



## ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge | 2020 Action Plan

### **ALVERNIA UNIVERSITY**

#### **Overview**

The Mission of Alvernia University in part is to form “engaged citizens and ethical leaders with moral courage.” Participation in the electoral process is the foundation of being an engaged citizen. The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy. So it is only fitting that if our mission is to encourage civic engagement, we should inspire our students to both register to vote and vote. Consequently, we are planning a series of targeted announcements and special events in order to give specific attention to voter registration, voting encouragement, and voter education.

#### **Coalition**

Our efforts will be supported by a campus based group of faculty, staff, key students, and supported by others in our community.

- Bret Krotee – Student Voting Coordinator, Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Coordinator of the Veterans Center, and Assistant Men’s Soccer Coach.
- Staff from the Holleran Center for Community and Global Engagement, led by Dr. Rudy Ruth, Director of the Holleran Center.
- Staff from the Student Activities Office, under the direction of Karolina Dreher, Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life.
- Faculty members from Communications, Philosophy, and Political Science, including Professors Jodi Radosh, Victoria Williams, Tim Blessing and Diane Kraft.
- The leadership of our Student Government Association and our Political Science Club.

## **Background**

Alvernia is a private, Franciscan university that offers undergraduate, graduate, and adult education programs located at three areas in Pennsylvania. The main campus is located in Reading, with branch campuses in Philadelphia and Schuylkill Counties. Our total enrollment approaches 3,000 students, approximately 1,400 of whom are full-time traditional undergraduates. Our entering freshman class is composed of approximately 400, largely from Pennsylvania, but with a significant number of students from New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Delaware, with a scattering of students from other states across the country. Our adult and graduate populations are almost exclusively from Pennsylvania.

## **Description of Work**

Our efforts will be in two distinct, but related phases. Initially we will concentrate on voter registration efforts. Later in the fall, we will focus our attention to voter education and encouragement.

- ***Voter Registration***
  - Each incoming student will receive a voter information sheet stating how to access the Pennsylvania voter registration online form, with a note of personal encouragement to register and to vote, as well as a referral for information about registration in home districts in her/his New Student Orientation (NSO) folder.
  - Following our New Student Orientation, a series of periodic communications will be sent to all students using email and social media (and other forms of communication, when possible) focusing on voter registration. This will continue up until the Pennsylvania voter registration deadline in early October. These communications will include information about the voter registration process and state voter deadlines. Some of the announcements will have a relevant topical theme (e.g., commemoration of September 11, Constitution Day, National Voter Registration Day). This communication will also include referral for information about where to obtain a Pennsylvania voter registration form on campus (and online) and about registration in the home districts of our students.
- ***Voter Education***
  - Specific reference to voter registration and voting encouragement will be included in the remarks at New Student Orientation.

- Our Constitution Day commemorations will include sessions featuring faculty, staff, and key student leaders. We will also reach out to local organizations for support and/or educational offerings. There will be a voter registration table located on campus.
- ***Voting Process***
  - Following the Pennsylvania voter registration deadline, our announcements will shift to voter education and voting encouragement. We will provide information about securing and submitting absentee ballots, the location of polling places, and how to vote using a voting machine (NEW machines in 2019).
  - Our campus hosts the polling place for our district. We will provide information to students about the location of their polling location and the hours students can vote.
- ***Voter Turnout***
  - Specific attention to turning out the vote will be the focus of the final announcement in the weekly series.
  - According to data submitted by the previous manager of our campus program, in 2018 approximately 75% of our students registered to vote and 50% of those actually voted. Since 2020 is a Presidential election year, we anticipate that both figures will be increase.

### **Timeline 2020**

- August 27 Voter registration information sheet and notes of encouragement in NSO folders
- September 1 Periodic voter registration encouragement announcements begin
- September 17 Constitution Day commemorative activities, with voter registration and voting encouragement theme
- September 22 National Voter Registration Day information table
- October 5 Announcements shift to voter education and voting encouragement
- November 3 Election Day
- November 16 Assessment commences
- December 7 Assessment analysis commences

- January 4      Assessment results dissemination to key staff, faculty, and student leaders for use in shaping future efforts

### **Measuring Success**

In the past, we have used outcomes of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which we most recently received in September of 2019. We were recognized as a university committed to increasing college student voting rates, receiving a Silver Seal for achieving a student voting rate between 30-39%

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