

## Lenoir-Rhyne University 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Casey Stafford, Director of Student Involvement and Leadership

### Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election. Our plan lays out our goals and strategies to achieve a new level of engagement among our campus community. Much of this plan will be carried out in-person on our Hickory, NC campus as well as through digital platforms of email and/or social media to reach more of our students.

While our plan started with our student involvement team, we have grown our committee to include those in university leadership, faculty, theatre, and counseling. Our team will also consist of student leaders to help encourage this engagement. The goals for Lenoir-Rhyne University for the 2024 election are:

1. Increase rates of students registered to vote by 100 students for the upcoming 2024 election.
2. Host a speaker's series through the upcoming fall semester to encourage conversations around the 2024 election. This will be called the Bears Engage 2024 Campaign.
3. Partner with local nonpartisan organizations to make voting in-person or via mail more seamless and accessible for students.
4. Gain powerful insight to the voting data from our campus through the NSLVE survey.

We kicked off our Bears Engage 2024 campaign in the 2024 spring semester. As we are starting our journey with All In and our efforts to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement, we will carry this plan out through the next presidential election in 2024 through the mid-terms in 2026. By the mid-terms we hope to gain powerful insight into the voting habits of our students and national trends through the NSLVE survey. Before the 2026 mid-term elections, we will also have a new data set from the NSSE survey to inform our efforts to increase engagement on campus. These results will best inform how we adapt and add to our plan to best continue this engagement for years to come

on our campus to further our efforts to develop the whole student and promote leadership around the world.

### Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

Dr. Laura Crawley – V.P. for Mission, Engagement and Innovation for Lenoir-Rhyne University

Dr. Harry Titus – Dean of Students for Lenoir-Rhyne University

Casey Stafford – Director of Student Involvement and Leadership for Lenoir-Rhyne University

Ashley Clack- Counselor and Cornerstone Manager for Lenoir-Rhyne University

Betty Lohr, League of Women Voters for Catawba Valley

We will add a student leader in the fall 2024 semester

### Commitment:

The commitment for Lenoir-Rhyne University to encourage nonpartisan democratic engagement is critical to our community. Within our mission statement, we are focused on the development of the whole person as well as the promotion of responsible leadership of service around the world. As a small liberal arts university, we are focused on liberating the minds of our students and providing the space for them to discover who they are now and who they wish to become. One of the goals in our strategic plan is to increase the “exceptional excellence” of our students. Within this goal our focus is to “provide a transformational experience for our students by cultivating a culture of engagement and student success.” This ties to our mission statement to again develop the whole person.

On campus, we encourage dialogues around topics related to elections and the broader political world. With student clubs and organizations focused on different political sides and ideology/civil dialogues our students can see different issues from multiple perspectives. Our campus population consists of students from all over the country and the world. Through these dialogues, whether formal or informal, students can learn how issues are handled in the United States but also in the different countries that are represented by our students. This lends itself wonderfully to continuing our efforts to develop the whole student outside of the classroom.

These opportunities are shared with our campus community, both inside and outside of the classroom. Through classroom discussions, there can be growth and development

found within nonpartisan democratically focused courses. Through the co-curricular atmosphere, our students are vital in promoting dialogues and hosting programs to introduce and educate other students of ways to engage in nonpartisan democratic engagement.

We have established a Bears Engage 2024 campaign to be implemented this Fall 2024 Semester. Below are the dates/times and the specifics for each event which is both open to our students and the local community.

### **Fall 2024- Bears Engage 2024 Full Schedule**

Monday, September 9, 7 pm

Grace Chapel

Public hearing for draft ELCA Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith  
An opportunity for the LR community and others to participate in a conversation about the ELCA's draft social statement to guide how Lutherans should understand our relationship to civic life – including government – as individuals and as a church body. Dr. Mindy Makant, professor of religious studies and director of the youth and family ministry program at Lenoir-Rhyne, has been involved in writing the draft and will lead the public hearing according to guidelines provided by the ELCA. This session is part of the ELCA's process of reviewing and eventually approving a social statement that will then govern church teaching and policies and support ministries for the denomination.

September 17th from 11am-3pm

Cromer Center Lobby and the Library

In partnership with the League of Women Voters for Catawba County, we will have a table in our student center and library to educate students on voter registration. We will have forms available for students to register on site to vote and check their status to vote in the upcoming election.

