Southwest Virginia Community College
2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Antwan VanBuren and Lisa Haywood

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Southwest Virginia Community College in Virginia for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election. The goals for Southwest Virginia Community for the 2024 election are: Empower Southwest Virginia Community College students to become active participants in shaping their communities through a comprehensive voter registration campaign that educates students about the voting process, raises awareness about the importance of their vote, and leverages targeted marketing strategies to register 90% of eligible students to vote in the 2024 elections

Leadership:

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

Antwan VanBuren – Coordinator for Student Engagement and Inclusion
Lisa Haywood – Dean of Student Success

Commitment:

Southwest Virginia Community College is committed to fostering a campus culture that values civic responsibility and democratic participation. Our mission statement emphasizes the importance of preparing students to be active, informed citizens. This commitment is reflected in our learning outcomes, which include civic knowledge and

engagement. We integrate voting and election-focused content into our curriculum, particularly in our political science, history, and government courses. Co-curricularly, we will host voter registration drives, candidate forums, and issue-based discussions to educate students about the voting process and the importance of their participation

Communication of Commitment:

The Dean of Student Success will authorize Southwest Virginia Community College's participation in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. We clearly communicate our commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement through various channels, promoting voter registration and education initiatives via our website, social media, student email announcements, and campus posters. Our student government association actively leads voter registration efforts and disseminates information about voting deadlines and requirements. Faculty members also play a key role by incorporating voting-focused content into their classrooms and encouraging students to register and vote**.**

Future Presidential Support:

While President Wright currently does not intend to sign the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment. We will continue to demonstrate our institutional commitment to student voting and work towards gaining presidential support for the ALL IN initiative.

This is the first action plan that Southwest Virginia Community College has developed for ALL IN.

Landscape:

Voter Registration Laws in Virginia:

To register to vote in Virginia, students must be United States citizens, residents of Virginia, and at least 18 years old by the next general election (Virginia Department of Elections). Students can register using a Virginia Voter Registration Application form or a National Voter Registration Application form (Virginia Department of Elections). The voter registration books close 22 days prior to a general election (Newport News, VA).

Voter ID Laws:

Virginia requires voters to provide an acceptable form of identification when voting in person or sign an ID confirmation statement (Virginia Department of Elections). Accepted forms of ID include Virginia driver's licenses, US passports, student IDs, and more (Ballotpedia). If a voter does not present acceptable ID, they will be required to sign an ID confirmation statement or vote a provisional ballot (Fairfax County, VA).

Vote-by-Mail and Absentee Ballots:

All registered voters in Virginia are eligible to request, receive, mark, and return their absentee ballots by mail (Loudoun County, VA). Voters have the option to vote absentee in the next election or automatically receive an absentee ballot for all future elections (Virginia Department of Elections). Voted absentee ballots are due postmarked by Election Day and received by noon three days after Election Day (Vote.org).

Southwest Virginia Community College is an institution within the Virginia Community College System, Southwest is a commuter campus and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024. – Antwan VanBuren

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Southwest Virginia Community College has approximately 2,295 students.

- **In-state vs. out-of-state students:** 90% of students are from in-state, while 9% are from out-of-state.
- **Residential vs. commuter students:** The specific breakdown between residential and commuter students is not available. However, the college is in a rural area.
- **Demographic breakdowns:**
  - **Race:** The enrolled student population is 90% White, 3.1% Black or African American, and 2.54% other races.
  - **Gender:** The full-time undergraduate population is made up of 63% women and 37% men.
  - **Age:** 33% of students are under 18 years old.

Southwest Virginia Community College – Antwan VanBuren will be the representative for NSLVE

Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals for voter registration and turnout at Southwest Virginia Community College:

- **Specific:** Clearly define what you want to achieve.
- **Measurable:** Quantify your goals using the available data as a baseline.
- **Ambitious**: Strive for meaningful improvement.
- **Realistic:** Ensure your goals are attainable based on your campus's specific context and resources.
- **Timebound:** Set specific deadlines (2024 and 2026).

- **Inclusive**: Focus on engaging all students, regardless of their backgrounds.
- **Equitable:** Aim to close gaps in voter registration and turnout rates among different student groups.
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Given that the specific 2020 voter registration and turnout rates for Southwest Virginia Community College are not available, we can use the national averages for community colleges (66% turnout, 83% registration) as a baseline.

Here are three examples S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals:

- **Goal 1: Voter Turnout**
  - o   Specific: Increase student voter turnout.
  - o   Measurable: Reach 72% turnout in 2024 and 75% in 2026.
  - o   Ambitious: Improve upon the national community college average.
  - o   Realistic: Attainable with targeted efforts.
  - o   Timebound: Achieve these rates in the 2024 and 2026 elections.
  - o   Inclusive: Engage all students in voting efforts.
  - o   Equitable: Work to equalize turnout rates among different student groups.

- **Goal 2: Voter Registration**

  - o   Specific: Increase student voter registration.
  - o   Measurable: Register 88% of students in 2024 and 90% in 2026.
  - o   Ambitious: Exceed the national community college average.
  - o   Realistic: Possible with new registration strategies.
  - o   Timebound: Complete by the registration deadlines for the 2024 and 2026 elections.
  - o   Inclusive: Ensure all eligible students can register.
  - o   Equitable: Focus on registering underrepresented student groups.

- **Goal 3: New Student Voter Registration**

  - o   Specific: Integrate voter registration into new student orientation.
  - o   Measurable: Offer voter registration to all new students during fall 2024 orientation.
  - o   Ambitious: Normalize voter registration as part of the college experience.
  - o   Realistic: Achievable by partnering with relevant campus departments.
  - o   Timebound: Implement by the start of fall 2024 orientation.
  - o   Inclusive: Ensure all new students, regardless of background, can register.
  - o   Equitable: Work to register students from historically disenfranchised groups.

