

## RowanVotes - ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge 2020 Rowan University Revised Action Plan

### Executive Summary

The Rowan University ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan was developed through collaboration between Rowan University Administration, Rowan University Student Affairs, the Student Government Association, student leaders from the Rowan Republicans and the Rowan Democrats, the Faculty Senate, the Rowan Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship (RIPPAC), and the Department of Political Science and Economics. The action plan outlines the coordination efforts between these different organizations to make voter registration, education and participation a seamless and integrated part of the student experience at Rowan University. As we learn about our institution through data from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE), we will update our plan to continue our successes and identify areas for improvement<sup>1</sup>.

This Action Plan covers the plans for the 2020-2021 academic year. However, we will continue with this work after the 2020 elections. At that time, we will assess the success of our first year and work to improve. Our short term goals are to begin to make civic engagement and political participation a regular part of the Rowan University experience. This will be done through student, faculty and administrative leadership. Long term, we aim to make civic participation a seamless integral part of a Rowan University education, where all students are afforded many opportunities for engagement and support for participation. In the near future, the plan will be implemented at Rowan University's flagship campus in Glassboro, NJ. As we make strides toward institutionalization, we plan to expand to Rowan's other campuses.

### Working Group

Our working group consists of representatives from Rowan University Administration as well as leaders from the student body, including the very active and well resourced Student Government Association. In addition, we are working to recruit more student leaders, who we will call #RowanVotes Captains, to join the effort. In particular, we have reached out to students from various campus organizations, such as the Political Science Club, the Rowan Progressives, Greek Life organizations, campus cultural clubs, and other organizations that we believe will be interested in joining the effort. The Rowan Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship, the Department of Political Science and Economics, Student Affairs, and The Chamberlain Student Center & Campus Activities will be playing key roles in implementing initiatives and supporting students as they lead the effort.

Current members of the working group include:

Anthony Lowman, Ph.D., Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Steve Weinstein, Executive Vice President for Policy and External Relationships/Partnerships  
Rory McElewee, Ph.D. Vice President, Student Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> Rowan University joined the NSLVE in February of 2020.

Bill Friend, Ph.D. President of the Faculty Senate  
Drew Tinnin, ED.D. Associate Vice President, Student Life  
Joseph Lizza, ED.D. Director of Chamberlain Student Center & Campus Activities  
Ben Dworkin, Ph.D. Director of the Rowan Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship  
Kathy Javian Ph.D. Faculty, Department of Political Science and Economics  
Joseph Martin '21, President of the Rowan Republicans  
Michael Giuliani '21, President of the Rowan Democrats.  
Kevin McCarthy '21, AVP of Government Relations, Student Government Association  
Jason Brooks '21, representing Rowan Institute for Public Policy & Citizenship

### *Leadership Succession Plan*

The university administrative offices will continue to play a role in the project indefinitely, and faculty leadership will continue within the Rowan Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship and the Political Science Department. Faculty from other departments will be invited to join the effort and lead the charge in the future. Should faculty leaders decide to step down from the position, Rowan Administration will seek out an appropriate replacement, ideally with the input of the committee.

### **Commitment**

Rowan University's Mission places "engagement" and "student centeredness" as central tenets of its core operational values<sup>2</sup>. Increasing participation and civic engagement among the student body and the broader community is a critical goal for any 21st century research university. Politics and public policy are uniquely linked to student opportunities at Rowan as Rowan is a state funded institution. As a result, a more engaged campus will benefit the Rowan community as well as the state of New Jersey. A more engaged citizenry is the goal of any democratic nation. One way for Rowan to increase civic engagement and participation is to join the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. The challenge requires universities to prioritize voter registration as well as promote and encourage participation in the electoral process. Below is our action plan for the year 2020 and beyond.

As part of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Rowan will be increasing its commitment to civic engagement and participation. Rowan will weave civic participation into its culture and ensure that students have many points of entry into civic engagement. Over time, there will be more and more routine and natural opportunities for engagement at many University-wide events, including but not limited to: Orientation, Homecoming, and the end-of-year concert which is called the "Hollybash". We also plan to have university-wide administrators as well as college deans and faculty provide encouragement and information to students through email and social media communication to help them get engaged, educated and mobilized to vote. Further, we currently have an office on campus that is dedicated to Civic Engagement and we will be partnering with them and incorporating ALL IN goals into their programming.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.rowan.edu/about/officialmissionstatementandoperationalcontext.pdf>

With respect to curriculum, faculty across the university will be encouraged to alert students to opportunities for registration and participation and support students in their efforts to register, vote and engage in other civic activity. There is a course that runs concurrently with federal elections that trains students to lead efforts to register and mobilize students. Students in this class will create a Rowan University Voter Guide which will be distributed widely to the student population.

