

Ramapo College of NJ Campus Action Plan

Executive Summary

The following Ramapo College of New Jersey staff wrote this action plan,

- Eddie Seavers, Associate Director of the Center for Student Involvement and Andrew Goodman Foundation Campus Co-champion
- Dylan Heffernan, Assistant Director of the We Care Program and Civic Engagement and Andrew Goodman Foundation Campus Co-Champion

The purpose of this action plan is to continue growing and evaluating Ramapo College's voting and civic engagement efforts and working to better integrate civic engagement into the campus culture. Since the creation of the CCEC in 2011, dedicated support (personnel and financial) has increased and both anecdotal and quantitative data from NSLVE show significant growth (voter registration and voter turnout) during presidential election years (2020 over 2016) and midterm election years (2018 over 2014). The plan includes both short-term goals leading up to the 2024 presidential election and long-term goals focused on programmatic and systemic changes. This plan will be implemented throughout 2024 and beyond. The implementation of this plan will be done through collaboration with various departments across campus. We will utilize resources immediately available within our unit, the Civic and Community Engagement Center's student staff, and connect with other offices and departments as needed to complete our goals.

Leadership

Cabinet/Executive

Cindy R. Jebb, President of Ramapo College

Patrick O'Connor, Vice President for Government Relations & Business Development

Christopher Romano, Vice President for Strategic Enrollment, Outreach, and Engagement

Nicole Morgan Agard, Chief Equity and Diversity Officer and Vice President for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Compliance

Melissa Van Der Wall, Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Wellbeing

The cabinet/executive folks listed generally serve in an advisory capacity, but do partner in direct work at the request of staff and sometimes request staff assistance with direct work projects they are leading on.

Staff

Rick Brown, Director of the Center for Student Involvement

Edward Seavers, Associate Director of the Center for Student Involvement

Dylan Heffernan, Assistant Director of the We Care Program and Civic Engagement

Allene Shapiro, Coordinator of Community Engagement

All four staff members are engaged in direct work initiatives on goals and elements of the action plan.

Faculty

Aaron R. S. Lorenz, Dean, School of Social Science and Human Services

Susan Hangen, Dean, School of Humanities and Global Studies; Interim Vice Provost

Kristin Kenneavy, Associate Professor of Sociology

Regina Clark, Associate Professor of Journalism and Chair of Black Lives Matter at Ramapo College

Sangha Padhy, Associate Professor of Law and Sustainability

Mia Serban, Professor of Law and Society

Jeremy Teigen, Professor of Political Science

Michael Unger, Associate Professor of Political Science

Deans/Faculty listed generally serve in an advisory capacity, but do partner in direct work at the request of staff and sometimes request staff assistance with direct work projects they are leading on.

Student Groups

College Republicans

Civic and Community Engagement Center Student Staff

Andrew Goodman Campus Ambassadors

Partners

Andrew Goodman Foundation: Kaylee Valencia, Program Manager: Operations Strategist

Bergen County Board of Elections: Richard L. Miller, Chairman

John S. Hogan, Bergen County Clerk

Succession Plan

Professional Staff - In the event of a professional staff member leaving the College, specifically the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement, a search will be started to hire a new individual for this position. In the meantime, the responsibilities of the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement will be assumed by the Associate Director of the Center for Student Involvement, supported by the student staff members within the Civic and Community Engagement Center and the Andrew Goodman Ambassadors.

Student Staff - When student staff either graduate or leave their role within the Civic and Community Engagement Center, a search starts to hire another student. This same process applies to Andrew Goodman Ambassadors. Relevant student groups and faculty members are contacted to reach out to their students about these opportunities. Efforts are made to always include first-year and/or second year students in both student staff and AGF positions to allow time for learning and so that knowledge can continually be passed on.

Faculty - If a faculty member leaves the college or is no longer able to work within this coalition, we will work to identify other interested faculty members at the college to continue the work

If a contact is lost at one of our partner organizations, we will work with the organization to learn who will be assuming their duties and get them up to speed on the work done on our campus.

