



Rutgers Democracy Lab

Eagleton Institute of Politics

invites you to an Inaugural Convening focusing on

**CENTERS, INSTITUTES, AND
LABS OF DEMOCRACY:
SUPPORTING CIVIC LEARNING
AND ENGAGEMENT ON COLLEGE
CAMPUSES AND BEYOND**

APRIL 23-25, 2026

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:





It is our pleasure to invite you to join the Rutgers Democracy Lab at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, in partnership with Campus Compact, the Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation, and the Democratic Knowledge Project, for a convening featuring keynote speakers, interactive panels, and collaborative workshops focused on democratic resilience, institutional reform, civic engagement, and the vital role of higher education in cultivating informed and active citizens.

Centers, institutes, and labs focused on politics and democracy play an increasingly important role on college campuses in equipping and encouraging democratic learning and engagement. By connecting the study of politics to its real-world practice, and by emphasizing applied research and hands-on experiences, these units offer opportunities distinct from those in traditional political science departments.

This groundbreaking convening will bring together scholar-practitioners from democracy-focused centers, institutes, and labs nationwide for aspirational and action-oriented collaboration. Insights generated through sessions, panels, and discussions will directly inform a post-convening white paper that maps the national ecosystem; proposes a collaborative framework for research, pedagogy, programming, and field-building; and outlines next steps and structures for sustained partnership—serving as a shared guide for this emerging network.

FEATURED SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE:

- **Danielle Allen**, Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation and Democratic Knowledge Project
- **Allison Briscoe-Smith**, Greater Good Science Center
- **Bobbie Laur**, Campus Compact
- **Nicholas Longo**, Rutgers Democracy Lab
- **Elizabeth Matto**, Eagleton Institute of Politics
- **Thomas Schnaubelt**, Center for Revitalizing American Institutions
- **Shiri Spitz Siddiqi**, Heterodox Academy

(Full list in formation.)

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026 // RUTGERS DEMOCRACY LAB SHOWCASE

Time: 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: Cook Student Center, Rutgers University – New Brunswick

Overview:

An open showcase highlighting the work of the Rutgers Democracy Lab during its inaugural year. Visitors will have the opportunity to meet RDL students and faculty fellows, explore ongoing projects, and engage with RDL staff and partners.

Detailed agenda forthcoming.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026 // WELCOME RECEPTION

Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Location: The Heldrich Hotel – New Brunswick, NJ

Program:

- **Welcome Remarks**
- **Conversation and Q&A:** Setting the Framework for the Convening Participants

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026 // CONVENING

Time: 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Location: Rutgers University Inn – New Brunswick, NJ

Note: Transportation provided from The Heldrich to the Rutgers University Inn

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Arrival & Breakfast

- Light breakfast and coffee
- Informal networking

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM | Opening Session: Welcome & Framing the Day

- Welcome remarks
- Overview of convening goals
- Guided discussions to set intentions and expectations

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Exploring the Ecosystem of Campus-Based Democracy Centers, Institutes & Labs

- Includes a 15-minute mapping exercise to identify existing models, practices, and gaps

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM | The Three Dimensions of Democracy Work

Experts will frame the current landscape of research and practice and facilitate breakout groups in each dimension (Civic Thought & Knowledge, Civic Engagement, Civic Dialogue).

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM | Dimension-Based Interactive Breakouts

Participants join one of the three dimensions based on their self-selected focus, with the goal of surfacing shared challenges, promising approaches, and opportunities for collaboration.

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Lunch Session: The Student Experience

Topics include:

- Innovative campus-based civic learning models
- Student leadership and democratic practice

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM | Breakout Read-Outs by Civic Dimension

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM | Break

Coffee, tea, snacks, and informal networking

2:45 PM – 4:00 PM | Mapping the Field & Building a Framework

A collective visioning session with guided questions working toward a collaborative framework.

4:00 PM – 4:15 PM | Reflections

- Summary of insights
- Priorities for post-convening work

4:30 PM | Transportation to Dinner at the Rutgers Club

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026 // DINNER, DRINKS & CONVERSATION

Time: 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Location: Rutgers Club – Piscataway, NJ

- Keynote Address: Danielle Allen
- Reflections on Democracy and Education

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026 // BREAKFAST & NEXT STEPS

Time: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Location: The Heldrich Hotel – New Brunswick, NJ

ABOUT THE RUTGERS DEMOCRACY LAB

The Rutgers Democracy Lab works to ensure that future generations have access to the tools and knowledge needed to strengthen democracy. The Lab draws on the multidisciplinary expertise of Rutgers students, faculty, and researchers to connect with community members, civic groups, and practitioners to tackle challenges; explore and test new ideas and potential solutions; and develop evidence-based best practices that support and enhance democracy.

OPTIONAL WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

Enjoy the region after the convening:

- **Rutgers Day:** Family-friendly festivities across campus
<https://newbrunswick.rutgers.edu/rutgers-day>
- **New York City:** A short train ride away—museums, dining, theatre, sightseeing
- **Jersey Shore:** Beaches, boardwalks, and coastal towns
- **Atlantic City:** Entertainment, dining, and the iconic boardwalk

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

Rutgers Democracy Lab will provide accommodations and transportation for all invited participants and will reimburse eligible travel expenses as outlined below.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Heldrich Hotel
10 Livingston Ave
New Brunswick, NJ

Hotel rooms have been reserved and prepaid by Rutgers Democracy Lab.

Rutgers Democracy Lab will reimburse the following expenses:

- Round-trip airfare
- Ground transportation to and from the airport (e.g., taxi, rideshare)
- Parking fees (hotel and campus)

In addition:

Shuttle service will be provided between The Heldrich Hotel and the Rutgers campus.

REGISTRATION

To register for this event, please scan QR code below or visit our website at:

<https://democracylab.rutgers.edu/convening2026>



For questions or more information, please contact
Allison Sargent Events at 973-783-5689 or info@allisonsargent.com