September 20-22, various times

Lenoir-Rhyne Playmakers presents "What the Constitution Means to Me"  
Belk Centrum

"Fifteen-year-old Heidi earned her college tuition by winning Constitutional debate competitions across the United States. In this hilarious, hopeful and achingly human new play, she resurrects her teenage self in order to trace the profound relationship between four generations of women and the founding document that shaped their lives." Presented by Dr. Lindsay Weitkamp, associate professor of theatre and theatre program coordinator at Lenoir-Rhyne, and theatre program faculty.

Tuesday, September 24, 7 pm

Cromer Banquet Room

"The Local News Crisis and American Elections"

Dr. Danny Hayes, professor of political science at George Washington University  
The presidential election is on everyone's mind, but this year there are also tens of thousands of elections for city and county offices across the country. Yet few Americans know much about them, in part because of a crisis in the local news business. In the last two decades, thousands of local newspapers have closed, and virtually every remaining paper has slashed its reporting staff. As a result, Americans have become less knowledgeable about their local governments and

less likely to turn out to vote in local elections. Dr. Hayes' talk will draw on two decades of data to show how the decline of local news in the United States is threatening the foundations of local democracy. Moderated by Dr. Clinton Jenkins, assistant professor of political science at Lenoir-Rhyne. Dr. Hayes is professor of political science at George Washington University. A former journalist, Professor Hayes' research focuses on the media, public opinion, and elections. He is author of three books published by Cambridge University Press. The most recent, *News Hole: The Demise of Local Journalism and Political Engagement* (2021), was awarded the Goldsmith Book Prize from Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy.

Monday, October 7, 7 pm (subject to change)

Grace Chapel

"Loving Our Neighbors at the Ballot Box: Various Christian Perspectives"

A panel discussion organized and moderated by Dr. Tripp York, visiting assistant professor of religion, through the Institute for Faith and Learning at Lenoir-Rhyne.

Wednesday, October 9, 7 pm

Location TBD

Dynamics of general elections/our current electoral context – title TBD

John Sides, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science and William R. Kenan, Jr. Chair at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Sides studies political behavior in American and comparative politics. He is author of *The Bitter End: The 2020 Presidential Campaign and the Challenge to American Democracy*, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and The Battle for the Meaning of America*, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Election* and *Campaigns and Election: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice*. Dr. Sides helped found Good Authority and its predecessor, The Monkey Cage, both of which are sites about political science and politics. He also serves as Research Advisor to the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group. Moderated by Dr. Clinton Jenkins, assistant professor of political science at Lenoir-Rhyne.

Tuesday, October 29, 7 pm

Location TBD

"Race, Ethnicity and Politics"

Dr. Yalidy Matos, associate professor of political science and director of graduate studies at Rutgers University

Dr. Matos' scholarship sits at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and politics (REP), immigration, and identity politics. Broadly, her work explores how race and gender operate for various groups in the United States by investigating important topics such as immigration politics and policy, voting behavior, and political representation. In 2022, Matos was named a 2022 American Political Science Association Distinguished Junior Scholar in Political Psychology.

Moderated by Dr. Clinton Jenkins, assistant professor of political science at Lenoir-Rhyne.

Tuesday, November 5th

Starting in the Cromer Center Lobby (Student Center)

We plan to gather students to do a "Walk to the Polls"

Thursday, November 7, 7 pm

Grace Chapel or Belk Centrum Lenoir-Rhyne Visiting Writers Series presents Andrew Aydin

Public talk and Q&A on why voting matters now – and perhaps now more than ever (title still TBD)

This will be a public conversation with Avery Staley, Lenoir-Rhyne vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Along with Betty Lohr with League of Women Voters for Catawba Valley, we will help to advertise the following events and encourage our students to attend to learn more!

- Monday, September 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm- Meet the Candidates Event
  - Location: Ridgeview Recreation Center
- Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm- Catawba County School Board Forum
  - Location: CVCC
- Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at 10am- Catawba County Commissioners Forum
  - Location: Newton Public Library

## Landscape:

### **CAMPUS LANDSCAPE:**

Lenoir-Rhyne University is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2023. Our institution is a predominantly white institution located in Hickory, North Carolina. Our university has three campuses:

- Hickory, NC
- Asheville, NC
- Columbia, SC

#### Our campus demographic and voting data:

Lenoir-Rhyne University has 2,686 students.

- 1,783 undergraduate students – Hickory, NC campus
- 903 graduate students – on campus and online

Our students come from all over the world.

- 40 states/territories
- 77 North Carolina counties
- 31 countries

Lenoir-Rhyne University has not yet authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) so does not have past campus voting data yet to include in this plan.

