



Rhode Island School of Design 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

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Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence, Rhode Island, for the 2024 election. This action plan aims to increase nonpartisan, democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election.

The RISD Votes initiative's goals for the 2024 election are to

- Increase student voter registration by 10% by integrating voter registration into campus platforms and during events such as National Voter Registration Day.
- Raise voter turnout by 5% through expanded voter education and transportation to polling locations.

The action plan development began during the summer of 2023 to communicate RISD's short-term strategy for increasing voter registration and turnout rates. The planned activities outlined here will be conducted throughout the 2024-25 academic year on and around campus in Providence, RI. Students, staff, faculty, and other partners recruited by the RISD Votes initiative will implement the plan to accomplish its goals and further institutionalize RISD's commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and election participation. RISD's Center for Community Partnerships (CCP) will review and update this plan annually.

Leadership:

The RISD Votes initiative currently consists of a diverse working group of staff and faculty members, institutional divisions, and community partners who, beginning in the summer of 2024 and continuing into the academic year of 2024-25, set strategic goals, share information and resources, address challenges, brainstorm ideas, plan and implement events and programs.

The CCP will evaluate the outcomes as the Center primarily leads, coordinates, and oversees RISD's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement.

The leadership team includes representatives from the following campus offices and community organizations:

RISD Staff Leadership and Offices

- Center for Community Partnerships
- Center for Arts & Language
- Fleet Library Division of Student Life
- Fleet Library
- History, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences Department
- Teaching & Learning Lab
- Office of Financial Aid
- Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Office of the Provost
- Office of the Registrar
- RISD Museum

Campus Student Organization

- Health and Wellness Ambassadors

Community Partners

- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- Office of the RI Secretary of State, Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore
- Common Cause Rhode Island
- The Womxn Project Education Fund
- DesignxRI
- Civic Nation

The primary point of contact for RISD Votes is The Center for Community Partnerships (community@risd.edu).

Commitment:

RISD's Provost Toubia Ghadessi is the current signatory to ALL IN's Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

2024 is the first election cycle in which the institution has developed a nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. With a theme of *Lift Every Voice: Civics in Action Series*, the plan demonstrates an institutional commitment that aligns with RISD's broader educational mission to promote democratic engagement through co-curricular and community partnerships.

The institution demonstrates its commitment to student voter engagement in several key ways:

1. Providing campus documents and resources emphasizing a dedication to fostering engaging, civically minded students. Supporting student organizations that promote social justice, civic engagement, leadership, and community responsibility; and actively involved in justice and community;
2. Partnering with community-based, local, and national organizations to encourage student voting and civic participation.

Campus administrators will collaborate with faculty, staff, students, and community members to organize, deliberate, and dialogue through forums, town hall discussions, art-making, faculty workshops, and voter mobilization activities. Various units across the institution will work together to provide mission-driven support to students. The subsections below highlight the institutional resources that are strengthening its commitment to student civic engagement.

Elections & Voting

- Provide free transportation to polling locations during election season.
- Create a comprehensive, user-friendly web presence aggregating student, faculty, and staff information.
- Develop and deploy training for RISD staff registering to vote (including student workers).
- Incentivize students to update their voter registration records.
- Advocate for flexible scheduling on Election Day for students, faculty, and staff.

University Initiatives & Recognition

- Create and support a professional staff position to lead college-wide, long-term civic engagement initiatives.
- Develop and deploy a comprehensive college-wide action plan to increase civic learning and receive a commitment from critical faculty, staff, and student stakeholders.

- Set a goal of achieving a gold status for the ALL IN Challenge by increasing student voter turnout for local, state, and federal elections to 80% of eligible voters.

Community Engagement

- Increase relationships between students and the City of Providence through various outreach initiatives.
- Increase student, faculty, and staff participation in Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement Framework.
- Host and support partisan political events on civic engagement, community building, and civil dialogue.
- Provide resources and share information about the consensus, including forums, marketing, and a call to action to activate volunteers. Showcase student-led initiatives and community involvement.
- Work to achieve a Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification for Community Engagement.
- Build out the Civic Action Scorecard initiative.

