All In Challenge: Western Carolina University Plan of Action

SOCON VOTES! Student Democracy Coalition Playbook

Fall 2016

Introduction

"The citizenship virtues of benevolence, ethical and moral behavior, character, civility, and community are important to learn now. If a student graduates without these understandings, they will most likely never get them (personal communication, September 1, 2012)." – Dr. W. Roger Webb, former university president Northeastern State University (1978-1997) and University of Central Oklahoma (1997-2011)

To us, this idea that if "a student graduates without these understandings, they will most likely never get them" really resounds with us. If engaged students do not capture the spirit of community and civic engagement during the time they and others are investing so much into their personal and professional development, we are hard pressed to imagine another period of concentrated focus that could generate the passion, knowledge, and commitment demanded by an engaged democracy. To bridge this development space and to harness the spirit of youthful members of a democracy, the Student Democracy Coalition was formed. The Student Democracy Coalition was created when the Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) and Campus Vote Project (CVP) brought their organizations and an intentional partnership to Western Carolina University (WCU).

Additionally, we believe that citizenship should be perceived and pursued as a craft that can and should be learned within a higher education context. Imperative to understanding learning as a process is recognizing how learners' beliefs, values, and experiences influence how meanings and perspectives are constructed. This particular point seems to be a primary concern of experiential educationalists and practitioners who align with experiential pedagogies that work directly with local communities, and have the greater intention of creating relevance in student learning, addressing a need within a local community, and cultivating a culture of community and civic engagement (these are key ingredients of community engagement, see Where's the Learning in Service Learning by Eyler and Giles, 1999).

With this, citizenship should be viewed as a craft that equals a whole, which is greater than the sum of its parts. By identifying the skills of a citizen as a set of skills or as a craft illuminates its potential to align with educational strategies in order to expose, connect, test, and confirm this body of knowledge with students' perspectives and personal experiences. This is the premise for recognizing citizenship as a domain of knowledge dependent on experience and learned through reflection. The Student Democracy Coalition focuses on preparing and supporting students on their journeys towards a brighter, richer, more inclusive democracy. We believe that the sun is setting on the era of apathy and rising boldly on a future of informed, passionate, and steady democracy.

We are the Student Democracy Coalition.

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Special Acknowledgements to the Following Organizations and Offices:
Chancellor & Chancellor's Office

Provost & the Office of the Provost

University Parking & Transportation

University Marketing Department

University Public Relations Department

University Legal Counsel

Communication Department

Social Work Department

Student Government Association

Inter-Cultural Affairs

Inter Fraternal Council

National Pan-Hellenic

Public Policy Institute

Center for Service Learning

Office of Leadership & Student Involvement

70+ Student Volunteers

College of Engineering & Technology

College of Arts & Sciences

College of Health & Human Sciences

College of Fine & Performing Arts

Inter-Club Council

Residential Living

Last Minute Productions

Special Acknowledgements to the following Community (External) Partners
Andrew Goodman Foundation

Campus Vote Project

SoCon Votes

Democracy NC

TurboVote

County Board of Commissioners

County Board of Elections

County Manager

American Democracy Project

iCitizen

Jackson County NAACP

Jackson County Democrats

Jackson County Republicans

Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream

The Sylva Herald

Power 90.5 radio station

Internet/Social Media Presence:
vote.wcu.edu

Facebook: WCU Votes

Twitter: @WCUVotes

Instagram: @WCUVotes

Hashtags Used:
#WCUVotes

#WesternCarolinaUniversity

#AndrewGoodmanFoundation

#CampusVoteProject

#DemocracyNC

#VOTEHOT

#GOTV

What Have We Done So Far?

The WCU Student Democracy Coalition has accomplished much in the 8 months of its existence. We built from the ground up a massive campus-wide operation of voter engagement encompassing every corner of the institution. At first, our goals were set relatively low since we were a new organization. When we thought about the potential for gaining a polling place on campus the atmosphere heated up. After a long process (described later) we accomplished bringing the polling place to campus.

In the spring semester, we held Intentional Dialogue panel discussions where a panel of experts spoke about varying issues students found important. We held a State of the Union Watch Party, as well as watch parties for every debate as the primaries began. Biweekly, we held voter registration drives on the university lawn, and on the last day to register we held an eight hour voter registration drive. At each registration drive we tried to have what we call the Triple Threat: Food, Music, and Puppies. So far, this has worked successfully for us. We also had the Voter Mobile shuttle voters during the Primary.

