



# **Civic Engagement Action Plan 2023-2024**

**“Be the Vote that Shapes the Future”**



**Prepared by The ALL IN Challenge Committee at Northeastern**

# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?*

The purpose of the Civic Engagement Action Plan at Northeastern is to raise awareness, educate, and empower the Northeastern community to enact positive change through social engagement and citizenship. This need for this plan is based on the perception and belief that many students arrive at Northeastern right out of high school, not necessarily aware that they can take an active role in addressing social problems. Through both in-class and out-of-class civic experiences, the Civic Engagement Action Plan seeks to encourage and train students to become conscientious citizens who seek to understand the causes and effects of social and civic issues. Additionally, we would like to see students become active citizens who make it their priority to address and possibly find solutions to the issues in their community and nation. Furthermore, the intent of this plan is to lead to a continued increase voter registration and voting by the students at Northeastern Junior College.

While election years are the primary emphasis of this work, empowering our students to contribute to the public discourse beyond elections will lead them to further have a positive impact on their communities. We recognize that community college students have numerous talents, fresh ideas, and almost limitless energy, that if not properly channeled could leave a huge void in the civic processes of our communities. Through multiple strategies, the Civic Engagement Action Plan at Northeastern is intended to cultivate a sense of civic-minded thinking among students, including the knowledge, skills, and motivation, which will ultimately empower them to make a positive difference in their communities. Increased voting rates will be a result of this kind of civic mindedness, as students will eventually discover that they are the ones who will make their world a better place.

It is to be noted that this plan has been developed by a leadership team comprised of professionals from Student Services, Academic Affairs, Institutional Research, Student Support Services, and the Northeastern Junior College Student Government. The plan is to be implemented on the Northeastern Junior College main campus in Sterling, Colorado. See “Landscape” for additional information about the campus and the student population.

Some of the statistical data in the Action Plan is from NSLVE reporting. Additional statistical data is from the Fall 2023 Northeastern Junior College Academic Profile, published annually by our Director of Institutional Research.

## II. LEADERSHIP

Northeastern joined the **ALL IN** Challenge in early September 2020. The decision to continue with this challenge was supported and encouraged by Northeastern **President, Mike White.**

**Steve Smith, Vice President of Student Services** at Northeastern, enrolled Northeastern in the challenge and requested that the following campus leaders be the official working group to develop and oversee the plan.

**Sam Soliman, Vice President of Academic Affairs** at Northeastern

**Catheryne Trenkle, Director of Academic Student Support Services and the Monahan Learning Center** at Northeastern

**Brant Davis, Director of Residence Life and Student Activities** at Northeastern

**Andrea Orin, Director of Student Success, Equity, and Inclusion** at Northeastern

**Jaecey Nichols, Student Success Specialist** at Northeastern

**Cindy Carey, Student Guidance Coordinator** at Northeastern

**Clayton Marty, Associated Student Government 2nd Vice President** at Northeastern

**Andrew De Souza, Coordinator of Campus Safety** at Northeastern

**Leslie Weinsheim, Director of Institutional Research** at Northeastern

**Jesse Quinlin, Director of Marketing & Communication** at Northeastern

**Auston Hoskins, Social Media Coordinator** at Northeastern

Each person listed above plays an integral role in the success of this plan. Mike White believes that leading by example has an impact on our students and commits to local advisory board and is visible at college and community events to show the power of “showing up.” Sam Soliman will encourage faculty to make a difference in the lives of students and challenge them to see the real-life relevance of the course material. Faculty teaching skill-based courses such as English and communication could teach these subjects with citizenship skills – skills that can be used to affect a positive change – thus, enhancing the relevance of course material. Professors in biology, sociology and psychology may also find civic engagement valuable for demonstrating the applicability of course material.

The Office of Residence Life and Student Activities, led by Brant Davis, is a valuable partner in the work of holistically engaging students. Because civic engagement is student engagement, the overlap of these interests during election years can expand to foster voter registration, education, and engagement, improve student retention, and enhance their college experience.

Brant Davis will also promote student activities using social media and the Associated Student Government, led by Northeastern's ASG 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Clayton Marty.