Landscape:

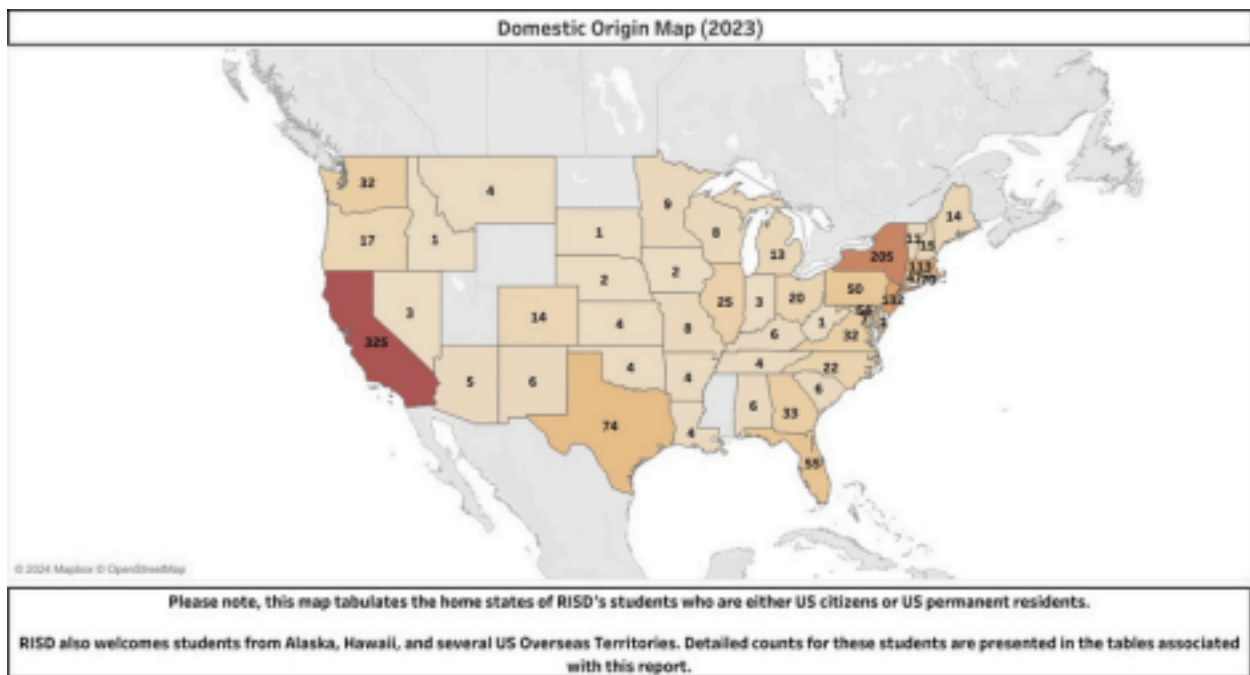
RISD (pronounced “RIZ-dee”) is a creative community founded in 1877 in Providence, Rhode Island. Today, we enroll 2,567 students hailing from 60 countries. Led by a committed faculty, they are engaged in 44 full-time bachelor’s and master’s degree programs and supported by a worldwide network of over 31,000 alums who demonstrate the vital role artists and designers play in today’s society.

Institutional Mission

The mission of RISD, through its college and museum, is to educate its students and the public in creating and appreciating works of art and design, discover and transmit knowledge, and make lasting contributions to a global society through critical thinking, scholarship, and innovation.

Institutional Data

- 2024 Student population 2,540



- Non-U.S. citizens comprise 37% of the student body
- 21% identify as Asian-American
- 69.9% of students identify as female
- 14% identify as first-generation
- 17% are graduate students
- 2.8% are Rhode Island residents

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) shows discrepancies in voting rates based on race, with white students participating at higher rates than minority students. However, the figures above reflect RISD's rich cultural diversity, no longer being designated as a predominantly white institution. This diversity enriches the RISD community, fostering a more inclusive environment that aligns with RISD's values and commitment to global perspectives.

