

ALL IN CHALLENGE Action Plan

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OVERVIEW

The University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL) is a land-grant research institution committed to civic learning and democratic engagement work as it meets diverse needs for higher education and knowledge in the state’s largest metropolitan community. Our academic programs are enriched through partnerships that link the University to communities, institutions and businesses throughout the region. In 2010 UMSL received recognition from the Carnegie Foundation as a community engaged campus and later that year hired its first director of Community Outreach & Engagement.

UMSL was an early adopter to the American Democracy Project initiative and regularly hosts related civic and community engagement activities across the campus. Different offices throughout the university have stepped up to take responsibility to sustain civic engagement-focused projects including annual events such as Constitution Day, MLK Day of Service, Civic Engagement Day, and programs such as volunteer resource fairs and faculty seminars. Our Constitution Day activities go beyond a mere “observance” of the day and extend to the entire campus community through presentations, forums, contests, and art and word expressions similar to a democracy wall. The UMSL student newspaper, *The Current*, also partners with *The New York Times* for monthly lunch-and-learn programs on current events and critical issues throughout the year.

In addition to the Political Science and the Public Policy Administration departments, UMSL has a few offices and centers related to Civic Engagement that support civic learning. In no particular order they include:

- The Center for Character & Citizenship—engaging in research, education and advocacy to foster the development of character, democratic citizenship and civil society... the Center focuses on generating and disseminating both knowledge and research pertaining to how individuals develop moral and civic character. By providing scholars, educators and social organizations with the tools they need to contribute to this development, the Center plays the role of a think tank, offering workshops, consulting, and professional development. The Center also provides resources and tool kits to assist educators, parents and scholars in character and citizenship education. (<https://characterandcitizenship.org/about-us/overview>)
- The Center for Ethics in Public Life—an initiative established to promote integrity in public service and insure a democratic process that protects public values of all kinds. The Center is one of only a very few university-based programs across the country dedicated to the particularly challenging ethical issues that confront public officials at the federal, state and local levels. Through its planned program of instruction, training and research, the Center seeks to strengthen public confidence and trust in government and to support appointed and elected officials in pursuing careers that are distinguished by honesty and integrity. (<http://cepl.umsl.edu/>)

- The Sue Shear Institute for Women in Public Life – a non-partisan, non-issue institute focused on making government accessible to all Missouri citizens. Though educational programs are open to everyone, the Institute was founded in 1996 to assist women in developing the interest and skills necessary to succeed as full participants within government, serving in elected and appointed office as well as employed policy makers. (<http://www.umsl.edu/sueshear/>)

Local government is a strand in the Masters in Public Policy program. Students in this field along with others with interest are connected with internships in a variety of civic organizations, and offices and campaigns throughout the community. Further, the Student Government Association and the Office of Student Involvement at UMSL have been hosting local legislators to speak to students at different times throughout the year, and individual faculty have these legislators and others who work in government as guest lecturers in their classes. Early in 2016 during the national primaries, UMSL also held two debate viewing events and extended invitations for participation beyond the campus community to area high school students.

Related to Civic Engagement, UMSL has been a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) for the last couple of years coordinated by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University. To date, the study has revealed that UMSL has a high voting rate compared to other universities (even after controlling for student population age, commuter status and the civic health in the state); therefore, NSLVE selected UMSL, along with four other campuses nationally, as a site for a qualitative case study. Interviews and focus groups took place on campus earlier this year (2016). When the study is complete, UMSL will receive an individualized report highlighting our campus climate’s strengths and areas for improvement. A report will also be developed identifying promising practices that other campuses can use.

Ferguson and the events that have taken place there and throughout the St. Louis community and beyond over the past two years continue to spur campus initiatives related to race, equity, health outcomes, trauma, employment, education, etc. These have included forums, service-learning courses, research projects, and health fairs to name a few. The university campus has also hosted dozens of civic meetings during this time for public debate and dialogue. These have included Public Radio, the Ferguson Commission, the Department of Justice and the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to name a few.

While it is evident that there has been an ongoing, campus-wide effort to increase civic learning and participation at UMSL, we are taking advantage of interest in the national elections and related opportunities such as the ALL IN challenge to renew this focus. As a result, there are three areas we hope to address long-term:

1. How to better engender **civil** dialogue around issues that might be contentious.
2. Increase student participation in mid-year and local elections.
3. Cultivate upcoming student leadership by providing meaningful opportunities for ongoing engagement.

With a focus on the impending national elections, UMSL formed a Civic Engagement Coalition in the summer (2016) that began with biweekly meetings to share ideas for programming and strategize for activities in the upcoming months. After semester activities began, the Coalition changed to having monthly meetings, with plans to continue throughout the year.

UMSL Civic Engagement Coalition representatives

- The Office of Academic Affairs
- The Office of Admissions
- The Center for Ethics in Public Life
- The Gender Studies Program
- The Office of Residential Life and Housing
- The Office of Student Administrative Services
- The Office of Student Involvement
- The Sue Shear Center for Women in Public Life
- The Association of Students of the University of Missouri – UMSL representatives
- The Student Government Association
- Sustainability/ Environmental Health & Safety
- The University Program Board
- Other Academic departments: Communication & Media, English, Political Science

There are shared leadership responsibilities for Civic Engagement with those on the coalition team and within all of the Colleges, particularly Art & Sciences, Education, Honors, and the School of Social Work and the School of Fine & Performing Arts.

