



All In Democracy Challenge Action Plan 2020

I. INTRODUCTION

a. The University

The University of Maryland is a public research university located in College Park, Maryland. Founded in 1856, it serves as the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland and is the state's original land-grant institution, serving approximately 41,000 undergraduate and graduate students. In keeping with its mission, the University recognizes the importance of educating all undergraduate and graduate students to engage, interact, and work effectively in an increasingly diverse world.

b. Voting and Registration Rates

The university participates in the Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) which measures voter registration and participation rates at over 750 colleges nationwide. During the 2016 Presidential election the university increased the registration rate from the 2012 election by 5.2% to 85.7% of all eligible students, while the total number of registered students who voted in the election increased by 3.1% to 70.4%.

For the 2018 midterm election, the number of students registered to vote and of whom voted slightly decreased. While this is true, the percentage of students registered to vote for the 2018 midterm elections increased from 2014 by 8.6% to 85.3%, and the voting rate of registered students increased as well by 28.8% to 53.9%.

The data from the NSLVE report and other campus surveys indicates that there is a growing trend among our students away from in-person voting in favor of early and absentee voting. In our university Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) survey of upperclassmen

following the 2018 midterm election, 46% of our students responded that they preferred to vote early or absentee, while 44% of students favored in-person voting on Election Day. The university aims to take advantage of this trend by encouraging students to plan ahead of time by (1) making a plan to vote, and (2) being aware of election deadlines in Maryland and in their home states, such as registration deadlines and absentee mail-in deadlines.

The university recognizes that innovation and advocacy are necessary to inspire social change and seeks to improve both registration and participation rates in the upcoming 2020 presidential election.

c. Campus Climate

The CAWG survey of upperclassmen mentioned above provides further insights into our campus climate that aid in our efforts to create an effective action plan.

In the spring 2019 semester, 52% (1,834) of students in Professional Writing courses completed the "University of Maryland Student Survey." That semester, a series of questions were asked about the 2018 midterm election. Some key results are as follows:

- 96% of students who voted believe it is their civic responsibility to vote
- 75% of students who voted felt that the results of the election would directly impact their lives
- 53% of students who voted agreed that there was a culture of voting at the university
- 51% of students who did not vote did not believe they had enough information to vote
- 91% of students surveyed agreed that if UMD provided access to stamps and envelopes, more students would be encouraged to vote absentee.

d. TerpsVote Steering Committee

The university is currently participating in both the All In Democracy Challenge and the Big Ten Voter Registration Challenge. Both these efforts have been combined into one steering committee co-chaired by the TerpsVote Staff Co-Chair, Alison Barlow, and Student Co-Chair, Alexandra (Sasha) Marquez. The committee is advised by Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs John Zacker. The steering committee is comprised of faculty, staff, and students as follows:

- Alison Barlow, Leadership and Community Service Learning (staff)
- Alexandra (Sasha) Marquez, Student Government Association (student)
- John Zacker, Office of Vice President for Student Affairs (faculty)
- Simon Sheaff, Graduate Student Government (student)
- Dan Alpert, Student Government Association (student)
- Benjamin Parks, College Park Scholars (staff)
- Michael Goodman, Department of Fraternity and Sorority Life (staff)
- Greeshma Anand, MaryPIRG (student)
- Matthew Blum, Residence Hall Association (student)
- Daniel Ostick, Department of Resident Life (staff)

Mike Hanmer, Center for American Politics and Citizenship (faculty)
Paul Brown, School of Public Policy (staff)
Rya Griffiths, City of College Park (staff)
Andrew Fellows, College of Information Studies, (faculty).

