



**Mount Saint Mary's University**  
**LOS ANGELES**

# **MSMU VOTES**

## **Democratic Engagement Plan**

Submitted to the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

Submitted By:  
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## **Background Statement:**

Civic learning and democratic engagement is at the heart of the Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) mission and the institution has a long history of providing programs and experiences for students as active citizens on campus and in their communities. Established in 1925, the University is unique in that it encompasses two campuses in Los Angeles. The first, near downtown Los Angeles, houses our associate in arts, weekend/evening college, and graduate programs. The other campus in Brentwood houses our traditional baccalaureate programs. We also offer online degree programs. While we are primarily a college for women, our nursing, graduate and weekend/evening programs are co-educational. Our varied programs coupled with a diverse student population and rich history rooted in the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, provides opportunities for different approaches and perspectives on how best to infuse civic learning and democratic engagement across our institution. Activities and events such as the annual Women's Leadership Conference and Report on the Status of Women and Girls™, voter registration and education efforts, service-learning opportunities and student-initiated action projects have served as ways for all in the Mount community to live out our mission and fulfill the vision of our founders.

The Director of Women's Leadership and Student Involvement, Dr. Rosalyn Kempf, has primary responsibility for civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives at Mount Saint Mary's University. However, it is truly a collaborative effort across the institution to connect students with opportunities for growth as civically-minded leaders in society. Women's Leadership and Student Involvement along with Community Engagement and our forthcoming Community Bridges Institute provide students, faculty, and staff with resources and opportunities to actively engage as citizens in their campus and local communities.

The first goal of our 2007-2012 strategic plan stated that: "The University will provide an education that enables students to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and character essential for socially responsible leadership in a democratic society." In that spirit, Mount Saint Mary's University has taken several steps over the years to create, facilitate and support programs and activities that move students toward a greater appreciation of their role as citizen-leaders. To continue this work, the department of Women's Leadership and Student Involvement, as part of the current 2013-2018 strategic plan, is developing a campus-wide Women's Leadership and Civic Engagement initiative that is scheduled to launch in 2017.

MSMU has participated in National Voter Registration Day since 2013. We also actively celebrate Constitution Day with voter registration and fun activities and games for students to learn about their rights. In addition, the Women's Leadership and Student Involvement office promotes voter registration beginning at new student orientation where each student receives a voter registration form in their welcome bags. In addition, we hold voter registration and education events throughout the year. This year we also partnered with the History and Political Science department who held its first ever mock caucus event to select nominees for our state of "Mountlandia!" Such engagement opportunities will continue in the fall as we hold our traditional mock presidential debates on campus which we have done during the last three presidential election periods. In 2012, Mount Saint Mary's University first applied for and was selected to participate in NASPA's CLDE Lead Initiative. As a current member of this network, the University remains committed to initiating civic learning and democratic engagement activities for our students, validated with clear learning outcomes.

Our democratic engagement plan, branded as "MSMU Votes," will encompass a variety of programs, events, and collaborative efforts across the University. This will provide universal recognition of our efforts across both campuses.

#### **MSMU Votes Coalition:**

In order to provide students with robust and comprehensive engagement opportunities, we will bring together various stakeholders including faculty, staff, and current students as part of a coalition across both campuses. The group's purpose will be to celebrate and continue the many ways MSMU prepares our students as active citizens and to find new ways to engage all areas of our university community in this important work. It is our hope that this group will serve as ambassadors within their own groups (faculty, staff, and students) to encourage collaboration and support for current and new programs and learning experiences. Given the fact that many staff and faculty work across both campuses, it is hoped that we can connect as a whole group (including virtually) at the beginning of the fall semester with follow-up meetings between individuals and Rosalyn Kempf, who will be coordinating the university's efforts.

