

RVC Voter Engagement Plan

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Executive Summary

1. Dr. Howard Spearman, President, convened the Voting Coalition in Spring 2024 to develop the nonpartisan voter engagement plan for the 2024-2025 academic year.
2. Student leaders presented this plan to the Board of Trustees in May 2024.
3. The plan's purpose is to increase student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 General Election and 2025 Consolidated Election.
4. The plan was developed using the non-partisan action plan framework from the "Strengthening American Democracy" guide from the Students Learn, Students Vote.¹
5. The plan proposes student event activities (Welcome Week and Civic Holidays) as well as in-classroom voter registration efforts.
6. The plan is led by 6 Student Voting Ambassadors.
7. In Summer 2024, RVC won a \$5000.00 grant from Ask Every Student (AES) to support this project.

The goals for Rock Valley College are:

Goal 1: Ask every RVC student if they are registered to vote.

Goal 2: Meet or exceeds the 2020 national college student voter registration rate of 83%.²

Goal 3: Meet or exceeds the 2020 national community college student voter turnout rate of 57% (General Election).³

Goal 4: Meet or exceed the 2023 Consolidated Election voter turnout rate of 9% (2025 Consolidated Election).⁴

Goal 5: Eliminate equity gaps in voter registration and turnout.

¹ "Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students." Students Learn, Students Vote, 2024, PDF, <https://slsvcoalition.org/resource/strengthening-american-democracy-guide-version-3/>.

² Thomas, Nancy, et. al. "Democracy Counts 2020: Record-Breaking Turnout and Student Resiliency." Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, Tufts University, 2021, PDF, <https://tufts.app.box.com/v/democracy-counts-2020>, 10.

³ Ibid, 8.

⁴ "Turnout." April 4, 2023 Election Results; Consolidated Election, Rockford Board of Elections, 2024, <https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/WRC/Rockford/117733/Web02.307075/#/turnout?undefined>

Leadership

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

1. Howard Spearman, PhD – President
2. Jennifer Thompson – Executive Director of College Communications
3. Luevinus Muhammad, EdD – Interim Dean of Students
4. Takesha Brooks – Interim Director, Student Life & Intercultural Student Services
5. Sheila Ogbevire – Student Activities Coordinator
6. Theresa Paulette Gilbert, Professor, Composition & Literature
7. Mathew Oakes, PhD, Professor, Composition & Literature
8. Maureen Lowry-Fritz, PhD, Professor, Political Science
9. Jazmine Nathan, Student Government President (2023-2024)
10. Juan Noguera, Student Trustee (2023-2024)
11. Nico Mikos, Student Trustee (2024-2025)
12. League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford

Commitment

This is the first action plan that our institution has developed for ALL IN.

Student leaders presented an overview of this plan to the Board of Trustees in May 2024 and the Board signaled its support for the initiatives.

Our College President, Dr. Spearman, is actively supporting these efforts. He signed the ALL IN Presidents Commitment in May 2024 indicating RVC's intention to create a strategic student voter engagement plan.⁵ The President also convened the Voting Coalition and it reports directly to his office. Dr. Spearman has also directed his executive assistants and the Cabinet to support these efforts.

This action plan aligns with the following elements of our campus culture and institutional documents.

Guiding RVC Document	Details	Our Action Plan
Mission	"Rock Valley College empowers students and community through lifelong learning." ⁶	Supports students to become lifelong voters.
Core Value: Mutual Respect	"At all times, Rock Valley College upholds the dignity of each individual by being ethical, respectful, fair, and courteous in communications and actions." ⁷	Encourages students to respectfully engage with those with whom they agree and disagree.
Core Value: Collaboration	"Rock Valley College fosters innovative, enriching partnerships within the	Connects students, staff, and faculty to each other and to community partnerships

⁵ "Rock Valley College." *All In*, 2024, <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/rock-valley-college/>.

⁶ "About RVC." *Rock Valley College*, Rock Valley College, 2024, <https://rockvalleycollege.edu/about/index>.

⁷ Ibid.