During that semester, we also took ten students to the Moral March on Raleigh—an annual event hosted by the North Carolina NAACP. Students were not required to march or protest if they did not feel comfortable, but during this particular event all students had issues for which they felt pushed to march. The goal of this experience was to provide the opportunities for students to serve as observers of various forms of civic engagement in action. We held a very successful sign-making party before the march. As the semester wound to an end, we were able to send one student to Democracy Awakening in Washington D.C. who lobbied and marched with community members, activists, and civil rights legends. Again, democracy is more than voting and these experiences exposed students to this space.

When summer came, our work continued. One student stayed on campus to continue engagement planning for the fall semester. Several students and advisors went to the NASPA/ADP conference held in Indianapolis, IN, and presented on the work accomplished so far. Later in the summer, one of the other Student Democracy Coalition fellows presented our success on a national conference call with the Campus Vote Project. As summer came to a close, the Andrew Goodman Foundation hosted their annual Vote Everywhere Institute which brings ambassadors from across the country together to attend sessions presented by giants of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as presentations by their peers. The ambassador attending for WCU was not only asked to present about the success of our university and coalition, she also won one of six Hidden Hero awards.

We have all come back to campus rejuvenated for the fall 2016 semester, and we have already exceeded our most audacious expectations. We hold weekly voter registration drives this time, rather than biweekly. During our back to school festival, Ben & Jerry's came and we registered 253 voters. We put together a classroom presentation to do classroom drives, and have almost reached 100 classrooms. We have registered around 500 students this semester. We held Constitutional Shark Tank, in which students could add an amendment they thought should be added to the constitution. We have partnered with the university's media team to make the debate and election watch parties into a huge party. We've partnered with the marketing department to deluge the campus in voter signage. We have teams of students from the Communication department taking over our social media postings and hosting competitions weekly, they have also committed to designing marking; Journalism students have committed to covering our story; Social Work students have committed to assisting with registration drives and event planning. We have a voter tip of the week every week, and a "Why I Vote" video collaboration coming soon.

Goals for the Semester

Our goals were originally set at a modest expectation of ten percent growth over our highest turnout year. In 2014, 51 percent of registered student voters turned out to vote. This figure was based off of the 2015 NSLVE report generated by Tufts University. At the beginning of our journey, we set our eyes at 61 percent. This is nearly the same as the average general population voting rates across the United States. As our success climbed, our goal climbed to 65 percent because we wanted to push ourselves. With the amount of community and university support we have received, we have now put all our weight into achieving **75 percent** of **the total student body** to come out and vote in the election. Though this is an audacious a goal, we believe in ferocious optimism and a very strong collaborative of volunteers, fellows, and leaders will push until the end to achieve this goal.

- Obtain an early voting polling place on WCU's campus in the University Center (central location)
- Register 2,000 voters across campus through:
  - Turbovote
  - Traditional tabling efforts (10 tabling initiatives over the fall semester)
  - Classroom presentations (150 classroom presentations = ~3,750 students
  - Other initiatives (residence hall registration drives, Valley Ballyhoo, etc.)
- Educate voters through 12-15 programs including (between August 22 – November 1):
  - 3 debate watch parties and discussions
  - 2 intentional dialogues
  - 3 live/in-person candidate debates (on-campus)
  - 1 Constitutional Shark Tank
  - 2 polling place trainings
  - 2 Brown Bag Conversations on Relevant Topics
  - 1 Raise Your VOICE program (Advising Day)
- Develop a first-stop shop website with critical information (**vote.wcu.edu**) focused on ways to register to vote, for voters to educate themselves on the process and candidates/issues, and for voters to learn how (where/when) they vote (whether by absentee ballot in their home county/precinct or by voting on campus in the early voting polling place location).
- Collaborate with 4-5 classes (and groups) of students engaged in project-based learning to assist with voter registration, education programming, and marketing initiatives.
- Collaborate across campus to create synergy and opportunities (see list above of all partners who are making our goals come to life)
- Develop a strategic and intentional marketing campaign:
  - Social media Campaign (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
  - 7 Bi-weekly newsletters (to all students)
  - 7 voter tips of the week (strategically unveiled weekly)
  - 1 video of the chancellor supporting voting and civic engagement
  - Branded materials across campus (ground stickers, social media, flyers, banners on the UC and at "tables", etc.)
  - Substantial press from Public Relations Office and local news sources
- 75% of total student body will turn out to vote

What are we going to do next?

VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES (Catafount, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.):

September 16
September 21
September 27
October 5
October 12

DISCUSSSIONS ON TOPICS YOU CARE ABOUT:

September 13 - Constitutional Shark Tank: Propose amendments YOU think should be added to the U.S. Constitution
Location: UC Theatre
5:00-6:30 p.m.

October 10 - Knowledge is Power!
Hosted by Jamie Bigby and Jackson County Parks & Recreation
Location: Jackson County Recreation Center (88 Cullowhee Mountain Road)
7:00-9:00 p.m.

October 25 - Topics and speakers TBD.
Location: UC Theatre
5:00-6:30 p.m.

October 27 - Gender and Electoral Politics with Ingrid Bego--A discussion about gender and politics over a brown bag lunch!
Location: TBD
12:00-1:00 p.m.

DEBATES BETWEEN LOCAL CANDIDATES (204 HHS building, 7:00-9:00 p.m.):

September 23 - Mark Meadows / Rick Bryson
District 11 Congressional House race

October 12 - Joe Sam Queen / Mike Clampitt
NC District 119 House race

October 27 - Jim Davis / Jane Hipps
NC District 50 Senate race

DEBATE WATCH PARTIES (UC Illusions, 8:30-11:00 p.m.)
September 26 (Presidential debate)
October 4 (Vice Presidential debate)
October 9 (Presidential debate)

EARLY VOTING (UC Multipurpose Room)
October 27- November 5
Monday-Friday 11:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Sunday will be closed

RAISE YOUR VOICE! Get Out the Vote Festival November 1 (Catafount, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m)

Election watch party November 8 (UC Illusions 7:00 p.m. - midnight)

Western Carolina University | Student Democracy Coalition   VOTE.WCU.EDU   voteeverywhere
THE ANDREW GOODMAN FOUNDATION

IS PROUDLY HOSTING A

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE WATCH PARTY

IN THE

UC ILLUSIONS ROOM

SEPTEMBER 26TH 2016 @ 8:30PM-
11:30PM

Western Carolina UNIVERSITY | Student Democracy Coalition

VOTE.WCU.EDU

ADP

· CONSTITUTION DAY 2016·

CONSTITUTIONAL SHARK TANK

DO YOU HAVE A GREAT IDEA FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT?

GET 5 MINUTES TO PRESENT ONE AMENDMENT TO ADD TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION!
3 WINNERS WILL RECEIVE A $50 GIFT CARD!
OPEN TO ALL! FOOD PROVIDED!

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
5PM U.C. THEATER

EMAIL TCOLLINS@EMAIL.WCU.EDU TO SIGN UP

reac(+)

To register, to educate, to activate, to celebrate and beyond

At Western Carolina University, we use a four point plan to organize and create ground-up spirit of civic engagement on campus. We believe that engaging the students by creating programs which revolve around their lifestyles, offering them open and honest communication from a knowledgeable base, and giving them the opportunity to participate and be heard on a local level will empower them to take charge of their own life politically.

Register: Although it may sound simple, the registration process, at least in North Carolina, is anything but. We have developed a system where we are able to walk students through the process of registering, ensure that their application is correct, and submit the paperwork in their stead. The process is streamlined, it is carried out by trained student volunteers, and the applications are submitted by someone in the Democracy Coalition.

Q: What does your institution do to help break down the registration process? Do you have an exact process, or might you need help establishing one? Online voter registration space?

Educate: Many students have opinions on political issues, but are not completely familiar with both sides of the issue, or familiar with local candidates' views on those same issues. As a nonpartisan organization, we aim to offer well-rounded educational opportunities not only regarding those issues, but also the actually *voting process*, which can oftentimes be cumbersome for someone who has not yet voted before.

Q: Does your organization partner with other departments, clubs, or organizations (internally or externally) in order to establish a well-connected web of information and resources? This can be beneficial to offering a wide range of educational programs which will draw interest from students.

Activate: Activation can be one of the toughest pieces of the puzzle. At WCU, we utilized a shuttle in order to transport students to the polls for the primary, but were still only able to reach 400 students out of 10,000. Now we are working tirelessly to establish an early voting polling place on campus for the fall. This, we believe, will blast wide open the opportunity for students to vote for a multitude of reasons, and this belief is backed up by statistics which show the closer to a polling place a person lives, the more likely he or she is to vote.