Part of Catheryne Trenkle's position is to supervise the Monahan Learning Center, which includes the Library at Northeastern. Library staff are key stakeholders in cultivating a politically informed student body. At Northeastern, the library is the nucleus of activity for tutoring, computer access, information seeking and socializing. The library features civic awareness displays featuring ballot initiatives and voter registration information. Additionally, this Office coordinates the Student Success Seminars for First Year Students.

Andrea Orin and Jaecey Nichols and Cindy Carey all work in the Office of Student Success, Equity, and Inclusion. As effective democratic citizenship requires understanding and tolerating differences, this office has proven to be a valuable partner in co-sponsoring events. These events are geared, in part, toward inspiring first generation and lower income students, especially from minority communities, to persevere through college. Andrea Orin and Jaecey Nichols and Cindy Carey will promote civic engagement and voter registration during the final week of class for the seminar courses.

Andrew De Souza will lead efforts with faculty members to bring politicians to campus to address ballot issues and emphasize the importance of voting and becoming involved in civic matters in one's community.

Leslie Weinsheim will provide relevant data from NSCLVE for our ALL IN Civic Engagement Action Plan and other reporting. Leslie also produces the annual Academic Profile which provides additional student data found under "Landscape" (IV).

Jesse Quinlin and Auston Hoskins will market all strategies of our action plan, including promoting future events on social media, and summarizing successes of past events with the use of photos and testimonials. They will also review press releases about the Action Plan and voter participation.

Steve Smith, the Vice President of Student Services, will schedule and chair the working team planning meetings and report to the campus about the plans and activities slated for student civic engagement. He will also submit press releases to the community about the ALL IN Challenge and Northeastern's voter registration data.

### III. COMMITMENT

Northeastern Junior College is fully committed to increase NJC student voter registration and civic engagement. Vice President of Student Services, Steve Smith will continually send email reminders to all students with voter registration information, deadlines to register and vote, and links to ballot initiatives. The NJC Library is committed to displaying visuals about ballot initiatives and voter registration instructions. Our social media personnel are committed to ongoing messaging promoting civic processes and upcoming election information. Our Student Government Officers and Residence Assistants and Hall Directors, along with our Director of Residence Life & Student Activities are all committed to developing and promoting engaging student programs and activities for the purpose of enhancing student awareness and participation in civic engagement and voter participation. Our strategies listed later in this plan emphasize some of the activities and plans to accomplish this goal. Co-curricular activities are also being developed and will take place in the classrooms. Instructors will report to the ALL IN Leadership Team as these activities occur.

Our official njc.edu website features our past medals, including the medal for voter registration increases from 2016 to 2020. Additionally, we are committed to regularly report to the CCCS Student Life Development Council (SLDC) about our civic engagement processes and accomplishments. We share these results in our reports to the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education, highlighting the commitment this important topic. The Director of Student Activities reports to this system functional on a monthly basis.

The commitment from our college president, Mike White, shows that this commitment starts at the top. The leadership team has representation from several facets of the college, including student affairs, academics, student support services, institutional research, marketing, and student government.

The college is reviewing its mission and values statements. Plans are to add a statement about developing civic mindedness in students in addition to the academic and career goals that are stated. Additionally, as we review and revise our strategic enrollment and retention plan (SERM) for the next 5 years, student civic engagement will be added to the new SERM.

## IV. LANDSCAPE

National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)

Since 2012, Northeastern has received campus-specific voter registration and turnout data through the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE). As was the case across the entire study, voter turnout among Northeastern students went up in 2018, compared to the 2014 midterm elections. 2018 NSLVE data indicated a voter turnout rate of 61.5% at Northeastern, with 67.7% of students registered.

Northeastern's 41.7% voter turnout rate in 2018 was slightly higher than other Associate institutions in the study.