### **Rowan University**

Rowan University is ranked one of the top ten fastest growing doctoral universities in the country<sup>3</sup>. Rowan's student population is almost 20,000, with most students attending Rowan's Glassboro campus. In addition to the Glassboro, NJ campus, Rowan has a campus that serves undergraduates in Camden, NJ. The student body is relatively diverse, with 32% coming from underrepresented groups. Rowan has seven colleges and five schools<sup>4</sup>. Rowan's influence in the South Jersey region is increasing as the university continues to grow.

This is Rowan's first year participating in the challenge. In February, Rowan University officially became a participant of the NSLVE. Over time, we are planning to use NSLVE data to help us determine where there are barriers to participation for our students so that we can target our efforts more effectively.

Rowan's student body is a mix of students who begin their college careers at Rowan and those who come to Rowan after attending one of the local community colleges. As such, students are entering Rowan at different stages of their academic careers. In addition, we have many students who are commuting to campus rather than residing here. According to U.S. News and World Report, 63% of Rowan students live on campus<sup>5</sup>. These data suggest that we will need to be prepared to register and mobilize students throughout the mid-Atlantic region. The state of New Jersey now has a Vote By Mail (VBM) option, which will allow students to easily vote regardless of their home address or residence.

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, 35 percent of Rowan's student population are first generation college students<sup>6</sup>. Research suggests that parental education is correlated with a propensity to vote<sup>7</sup>. First generation students are therefore less likely to participate in politics. However, the research also shows that holding constant these background variables, college education, that focuses specifically on civic engagement makes students more likely to participate<sup>8</sup>. Our approach to addressing Rowan University student participation will focus on best practices based on research. Because Rowan has a large number of students who experience barriers to participation, the ALL IN Challenge is needed and necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://sites.rowan.edu/fastfacts/\\_docs/at-a-glance-2018-19.pdf](https://sites.rowan.edu/fastfacts/_docs/at-a-glance-2018-19.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rowan-university-2609/student-life>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Perrin, A. J., & Gillis, A. (2019). How College Makes Citizens: Higher Education Experiences and Political Engagement. *Socius*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119859708>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

In the past, efforts at increasing civic engagement and participation have been decentralized. Institutionalizing this effort to the university level is a new initiative for Rowan. The university has a very engaged student body that has a lot of pride and shared identity. We plan to foster this institutional culture and use it to help students identify and accept the ALL IN initiative as a routine part of ongoing efforts to make Rowan a more engaged community.

### **Goals**

As part of the Campus Democracy Challenge, Rowan University will promote democratic engagement through three pillars: Registration, Education, and Mobilization. In order to achieve the broader goal of increased participation and engagement, we have identified a number of action items that we will be implementing beginning in the Spring of 2020 through the Fall federal elections and beyond. In addition, Rowan will follow the evidence-based practices to improve participation and engagement from the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP). Our main goal for the first year of this challenge is to institutionalize opportunities for voter registration, education, and mobilization. Our effort on campus will broadly be referred to as #RowanVotes.

One main goal of this challenge for Rowan is to have it be a student directed effort. Student leaders will be able to participate in this effort by earning credit, volunteering or taking a 3 credit course on political activism and participation. Students leaders, our “#RowanVotes Captains”, organize registration, education and mobilization efforts. Research shows that this type of experience creates the skills necessary for active political participation and civic engagement<sup>9</sup>. Further, peer contact is a key way to get potential voters registered and increase their likelihood of participation. This is why we will encourage students to be at the center of this campaign by training student resident life leaders and creating a team of #RowanVotes Captains who will be present at events around campus.

#### *Voter Registration*

- Meeting students where they are, we will make an effort to have voter registration as an option for students during check in when they come to Rowan, either as a first year student or as a transfer student. This will be an ongoing effort and not just for the 2020-21 academic year.
- Student clubs: Many student clubs and organizations already conduct voter registration efforts. Clubs are required to complete a certain number of service hours in order to receive funding from the Student Government Association. We already have representatives in our working group from the Student Government Association (SGA), the Rowan Democrats, and the Rowan Republicans. In addition, we will reach out to heads of the Greek Life organizations as well as other clubs. We will provide training to clubs who are interested in doing this, as well as create a system for clubs across campus to track voter registration. This will be an ongoing effort that will begin in the fall of 2020.

