

**Rutgers-Camden Campaign Plan  
Fall 2022**

# Campaign Overview

## *Executive Summary*

The RUC Votes Coalition (RUCVC) is Rutgers-Camden's student-led, non-partisan organization focused on increasing student, faculty, and staff voter engagement and voter education. Working with our campus partners like NJPIRG and Student Government Association and local partners like the League of Women Voters, RUCVC looks to institutionalize a culture of civic engagement throughout the campus for this semester and beyond.

## *Leadership*

RUCVC was formed under the Office of Civic Engagement and worked with numerous organizations on campus to help achieve its goals

The leadership team of RUCVC votes consists of undergraduate students from the Rutgers-Camden Civic Scholar Program and representatives from NJPIRG and SGA. RUCVC is a year-round coalition focusing on voter turnout for every election, including off-year state elections (like 2021). The RUCVC team connects the school with different national and local partners throughout the United States to provide them with the resources needed to vote in upcoming locations. Throughout the year, RUCVC will encourage students to vote, promote education in civic engagement, and promote involvement in civic engagement through poll working, registering voters, and providing educational materials. The coalition will also push for long-term institutional changes to promote civic engagement far into the future.

The leadership team for the RUC Votes coalition is as follows:

- Matthew Brodsky (CCAS 22') - Chair
- Dr. Simanti Lahiri: Faculty Outreach
- Shaniyla Johnson - Outreach Coordinator
- Taylin Garvin - Social Media Coordinator

The RUCVC coalition is supported by the Office of Civic Engagement and helps provide resources and advice to the leadership team throughout the year.

## *Office of Civic Engagement*

The leadership team for the office of civic engagement is as follows:

- Nyemma Watson, Ph.D. - Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Inclusion, and Civic Engagement
- Simanti Lahiri, Ph.D. - Program Coordinator, Student Civic Engagement
- Daniel Fidalgo Tome, Ed D - Program Coordinator, Engaged Civic Learning

In addition to the listed partners, RUCVC works with different organizations on campus to help promote Civic Engagement, like the Student Government Association, Political Science Society, and New Jersey Public Interest Group (NJPIRG). RUCVC works with outside organizations like the League of Women Voters and participates in ALL IN Democracy Challenge. RUCVC also joins the New Jersey Department of State's Division of Elections (DOE) in their annual Ballot Bowl competition, where schools across New Jersey compete to register as many voters as possible and get students to pledge to vote.

### ***Commitment***

Rutgers-Camden has recently expanded the 12 year-old office of civic engagement into the division of diversity, inclusion, and civic engagement. We strive to fulfill the mission of an anchor institution for the city of Camden and to our students. And believe that civic engagement means full participation in public life. We emphasize both curricular and Co-curricular forms of engagement for all students.

### ***Landscape***

On a state level, New Jersey has some strong voting laws to ensure accessibility. Easy access to voter registration forms in person and online, mail-in voting for all residents, and early voting. The Division of Elections in New Jersey also hosts an annual ballot bowl competition to encourage schools to register many students to vote and turn them out to the polls. The only missing key piece is same-day voter registration.

Rutgers promotes voting throughout its platforms, primarily online, with access to turbovote to register online. In New Brunswick, groups like Eagleton do a lot of voting work during election season. In Camden, the new RUC Votes Coalition hopes to accomplish what Eagleton can do in New Brunswick. Voting itself is promoted on campus, but the environment of Rutgers-Camden regarding civic engagement needs improvement.

### ***Goals***

Building on the progress made in the first year of the RUCVC, we plan to accomplish the following goals for the 2022-2023 academic year.

#### Short Term Goals

- Register at least 195 students
- Get at least 1,200 students to pledge to vote

- Increase the number of student organizations in the coalition to 10
- Add two outside organizations to the coalition
- Receive more buy-in from the administration
- Create a social media account and gain 100 followers
- Host 3 Election related events on campus
- Create a strong communication structure within the coalition
- Increase visibility on campus for the elections
- Create branding for the coalition
- Have 50 volunteers from different organizations

### Long Term Goals

- Make election day a school holiday
- Increase voting rate to 95% by 2025
- Increase registration rate to 100% by 2025
- Have every student organization pledge to hold non-election-related events on election day
- Advocate for better voting policies: better ballots, same-day voter registration
- Strengthen university partnerships in the coalition
- Develop a detailed volunteer strategy to implement in the following years
- Making voter registration a part of student orientation
- Have University-wide notifications every election cycle, including primary elections
- Bring in a project focused on voter engagement in Camden High Schools