Lenoir-Rhyne University has previously participated in National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day.

### **STATE VOTING LANDSCAPE:**

As for the landscape in North Carolina for voting dates and laws that could impact our students much of this information comes from the [U.S. Vote Foundation](#).

North Carolina Federal and State Elections

Tue Mar 5, 2024 - North Carolina Presidential Primary

Voter Registration Deadline	Absentee Ballot Request Deadline	Absentee Ballot Return Deadline	Early Voting Available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Email, Online or Fax by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>In-Person Request by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Postmarked by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Election Day Registration &amp; Voting</b> Tue Mar 5, 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Received by</b> Tue Feb 27, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Emergency Ballot Period</b> From Tue Feb 27, 2024 to Mon Mar 4, 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-Person, Received by</b> Tue Mar 5, 2024 5:00PM EST</li> <li>• <b>Postmarked On or Before Election Day and Received by</b> Fri Mar 8, 2024 5:00PM EST</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-person Absentee Voting</b> From Thu Feb 15, 2024 to Sat Mar 2, 2024</li> </ul>

Tue Mar 5, 2024 - North Carolina State Primary

Voter Registration Deadline	Absentee Ballot Request Deadline	Absentee Ballot Return Deadline	Early Voting Available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Email, Online or Fax by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>In-Person Request by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Postmarked by</b> Fri Feb 9, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Election Day Registration &amp; Voting</b> Tue Mar 5, 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Received by</b> Tue Feb 27, 2024</li> <li>• <b>Emergency Ballot Period</b> From Tue Feb 27, 2024 to Mon Mar 4, 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-Person, Received by</b> Tue Mar 5, 2024 5:00PM EST</li> <li>• <b>Postmarked On or Before Election Day and Received by</b> Fri Mar 8, 2024 5:00PM EST</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-person Absentee Voting</b> From Thu Feb 15, 2024 to Sat Mar 2, 2024</li> </ul>

North Carolina residents can vote the following ways in the upcoming election:

1. Absentee Voting Without Excuse
  - a. Request for Absentee Ballot can be [found here](#)
2. Early Voting
3. Military Absentee Voting
4. Overseas Absentee Voting
5. Polling Place Voting
6. Provisional Voting
7. Election Day (Same Day) Voter Registration
  - a. Photo IDs are required to vote in person

According to the [North Carolina State Board of Education](#), college students in North Carolina are able to register to vote in the county in which they go to school. For Lenoir-Rhyne students that would be [Catawba County](#). For our students who may have moved to Hickory, NC or close by permanently, they can register to vote online or through mail. They can go to [my NCDMV](#) to register to vote. There is no fee to apply for voter registration.

There are specifics that our students will need to know to best be prepared for the upcoming elections. Those details are listed below.

- **2024 Presidential Primary Election Day**
  - o Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>
    - Photo IDs will be required for all elections.
    - These IDs can be one of the following: unexpired NC Driver's License, DMV issued State ID or non-driver ID, US Passport, US Military or veterans ID card, or NC Voter Photo ID.
- **2024 Absentee-by-Mail**
  - o Absentee-by-Mail ballots will be available online starting in January 2024.
  - o People can request ballots [through this link](#)

- **Early Voting Locations-** there are 5 locations, and the two highlights are the closest to campus
  - o Newton Main Library – 115 West ‘C’ St, Newton
  - o Highland Recreation Center – 1451 8th St Dr NE, Hickory
  - o Southwest Library (Mountain View) – 2944 S Hwy 127, Hickory
  - o Conover Station – 403 Conover Station SE, Conover
  - o Sherrills Ford-Terrell Library – 9154 Sherrills Ford Rd, Terrell
- **2024 Second Primary (if needed)**
  - o Early Voting:
    - Starts- Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
    - Ends- Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 3pm, 2024.
  - o 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary:
    - Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> from 6:30am-7:30pm
- **2024 Presidential Election**
  - o Early Voting:
    - Starts- Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
    - Ends- Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm 2024.
  - o Election Day:
    - Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> from 6:30am-7:30pm

## Goals:

Our institution’s nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

- Have our president/chancellor sign the [ALL IN Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#) by August 2024.
- Create a marketing campaign to effectively educate our students about their voting capability while on a college campus and absentee ballots from their home state/territory.
  - o This will be completed through tabling at each Bears Engage event as well as a social media campaign to share about voter education.
- Gain knowledge from the NSLVE survey to best inform how we can increase voter registration and turnout for elections in 2026 and 2028.
- Increase rates of students registered to vote for the upcoming 2024 election.
  - o Our goal is to register 100 additional students to vote in the upcoming election.
- Host a speaker’s series through the upcoming fall semester to encourage conversations around the 2024 election.
  - o This will be completed and tracked through our Bears Engage 2024 campaign. These events are listed in the previous section.
- Partner with local voting sites to make voting in-person or via mail more seamless and accessible for students.
  - o This will be in partnership with League of Women Voters for Catawba Valley as well as local transportation companies to provide students transportation to the polls on election day.
  - o A long-term goal would be for our campus to become an early voting site so students can vote on campus.