#### **Faculty:**

Dr. Helen Boutrous, Chair of History/Political Science Department  
Dr. Jackie Filla, Assistant Professor of History/Political Science  
Dr. Pam Gist, Associate in Arts Dean, Associate Professor, Psychology  
Kim Middleton, Director, Center for Academic Innovation and Creativity  
Lacey Smith, Baccalaureate Dean

#### **Staff:**

Dr. Rosalyn Kempf, Director of Women's Leadership  
Christine Hernandez, Associate Director of Women's Leadership and Student Involvement  
Brittney Plascencia, Assistant Director of Women's Leadership and Student Involvement  
Karla Guzman, Program Coordinator of Women's Leadership and Student Involvement  
Kimberly Terrill, Director of Community Engagement  
Gail Gresser, Director of Campus Ministry  
Heather Brown, Assistant Vice President, Institutional Planning and Research  
Weekend/Evening College Representative - TBD  
Graduate Division Representative - TBD  
MSMU Online Representative – Success Networking Coach

#### **Students:**

Melanie Sava, President, Student Government Association (SGA), Senior Political Science major  
Arlene Valdes, Leadership Scholar, Student Leader, Chalon campus  
TBD, Student Leader, Doheny campus

#### **Shared Responsibility:**

- Women's Leadership and Student Involvement Staff will plan, facilitate and collaborate on programs throughout the academic year, coordinate publicity and communication university-wide.
- Academic deans will assist in communicating with department chairs and faculty to encourage

student participation and collaboration on programs.

- Faculty from History/Political Science will be spearheading various programs – mock presidential debates, issue forums.
- Student Leaders will assist at getting the word out, volunteering at programs and events.
- Community Engagement will reach out to community partners on possible collaborations.
- Various other Student Affairs departments will co-sponsor and provide support for events and programs.
- Representatives from Weekend/Evening College, Graduate Division and MSMU Online will assist in distributing voter registration forms and program publicity to their student populations.

## **Engagement Efforts**

### **Voter Registration:**

- Students will also receive information on how to register via email, OrgSync (our online involvement platform), the myMSMU portal, social media, flyers, and handouts. Voter registration forms will be available in both English and Spanish on both campus. Voter registration drive will be held throughout the academic year at various campus events and programs (see timeline).
- Voter Registration tabling will take place on both campuses at various events and programs including celebrations of Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day. All who visit our table will receive an "MSMU Votes" button.
- Voter registration forms will be distributed to key offices on campus and students will be asked to return them to the Women's Leadership and Student Involvement office for mailing and to ensure they are completed correctly
- Online voter registration links will be placed on the MSMU Votes portal site
- We will request that OIT also place a "Voter Registration" link as part of the recurring announcements on the myMSMU portal site

### **Voter Education:**

We will utilize a variety of methods and non-partisan materials to educate students on candidates and issues.

- An "MSMU Votes" portal site will be created within the myMSMU portal and will include information on MSMU voter programs and events as well as links to the following external sites where students can get more information about registration, find their polling site, and learn about candidates and issues on the ballot. Such sites include:

CA Registrar of Voters: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/>

- Online Registration: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/>

- Voter Guide: <http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/>

Easy Voter Guide: <http://www.easyvoterguide.org/>

Vote 411: <http://www.vote411.org/> League of Women Voters)

SmartVoter: <http://www.votersedge.org/ca/page/smartzvoter>

Project Vote Smart: <http://votesmart.org/>

TurboVote (for individual sign-ups): <https://turbovote.org>

iCitizen: <https://icitizen.com/>

- Weekly voter-related information and frequently-asked questions will be included in our weekly student newspapers (Athenian Weekly and Doheny Happenings).
- In collaboration with the History/Political Science department, we will host a Mock Presidential Debate at our Chalon campus. Students will be able to see their peers take on the roles of the presidential candidates, media, citizens, and even protesters!
- Pizza and Politics: Debate watching parties will be held in the student lounges on both campuses to encourage students to watch and dialogue with one another. All who attend will receive an "MSMU Votes" button.
- Printed Easy Voter Guides will be purchased in both English and Spanish and available at voter education events and in various campus offices.
- Issue Forums: In collaboration with faculty/staff from various departments we plan to hold issue forums on various topics so students can get information and make informed decisions. Dates TBD.