RISD has authorized NSLVE through 2023 and will need to reauthorize NSLVE to receive campus voting data for the 2024 election.

Around Campus

RISD's Teaching & Learning Lab facilitates civic-themed workshops, including effectively fostering inclusive discourse in the classroom and studio. The CCP and the Provost's Office will continue to engage the campus community in a variety of events and workshops designed to share strategies for forging meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships with the community, generating institutional dialogue on how to advance socially embedded art and design, teaching, student development, and practices.

Outside the Classroom

RISD has built an environment for students and faculty to engage in their democracy and with one another safely. The institution also provides opportunities for students to engage in more considerable nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts on campus, such as Ask Every Student. A list of health and wellness resources in Providence and a network of dedicated campus partners will support student well-being.

Challenges & Opportunities

The data from NSLVE will guide and inform RISD's Civic Engagement Plan to increase democratic and civic engagement at RISD. Additionally, the gains made in voter registration during the 2022 Midterms are notable, but there are still opportunities for increases in all engagement categories.

Internal

- Fostering a culture of civic engagement is not a current priority across RISD. Election Day should be a college-wide break, like a study day, to encourage voter turnout.
 - The institution should develop a centralized civic engagement portal and include information on voter registration, civic engagement policies, and a shared calendar of engagement activities and events for the campus community.
- Dedicated time to building faculty buy-in on the value of consistently incorporating civic and vocational education information into their courses is lacking.
- Lack of knowledge around the definition of civic engagement.
- A culture of civic engagement among students and student organizations does not exist.
 - Student organizations must be activated as vital partners in promoting civic engagement.
 - Increase the number and frequency of social events and gatherings centered on civic engagement.

External

- Voting Laws
 - Deciphering information about local voting laws is complex. Identifying sources of support is difficult when seeking to answer critical questions such as:
 - What are the rules for registration (i.e., when, how, and eligibility)?
 - Are students registered in their home states or Rhode Island?
 - What IDs are acceptable forms of identification in RI?
 - What is the correct polling location? (RISD's campus is split between two polling locations.

Strengths

Through creating the RISD Votes initiative, RISD has taken several steps to institutionalize civic engagement and democratic work on campus:

1. A partnership with the Campus Vote project has been developed and deployed.
2. A partnership with Ask Every Student has been developed and activated.
3. A civic engagement group, including faculty, staff, and the administration, has been created to support campus-wide activities.
4. Meetings with the Registrar's Office have created consistent updates about student voters and general information.

Goals:

RISD Votes envisions a campus culture where the campus takes pride in being actively informed and civically engaged members of a larger community. The institution's nonpartisan, democratic engagement plan has several short-term and long-term goals designed to help achieve these outcomes:

1. RISDVotes becomes student-driven to inform better ways to drive engagement.
2. Voter Registration: Increase the current registration rate goal from 71.5% (2024 target) to 80% in 2026. Aligning with national campus trends and reflects continued efforts in voter education.
3. Voter Turnout: Aim to increase voter turnout from the 21.1% target in 2024 to 30% in 2026. This goal is realistic, given the implementation of enhanced voter engagement strategies and programming on campus.
4. Build a social media presence for the RISDVotes initiative and engage campus partners to support the initiative.
5. Establish and fill a civic engagement appointed student leadership position.
6. Increase participation in RI state and local Providence elections.
 - a. Institute mandatory civic engagement workshops for all student leaders.
7. Develop and institute a formal policy around civic engagement, including time off to vote and participate in political activity.
8. Include a voter registration drive and civic engagement informational workshop as a part of New Student Orientation by 2026.
9. Establish and maintain a civic engagement/voting information page on the RISD website.
 - a. Include election dates and voter registration deadlines on the official academic calendar.

