

MC VOTES

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A Campaign for Civic Engagement

Maryville College

ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

FALL 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MC VOTES: A Campaign for Civic Engagement is an action plan for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. This plan will be implemented at Maryville College for students who are disengaged from the voting process. MC VOTES begins in Fall 2018 and will end in Spring 2019. The plan was developed in response to an SGA resolution calling for a more engaged student body and to fulfill institutional priorities and objectives as set forth by the College's strategic plan. MC VOTES was developed and will be implemented by Thomas Mitchell, Bonner Special Projects Coordinator, Center for Campus Ministry, in collaboration with the leadership team listed below.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership of the MC VOTES planning team is comprised of students who possess a dedicated interest in civic engagement promotion and staff whose positions facilitate innovations in civic learning and engagement. The size of the leadership team reflects the founding stage of this work. Following the successful execution of this first iteration of MC VOTES, the team will focus on expanding the leadership team to include student, staff, and faculty stakeholders from significant demographic groups based on NSLVE data, priorities outlined in the College's forthcoming strategic plan, and the capacity of individual departments and offices.

Thomas Mitchell, Bonner Special Projects Coordinator (Campus Lead)

Rev. Dr. Anne Mckee, Chaplain and Director of Church and College Scholars

Ali L., Student, President of MC Votes

Alex R., Student, Vice-President of MC Votes

COMMITMENT

The college's mission statement opens reading: "Maryville college prepares students for lives of citizenship and leadership..." This mission coupled with the ethos "do good on the largest possible scale" established by our founder, Rev. Thomas Anderson lays a solid foundation upon which the college has constructed its commitment to civic learning and engagement. Additionally, Maryville is preparing its application for the Elective Classification on Community Engagement, which has provided space for all areas of the college to closely examine and self-reflect on the work produced in support of the college's strategic plan. Moreover, the education goals of the college are designed to support and enhance "students' readiness to act as informed and responsible citizens...in an interconnected and diverse world."

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These commitments are consistently communicated to all members of the college community, including prospective students and families, students, staff, faculty, and alumni via the college website, admissions materials, public presentations, and town halls.

LANDSCAPE

Maryville College benefits from a robust array of co-curricular and scholarship programs that have a distinct focus on civic learning and engagement. Through the Center for Civic Engagement, Maryville is one of only 37 schools in the nation, and the only one in East Tennessee to offer a Certified Nonprofit Professional credential. The credential is indicative of exceptional preparation for entry-level positions at a number of nonprofit agencies. In addition to the CNP credential, the College offers students the ability to study or intern in the nation's capital via the "Washington Experience," engages students in literacy education and policy analysis via the "Student Literacy Corps," and, since 2015, has been an active competitor in the Hult Prize competition, which challenges student across the world to combine their rigorous academic preparation and creativity to solve social issues of global importance. In addition to these experiences, students also benefit from the Bonner Scholars Program.

The Bonner Scholars program at Maryville College is funded via an endowment that was established by the Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation. The program offers first-generation and low-EFC students with the opportunity to attend the College in exchange for a commitment to perform 10 hours of community service each week that they are enrolled at the institution. In return, the scholarship provides a student with a significant scholarship and a monthly stipend. A "common commitment" of the Bonner Scholars Program is Civic Engagement, which is illustrated through the various clubs and organizations that are led by Bonner Scholars, including: SGA, Peace & World Concerns, Black Student Association, and MC Votes.

The above co-curricular programs and scholarship programs serve as catalysts for civic engagement at Maryville College. In addition these institutional programs, there are numerous student clubs and organizations that reflect the College's commitment to civic engagement. Among others, these clubs include: Circle K, a campus affiliate of the Kiwanis Club, the Environmental Action Team, Campus Democrats and Republicans, Global Citizen Organization, Peace & World Concerns, and, an active student newspaper, the Highland Echo.

While these programs and organizations provide a strong foundation on which to build voter engagement and education programs, there is still a fairly challenging road ahead due to internal and external barriers to the voting process. These barriers include staff capacity, communication, and the unique realities of Tennessee state law pertaining to voter registration and participation. A significant barrier to continued work on this civic engagement initiative lies with the capacity of our staff. The amount of man hours necessary to commit to this plan simply do not exist among

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current staff. This is due to the reality that much of this work needs to be planned and executed during what is arguably the busiest portion of the academic year, new students are entering and returning are inevitable overextending themselves in pursuit of new ideas for a club or their academics. In addition to our capacity barrier, we will receive our first NSLVE report in Spring 2019. As a result, we do not have campus specific information regarding voter registration and participation rates, which would otherwise be able to provide data indicating the areas in which we should focus our efforts. In addition to these internal barriers, Tennessee's voter laws will have a significant adverse effect on the results of this plan.

Although MC VOTES has placed a priority on engaging First-year students, the group is aware that many of those students may be unable to actually vote due to a Tennessee state law that requires first-time voters to vote in-person. This law establishes a high barrier for Tennessee residents who attend Maryville College, but registered to vote at their home address. Moreover, while our campus is one of a small handful in the state with an on-campus polling location, the location is not an early voting site. As a result, even the students who reside within Blount County are unable to vote at the on-campus location, unless their registered address is within the site's precinct. We are grateful for our relationship the Blount County Election Commission, which has been an invaluable resource through this process of better understanding the various ways in which Tennessee's voter laws affect Maryville College students.

GOALS

The overarching goal of MC Votes is to increase voter education, engagement, and participation in campus, local, state, and federal elections. The immediate goal of this plan is to establish MC Votes and accurately assess the current landscape of voter engagement and participation. Following the receipt of the College's NSLVE report in the spring, MC Votes will engage in a strategic planning process to determine goals and priorities through the 2020 election cycle.

STRATEGY

The Center for Campus Ministry staff will oversee efforts to involve the College in the National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement and the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge. Additionally, CCM staff will serve as the founding advisor for the student organization formed as part of this plan, MC Votes. Additionally, MC Votes will host three voter registration drives at the following events:

- September 9: Opportunities of Lifetime Fair (MC Votes tabling)
- September 25: National Voter Registration Day (League of Women Voters tabling)
- October 4-9: Voter Registration Deadline Sweep (MC Votes tabling)

REPORTING

Initially, the results of this plan will be shared with the leadership team of MC VOTES and faculty/staff stakeholders. Future decisions to share this plan will be made in consultation the President's Cabinet.

EVALUATION

Following the conclusion of the 2018 election cycle and the receipt of the NSLVE report, the MC VOTES leadership team will conduct an evaluation of this plan with the goal of increasing future effectiveness and addressing issues that arose during the operational period of the plan. The leadership team will use a combination of formal and informal assessments to measure the awareness of this campaign across campaign and its ultimate impact in whether an individual decided to register and/or participate in the voting process. The results of the evaluation will be shared according to the opinion of the president's cabinet.