All documents and materials are maintained on a college network shared space and shared google drive so that documents are available to staff members in the future despite any transitions.

Commitment

Ramapo College's mission is to provide students with a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement. The College is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning and international and intercultural understanding. Our vision is to prepare students to be successful leaders for a changing world by developing the whole person—as scholars, creators, individuals, and most importantly as local and global citizens. These aspects are core to how we approach civic engagement and involvement.

The Civic and Community Engagement Center

The Civic and Community Engagement Center is the core of our voter and political engagement programming. There are two full-time staff members and five student staff members who lead the work of the Center. Two additional managers have roles in supporting and promoting the work of the Center. The Civic and Community Engagement Center coordinates programming on civic holidays, including:

- Constitution Day
- National Voter Registration Day
- National Voter Education Week
- Vote Early Day
- Election Hero Day

Throughout National Voter Education Week the Civic and Community Engagement Center hosts numerous voter registration drives for the student population as well as voter education events. Students who participate in these events should leave knowing their voter registration status, voting district, and easy ways to find out who is running for elected office. These events are run in collaboration with the student staff and the college's Andrew Goodman Ambassadors.

The Civic and Community Engagement Center also hosts voter registration and engagement events leading up to the general election. Ramapo College participates in New Jersey's Ballot Bowl and the Civic and Community Engagement Center is responsible for all the related data collection and programming. The Civic and Community Engagement Center participated in the State's pilot program where schools extend Ballot Bowl into the community surrounding campus and anticipates doing so in the next year. In the last two elections, Ramapo finished 3rd and 2nd in its division for Ballot Bowl.

Other than specific voting-related programming, the Civic and Community Engagement Center also offers Leaders in Service, a leadership experience for first-year students. As part of this program, students are asked to write to an elected official about an issue or topic that is

important to them. The students who participate in Leaders in Service are challenged to think about what it means to be an active citizen. A similar program offered to Sophomores is titled, Sophomore Advancing in Leadership, also known as S.A.I.L. Sophomore students can apply to participate in this leadership program, and if accepted, attend monthly workshops, reflection sessions, and participate in service in local communities.

The Civic and Community Engagement Center hosts themed weeks throughout the year—two of our biggest efforts are the promotion of Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in the fall, and Civic Engagement Week in the spring. These weeks include presentations about topics related to food justice, housing, and basic needs insecurity, as well as other civic topics. Throughout all of these programs and events, voting and democratic participation are discussed in relation to addressing these issues.

Additionally, the Civic and Community Engagement Center is coordinating two trips for students to visit Trenton, the NJ state capital. In the first trip, students toured the State House, and met with elected officials and advocates to learn about the legislative process on a state level. In the spring, the second trip will have students visit the State House while it is in session and see the process from a different perspective. Students from our Student Government Association and Leaders in Service cohort will attend.

Alternative Breaks have been a recent change. Previously, Alternative Breaks were primarily focused on community service. A typical trip consisted of students completing a service project for a large portion of their stay, with a cultural immersion component happening as well. In Spring 2022, the Civic and Community Engagement Center held two Alternative Breaks that had a stronger emphasis on civic engagement. One trip took nine students to Washington D.C. to learn about anti-Semitism and how to combat it. Students visited the Holocaust Museum, and the Capitol Building and were able to talk with local religious leaders about anti-Semitism and where it's rooted. Voting and civic involvement were discussed frequently as solutions to this issue. Another trip took 10 students to Hyde Park, New York to visit Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home and museum and learn about the Four Freedoms, and his work regarding the New Deal. In 2024, trips are slated for Tennessee, Washington D.C., and New York and will focus on the environment, the Black and indigenous experience in America, and social good.