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<sup>9</sup> Brady, H., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. (1995). Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation. *The American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271-294. doi:10.2307/2082425

- Resident Student Life: One of our goals is to train student life representatives including Resident Assistants to register people to vote and circulate relevant voter information. *Planning* for this is underway, but may be sidelined by the COVID 19 crisis. This is part of the long term plan.
- Commuter Student Life: Work with the Office of Volunteerism, Civic Engagement and Commuter Services on helping our commuter students register to vote and make a plan to vote. Specifically, we will make connections with commuter students at events that are set up for them, such as “Commuter Taco Tuesdays”.
- National Voter Registration Day Campus Wide Event (9/22/2019). This event will occur in the fall of 2020 as a virtual engagement event. We plan to make this an annual campus wide event.

### *Education*

- Voter and Civics Education: We plan to work with university partners including the Rowan Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship (RIPPAC), the Department of Political Science and Economics, Chamberlain Student Center & Campus Activities, and the Office of Community Engagement, Civic Volunteerism and Commuter Services to organize several events to highlight the importance of the election including teach-ins on gerrymandering, and elections. In particular, we have several events on campus surrounding Constitution Day as well as a spring kick off event teaching about the importance of primaries. These events will continue in a virtual capacity in the fall of 2020. Beyond the fall of 2020, educational initiatives will continue to be conducted by various Departments on campus, and our aim will be to connect these events to voter registration and mobilization resources.
- Rowan University and, in particular, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is emphasizing experiential learning. We have several options for students who would like to get involved in the ALL IN Challenge through participating in voter registration, mobilization and supporting the educational initiatives. We have in place mechanisms where students can receive 2-3 credits for this type of experiential education. First, we offer a class entitled *Social Movements and Political Activism*, which is an experiential class. In the class, students will create a non-partisan #RowanVotes guide for students to be distributed at our events. Students can choose to participate in the ALL IN Challenge as part of this class. This class runs every fall that coincides with federal elections. In addition, the College of Humanities and Social Science’s Center for Professional Success provides ways for students to earn credit for volunteer experience including with the ALL IN challenge.
- We will encourage college administrators and leaders to promote voter engagement through email reminders to register to vote and participate in the election. We will have those emails link back to a point person working on the ALL IN challenge who can help students who are experiencing problems with registration or figuring out where to vote.
- We will also use social media to field student questions about the elections from our local experts and to troubleshoot any problems students are encountering. This will be an ongoing campaign that will go beyond the 2020 election.

### *Mobilization*

- In order to help students get to the polls on election day, or vote by mail, we will host a number of events to encourage participation. One such initiative will be having students post “why I will vote” in the Student Center on a large board in a central location. In light of the COVID 19 crisis, we will focus on Voting By Mail.
- Another mobilization tactic will be to host a vote by mail event, where students can mail their ballots at the Post Office on campus and get an “I Voted #RowanVotes” sticker. This event is not likely to happen in the fall of 2020, but plans will be made for this event for the fall of 2021 and beyond. We will substitute for something virtual through social media.
- Students will be encouraged to vote through email blasts and social media takeovers.
- Rowan University will host a Get Out the Vote concert or event through a national organization such as *Rock the Vote* or *Headcount.org*. While this will obviously not occur in the fall or spring of 2020 and 2021, the hope is that this can become a regular event on campus.

### **Self Assessment and Evaluation**

The Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) has a tool for assessing which nonpartisan election engagement practices are being implemented on campus. We have used this to guide our approach. There are many practices that are already underway and some that can be implemented easily. We will use this tool to assess our progress as we implement and review the initiative. In particular, we will focus on several items that have been adopted from the CEEP self assessment.<sup>10</sup> Below are a list of self-assessment items that were adapted from the CEEP that we will work on in the coming year(s):

- We will continue to build our coalition of faculty, staff and students. (ongoing)
- We will formalize and institutionalize processes for updating students about key dates and deadlines for voter registration and turnout. We will use the official calendars and email blasts, and official social media platforms for this purpose. (ongoing)
- We will work on creating resources for supporting the ALL IN initiative.
- We will create opportunities for students to register to vote as they begin to matriculate at Rowan.
- Rowan University is actively working to increase experiential learning opportunities on campus. We currently have one class that will use experiential education to “foster student’s political learning and culminates in a project that registers, educates and empowers their fellow students to vote.” (*PS 07327 - Social Movements and Political Activism*). This class will also create non-partisan voter guides for the Rowan Community.