Community partners

- Local elected officials and area governments
- East-West Gateway
- FOCUS St. Louis
- The League of Women Voters
- Missouri Ethics Commission
- The Missouri Municipal League
- St. Louis County and City election boards
- St. Louis Public Radio
- National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)

Resources

- NSLVE reports on past voter engagement for UMSL students
- Experts and data resources for programs and events
- Enthusiasm from many faculty, staff and students to promote civic involvement
- Accessible public transportation with stops on campus
- Voter registration materials from League of Women Voters
- Civic Engagement Calendar through TritonSync which includes all civic engagement related projects and activities taking place on campus and/or supported by the University departments and organizations. Email reminders sent to students through TritonSync and events and programs listed on *UMSL Daily* calendar have campus-wide reminders the day prior to events.

Focus Areas

- **Voter Registration**
 - Disseminate information about Student voting guide for all states available online at www.campusvoteproject.org
 - Advertise Voter registration with posters and campaign in campus housing and around campus
 - Campus "post-it" project encouraging the campus community to register and vote
 - Reminder messages to faculty to mention/promote in classes
 - Student Government encouragement to all student organizations for promotion to membership
 - Host a training session for students who volunteer to register people
 - Have voter registration materials available in the Office of Student Involvement as well as Political Science and other departments on campus
 - Hold voter registration events during the semester, and specifically on special days including:
 - August 24 & 25 – Expo/Volunteer Fair
 - September 13 & 15 – before/after Constitution Day programs
 - September 27 – National voter registration day
 - October 7 – Leadership Diversity Institute
- **Voter Education**
 - Create a FAQ sheet for students, area residents, etc.
 - Business Writing students write letters to the candidates during the primary process
 - Host Debate watch parties with sponsorship from student groups including The Political Science Academy, Philosophers’ Forum, Associated Black Collegians, Associated Students of the University of Missouri, and College Democrats
 - September 26 – Presidential debate
 - October 9 – Presidential debate local at Washington University
 - October 19 – Presidential debate
 - Centralized debate watch parties open to campus community and others
 - Extend invitations to area high school students
 - Support state and local candidate debates being planned on campus
 - Host and publicize workshops/programs on elections, voting, etc.
 - Residence hall programs
 - October 20 – “A Huge Election” panel and discussion with three political analysts
 - October 31 - “The Landscape of the 2016 Presidential Election” with Dave Robertson, Curators Professor of Public Policy Administration, providing a historical overview and discussion of past and current election cycles at Monday Noon series public program
 - November 8 – Political science students conduct Election Day exit-polling project coordinated by Professor David Kimball

- November 8 – Election Day Trivia on the MSC Bridge
- November 8 – Election Day Watch Party
- December 2 – College of Education Grand Seminar for Educators focused on “The Election Process”
- **Ballot Access**
 - Send out information to advertise deadlines for registration
 - Provide information about polling places and hours
 - Send out link for online sample ballot review
 - Provide free public transportation/ Metrolink passes to students. (UMSL has two Metrolink stops on campus and one bus stop. Metrolink stops at the St. Louis County Board of Elections.)
 - Encourage students to make a logistics “plan” for voting day (when, where, how, and with whom they will travel to vote)
- **Get Out the Vote**
 - Election board representatives speak in classes/on campus and recruit students to serve on election day
 - Reminder to faculty to mention/promote voting in classes
 - Student Government encouragement to all student organizations for promotion to membership
 - Posters and banners to remind people to vote
 - Employ a social media campaign thru Instagram “Triton Eyes” filter with themes related to civic engagement and voting timelines
 - Campus-wide student email reminder to vote
- **Other Civic Engagement Activities (completed and upcoming)**
 - September 12-17 – Bridge Expressions project addressing the question, “How can we secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our children?” in 6 words or less
 - September 13 – *Where Soldiers Come From* film screening with discussion
 - September 14 – *Standing up to Bullying* film screening and discussion
 - September 15 – UMSL Triton Toastmaster’s meeting with speeches focused on the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution
 - September 15 – *The 'General Welfare' Gets Specific: Sex, Skin, and the Constitution*-panel program
 - October 14 - Campus Compact Civic Action Planning Institute (UMSL as host and participating institution)
 - November 2 – *Campaign Financing: A Brave New World* discussion with Wally Siewert, Director of the Center for Ethics in Public Life
 - November 17 – *Post-Election Conversations/* Facilitated discussion on the 2016 Presidential elections and subsequent emotions, feelings, and opinions generated by the results.
 - School of Social Work – Bellerive Hall Student Lounge
 - Gender Studies Program & Office of Sexuality and Gender Diversity – Lounge
 - December 7 - *Black Lives Matter* panel and discussion

- February 3, 2017 - *Building Vibrant Partnerships: St. Louis Community and University Engagement Summit*
- March 24, 2017 – *Ethics, Money & Politics conference* hosted by the Center for Ethics in Public Life
- Encourage future designated Heritage and History month activities to be focused on civic engagement history, status and related themes