Election Year	NJC Registration Rate	NJC Voting Rate of Registered Students	NJC Overall Voting Rate of Students	Voting Rate of All Colleges
<b>2016</b>	74.1%	75.4%	55.9%	53.0%
<b>2018</b>	68.9%	59.5%	41.0%	39.1%
<b>2020</b>	80.9%	83.3%	67.4%	66.0%

**NJC Overall Voting Rate in Previous Three Elections**

Source: Institute for Democracy & Higher Education



**NJC Voting by Age Group**

	2016	2018	2020
18-21	50%	32%	64%
22-24	56%	32%	57%
25-29	52%	38%	58%
30-39	61%	56%	71%
40-49	65%	62%	73%

50+

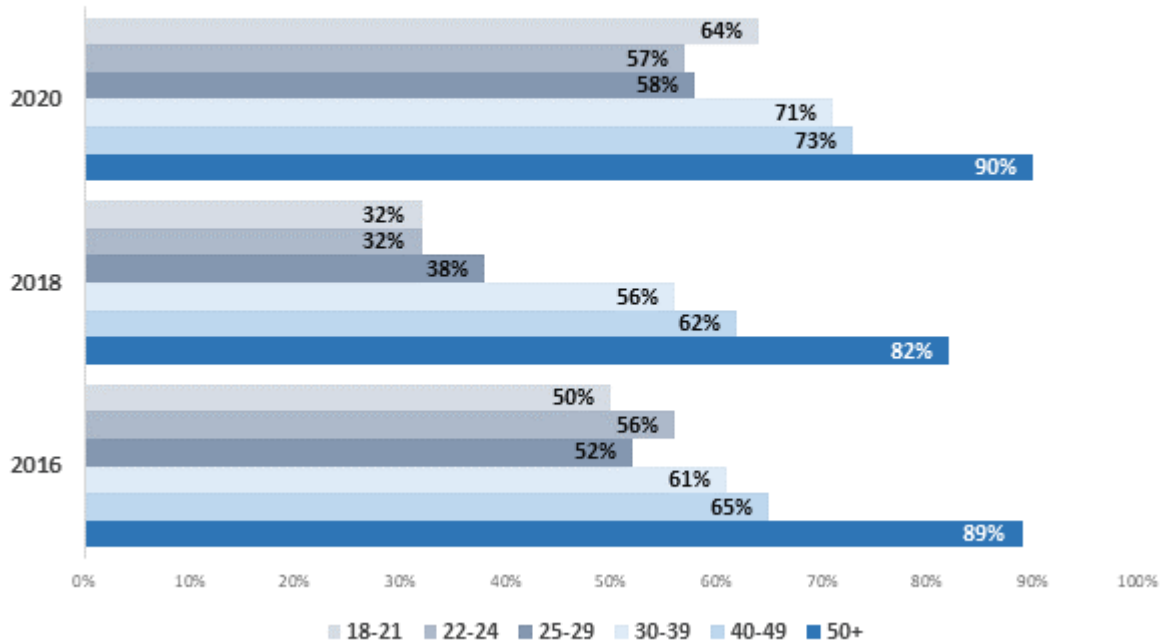
89%

82%

90%

### Northeastern Voting by Age Group

Source: Institute for Democracy & Higher Education



Year	Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Overall Voting Rate of Student Body
2016	74.0 percent	75.0 percent	56.0 percent
2018	69.0 percent	59.0 percent	41.0 percent
2020	81.0 percent	83.0 percent	67.0 percent
CHANGE from 2018-2020	+11.0 percent	+24.0 percent	+26.0 percent

In the most recent NSLVE report, there was no data available regarding the race/ethnicity of NJC student voters. All data pertaining to race was categorized as “Race Unknown.”

Northeastern’s faculty advising model and ratio of full-time faculty allows the institution a unique opportunity for students to make a personal connection with staff and faculty. Students often build a sense of identity based on academic area of study and/or participation in extra-curricular activities. Northeastern will choose to focus on these subsets of students when implementing specific strategies.

This year (2023-2024) all students received the emails sent to the college from ALL-IN that specifically 6

let them know about the ballot initiatives in Colorado. Also included was information about how to register to vote online and where students could participate in primary and general elections, and how students could request absentee ballots, if needed.