Strategy:

RISD will implement the following strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

- Constitution Day
 - Implement a Constitution Day workshop with RISD general counsel.
- National Voter Registration Day (NRVD)
 - Organize and implement voter registration drives. The 2024 NVRD was a massive success due to the network of collaborations that ensured that many different voices were celebrated and engaged on this day. In successive years, this event should continue to be a signature event for those engaging in civic engagement.
 - Promote student organization buy-in to the importance of National Voter Registration Day, which helps amplify its importance and ensure that many different voices are represented both for domestic and non-resident students.
- Civic Nation Registration Dashboard
 - This resource, provided by ALL In and Civic Nation, ensures that voter registration can occur securely and confidentially at RISD digitally. The institution's website has embedded the Registration portal.
 - Allowing the institution to track the number of people who have used the portal to verify their registration
 - Know the number of people who registered through the portal
 - Number of portal users over time
 - A 'Demographics' tab that shows the location, age, ethnicity, and gender of portal users. Allowing to filter between Verify/Registered.
- National Voter Education Week
 - Build knowledge of civic engagement and activism through programming with community partners.
- Vote Early Day
 - Build a marketing campaign and host tabling events.
- Increasing Availability of Information
 - Many areas of campus are civically engaged but disconnected. As such, the initiative has created the goal of centralizing the many resources available to the campus community in a singular portal.
 - Presentations around the Center for Community Partnerships, civic engagement, and voter engagement have been developed.
 - Provide transportation to polling stations and early voting locations.
- College Communications
 - RISD leadership sent a message on September 18 reminding the campus community of programs and events—from ongoing voter

registration and education efforts to faculty and staff workshops—centered on dialogue, learning, and understanding to emphasize that it is a co-created effort from multiple divisions across RISD. The *Lift Every Voice: Civics in Action Series* offers opportunities to listen, share, and learn across differences and gives a deeper appreciation for the variety of ways those in the RISD community live in and experience the world.

- Registrar Email/Election Engagement Strategy
 - Various campus departments, including Human Resources, Financial Aid, and the Registrar’s Office. Additionally, Workday, a campus portal, will continue to provide information on the presidential election and promote tools and resources such as the Civic Nation registration portal link.
- Faculty Involvement
 - Work must continue to engage Faculty in curriculum development on civic engagement. It involves designing courses that actively integrate community engagement, real-world issues, and opportunities for students to apply their learning to address local concerns, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and active participation within their communities.

Calendar of Events

First-generation Pre-Orientation: August 14

RISD Move-in Day: Aug 29-31

International and New Student Orientation: Sept 1-3

Disability Voting Week: September 9-13

Constitution Day: September 17

2024 RI Design Week Keynote Speaker - Cey Adams: September 17

National Voter Registration Day: September 17

National Voter Education Week: October 7-11

Empowered to advocate: October 8

RISD Votes T-shirt Decorating: October 9

Faculty Workshop - Strategies for Political Discussion and Debate: October 11

No Time To Fail: Movie Screening and Panel with RI Sec. of State: October 24

Vote Early Day: October 29

Community Involvement Fair: November 14

Evaluation:

Evaluation of the action plan will take place in the following ways:

- Collaboration with NSLVE to collect and analyze data
- Tracking event registration counts and feedback surveys.
- Use campus voting data to examine percentage changes in registration and voting rates year over year.

- Track participation in civic programming and events and use student feedback through the Civic Action Scorecard and Pathways Framework Survey.
- RISDVotes will review yearly action plans to assess whether goals are met and follow up with adjustments. The most current NSLVE will also guide adjustments.
- Additional evaluation methods and procedures will be identified as new goals are determined.

Reporting:

RISD leadership team and campus partners will receive a copy of the civic action plan. Institutional Effectiveness will receive a copy of this report and NSLVE data to file.

Report updates will be archived on the Community Engagement and Conversation website. The original NSLVE will be made available upon request. RISD has given permission to publish past NSLVE reports. The plan can be found on ALL IN's campus website: <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/rhode-island-school-of-design/>.