



# Mason Votes

Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan 2020



# *About George Mason University*

George Mason University is one of Virginia's youngest institutions, but has grown to be the largest public research university in the state of Virginia. At George Mason we are committed to graduating engaged citizens and well-rounded scholars who are prepared to act and tackle global questions and issues.

Our proximity to the Nation's Capital places us in the middle of the critical conversations, policies, and decision-making that impact the future of not just our campus, but our nation and our world. We draw students who are very interested in politics and policy and are able to have their classrooms extend from the wall of campus into Washington, DC and beyond.



# George Mason University At a Glance

- Located in Fairfax, Va., 15 miles from Washington, D.C.
- 38,000 students (6,100 residential)
- Students from 130 countries, 50 states
- 82 undergraduate programs, 89 master's, 39 doctoral, law
- 33rd in educational innovation – *U.S. News & World Report*
- A *Money* “best value” college



# *George Mason University At a Glance*

## **Mission of George Mason University**

A public, comprehensive, research university established by the Commonwealth of Virginia in the National Capital Region, we are an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world.

## **The Mason Graduate**

- An engaged citizen.
- A well-rounded scholar.
- Prepared to act.



# Mason Votes

*Mason's collaborative approach to democratic engagement*

- Mason Votes committee leads the University effort around voter education and engagement in collaboration with our local Board of Elections
- The Mason Votes committee is comprised of representatives from both academic and student affairs:
  - Student Involvement
  - University Life Central Office
  - Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning
  - Student Government Association
  - Student Media
  - Political Science Department



# *Mason Votes - Education*

## **Website – Static Content**

- Registration Information
- Voter Guides
- Department of Elections

## **Website – Student Generated Content**

- Election News
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Issue Education and Discussion
- Spin Room (radio show)





# Mason Votes - Campus Engagement

## Host Campus Watch Parties

- Debates
- Results

## Educational Events/Issue Forums

- Registration
- Campus polling place

## Community Building

- Promotional Materials
  - T-shirts
  - Stickers

## Social Media and Event Marketing

- Voter registration deadlines
- Candidate visits



# 2016 George Mason University NSLVE Data

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | George Mason University

## YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

### Voting and Registration Rates

2016 Voting Rate

**64.9%**

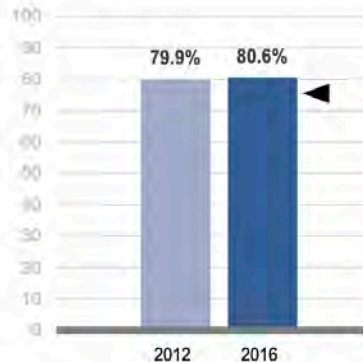
CHANGE  
FROM 2012

**3.6**

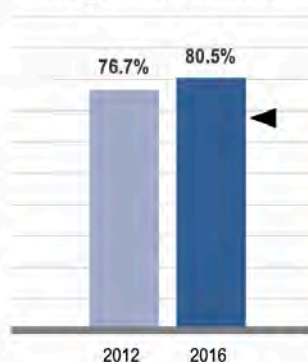
2016 VOTING RATE  
FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

**50.4%**

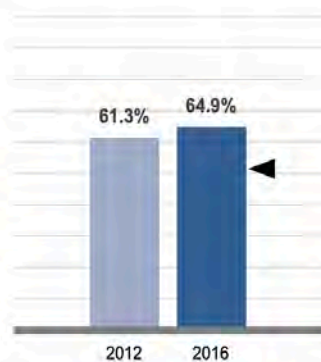
Registration Rate



Voting Rate of  
Registered Students



Voting Rate



◀ All Institutions, 2016

	2012	2016	Change
Total student enrollment	33,034	35,339	↑ 2,305
Age under 18/Unknown	(126)	(113)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(1,840)	(2,563)	
FERPA records blocked	(12)	(17)	
Total eligible voters	31,056	32,646	↑ 1,590
Number of students who registered	24,807	26,305	↑ 1,498
Number of students who voted	19,037	21,174	↑ 2,137
Registration rate	79.9%	80.6%	↑ 0.7
Voting rate of registered students	76.7%	80.5%	↑ 3.8
Voting rate	61.3%	64.9%	↑ 3.6
Difference from all institutions	+14.4	+14.5	