#### **Ballot Access**

- In collaboration with the Transportation department, shuttles will be provided from both campuses to nearby polling places

#### **Get Out the Vote**

- Campus-wide emails will be sent from key individuals on campus encouraging all members of the Mount community to participate in the upcoming election (important deadlines, voter registration, early voting, absentee ballots, polling sites, day before and day after emails, etc.)
- Various forms of print publicity will be used throughout both campuses to publicize election-related information, upcoming programs, and how to vote information

#### **Democratic Engagement Goals**

→ *Increase the number of our traditional undergraduate students who register and vote in the 2016 federal election.*

Mount Saint Mary's University has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) since its launch in 2013. We were able to gain insight into the extent to which students participated in the 2012 federal election which provides us a great foundation for this year's engagement plan. In 2012, MSMU (then MSCM) had a 72% student voter registration rate. Of the students eligible to vote, 53.5% actually voted in the 2012 federal election. As can be seen in Figure 1, we were pleased to see that our institutional student voting rate surpassed that of other private baccalaureate and masters institutions that participated in the study. However, Figure 2 shows that among our traditional undergraduate population who make up a majority students ages 18-21, only 707 or 47.8% of the 1,480 students enrolled in that age group actually voted in the election. As a result, one of our main goals is to increase the number of our traditional undergraduate students who register and vote in the 2016 federal election.

(Figures can be found on next page)