II. PLANS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION and ENGAGEMENT

A. Spring 2020 Initiatives

- a. Hire a new TerpsVote intern for the Summer and Fall 2020 semester - through an agreement among the Big Ten institutions, university presidents agreed to commit \$10,000 for public service interns to support the Big Ten student voting challenge.
 - i. The hiring process for this intern has been suspended until a further date due to a budget freeze caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. Initiatives completed or underway
 - i. Voter registration through TurboVote at various tabling events, like the annual Second Look Fair, and virtually, through social media promotion and newsletter/listserv advertisement.
 - ii. Advertising and planning for the mail-in Maryland presidential primary election on June 2
 1. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland primary has been moved to the first week of June. In April, we began an aggressive social media campaign advertising the new date, how to register, and how to update mailing addresses to ensure reception of a ballot. Additional advertising for the primary has been done via different newsletters and listservs in the various schools and departments on campus, including a campus-wide weekly newsletter prepared by our Vice President of Student Affairs.
 - iii. Creation and dissemination of a fact-sheet about the mail-in June 2 primary to inform student voters about the almost-weekly changes to the election and keep them updated on the latest information
 - iv. Bringing together a diverse group of students from across campus for discussions about voting, focusing particularly on students from the fields of study who vote at the lowest rates, based on our NSELVE data
 - v. Update the TerpsVote website with a new design, information about the Maryland presidential primary, and new Fall 2020 registration, early voting, and absentee deadlines for all 50 states
- c. Establish November 3 election goal of increasing voter turnout to 75%
- d. Prepare and submit application for Voter Friendly Campus designation
- e. Distribute NSLVE report to senior campus leadership
- f. Participate in Big Ten Voter Challenge meetings
- g. Request that the Registrar's Office redesign the student registration page to highlight "register to vote" and to develop a banner to be displayed close to the election
- h. Send out campus-wide email targeted to students to encourage them to register to vote and participate in primary elections.

B. Summer 2020

- a. Develop a communications and marketing strategy beginning in September 2020 and leading up to the presidential election.
 - i. The communications and marketing strategy will be designed to both raise general awareness on campus and target specific populations that were identified as less likely to vote, according to our NSLVE report.
 - ii. Targeted messaging will be created for less-likely-to-vote groups, like STEM and business students. The focus of this messaging will be why these students should care about democracy and civic engagement and how specific federal and state government decisions affect their daily lives and careers. These messages will be disseminated through the deans and administrations of each college on campus, as well as student groups involved in those colleges, so that students are engaged by the student leaders, professors, and administrators they know best.
 - iii. Specific tactics and content include:
 - 1. Using the #TerpsVote hashtag in all social media posts and other communications.
 - 2. Designing branded social media images to ensure consistency across TerpsVote Coalition messaging, including the creation of a temporary profile picture frame for National Voter Registration Day and Election Day
 - 3. Creating short videos that would range from animated explainers of the importance of voting to student testimonials of why they care about civic engagement
- b. Establish partnerships with large student organizations, as well as involve representatives from various academic units who can help raise awareness, register students to vote, and encourage students to vote absentee.
- c. Request that the Vice President for Student Affairs add a brief statement in her summer letter to new students regarding the importance of registering to vote and voting
- d. Request that the Student Government President make prominent mention of voter engagement during the new student convocation
- e. Embed voter registration and voting-themed messages throughout the virtual new student orientation
- f. Update messaging and marketing efforts throughout the summer, as needed, based on adjustments made to the university calendar, in-person learning, and social distancing requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic

C. Fall 2020

- a. National Voter Registration Day events
 - i. Modify in-person tabling events as needed based on social distancing guidelines for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. Homecoming 2020
 - i. The University of Maryland usually hosts various competitions in the week leading up to homecoming and during homecoming weekend. The TerpsVote Coalition is hoping to add a voter registration competition to the events with a prize for the student organization with the highest percentage of registered voters among its membership.

- c. Event tabling or virtual involvement at various fall semester campus-wide events, including,
 - i. First Look Fair
 - ii. Free Fest (Resident Life)
 - iii. The Stamp All-Niter
 - iv. Welcome Weekend
- d. Develop and implement a communication strategy throughout the fall semester leading up to Election Day
 - i. Publish updated early voter registration dates for all 50 states
 - ii. Communicate the importance of obtaining absentee ballots or early voters to students particularly out of state students
 - iii. Coordinate University-wide communication campaign
- e. Engage with the Undocumented Student Coordinator and the International Student Services Office to collaborate on ways to engage undocumented and international students in the political and civic process, even though these students are not eligible to vote.
- f. Election Day - Get Out The Vote
 - i. Fund the purchase of stamps and envelopes for absentee ballots to be handed out to students in the month leading up to the general election.
 - ii. Train students to go into classrooms, as requested by professors, and give short five to ten minute presentations about registering to vote and voting absentee in the three weeks leading up to the general election.
 - iii. Work with student organizations to fund and plan a Party at the Polls at at least one of our on-campus voting locations.
 - iv. Civic Nation has expressed interest in partnering with the Center for American Politics and Citizenship to bring its #VoteTogether movement to the University of Maryland. #VoteTogether creates celebrations at voting locations and aims to create a sense of community and increase voter turnout.