Guiding RVC Document	Details	Our Action Plan
	college community and among others that serve the region.” ⁸	with the League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford, the Rockford Board of Elections, the Winnebago County Elections Office, Students Learn Students Vote, All In, and Civic Nation.
Civic Engagement (Institutional Student Learning Outcome 3.3)	“Civic engagement is ‘working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to make that difference.” ⁹	Develops institutional practices and curricular and co-curricular resources to support students’ mastery of ISLO 3.3.
Goal 2.1 (Strategic Plan)	“Ensure high-quality and relevant certificate, degree, and co-curricular programs.” ¹⁰	Develops curricular resources and co-curricular programming to support students’ mastery of ISLO 3.3.
Goal 4.1 (Strategic Plan)	“Improve the campus culture by establishing cultural competence, trust, and a sense of belonging among employees and learners.” ¹¹	Develops a set of institutional practices, curricular resources, and co-curricular programming that foster the development of the civic identity of employees and learners.

Landscape

Overview

Rock Valley College, a public, two-year community college in Rockford, IL, joined the All In Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024. As documented in Appendix A, RVC is in the early stages of becoming a voter-friendly campus.

In the past, Student Government has worked with faculty and staff, as well as the League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford, to register students to vote in advance of upcoming elections. RVC also maintains a webpage with current information for student voters.

In Spring 2024, the College made an express commitment to develop a strategic and ongoing plan to engage student voters at RVC.

⁸ Ibid.

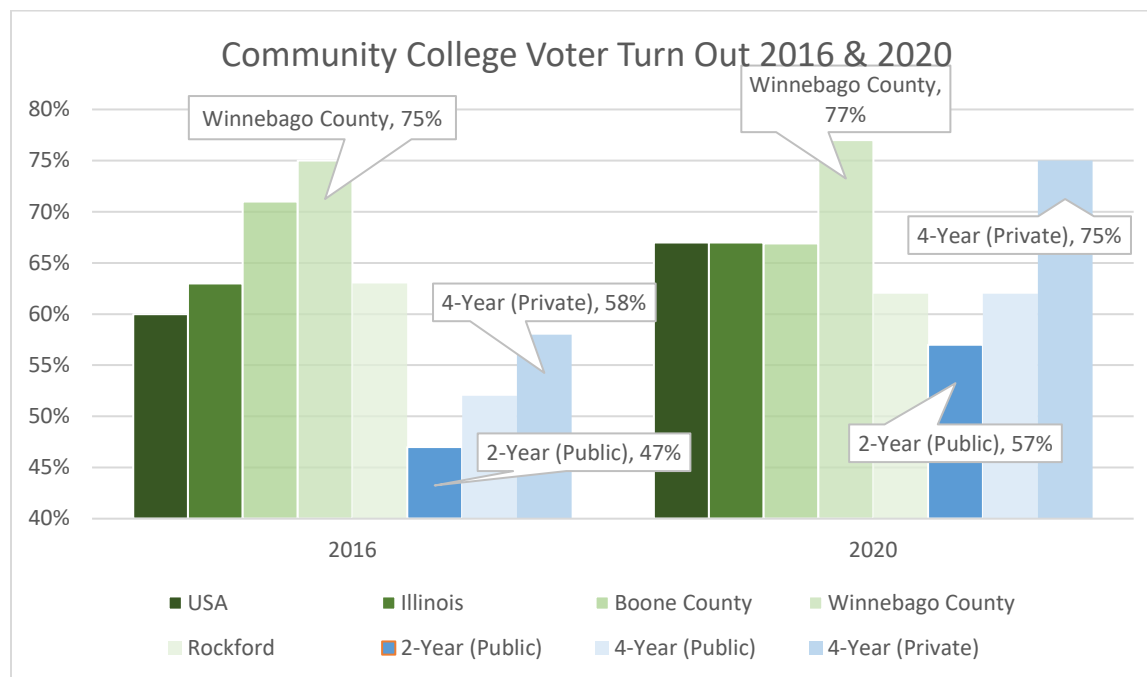
⁹ “Institutional Student Learning Outcomes.” Rock Valley College Intranet, Rock Valley College, 2023, [https://rockvalleycollege.sharepoint.com/:u:/r/sites/Institutional-Effectiveness/SitePages/Institutional-Student-Learning-Outcomes-\(ISLO\).aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=dwXfQf](https://rockvalleycollege.sharepoint.com/:u:/r/sites/Institutional-Effectiveness/SitePages/Institutional-Student-Learning-Outcomes-(ISLO).aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=dwXfQf).