In order to evaluate our successes and areas for improvement, we will use the report from the NSLVE to take stock of where students are lagging in voter registration and turnout. We will also collect information about how many people attended Rowan Votes events and invite feedback

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<sup>10</sup>[https://campuselect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017\\_electoral\\_engagement\\_assessment\\_final.pdf](https://campuselect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017_electoral_engagement_assessment_final.pdf)

on how these events helped students to participate in politics. We also plan to track the number of students that we register to vote and determine where they may be most likely to take the opportunity to do this.

The NSLVE report will be shared with the committee as well as with the university's top leadership so that the administration can help us with resources and support where it is needed. In addition, we plan to share the report with the campus community as a whole so that students and faculty can be involved in helping to identify ways to improve participation and registration as well as be a part of the wider community efforts. In addition, we will use the report to write a self assessment of our own efforts and discuss what new initiatives need to be added, what worked and what should be changed.

### **Timeline, Budget, and Announcement**

We have created a grid of our proposed events and initiatives by semester and month for the year 2020 (see Attachment A). Many of these events will need to be modified or cancelled in light of the COVID 19 crisis. We have made notes to highlight how we plan to adapt. We have also created a COVID 19 addendum, which will explain how we are adapting in light of the crisis. Our budget and the resources needed are now much different than they were during the initial planning. We will update our budget request for each semester depending on what is happening with COVID 19 in our community.

### **COVID 19 Addendum**

Like the rest of the country and the world, we are working to adapt to the challenges created by the COVID 19 pandemic. As of this writing, much is unknown about what campus life will look like in the fall of 2020 and beyond. As a result, we have some immediate plans for adaptation that we believe can be put forth no matter the circumstances in the fall.

Here are some of the initiatives that we are planning for the fall of 2020 to adapt to the COVID 19 crisis while continuing this important work.

#### ***Vote By Mail***

First and foremost and for the purpose of maintaining safety, we will be promoting and encouraging Vote By Mail for all students, faculty and staff. We expect #RowanVotesByMail to be a widely used hashtag by the university community. Earlier this year, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed an executive order making the state of NJ an official Vote By Mail state for the re-scheduled July primary. We expect that Vote By Mail will continue to be a major part of the state's plan to ensure enfranchisement in the fall election cycle and in the future.

- We planned to encourage voting by mail prior to the COVID 19 crisis. Now it is just common sense.

### Action Items

- To encourage VBM, we will help students register to vote and update their voter registrations to request ballots at the location that they plan to be at for the November election.
- Encourage VBM through a social media campaign with the hashtag #RowanVotesbyMail

### *NJ Voter Guide*

- Students in the experiential course, *Social Movements and Political Activism* will be creating a nonpartisan online voter guide which will be widely distributed to the campus community through email, social media, and the student government association.
- Students in this course will also be fielding voter student voter questions on social media.

### *Registration*

- Students will take the lead in organizing social media voter engagement events including a pledge to vote and voter registration competition.
- Faculty will be encouraged to promote voter registration and participation by asking their classes about registration.

### *Mobilization*

- Focus on VBM by creating a database of all registered students and then following up on those who need to (a) request a VBM ballot and (b) turned in their VBM ballot.
- We will create a social media campaign asking students to film their pledge to vote. This also provides an opportunity for a fun competition as students challenge other students to “take the pledge”.

### *Virtual Events*

- Voter Registration Day - competition among student organizations to see how many people they can get to register and pledge to vote.

## #RowanVotes / ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Proposed Initial Calendar

**Goal:** To advance civic learning and voter participation among Rowan students.

Spring 2020	Activities		
	Registration	Education	Mobilization
Jan - Feb	Register students to vote at SGA Org Fair (completed)		
Feb	Add registration banner to Proflink (completed)		
Feb - May	Recruiting of 2020 #RowanVotes Team Leaders (select students charged with assisting efforts to register students & get them to vote) <b>(in progress)</b>		
Feb - May	Registering/recruiting students during Debate Watch parties (completed)	Debate Watch parties throughout the semester (only had March 3, 2020 party) May plan a virtual event for the fall of 2020.	
Feb - May	Registering students during interdisciplinary Teach-Ins (cancelled due to COVID 19)	Interdisciplinary Teach-In on Presidential Primaries. (Scheduled for March, 31, but cancelled due to COVID 19)	
Feb - May	Coordinating Fall voter registration competition through SGA and campus clubs (in progress)		
March 3	Registering students during Super Tuesday Results Watch party (Completed)	Super Tuesday Results Watch party <b>SGA</b>	