# 2018 George Mason University NSLVE Data

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | George Mason University

## YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | MIDTERM ELECTIONS

### Voting and Registration Rates

2018 Voting Rate

52.4%

CHANGE  
FROM 2014

+27.8

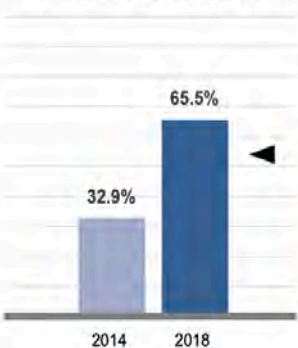
2018 VOTING RATE  
FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

39.1%

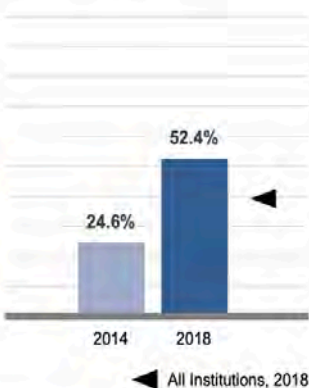
Registration Rate



Voting Rate of  
Registered Students



Voting Rate



	2014	2018	Change
Total student enrollment	33,806	37,789	↑ 3,983
Age under 18/Unknown	(123)	(123)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(2,131)	(3,159)	
FERPA records blocked	(17)	(18)	
Total eligible voters	31,535	34,489	↑ 2,954
Number of students who registered	23,566	27,597	↑ 4,031
Number of students who voted	7,745	18,066	↑ 10,321
Registration rate	74.7%	80.0%	↑ 5.3
Voting rate of registered students	32.9%	65.5%	↑ 32.6
Voting rate	24.6%	52.4%	↑ 27.8
Difference from all institutions	+4.9	+13.3	

# ***2020 Voter Registration Goals***

Voter turnout is very strong at GMU in comparison to peer institutions. Much of the success of voter engagement efforts is due to our proximity to Washington, DC and the desire of already political engaged students to attend a University like George Mason.

Our goal this year is to target the academic disciplines that have had historically lower registration and turnout with relevant voter education related to their learning to nudge our turnout even higher for this presidential election.

- 1. Increase our total eligible voter registration rate from 80% to 85% for the 2020 Presidential Election**
- 2. Increase our voter turnout rate from 64.9% (2016 Presidential) to 70% for 2020 Presidential Election**
- 3. Target voter registration outreach to academic areas where student voting was lowest to increase both registration and turnout in Business, Engineering, and Biological Sciences**

# ***2020 Voter Education and Engagement Goals***

Voter engagement is very strong at GMU in comparison to peer institutions. Much of the success of voter engagement efforts is due to our proximity to Washington, DC and the desire of already political engaged students to attend a University like George Mason.

In order to build upon the success of a relatively small coalition, our goal this year is to broaden the Mason Votes committee to include additional stakeholders, modify our efforts to include virtual engagement, and enhance the dialogue around difficult topics.

- 1. Increase participation from academic partners and faculty through democratic curriculum workshops and course resources**
- 2. Create virtual voter engagement initiatives including a video covering basic voter education and registration information with updated education given the context of voting during COVID-19**
- 3. Expand the Mason Votes network to include increased collaboration from students, first year experience, and deliberative dialogue programming**



# *New Strategies for 2020*

In addition to programming already in place, the Mason Votes committee plans to incorporate the following new initiatives in order to increase our voter registration and turnout.

- Democratic Engagement Student Staff
  - Paid student staff to work on website, communications, student events and programs
- Virtual Watch Parties
- Video in Partnership with GMUTV
  - Video to be shared during first year orientation
  - Video to be shared with faculty to include as part of a lesson in their course
- “Voting Buddies”
  - Accountability planning for voting (whether mail-in or in person)
- Academic Partnerships
  - Flash talks from faculty
  - Democratic engagement curriculum training for faculty

# *Timeline for 2020 Engagement*

February 2020 – May 2020

- Phase 1: Voter Engagement Steering Committee Planning Meetings

April 2020 – June 2020

- Phase 2: Communication strategy planning for summer and fall

May 2020 – August 2020

- Phase 3: Fall program planning and campus partner meetings

August 2020 – November 2020

- Phase 4: Promote campus events and registration

September 2020 – November 2020

- Phase 5: Final communication push and strategy

## *Data Sources and Assessment*

- George Mason University participates in the National Study on Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
- Our partnership with our local board of elections also provides us with information on students registered on campus and those who vote using our on-campus polling location (though this may look different due to COVID-19)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data
- Attendance at programming and events
- Views of videos shared during virtual orientation and welcome programs



## *Point of Contact*



Community Engagement & Civic Learning

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