¹⁰ “Strategic Plan: 2022-2027.” Rock Valley College, Rock Valley College, 2024, <https://rockvalleycollege.edu/about/leadership/strategic-plan>.

¹¹ Ibid.

Our current enrollment is 5,762 students, and our institution is designated as both a Predominantly White Institution and Hispanic-Serving Institution.

RVC authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) in Spring 2024 to receive future campus voting data. Until we receive the NSLVE data, the action plan uses the national voter turnout data in higher education as a benchmark.



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Illinois Election Law

The state of Illinois provides the following access to one’s voting rights:

- Voter registration requires two-forms of ID
- Student ID meets state requirements
- Pre-registration available for 16–17-year-olds
- Automatic voter registration available through the DMV
- Online and in-person voter registration
- Grace period registration available
- Election Day registration available
- Vote by mail available to all voters
- Permanent vote-by-mail option available to all voters
- Most voters do not have to show identification on Election Day
- Polls are open from 6:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

¹² “Election Information.” Winnebago County, n.d., <https://wincoil.gov/departments/clerks-office/election-information>.

“Election Results.” *Vote Rockford*, Rockford Board of Election Commissioners, n.d., <https://www.voterockfordil.gov/election-results>.

“Voting in Illinois.” *Ballotpedia*, n.d., https://ballotpedia.org/Voting_in_Illinois.

“Voter Turnout in United States Elections.” *Ballotpedia*, n.d., https://ballotpedia.org/Voter_turnout_in_United_States_elections.

- Voters with felony convictions are eligible to vote upon release
- Student voters may register and vote at their home or campus location

Important Dates

- September 26, 2024 - Early Voting Begins
- October 8, 2024 – Voter Registration Closes
- October 9, 2024 – Grace Period Registration Begins
- October 31, 2024 – Last Day to Request to Vote by Mail
- November 5, 2024 – General Election Day
- February 25, 2025 – Consolidated Primary Election
- March 4, 2025 – Voter Registration Closes
- March 5, 2025 – Grace Period Registration Begins
- April 1, 2025 – Consolidated Election Day

Goals

Goal 1:

Ask every RVC student if they are registered to vote.

Goal 2:

Meet or exceeds the 2020 national college student voter registration rate of 83%.

Goal 3:

Meet or exceeds the 2020 national community college student voter turnout rate of 57%.

Goal 4:

Meet or exceed the 2023 Consolidated Election voter turnout rate of 9% (2025 Consolidated Election).¹³

Goal 5:

Eliminate equity gaps in voter registration and turnout.

Strategies

Strategy 1: Integrate voter engagement efforts into existing College platforms and processes.

Tactic 1.1: Create the RVC Voter Engagement Plan

Responsible Party	Mathew Oakes
Audience	RVC (Internal)
Completion Date	August 1, 2024
Outcomes	1. Voter Engagement Plan submitted for review to All In

¹³ “Turnout.” April 4, 2023 Election Results; Consolidated Election, Rockford Board of Elections, 2024, <https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/WRC/Rockford/117733/Web02.307075/#/turnout?undefined>

Tactic 1.2: Engage local and national non-partisan organizations to support on-campus voter engagement

Responsible Party	Mathew Oakes, Paulette Gilbert, & Maureen Lowry-Fritz
Audience	RVC (Internal & External)
Completion Date	August 30, 2024
Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorize NSLVE (Tufts University) 2. Collaborate with League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford for on-campus voter registration 3. Collaborate with Rockford Board of Elections to establish on-campus, vote-by-mail Dropbox
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Create RVC-branded voter registration portal (Civic Nation)