With the 2022 ALL IN Action Plan, students took the lead with voter registration messaging across campus, including posting yard signs, assembling a display in the library, actively promoting Constitution Day with Constitution Trivia, and hosting Debate Watch nights in the residence halls. Each voting season, the college hosts a non-partisan review of amendments on the ballot, at which students and community members can hear about the issues and discuss in an open, but non-partisan forum. Local media is invited to the forum and reports to the community about the event. Additionally, advocates and opponents for or against various initiatives will be permitted to gather signatures from our students in an attempt to get various initiatives on the ballot and to educate and inform our students about the proposed initiatives.

Following, is a breakdown of our campus demographics for this current academic year.

In Spring 2024, the number of full-time female students was 63% while male students total 37%; however, when comparing the number of part time female and male students, the number of male students is significantly less at 26% than females at 74%. The significant difference in the part time numbers has been a common trend for the past five years.

In 2023, forty-six percent (46%) of Northeastern students were new first time, while 23% were high school students (also known as high school concurrent). Five percent (5%) of students transferred in from another college and the remaining 51% were continuing.

White non-Hispanics account for 73% of the student population. Students of color account for 20%.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of students at Northeastern for Fall 2023 were age 27 and under; this group is known as Generation Z. This compares to 71% for Fall 2022, 74% for Fall 2021, and 77% for Fall 2020.

Forty-five percent (45%) of Northeastern students are working toward Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of General Studies degrees while 17% are working toward Applied Science degrees. Nine percent (9%) are working toward certificates in a variety of subjects.

## V.GOALS and NSLVE

Short Term goals: **Be visible, be heard, be involved.**

In an ongoing effort to increase student participation and inclusion, we have identified 3 focus areas, to increase our efforts. We believe that student persistence, success and performance improve when they feel seen, heard, and included. We are setting our Civic Campaign goals for the ALL IN Challenge on this basis. First, we want students to SEE that something is taking place on campus. We will designate a



central and visible location that we know students will encounter at least once per day. Secondly, we want to give them a voice to feel heard and to inspire those around them. We will utilize hands on visuals and social media platforms that are comfortable and familiar to a broad demographic. Finally, we will encourage them to get involved by hosting activities that allow them to participate safely in group settings and as an individual working towards a common goal: student voter participation.

Create a central location with easy access to iPad stations to register to vote. This location will also be the hub for students to display their “I vote because...” post-it notes. In creating a visible, one stop station, with voting guides and website instruction, we hope to promote simplicity through the process while supporting and inspiring the student vote.

Host any upcoming debates in a large, neutral space, where students can live view the candidates and their positions. Stations will be at each of the broadcasts so students can register to vote.

Promote a social media campaign involving the slogan “Rock the Vote.” Starting with ASG, sports teams and clubs, student volunteers will have their photograph taken holding the sign “Rock the Vote” and then creating their own sign as to why they are voting. This will be posted to social media with each student challenging 3 peers with the question “How will you rock the vote?” Each post will be hash-tagged with #northeasternvotes and #rockthevote. With this challenge starting from a select group of peers, we hope to create a snowball effect of motivation amongst students and the chance to be featured on Northeastern’s social media accounts.

#### Long Term Goals:

Develop a Non-Partisan Civic Engagement Club from this year’s campaign, so that every year we have a level of involvement in elections. Ideally this would become a student run club in conjunction with our social sciences department. With enough participation we could have a community presence, with sponsorship and support from local government.

Increase participation throughout academic cohorts. Data taken from 2014 and 2018 showed a broad range of participation percentages across our academic community. Based on average enrollment numbers, if we make a push within individual cohorts by incorporating voter awareness into our small group seminars (AAA 178) and academic departments with a goal of 4% participation increase, we could increase our overall voter turn-out rate.

Make first-time student voter involvement a trackable statistic.

Would require student sign in with student ID number.

Could use e-RezLife for tracking.

Questionnaire about first-time voting or previous voting

Have President sign commitment to full student voter participation.