We will work to achieve these goals through our efforts explained in the “Strategy” section of our plan. We are most looking forward to the data we will receive from the NSLVE survey to inform our practices for the future elections in our state and for our country.

## Strategy:

Lenoir-Rhyne University will implement the following strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

1. We will have tables set up in our student center throughout the upcoming fall semester to share information for how students can register to vote if they are eligible to vote in person.
  - a. We will also share information for any students looking to vote in local elections in a different state for their primary residence.
2. Throughout the upcoming fall semester we will host seven different speakers, in conjunction with our political science department. These speaking events will give way to collaboration and partnerships across campus to open the conversation to as many students as we can. The speakers will tackle the following topics and encourage conversations around the upcoming election in 2024. This speaker series will be our Bears Engage 2023 campaign.
  - a. Women’s organizations and campaigns
  - b. Race/ethnicity and elections
  - c. General Elections / assessment of the 2024 election climate
  - d. Religion and the General Election
  - e. Role of the news media in elections
  - f. Why voting matters
3. To further increase voter registration, we will partner with local election personnel, such as the staff at League of Women Voters for Catawba Valley and Indivisible Asheville to provide more information and education for our students around election dates coming up.
  - a. Our goal is to register 100 additional students to vote in the upcoming election.
4. For the following dates we will hold on-campus programs to share awareness for our students:
  - a. National Voter Registration Day- September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - b. National Voter Education Week- we will partner with departments across campus so share information for our new and existing voters on campus.
  - c. Election Day- we will work with a local transportation company to provide transportation to the polls for the day of the election.
5. For our first-year students who are voting for the first time, we will work to educate them in partnership with their first-year experience courses. These courses are all about introducing them to what college is and what they can expect. These courses will be a wonderful avenue to share more about voter registration and participation in the 2024 election.
  - a. Through this work, we will also coordinate with the office of International Education to make sure students who are studying abroad are away of the voting capabilities they have by mail.
6. We will also grow from the past partnership with [NC Campus Engagement](#). This was student led and included four different dialogues around different topics/current issues that may be impacting our students specifically or the broader world. Lenoir-Rhyne was one of three universities chosen to participate with two student ambassadors who have



been trained in leading these conversations. These students have now trained other students to be able to have dialogues around campus to encourage conversations around differing opinions.

### Evaluation:

In our efforts to track the progress of our plan, we will work as a team to collect the data and feedback from our campus community for how the nonpartisan democratic engagement changes overtime. We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

- Polling students to see who is registered to vote in September 2024 as we approach the 2024 election.
- Our campus utilizes the NSSE survey to showcase changes every two years on student engagement through in and out of the classroom experiences. The next survey results we will receive will come in 2025.
  - o These results will help to showcase where we need to focus more of our efforts to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement as we lead into the mid-term elections in 2026.
- We will work to survey our students to better understand their knowledge around local and national elections.
- Through our many speakers coming to campus to engage in conversations related to the upcoming election, we will seek feedback from the students who attend the series.
- Through our Bears Engage 2024 campaign, we will track attendance for each event to also see how many students we are reaching. We hope to engage with 300 unique students through this speaker series. Keeping track of attendance through Rafr, will provide us with a great sense of our engagement across the campus.

Through all our efforts we will work to keep our President and the President's cabinet knowledgeable about the work we are doing to increase voter registration and voter participation on our campus.

### Reporting:

Institutional Reports will go to:

Julie Santiago- Director of Institutional Research at Lenoir-Rhyne University

- [julie.santiago@lr.edu](mailto:julie.santiago@lr.edu)

All institutional reports we will work to collect will be shared with the university. We will share with our department of student life, our board of directors, and the President's Cabinet. The data collected will also provide us with the sense of how we work to prepare for mid-term elections and the next election in four years. Planting the seeds of civic engagement will also open the conversation and eyes of our students to become more civically engaged in our county and city.