Tactic 1.3: Develop voter engagement marketing and communications assets

Responsible Party	Jennifer Thompson
Audience	RVC Students
Completion Date	August 30, 2024
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RVC Votes webpage updated to include current dates and link to custom voter registration portal 2. Print and digital marketing materials to support student initiatives 3. Social media plan to support student initiatives (takeovers, AMAs, etc.) 4. Single-topic email sent to all students to encourage voter registration and provide non-partisan election information and resources

Tactic 1.4: Develop curricular resources to support on-campus voter engagement efforts

Responsible Party	Mathew Oakes, Theresa Gilbert, Maureen Lowry-Fritz
Audience	RVC Students
Completion Date	September 1, 2024
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voter registration and engagement materials available for faculty to add to their courses through the LMS Canvas Commons

Tactic 1.5: Identify three student contact points for targeted ongoing voter engagement

Responsible Party	Luevinus Muhammad
Audience	RVC Students
Completion Date	September 30, 2024
Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RVC Students are regularly asked "Have you checked your voter registration status recently?"
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Students are asked about their voter registration: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When they begin at RVC b. While they study at RVC c. When they graduate from RVC

Strategy 2: Support student-led voter engagements efforts across campus.

Tactic 2.1: Establish FWS-funded student worker position to support on-campus voter engagement efforts

Responsible Party	Luevinus Muhammad
Audience	RVC (Internal)
Completion Date	August 30, 2024
Outcomes	1. FWS-funded student worker position following established DOE guidelines .

Tactic 2.2: Train Student Voting Ambassadors to lead on-campus voter engagement efforts

Responsible Party	Mathew Oakes
Audience	RVC (Internal)
Completion Date	August 30, 2024
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 trained Student Ambassadors Student-led civic holiday celebrations Student-led debate watch parties Student-led classroom voter registration visits

Tactic 2.3: Engage minoritized student populations to develop community-led voter engagement efforts

Responsible Party	Paulette Gilbert, Mathew Oakes, Luevinus Muhammad, & Maureen Lowry-Fritz
Audience	RVC (Internal)
Completion Date	September 30, 2024
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Black Student Union-sponsored event (Black students) ALAS-sponsored event (Hispanic students) SAGE-sponsored event (LGBTQ+ students) TRiO-sponsored event (students with disabilities, first-generation and poor students) RAISE-sponsored event (students with disabilities) RVC satellite-campus events Student-led classroom voter registration visits

NSLVE Data

RVC authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) in Spring 2024 to receive future campus voting data. This section of the plan will be updated by June 30, 2025.

Reporting

Our voter engagement action plan and NSLVE report will be posted on:

- RVC's ALL IN webpage: <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/rock-valley-college/>
- RVC's Strategic Plan webpage: <https://rockvalleycollege.edu/about/leadership/strategic-plan>

The Voting Coalition will regularly provide updates to the Board of Trustees through the President's Office.

Evaluation

Goal	Target	Evaluation Method
<i>1: Ask every RVC student if they are registered to vote</i>	100%	Completion of Tactic 1.4 Data from RVC voter registration portal (Civic Nation)
<i>2: Meet or exceeds the 2020 national college student voter registration rate of 83%</i>	83%	Data from RVC voter registration portal (Civic Nation) NSLVE Report
<i>3: Meet or exceeds the 2020 national community college student voter turnout rate of 57%.</i>	57%	NSLVE Report
<i>4: Eliminate equity gaps in voter registration and turnout.</i>	+/- 0%	Data from RVC voter registration portal (Civic Nation) NSLVE Report

Appendix A: Campus Commitment Assessment

Benchmark	Y/N	Current Efforts & Growth Opportunities
1.1 A coalition of faculty, staff, and students regularly meets to coordinate efforts and resources across campus to register, educate, and empower students to vote in local, state, and federal elections.	In-Progress	2024 is our first year of this concerted and strategic effort.
1.2 At least one staff or faculty member coordinates and tracks election engagement efforts across campus.	In Progress	The action planning process will include developing a process for regular review.
1.3 Our campus has submitted the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) 2018-2023 Reauthorization Form to the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education.	In Progress	Will be submitted Spring 2024
1.4 The college calendar incorporates key election dates, including but not limited to, registration deadlines, primary and general election dates, early voting timelines, and absentee ballot deadlines.	In Part	As a matter of practice, only College-specific dates are included on our calendar; however, our action plan includes events around the civic holidays and other election dates. As a result, key dates will make their way to the calendar. Key dates will be added to the College's voting page: https://rockvalleycollege.edu/student-life/get-involved/vote
1.5 Our campus designates funds for students or staff to conduct nonpartisan voter registration and education efforts. This can include student government funds, dedicated staff time, or allocated FWS funds.	Yes	The Dean of Students and Office of Student Life have dedicated staff time to supporting student-facing voter engagement work. We are exploring how to use FWS funds to support voter engagement work.