Outside of the Civic and Community Engagement Center

The College works to implement voter education across campus. Voting information is presented in the orientation material first-year students receive before the start of their first semester. When they arrive on campus in late August, they already know that voting and civic involvement are core to the College's identity and culture. Additionally, in Ramapo College's 2023-2029 Strategic Plan, "Boldy Ascending", civic engagement is a focus in its first goal:

Academic Excellence & Student Success. Achieve academic excellence and student success through the advancement of intercultural, global, and interdisciplinary education, experiential learning, and individualized student-centered resources.

- Grow service opportunities and civic engagement to explore personal identities and diversity, and make a positive societal impact locally, regionally, and internationally

There is also consistent communication between the President's Office and the Civic and Community Engagement Center about programming related to current events. Specifically, President Jebb worked to organize a campus-wide debriefing on the invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas War as these events were unfolding. President Jebb has communicated in a timely manner related to civic and social issues impacting our nation. She has also signed the Higher Education President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation and, for the first time at Ramapo College, President Jebb sent out a campus-wide message in 2022 regarding the midterm election. This was in addition to the annual email from the Dean of Students and a CCEC staff member. While the Presidential letter did not occur for the 2023 election, the annual letter was sent by the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement and the Dean of Students. The President's message is expected to return for the 2024 election.

Curriculum- Listed in both Commitment & Landscape per 2022 feedback notes

Civic engagement, in one form or another, is core to a Ramapo College liberal arts education. The following is a list of relevant majors, minors, and concentrations.

- Curriculum
 - Political Science (Major)
 - Public Policy (Minor)
 - Civic and Community Leadership (Minor)
 - Environmental Studies (Major)
 - Ethnicity and Race Studies (Social Science Contract Major Concentration) ○
 - Gender & Sexuality Studies (Social Science Contract Major Concentration) ○
 - Human Rights and Genocide Studies (Major)
 - Journalism (Major)
 - Labor, Work, & Organizations (Social Science Contract Major Concentration)
 - Law and Society (Major)
 - Social Science (Major)
 - Social Science: Society and Culture (Degree Completion Program Concentration)
 - Social Work (Major)
 - Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (Minor)

Landscape

To better capture the landscape of Ramapo College, below are some key demographics of our students. There are,

- 5,521 students
 - 5,013 Undergraduate students
 - 493 Graduate students
 - 15 Doctoral students
- The average age of a student at Ramapo is 21 years old
- Gender

- 59.2 % of students identify as female
- 40.8% of students identify as male
- Student Origin
 - 93.6% of students are from New Jersey
 - 5.3% of students are from out of state
 - 1% of students are international
- Demographics
 - 0.3% American Indian / Native Alaskan
 - 10% Asian
 - 6.3% Black
 - 23.6% Hispanic / Latino
 - 54.9% White
 - 1% Nonresident Alien
 - 3% Unknown
- Top Majors in Undergraduate
 - Nursing
 - Biology
 - Psychology
 - Marketing
 - Management
 - Education
- Top Majors in Graduate
 - Social Work
 - Special Education
 - Business Management
 - Nursing
 - Accounting
 - Contemporary Structural Design

Ramapo students are increasingly first-generation and increasingly non-white. Students are generally traditional aged college students and are generally from New Jersey, although out of state enrollment is increasing, albeit slowly.

Another aspect of Ramapo College's landscape is in the classroom. Ramapo's dedication to voter registration and involvement is shown across the campus, including our curriculum. Across our curriculum, you will find voting and civic education is core to what we teach. Our Political Science major is framed around the process by which individuals make collective decisions, set goals and priorities, and formulate policies to pursue them and offers courses discussing American government, campaigns, and elections.

We also offer the Civic and Community Leadership minor that cultivates student engagement in civic, local, state, and international communities. The Civic and Community Leadership minor brings together coursework that engages students and graduates in the public work of building democracy.

Additionally, topics of race, justice, and society are discussed across all our academic

programs. Civic engagement, in one form or another, is core to a Ramapo College liberal arts education. Below is a list of relevant majors, minors, and concentrations.