**Appendix:**



# Voting as a College Student

IN NORTH CAROLINA



Scan QR codes to learn  
more on our website!

## CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE AS A COLLEGE STUDENT?

### Yes, if you are:

- A U.S. citizen.
- A resident of North Carolina and county for 30 days prior to the election.
- At least 18 years old, or will be 18 by the date of the general election.
- Not serving a felony sentence, including probation, post-release supervision, or parole.

If your home is in the community where you attend school, you may register to vote at your address while in school. If you plan to return to your former home after college, either within North Carolina or in another state, you should remain registered to vote in your hometown. You may have only one residence for voting purposes. You can only vote once in the same election. Voting multiple times in the same election, either within the state or across state lines, is a felony.

## WHEN IS THE VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE?

**25 days before the election.** If you miss the deadline, you can still register at an early voting site during the 17-day early voting period before Election Day. You will be asked to show proof of your current residential address. To learn more about registering or register to vote, go to [ncsbe.gov/registering](https://ncsbe.gov/registering).

## WHAT ARE MY VOTING OPTIONS?



### EARLY VOTING

Every county offers a 17-day period of early voting before an election. You can register and vote at the same time at an early voting site.



### ELECTION DAY VOTING

Polls are open on Election Day from 6:30am to 7:30pm.



### ABSENTEE-BY-MAIL VOTING

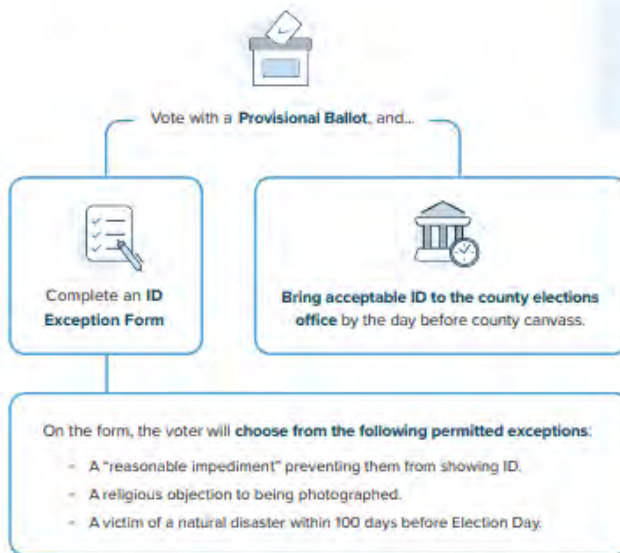
Request to vote by mail online on the State Board's website, or by submitting a completed and signed request form to your county board of elections by mail or in person. You will receive in the mail your ballot and an envelope to mail your ballot to the county board of elections.

## WHAT ARE THE PHOTO ID REQUIREMENTS FOR VOTING?

North Carolina voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Voters who vote by mail will be asked to include a photocopy of an acceptable photo ID when returning their ballot by mail. Many types of identification – including driver's licenses, U.S. Passports, and State-approved student IDs – will be accepted. To see the full list of acceptable photo IDs and read more about voter ID requirements in North Carolina, go to [ncsbe.gov/voter-ID](https://ncsbe.gov/voter-ID).

## WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A PHOTO ID?

All voters will be allowed to vote with or without a photo ID. If any voter is unable to show a photo ID when voting, they may:



### FREE PHOTO ID CARDS

Any registered voter can get a free photo ID from their county board of elections. Contact information for county boards can be found at [vt.ncsbe.gov/BOEInfo](https://vt.ncsbe.gov/BOEInfo). Any North Carolina resident can get a free non-driver's ID from the NCDMV.

Studying abroad or serving in the military? Scan below to learn more about **Military & Overseas Voting**.



## CAN I STILL VOTE IF THERE ARE QUESTIONS ABOUT MY ELIGIBILITY?

**Yes.** If there are any questions about your eligibility to vote, you will be offered a provisional ballot. Such questions may arise if a voter does not appear on the registration records, or they request a ballot with contests that they are not apparently eligible to vote on, due to residency or party affiliation in a primary, or they do not have acceptable photo ID. After Election Day, election officials conduct research to determine a provisional voter's eligibility and will count the provisional ballots of all eligible voters.

## CONTACT US

✉ [elections.sboe@ncsbe.gov](mailto:elections.sboe@ncsbe.gov) 🌐 [www.ncsbe.gov](https://www.ncsbe.gov) 📞 (919) 814-0700