III. VOTER EDUCATION

- A. Promote civic and voter education related lectures and speakers through TerpsVote Coalition.
- B. Develop a curriculum module for the freshman UNIV100 course, which will allow all instructors to download the module and lead their class in discussions and activities regarding the 2020 presidential election
 - a. Discussions will include education about voter registration and absentee deadlines, information about whether it's best to register to vote in College Park or in a student's home state, and information about what policies, laws, and initiatives are enacted by the different levels of government on student's ballots in November.
 - b. Activities will include mobile Q&A's, where students can get up and move to post sticky-notes around the room based on their answers to questions, and spectrum based questions, where students can line up based on how strongly they feel about certain voting-focused issues.
- C. GVPT479K: Seminar in American Politics; Presidential Elections
 - a. This class will explore American Presidential elections. While noting the current campaign unfolding around us, we are interested in the process, not just the events of

2020. We examine the institutions that structure candidates' and voters' behavior and how they have developed historically. We also look at American Presidential elections in comparative perspective, noting electoral arrangements in other countries.

- D. Collaborate with Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland <https://capc.umd.edu/> which might create a new section of its website to serve as a landing page to direct students towards information about voter registration, voting laws, candidates, and nonpartisan voter guides.
- E. Connect student voter registration to student employment - as students are hired on campus by large scale employers (RecWell, Stamp, Resident Life, Dining, C&VS) include voter registration opportunities in payroll paperwork.
- F. Explore opportunities with the athletics department to promote voter registration, absentee voting, early voting, and voter education at athletic events.
 - a. Update these plans accordingly based on social distancing guidelines in place for the Fall 2020 semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The University of Maryland System recently completed an audit of all system institutions in order to determine the degree that Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement is being practiced. A report due to be released in the coming months will provide recommendations for all systems institutions. The TerpsVote Coalition will work collaboratively on any initiatives resulting from this report.

The university is currently engaged in the following partnerships:

- President's National Honor Roll
- Campus Compact - Mid-Atlantic
- National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement
- Big Ten Voter Challenge
- Baltimore Collegetown Voter
- All In Democracy Challenge
- Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation

The University of Maryland provides a rich array of learning experiences around civic engagement and leadership. However, without clearly defined expectations and a mission that assembles them into a coherent whole, our students may not graduate with a sense of empowerment as civically engaged leaders in their careers and communities.

We recognize that students come to college to prepare for lives of personal satisfaction and rewarding careers. They also seek to address society's problems by engaging in community based research, social values work, contributing to a culture of entrepreneurial good, and a commitment to community service and philanthropy. As one of the nation's top public research universities, the flagship of the University System of Maryland, and a land-grant institution, the University of Maryland must educate students that they can both do good and do well, each in his or her own unique ways. It is the university's fundamental and compelling responsibility to prepare students for lives of wholeness and integrity. We

must prepare students in all majors and career paths to be civically engaged citizens, scholars, and leaders.

The University of Maryland already excels in providing a rich array of educational experiences that address these areas. However, we must become more intentional about defining our desired learning outcomes in order for our students to understand the compelling nature and high level of our expectations of them—to become intentional learners. We must also establish a mission that assembles these outcomes into a coherent whole so that our students graduate with a sense of empowerment as civically engaged citizens, scholars, and leaders.

The TerpsVote Coalition will work with campus leaders to design a civic learning and democratic engagement plan building on the work of a task force report issued in 2004 to advance and guide the university in creating a model to advance civically engaged leadership while creating further opportunities for students to learn about and practice civic engagement and leadership. Suggested actions include:

- a. Identify existing campus civic engagement initiatives and determine a larger campus collaborative to build on existing efforts – Do Good Campus, Democracy Then and Now, Campus Compact, Campus Fabric, among others to be determined
- b. Establish campus-wide civic engagement coalition and ongoing steering committee to oversee efforts building on Democracy Challenge
- c. Establish a campus-wide civic engagement vision and mission
- d. Identify existing civic engagement efforts on the campus and develop methods for promoting them to students
- e. Evaluate the development of learning outcomes to be used with civic engagement strategies.

V. ASSESSMENT

- a. The TerpsVote Coalition steering committee will evaluate data from the NSLVE to determine the degree to which we have been successful in achieving our goals of increasing voter turnout and increasing the number of students registered to vote.
- b. Data reported through TurboVote will be analyzed to assess voter registration efforts.
- c. The TerpsVote Coalition will again engage the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) to survey upperclassmen about the campus climate surrounding voting and voter registration on campus.