- Curriculum

- Political Science (Major)
- Public Policy (Minor)
- Civic and Community Leadership (Minor)
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- Ethnicity and Race Studies (Social Science Contract Major Concentration) ○
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- Social Science (Major)
- Social Science: Society and Culture (Degree Completion Program Concentration)
- Social Work (Major)
- Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (Minor)

- NSLVE Results from Ramapo College

- As of December 2023, Ramapo College has not received its 2022 NSLVE report. Once we have that data, this section will be updated. The following information is using the most current NLSVE results available for Ramapo College.

- General

- Ramapo College had a 15.1% increase in registration rate over a four-year period (2016-2020). The rate steadily increased over that period, starting at 71.9% and reaching 87% in 2020
- Ramapo College had a 13.1% increase in Voting Rate among registered students over a four-year period (2016-2020). This was 75.6% in 2016 and then rose to 88.7% in 2020.
- This information results in a 77.1% Voting Rate for all students, which is a 22.7% increase from 2016 and is 11.1% higher than the all-institution average.

- By Race/Ethnicity

- The voting rate for Asian students increased by 26% percent over the four-year period, starting at 34% and rising to 60%.
- The voting rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native students increased from 71% to 75%, a 4% increase over the four-year period.
- The voting rate for Black students increased by 19% over the four-year period, starting at 50% and rising to 69%.
- The voting rate for Hispanic students increased by 22% over the four-year period, starting at 51% and rising to 73%.

- Voting Method

- Over a four-year period, there was a monumental shift in voting methods. In 2016, 85% of students voted in person while 9% voted not in person. In

2020, only 0.002% of students would vote in person, while 96% would vote not in person or provisional voting. (3% unknown)

- This shift was primarily the result of the COVID-19 pandemic- this will be something to be aware of during 2024 efforts.

- Age Group

- These three groups all saw an increase in voting rate over the four-year period of 2016-2020.

- 18-21 would increase 28%, (49%-77%)
- 22-24 would increase 17%, (57%-74%)
- 25-29 would increase 18%, (59%-77%)

- The population groups above 29, saw little to no change in voting rates over the four-year period

- Gender

- The Female-identified student population saw a 22% increase in their voting rate. They started at 57% in 2016 and would rise to 78% in 2020.

- The Male-identified student population saw a 24% increase in their voting rate. They started at 49% in 2016 and rose to 73% in 2020.

NSLVE data shows us that students who identify as Asian, Black, and Hispanic at Ramapo all vote at a rate lower than the campus average. While we wait for the 2022 NSLVE data to see if this has changed, there are opportunities to increase the connection with student groups that connect with these demographics, including:

- Association of Latinos Moving Ahead
- Organization of Latino Unity
- Black Student Union
- Ebony Women for Social Change
- Brothers Making a Difference
- United Asian Association
- Filipino American Student Association

Ramapo has a modest international student population, but almost all programs include information geared toward international students and how they can impact the election outcome even though they cannot vote. Having international students understand what candidates may do and how it will impact their experience in America is highlighted so they can have conversations with friends who are eligible to vote and can advocate for themselves through their friends' vote.

Additional Landscape Notes

Very few students who are eligible to vote make Ramapo their permanent address, so on-campus voting and shuttles to the polls are not part of current or future plans. Vote by mail and early voting are prime elements of voter turnout efforts and education. Additionally, New Jersey and Bergen County have few laws that make voting challenging, and in-person long voter lines are rare to non-existent. In short, locally we have a favorable landscape for voter participation.

Goals

RCNJ has the following short-term goals:

1. Increase all metrics for the 2024 general election: Voter registration rate, % of registered voters who vote, and % of all students who vote. Specifically, our goal is for the overall voting rate among students to be at least 80% in the 2024 general election.
2. Increase the amount of programming done by the Civic and Community Engagement Center and Andrew Goodman Foundation, specifically targeting the Black and Asian student population.
3. Ask every student to vote in the 2024 election.
4. Implement a Syllabus statement that all faculty will use to inform students about upcoming elections, how to register to vote, and other relevant information.