Figure 1

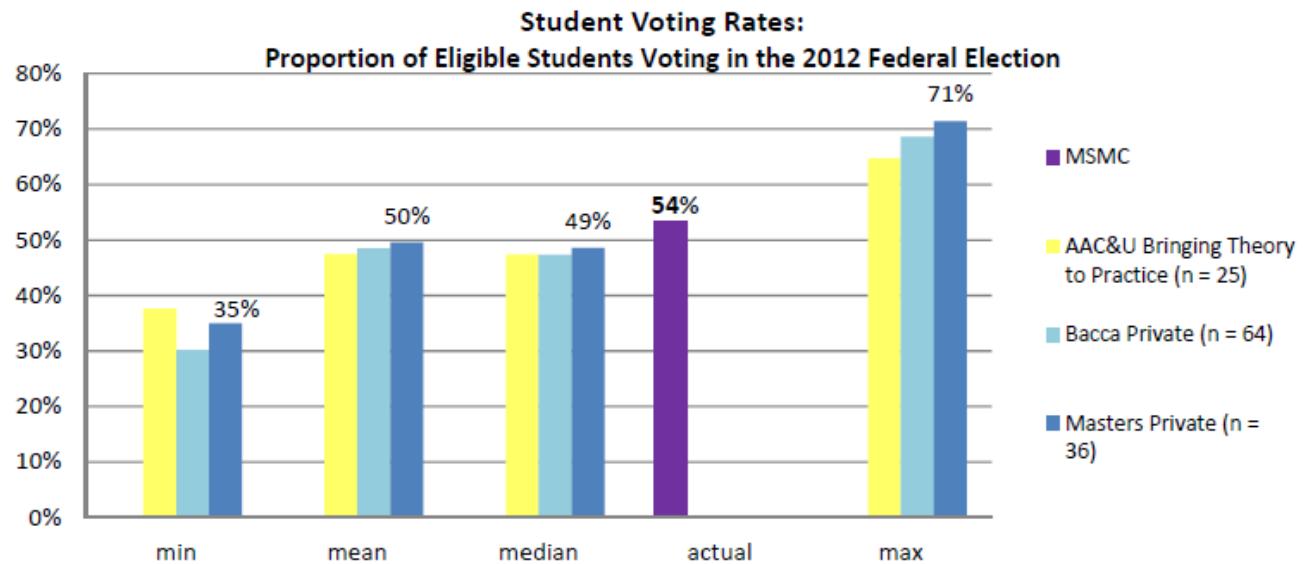
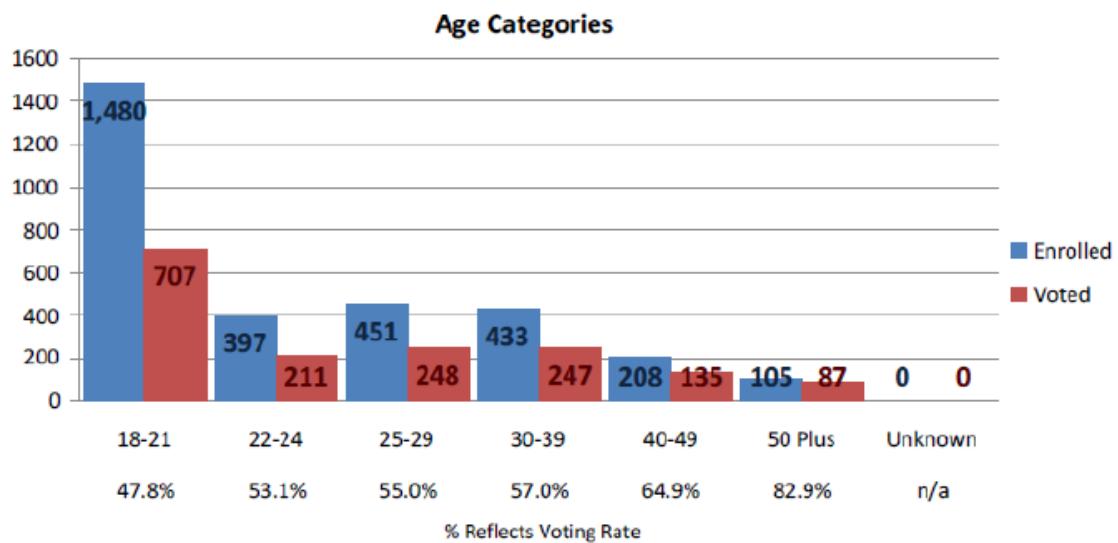


Figure 2



Source: MSMU Office of Institutional Planning and Research

→ *Foster collaboration and support between curricular and co-curricular programs to encourage students to vote*

Women's Leadership and Student Involvement (WLSI) has a long history of collaboration with the History/Political Science department on voter education and engagement programs. While these will continue during this election cycle, the goal is to encourage other academic departments to partner with WLSI and other departments throughout the university so that students hear a common message about the importance of voting and being engaged citizens from various entities on campus. WLSI staff will offer free resources such as publicity, student input and support, and decorations and supplies to academic departments who would like to hold democratic engagement-related programming. In addition, as in past years, WLSI staff will also provide faculty with the names of students who attend various programs should they wish to give them credit for their participation.

→ *Engage students in the process of registration and educating their peers.*

We understand the impact students have on their peers. As a result, we will actively seek out students who would like to take on leadership roles and assist us in our voter registration and education efforts. These will include representatives from our Student Government Association, Student Activities Council, and Leadership Scholars as well as our student employees in Women's Leadership and Student Involvement. Club and organization leaders will also be asked to support voter registration and education efforts at their various events and by encouraging their members to get involved. In addition, any student who would like to help with voter registration and education efforts on campus will be invited to become a part of the team. The team (to be named!) will serve as voting ambassadors and also provide key ideas and input on programs.