Attachment A - Draft as of 7/1/2020

March 5	Registering students during the Centennial celebration of Women’s Suffrage – Gail Collins speech	Centennial celebration of Women’s Suffrage – Gail Collins speech	
April	Add registration materials to packets	Add voter information to registration packets (sidelined by COVID19 - waiting on NJ to clarify election rules)	
April 13 or 15	Registering students during Gov. Tom Kean RIPPAC event (speaker is tentative) (cancelled event)	Gov. Tom Kean on Citizenship – RIPPAC event (speaker is tentative)	

Summer 2020	Possible Activities		
	Registration	Education	Mobilization
June – Aug	Identify all current students who are registered in Glassboro. This list might include people who graduated, so we’d have to clean it up ourselves.(In progress)		
June – Aug	Ongoing coordinating Fall 2020 voter registration competition through SGA and campus clubs (Greek, orgs, dorms), etc.		
June – Aug		Training of RAs and other student leaders in how to register voters.	
June – Aug			Create #RowanVotes website with information and links regarding registration, VBMs, calendar of #RowanVotes-affiliated events, etc. (completed, but needs updating)

Fall 2020	Activities		
	Registration	Education	Mobilization
Sept. 17		Constitution Day lecture – focus should be on voting issues. (virtual event, in process)	
Sept 22	#RowanVotes Kickoff Event, coincides with National Voter Registration Day. Host a registration fair, including food, tshirts, Uncle Sam on stilts, tables for campaigns, etc. <b>SCCA, SGA, PSEC</b>		
Sept. 22	Launch voter registration competition among student orgs: who can register largest percentage of their members <b>PSEC/RIPPAC SGA? Clubs?</b>		
Sept. 29		Presidential Debate Watch Party – 1 <sup>st</sup> debate (virtual)	
Sept-Oct			Republican / Democratic congressional candidate GOTV rallies
Sept-Oct	Design and place walk-and-walls on well-traversed sidewalks throughout campus with voter registration message. <b>SCCA</b>		

Attachment A - Draft as of 7/1/2020

Oct. 7		Vice Presidential Debate Watch Party	
Oct. 7 – 13	Red, white, and blue ribbons tied around trees on campus, as a reminder to register to vote. (tentatively cancelled)		
Oct. 9	Coinciding with RIPPAC Campaign Volunteer Fair, final voter registration push before NJ’s Oct. 13 <sup>th</sup> deadline. (virtual)		RIPPAC Campaign Volunteer Fair
Oct. 15		Presidential Debate Watch Party – 2 <sup>nd</sup> debate <b>Rowan Dems/Reps</b> (virtual)	
Oct. 20			Announce winners of voter registration competition among student organizations. Provide celebration of #RowanVotes success for all participants.
Oct. 22		Presidential Debate Watch Party – 3 <sup>rd</sup> debate (virtual)	
Oct. 24			RIPPAC “straw poll” and GOTV promotion at Homecoming 2020.
Oct		Annual debate between Rowan Democrats and Rowan Republicans. <b>Rowan Dems/Reps</b>	
Oct		Distribution of “NJ voter guide” – produced by students and overseen by faculty member. <b>Kathy will do this with her class</b>	
Post-Oct. 13			Promote VBM opportunities through direct email to registered students and social media campaign..

Attachment A - Draft as of 7/1/2020

Post-Oct. 13			Provide voting location and VBM information on website. Site can also provide pictures and updates on the calendar of events.
Post-Oct. 13			GOTV rally/concert in partnership with Rock the Vote (cancelled)
Post-Oct. 13			Create large “Why I Will Vote” display in CSC – with students allowed to affix Post-It notes explaining why they will vote on the display. <b>SCCA</b> (modified due to COVID)
Post-Oct. 13			#RowanVotes selfie challenge. Students take a selfie in front of a #RowanVotes banner and post on social media that they pledge to vote, and challenge 2 friends on campus to do the same.
Post-Oct. 13			Vote by mail day in the student center near the post office. Students will receive an “I Voted #RowanVotes” sticker.(this may become a virtual event)
Nov 3 – ELECTION DAY			Provide shuttle busses to polling places that cover campus. (tentatively cancelled)
Nov 3 – ELECTION DAY			<b>SGA</b> to host a watch party (likely virtual)
Nov 4 - POST ELECTION ROUNDTABLE (virtual panel)		Hosted by PSEC and RIPPAC	