RCNJ has the following long-term goals

1. Continue to move from a voter registration mindset to a more holistic voter education framework, focusing on creating a culture of voting and civic life. This holistic approach includes information prior to their start at Ramapo and each year in advance of the general election. There are opportunities to increase communication regarding New Jersey primaries, although New Jersey primaries occur while school is not in session so all communication will be electronic through email and social media, and impact is uncertain.
2. Increase the level of knowledge and engagement among students regarding political processes, especially locally. Partnering with our Vice President for Government Relations to offer more trips (county and state government) and more visits from government officials (local, county, state) would promote movement toward accomplishing this goal.
3. Increase the amount of civic engagement information as part of the curriculum. Specifically reaching students in the most popular majors, not just courses or majors that are typically associated with civic engagement/voting. With a new Provost having started within the last year, we have more opportunities for a broader curricular approach to voter/civic engagement. Previously, there has been a more individualized approach where relationships existed between individual faculty and staff members.

NSLVE

Our work is, in part, evaluated and measured by our participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life. This data is essential for tracking Ramapo's voting rate and other valuable information pertaining to civic engagement on campus. The recent NSLVE Data compares voting rates from the 2014 and 2018 Midterm Elections as well as the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections. The 2014 to 2018 and 2016 to 2020 cycles both show tremendous growth. Ramapo has submitted all recent NSLVE reports to ALL IN and they are posted on Ramapo's ALL IN page. As of

December 2023, Ramapo College has not received its 2022 NSLVE report. Once we have that data, this section will be updated.

Specific NSLVE data was reported above in the Landscape section. NSLVE data drivers short term goals 1 and 2 in the goals section above and below in strategy.

Strategy

RCNJ has the following short-term goals:

Increase all metrics for the 2024 general election: Voter registration rate, % of registered voters who vote, and % of all students who vote. Specifically, our goal is for the overall voting rate among students to be at least 80% in the 2024 general election

Ramapo College will increase our voting metrics through continued voter education and awareness campaigns. In-person events will be hosted on National Voter Registration Day, Constitution Day, and other civic holidays as well as tabling at the Student Involvement Fair. Additional tablings will be conducted throughout the beginning of the Fall 2024 semester, with an increased presence at athletic events and other well-attended college events. Additional information will be shared in a poster campaign and various digital spaces (social media, student engagement platform, and email). It is anticipated that voter registration information will be available on move-in day, making it visible not only to new students but also more than 2,000 family members who are in attendance and may also be inspired to register to vote if they are not already registered.

Increase the amount of programming done by the Civic and Community Engagement Center and Andrew Goodman Foundation, specifically targeting the Black and Asian student populations

Ramapo College will work to coordinate civic events through the Civic and Community Engagement Center and the Andrew Goodman Ambassadors that will increase voter participation and engagement within the Black and Asian student population at Ramapo College as they have the lowest voting rate, and fall below the college-wide average. We will work with groups and organizations including the United Asian Association, South Asian Club, the Black Student Union, Students of Caribbean Ancestry, Brothers Making a Difference, and Ebony Women for Change to assess student needs and conduct programming.

Ask Every Student to vote in the 2024 election.

Similar to the first short-term goal, with the assistance of materials provided by AES and other partners as well as internal communications, we will ask every student to cast their vote in the 2024 election. All students will receive email communications from both the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement and the Dean of Students and President Cindy Jebb, encouraging students to vote in the upcoming election. These two emails, the first prior to the voter registration deadline and the second a few days before election day, will, among other things, ask every student to vote in the 2024 general election. Additionally, students will be given resources such as Vote411 and the Andrew Goodman Foundation website to gain a deeper understanding of who is running in local elections and what they can do to get involved.

Implement a Syllabus statement that all faculty will use to inform students about

upcoming elections, how to register to vote, and other relevant information.