### **Strategy**

#### Student Outreach

- **Peer-to-Peer Engagement:** An essential aspect of any voter engagement project is making great connections with students on campus. No other strategy is better than peer-to-peer connection in person. The coalition's primary area of focus for peer-to-peer engagement will come from tabling. Like last year, RUCVC will hold tabling events three times a week in the campus center to reach out to students. If we have enough volunteers at the table, we could have one man at the table, another go to the student lounge, and another go outside to reach out to students daily. Utilizing our student organization partners, we hope to have consistent support.
- **Phone/Text Banking** a quick way to reach out to students is by utilizing phones. With the help of organizations like NJPIRG, the coalition will be able to send out reminders to students to make sure they go out and vote. Sometimes a simple reminder text is all that is needed.
- **In-person Events:** Having events is a great way to increase turnout in an election. RUCVC will hold events during the semester around voter engagement, with events on National Voter Registration Day and an Election Watch Party. RUCVC will also work with other organizations on campus to hold joint events and get election material in as many events as possible.

#### Organizational Outreach

- **Working with Student Organizations:** RUCVC will work to continue its outreach to student groups throughout the year. Outreach to organizations has begun via email and will target organizations like Immigrant Justice Association, Green Thumb, Black Student Union, Criminal Justice Society, and more. RUCVC hopes to create large amounts of buy-in with these organizations to gain their support in future elections. The coalition also wants mutually beneficial relationships with organizations and will support and promote activities other organizations are doing to increase student engagement on campus.
- **Expanding with Community Partners:** RUCVC wants to find local partners to help us increase voter engagement not just on campus but within the city. Community-based organizations like the DCCB, CCP, Camden Fireworks, and groups like the Camden League of Women Voters are essential for the coalition to succeed. Over the year, the coalition intends to increase outreach and involvement within these organizations and support them within the community.

### Policy Advocacy

- **Relationship Building:** RUCVC will work to build relationships with key stakeholders on campus to help achieve the goal of making Election Day a school-wide holiday. Consistently meeting with members of the Chancellor's Office, University Senate, SGA, and others, the coalition will advocate for the importance of students not having other stresses and responsibilities during election day so their focus can be on voting.
- **Petition:** RUCVC will create a petition for student organizations, teachers, and athletics to sign pledging to hold non-election-related events, assignments, or practices on election day. This will be the first phase of advocacy for the coalition, and we will begin pushing for this petition for the upcoming fall semester.

### **Reporting**

The RUCVC Campus Action Plan is to be shared with all coalition members and be made public if possible. RUCVC also intends to complete annual post-election reports to evaluate the success and growth of the coalition and make recommendations and changes when needed. These reports will be made public via coalition social media for anyone to see. In addition to reports, the coalition will have a post-election meeting with all partners within the coalition to receive feedback and ideas for the next semester.

### **Evaluation**

Looking at the first year of the RUCVC coalition, a lot needed to be improved, and much of that has been mentioned in the goals outlined for the upcoming year. For starters, except for one zoom meeting at the beginning of the semester, there was almost no contact between coalition partners, resulting in subpar results and struggling to find volunteers to support the coalition. There were moments during the 2021 election when coalition leaders were unsure if they had volunteered to staff the table. An SGA event resulted in the table being unattended for that day. Holding more consistent meetings and updates are needed in the future. There is a dire need for constant communication in the future, and hopefully, it can be accomplished.

There was also a lack of training for those who could help register voters. All volunteers must understand the registration process and know how to remain non-partisan. The only amount of training received occurred within the first few minutes of tabling that day. There should be an opportunity for an in-person training session and shared resources (video, slideshow, documents) that can be shared throughout the organization so that people understand how to register students successfully.

There was also a lack of structure on how registration forms and pledges were to be received. NJPIRG held most of the resources, and it became a challenge to receive those resources if a member of NJPIRG was not on campus to provide the necessary forms. There needs to be more accessible access to the documents and materials required staffman the table, along with a far more presentable table. It is also essential to have a streamlined process of collecting the number of registrations and pledges and getting any forms to the clerk's office. All numbers and completed forms must be given to either Dr. Simanti Lahiri, Matthew Brodsky, Taylin Garvin, or Shaniyla Johnson before the end of the day in the future. Whoever is operating the table must have some form of communication with any one of those members.

Visibility of the RUCVS was incredibly low last election cycle. Only three student organizations were involved, and anyone outside of that circle did not know about the coalition. Far better branding and visibility are needed for people to recognize the coalition as a legitimate form of voter and civic engagement on campus.