Strategy:

Southwest Virginia Community College will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Voter Registration:

- **National Voter Registration Day (NVRD):** Organize a campus-wide registration drive on this day in September 2024. Partner with local organizations to provide registration assistance. Offer incentives for students who register or pledge to register.
- **New Student Orientation:** Integrate a voter registration component into fall 2024 orientation for new and transfer students. Provide on-the-spot registration and answer questions about the process.
- **Classroom Registration Drives:** Collaborate with faculty to dedicate a day in September 2024 for voter registration drives within classrooms. Have registration forms and volunteers available.
- **Registration Tables:** Set up tables in high-traffic areas (e.g., student union, library) throughout September and October 2024 with registration forms and information.
- **Online Registration Promotion:** Use the college's website, social media, and email newsletters to promote online voter registration and provide resources.

Voter Education:

- **National Voter Education Week (NVEW):** Host events during NVEW in October 2024 to educate students about voting rules, candidates, and issues. Partner with student groups and local organizations.
- **Candidate Forums:** Organize forums where students can meet local candidates, ask questions, and learn about their positions.
- **Voting Guides:** Create and distribute guides explaining the voting process, deadlines, and what to expect at the polls. Make these available online and in print.
- **Classroom Presentations:** Work with faculty to deliver presentations about the importance of voting, how to research candidates, and how elections impact students' lives.
- **Voter Resources:** Provide information on campus and online about non-partisan voter resources, such as Vote411 and BallotReady.

Voter Turnout:

- **Vote Early Day:** Promote this day in October 2024 with events encouraging students to vote early. Offer transportation to early voting sites.
- **Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Campaign:** Launch a campus-wide GOTV effort in the days leading up to the election. Use social media, flyers, and campus announcements to remind students to vote.
- **Election Day Activities:** Host events on campus on Election Day, such as watch parties, to encourage voting and engage students in the democratic process.
- **Voting Challenges:** Organize friendly competitions between student groups or classes to see who can achieve the highest voter turnout.
- **Transportation to Polls:** Collaborate with the college or local organizations to provide transportation to polling sites on Election Day.

Additional Strategies:

- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with student organizations, faculty, and local community groups to amplify registration, education, and turnout efforts.
- **Data Tracking:** Monitor and analyze registration and turnout data to understand what's working and where to focus efforts.
- **Reflection and Improvement:** After each election, assess efforts, gather feedback, and use this information to improve strategies for future elections.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Metrics to Track:

1. **Voter Registration:** Number of students registered during registration drives, percentage of student body registered to vote.
2. **Voter Education:** Attendance at candidate forums, issue briefings, and other educational events. Surveys assessing students' knowledge of candidates, issues, and voting process before and after educational programming.
3. **Voter Turnout:** Comparison of student voter turnout rates with overall local and national youth turnout. Participation in GOTV campaigns and Election Day activities.
4. **Partnerships:** Number of student organizations, faculty, and community groups partnering on democratic engagement initiatives.
5. **Institutional Commitment:** Level of support from administration, faculty, and staff for democratic engagement efforts.

Leading the Evaluation Effort:

Designate a staff person or faculty member to oversee the evaluation. This could be someone in student life, civic engagement, or political science. They will track metrics, coordinate assessments, and analyze data.

Additional Evaluations:

- **NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement):** If the college participates in NSSE, use the results to understand students' civic engagement experiences and perceptions.
- **Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement:** If applicable, utilize this classification to assess the institution's overall community engagement, including democratic engagement.

Action Items:

1. **Authorize NSLVE:** If not already done, authorize NSLVE to access campus voting data reports.
2. **Designate an Evaluation Lead:** Appoint a staff or faculty member to oversee democratic engagement evaluation.
3. **Develop an Assessment Plan:** Based on the above metrics, create a plan for tracking and assessing democratic engagement efforts.
4. **Analyze and Improve:** Regularly review data, reflect on programming, and make data-driven decisions to enhance democratic engagement initiatives.

NSLVE@Tufts.edu.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website www.sw.edu.

Below, Southwest Virginia Community College has developed a plan to evaluate our campus democratic engagement programming beyond NSLVE voting data. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of our initiatives and identify areas for improvement.

Metrics:

1. Voter Registration: Track the number of students registered and the percentage of the student body registered.
2. Voter Education: Monitor attendance at educational events and assess student knowledge before and after programming.
3. Voter Turnout: Compare student turnout to local and national youth rates. Track participation in GOTV efforts.
4. Partnerships: Count the number of student organizations, faculty, and community groups partnering with us.
5. Institutional Commitment: Gauge support from administration, faculty, and staff.

Evaluation Lead:

Lisa Haywood (Dean of Student Success) with the assistance and responsibility of Antwan VanBuren to oversee the evaluation. We will track metrics, coordinate assessments, and analyze data.

Additional Evaluations:

●   NSSE: If we participate, use the results to understand students' civic engagement experiences.
●   Carnegie Classification: If applicable, utilize this to assess overall community engagement.

Sharing the Action Plan and NSLVE Reports:

We'll share these with the following:
- ALL IN!
- The SWCC website (democratic engagement webpage)
- Student Government Association
- Faculty Senate
- Campus-wide email updates

Action Items:
1. Authorize NSLVE: If not done, submit the authorization form.
2. Designate an Evaluation Lead: Appoint a staff/faculty member to oversee the evaluation.
3. Develop an Assessment Plan: Create a plan based on the above metrics.
4. Analyze and Improve: Regularly review data and make data-driven decisions.