The Assistant Director of the We Care Program and Civic Engagement will meet with the Provost/ Vice President for Teaching, Learning, and Growth to explore implementing a syllabus statement that will be incorporated into all academic syllabi by the start of the 2024-2025 Academic Year. This would drastically increase the reach of the Civic and Community Engagement Center and better equip students with the resources and information to vote in the 2024 election. Additionally, this makes it clear that civic engagement and voting is a priority across campus, and not something limited to Social Issues or Political Science courses.

RCNJ has the following long-term goals:

Continue to move from a voter registration mindset to a more holistic voter education framework, focusing on creating a culture of civic participation

New Jersey has many favorable policies related to voter registration, particularly, online registration and automatic voter registration. To that end, we will continue to shift from focusing on primarily encouraging students to register to vote, to working with them on making a voting plan. Are they voting by mail or voting in person? If they are voting in person, are they voting early or on Election Day? How are they getting to the polls? If they are voting by mail, are they putting the ballot in the mail or are they returning it to a secure location in their municipality?

These questions and processes should be asked throughout every year, not just during midterm or general election season. Ramapo College wants to do more to foster a culture of civic participation. This will be done through greater integration with academics, coordinating and promoting civic-minded internships and volunteer opportunities, and providing continual programming on voting and civic participation.

Increase the level of knowledge and engagement among students regarding political processes, especially locally.

This will be done through in-person programs as well as “pop-up” events across campus as CCEC staff “quiz” students about upcoming election dates and participation. Additionally, students will be encouraged to engage with local government and be provided opportunities to interact and interface with elected officials.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Vice President for Government Relations & Business Development, opportunities will be made available throughout the year that will either engage students in local issues or provide direct engagement with state and government officials. This may include trips to county and state government offices and an invitation for local, county, and state officials to come to campus. The US Congress member representing Ramapo was on campus in the Fall of 2022 and there may be opportunities for them to return to campus in 2024.

Increase the amount of civic engagement information as part of the curriculum. Specifically reaching students in the most popular majors, not just courses that typically related to voting in some way.

As noted in the landscape section, Nursing, Biology, and Psychology are some of our most popular majors and we would like to see more outreach to students in these classes.

The Director of the Center for Student Involvement will use formal (VP of Student Well-being, Provost, Deans) as well as informal (faculty colleagues) processes to determine the most effective path forward to infuse voting and civic engagement information into the classroom, and potentially the curriculum, beyond the courses noted in the *Commitment* section of the report above. President Jebb's encouragement for growth in this area will be explored as well.

Reporting

Ramapo will share our action plan internally via email correspondence with key stakeholders across campus. This will include, but is not limited to: the President, Cabinet Members, relevant faculty and staff, and student groups. While these individuals and groups will be directly connected with the Action Plan, as noted below, it will be available for the entire community. This action plan will be available for review on the recently revamped Civic and Community Engagement Center website. The report will be listed alongside voter registration deadlines and information, civic holidays, our NSLVE report, and other related resources.

Our NSLVE report is currently available for review on our Civic and Community Engagement Center website and we have previously released our NSLVE data through a press release and will continue to do so with future reports. We also include a link to our ALL IN Campus Profile on our website, which includes links to previous action plans and NSLVE reports.

Evaluation

Regarding our civic programming such as National Voter Registration Day, Constitution Day, and other voting-related activities, we track attendance, make note of specific observations, and feedback from staff, student staff, and volunteers to better understand what activities resonate with students.

The NSLVE data will continue to be a crucial evaluation tool for overall voter engagement within the student body, but it will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted programming towards specific student populations and the effectiveness of a syllabus statement. For 2024, we will compare and contrast previous general elections to see if our interventions have had a tangible impact.

Additionally, our partnership with the Andrew Goodman Foundation requires a yearly Action Plan as well with similar, but some different topic areas/questions. Having the AGF Action Plan each year helps keep us accountable for our ongoing voting initiatives and truly makes sure the work we are doing is present every year, and not just every other year or in Presidential election years.