Student Voter Registration

Benchmark	Y/N	Current Efforts & Growth Opportunities
3.1 Students are encouraged to register during orientation and provided with online or paper forms.	In-Progress	Student Voting Ambassadors will plan events during Welcome Week.
3.2 Voter registration is integrated with class registration and/or the online student portal.	No	Explore at a future date.
3.3 Voter registration forms are easily available for students as they get their student IDs.	In-Progress	Once Marketing develops assets, they will be strategically placed in key locations on campus.
3.4 Our campus uses online tools (e.g. Rock the Vote, TurboVote) to register students.	In-Progress	We are authorizing Civic Nation to construct a Voter Registration Portal for RVC.
3.5 Campus-wide email is used to inform all students how to register to vote at their local address or request an absentee ballot during each	In-Progress	This email will be sent out on September 3, 2024 and then appear in the Student News until September 17, 2024.

semester in which a local, state, or federal election is held.		The email will come from the Office of the President.
3.6 Official campus social media accounts are used to encourage voter registration and to provide nonpartisan election information and resources	In-Progress	Student Voting Ambassadors will work with Marketing to develop social media outreach.
3.7 At least one experiential or service-learning course exists to foster students' political learning and culminates in a project that registers, educates, and/or empowers their fellow students to vote.	No	Explore at a future date.

Student Education

Benchmark	Y/N	Current Efforts & Growth Opportunities
3.1 Other courses integrate election engagement in the curriculum and provide structured opportunities to volunteer with campaigns and interest groups of the students' choosing, or with the school's nonpartisan engagement team.	No	Explore at a future date.
3.2 Our campus hosts and publicizes watch parties for televised debates.	In-Progress	SGA and Voting Ambassadors will organize watch parties in Fall 2024.
3.3 Nonpartisan candidate and issue guides are widely distributed and available for students.	In-Progress	We will direct students to www.IllinoisVoterGuide.org and Ask Every Student's Your Major on the Ballot (https://www.studentvoting.org/your-major-on-the-ballot).
3.4 Administrators and faculty regularly facilitate campus conversations on issues important to students to promote dialogue and cross-cultural understanding.	Yes	Events like the annual Caskey Lecture, First Tuesday Lecture, RVC Reads, etc. fill this role. We could encourage Voting Ambassadors to offer programming at these events.

Student Voter Mobilization

Benchmark	Y/N	Current Efforts & Growth Opportunities
4.1 Our campus works with the local election authority to host an on-campus polling place for early and/or election day voting.	In-Progress	There are currently too many on-campus construction projects to facilitate a polling place on campus. We will work with BOE to explore the feasibility of a vote-by-mail dropbox on campus.
4.2 Students have easy access to official documents (e.g., utility bill, letter confirming student status) to satisfy voter ID requirements if students IDs are insufficient.	N/A	In Illinois, student IDs are a sufficient form of identification.

<p>4.3 . Our campus makes voting a community activity in multiple ways, such as having the school mascot promote voting, marching/strolling to the polls, and registering student athletes during games.</p>	<p>In-Progress</p>	<p>Student Voting Ambassadors will plan events for Fall 2024.</p>
<p>4.4 The President/Chancellor or another senior administrator uses campus-wide emails and social media to encourage students to vote and provide nonpartisan resources (e.g., polling place lookup).</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Student Voting Ambassadors will work with Marketing to develop social media outreach that includes the President.</p> <p>The email to students (see 3.5) will be sent from the Office of the President.</p>