Q: How did your organization handle the primary or caucus in your state? Was it a well-organized, coordinated effort? Were students located close to the polling place? Has your institution looked into acquiring an on-campus polling place?

Celebrate: After all the hard work, it is always necessary to celebrate and show your appreciation to the students for their hard work! Election watch parties, food, and music are always great places to start.

Q: What does your institution do to celebrate the success at the end of a voting cycle?

Activate: Getting a Polling Place on Campus

A. Gain campus support of wide range of students, faculty, staff, and community members

a. Develop petition with clear and cogent asks for the polling place

  i. Know possible locations for polling places and security details

  ii. Know parking requirements and curbside voting requirements

  iii. Know canvassing distance regulations

  iv. Understand chain of custody ballot process

b. Get petition signed; we targeted 10 percent of student body

c. Gather letters of support from key administration faculty and staff

d. Get upper administration, EC on board and draft letter of support

e. Operate in a nonpartisan space to gain wide range of support

f. Connect to institution strategic plan in order to hold admin feet to the fire

B. Gain support of established community organizations local and national

a. Collaborate with external local organizations

  i. Local party affiliations

  ii. Local NAACP

  iii. County Commissioner, Board of Commissioners

  iv. County Manager

b. Collaborate with external national/regional organizations to build support

  i. Andrew Goodman Foundation – andrewgoodman.org

  ii. Campus Vote Project – campusvoteproject.org

  iii. NC Campus Compact Election Engagement Fellows -
  http://tinyurl.com/hlxrzmq

  iv. Democracy NC – nc-democracy.org

  v. Be creative, the options for support are limitless

C. Gain support of the local Board of Elections

a. Know the law. Know the policies. Know the statutes. Know budget proposals.

b. Know statistics on other colleges and universities comparable in your state.

c. Students need to attend meetings as community members (the public)

d. Build a relationship with the members and director of the BOE if possible

e. Get on the agenda—do not surprise them, be intentional

f. Have all party affiliations present and able to speak when presenting at meeting (indicate a unified nonpartisan request).

D. Do not take no for an answer.

Are you ready to reac(+)? Need help getting started?

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Select Media, Press, and Public Relations

- "WCU students rank high in primary voting, look for even better turnout this fall"
  http://thereporter.wcu.edu/2016/07/wcu-students-rank-high-in-primary-voting-look-for-even-better-turnout-this-fall/
- Mountain College Students Get On-Campus Voting, Turnout In Record Numbers
  http://thereporter.wcu.edu/2016/07/wcu-students-rank-high-in-primary-voting-look-for-even-better-turnout-this-fall/
- Student finds her passion and a home at WCU
  http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2016/09/student-finds-passion-home-wcu/
- WCU student's work makes her a Hidden Hero
  http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2016/09/wcu-students-work-makes-hidden-hero/
- Voter registration, election turnout is continuing emphasis of WCU campus campaign
  http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2016/09/voter-registration-election-turnout-continuing-emphasis-wcu-campus-campaign/
- WCU numbers likely to bump up with new voting option
  http://www.thesylvaherald.com/top_stories/article_94e514a4-4923-11e6-9f9b-3b8ad121081e.html
- WCU to host congressional, state legislative debate series http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2016/09/wcu-host-congressional-state-legislative-debate-series/
- Early voting comes to Western Carolina University http://wlos.com/news/local/early-voting-comes-to-wcu
- Jackson County Board of Elections approves early voting WCU polling place
  http://campusvoteproject.org/blog-posts/release-wcu-polling-place-approved/
- UNC-A, WCU top voter turnout among NC schools
  http://www.commoncause.org/states/north-carolina/unc-a-wcu-top-voter-turnout.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/
- Add a one-stop early voting polling place to WCU's campus
  https://www.change.org/p/jackson-county-nc-board-of-elections-add-a-one-stop-early-voting-site-to-western-carolina-university-s-campus
- WCU and ECU vote everywhere ambassadors march to support voting rights
  http://blogs.elon.edu/nccc/2016/02/15/wcu-ecu-vote-everywhere-ambassadors-march-to-support-voting-rights/
- Mountain college students get on-campus voting, turnout in record numbers
  http://wcqs.org/post/mountain-college-students-get-campus-voting-turnout-record-numbers

Onward to 75…