Lastly, a major goal is to see a increase in voter participation rates in the presidential election from 2020 to 2024 and to 2028. According to NSLVE, our voting rate of eligible students who voted on Election Day

in 2020 was 67.4%, which was up 11.5% from 2016. We would like to see that rate increase to at least 70% for the 2024 presidential election.

In 2020, our actual voter registration rate was 81%, up 7% from 2016. We are very proud of that rate, but we would love to see it get to 85%! Of course, ideally and ambitiously, we would love to see that figure at 100%.

## VI. STRATEGY

ACTION	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHERE WILL IT TAKE PLACE	WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN	WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?
What’s on the Ballot?	Marketing/ Communication	Social Media	Fall 2023 Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To cultivate savvy to participate in the election.
Ballot Initiative Forum w/ former Senator Sonnenberg	American Government Instructor/ Liberal Arts	Corsberg Theater	October 2023	To review and explain the ballot initiatives
Candidate Debate Watch Party during the Primaries; Play Debate BINGO during the broadcast.	ASG	Various locations (residence halls)	Fall 2023 Spring 2024	Provide a neutral location to view the presidential debates and engage in discussion.
Registration Station  Emails sent to students with voter registration links.	Civic Engagement Team, Marketing, VPSS	MLC	Fall 2023-ongoing	To provide technology and support for students that want to register to vote.

<p>Election display in the library.</p> <p>Provide voter information.</p> <p>Understanding the Blue Book.</p>	MLC	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor of the MLC	Fall 2023 Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To provide students with information about the election, candidates, how to register and vote, sample ballots and more.
<p>Election and Registration yard signs</p> <p>Why vote? Did you register?</p>	ASG	Clock tower and main entrances	Fall 2023 Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To raise awareness about voter registration and the upcoming election and offer web resources.
<p>“Rock the Vote” Social Media Campaign</p>	Civic Engagement Team	Instagram Snapchat	Fall 2023 Spring 2024 Fall 2024	Ignite curiosity about voting and democracy.
<p>I Vote Because... display</p>	AAA 178 Instructors	MLC	Fall 2024 Spring 2024	To create a sense of voting identity for Northeastern students.
<p>Get out the vote party— Red and Blue Solo Cups (possibly purple and green, too)</p>	ASG	Various Locations	Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To invite students to participate and cultivate their identity as voters.

Guest political speakers from both (all parties)	Civic Engagement Team and Faculty	Classrooms and larger venues	Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To inform students about the ballot issues and hear both sides of the ballot issues.
Promote voter registration at the NJC Yuma campus	Civic Engagement Team; Coordinator of Yuma campus	NJC Yuma Campus	Fall 2023 Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To expand voter registration and civic engagement efforts beyond our main campus and our Sterling population.
Non-Partisan open forum to review ballot initiatives	College President/Club Representative and ASG	NJC Corsberg Theater	Spring 2024 Fall 2024	To make voters aware of proposed ballot initiatives and amendments from a non-partisan perspective.

## VII. REPORTING

This action plan will be shared campus wide. Faculty and staff will have the NSLVE data shared via email, which will include all relevant attachments from NSLVE and the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. We will also share the efforts of those employees and student leaders who are planning the student activities that promote student engagement. We will also share with all students and faculty/staff the voter registration and student voter data that is provided to us through NSLVE. Additionally, the NSLVE data will be available to the public. Our Marketing Director will issue press releases to our partners in local media regarding NJC's student civic engagement and voter registration/voting data. The Northeastern Junior College Marketing team will also post awards and citations on our website and our social media pages.

## VIII. EVALUATION

The work described in this plan will be evaluated annually, or after each activity. The evaluation will be conducted by members of the ALL IN Action Plan Leadership Team. The evaluation will consider the purpose of each strategic action item and activity, as well as the short term and long-term goals set forth in the Goals section of the plan (V). We will consider whether the strategies in the plan were effective and successful and to what extent goals were met. Based on the evaluations, adjustments to strategies may be made, as necessary.

Following the implementation of the 2022 Action Plan, some goals and strategies remained the same, while others were adjusted or removed. Additionally, several new strategies have been implemented for the 2023-2024 ALL IN Civic Engagement Action Plan.