### **Measuring Success**

A key indicator of our success will be through NSLVE data that we will receive on the 2016 federal election. As mentioned earlier, we hope to increase the voter registration and voting rate of our traditional undergraduate population. However, the overall success of our efforts will be demonstrated by the extent to which our students are actively involved in voter and election-related programs and activities. We will be able to report attendance numbers at various events and tally how many forms are distributed. Yet true student engagement goes beyond voter registration numbers and actual votes cast. Just as important, and often hard to measure, is the way in which our students are able to articulate their views and perspectives on issues and candidates on the ballot. We will explore ways to capture some of this through a survey after the election to gain some insight into how engaged students were in the election and the effectiveness of specific programs and outreach efforts. Ultimately, we hope that our success will be demonstrated through the continued engagement of our students in local campaigns and elections, campus dialogues, community work, internships, and the development of new student-led programs and organizations.

## MSMU Votes Fall Timeline

<b>First-Year Student Orientation</b>	June 24-25 – Chalon Campus July 22 – Doheny Campus	Voter registration forms included in Orientation bags
<b>Pre-ADN Orientation</b>	July 29	Voter registration forms included in Orientation bags
<b>Transfer Orientation</b>	August 5	Voter registration forms included in Orientation bags
<b>Student Affairs Kick-Off</b>	August 11	Share CLDE programming information with other SA staff
<b>Faculty/Staff Convocation</b>	August 18	Share CLDE programming information with all MSMU faculty and staff
<b>Voter FAQs in Weekly Campus Newsletters</b>	Athenian Weekly and Doheny Happenings distributed every Monday on each campus	FAQs about voter registration, elections, and the voting process
<b>Student Involvement Fairs</b>	August 25 – Doheny Campus	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
	September 1 – Chalon Campus	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Inter-Club Council Meeting</b>	August 30 – Chalon Campus	Ideas to promote voter registration/education among club members/ Possible event collaborations
<b>Constitution Day</b>	September 16 – observed all week on both campuses	Tabling: Constitution fun facts, games; Voter Registration and Education materials Communication: Via email, social media, flyers
<b>Presidential Debate Watching Party #1 (Pizza and Politics)</b>	September 26 – Student Lounges on both campuses	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
<b>National Voter Registration Day</b>	September 27 – both campuses	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials Communication: Via email, social media, flyers
<b>MSMU Mock Presidential Debate (with History/Political Science)</b>	Date TBD	Communication: Via email, social media, flyers
<b>Vice Presidential Debate Watching Party (Pizza and Politics)</b>	October 4 – Student Lounges on both campuses	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
<b>Presidential Debate Watching Party #2 (Pizza and Politics)</b>	October 9 – Student Lounges on both campuses	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
<b>Presidential Debate Watching Party #3 (Pizza and Politics)</b>	October 19 – Student Lounges on both campuses	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials
<b>Week before Voter Registration Deadline</b>	October 17-21	Tabling: Voter Registration and Education materials;

		Communication: Reminders via email, social media, flyers
Last Day to Register to Vote in California	October 24	Communication: Reminders and links to register via email, social media, flyers both week and day before and day of
Last Day to Request Vote-by-Mail Ballot	November 1	Communication: Reminders and links to register via email, social media, flyers both week and day before and day of
Election Day (7:00am – 8:00pm)	November 8	Voting shuttles to nearby polling sites from both campuses/ Communication: Reminders via email, social media, flyers
Pizza and Politics Election Night Coverage	November 8 – Student Lounges on both campuses	
Last Day to for SOS to receive Vote-by-Mail Ballot Postmarked by November 8	November 14	Communication: Reminders via email, social media, flyers both week and day before
Post-Election	November 9	Communication: "Thank you for voting" -- University-wide email, social media, flyers on campus

## Summary

Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles is fully committed to engaging all members of our community in the democratic process. We take this commitment seriously, especially given our status as a women's college and a Hispanic-serving institution with many first-generation students. By providing resources, education, and programming our hope is to encourage students to assume and embrace their full role as active citizens and ultimately to fulfill the promise set forth in our mission to produce "graduates who are committed to using their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their environments, and the world."