



# BEARCATS VOTE

## Campus Action Plan

May 2018





Bogey the Bearcat and McKenna Scaturro (BA Political Science, 2017), Fall 2016

### **TEAM LEADERS/CONTACTS:**

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McKendree ALL IN Action Plan  
 Bearcats Vote

# SECTION I: Executive Summary

McKendree University has a long history and commitment to civic engagement and service learning. Based on the University's mission and strategic plan, we seek not only to provide an excellent academic experience but also a wide variety of intellectual opportunities beyond the classroom by offering forums for lectures and discussions about current issues and events.

Moving forward, we will build on the activities we have organized over the last few years, while also forming partnerships with organizations such as Illinois Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), Campus Compact, and the St. Clair County Clerk's Office, in the hopes of hosting debates, town hall meetings, and other events. Our immediate goals center on:

- establishing a polling place on campus for the 2018 general elections
- increasing 2018 student voter turnout to 27%, a 7.5% increase over 2014
- targeting specific student groups (majors, organizations, sports) to spur increased interest in voting

Our long-term goals include fostering a strong sense of civic engagement among our campus community with the expectation of increased student voting turnout and involvement in the political process.

The 2018 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement report and other tools will help us gauge the success of our efforts.

Overall, by joining the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and other initiatives, we are encouraging students to use their voices in the electoral process and to cultivate a practice of community engagement so that after graduation they will be lifelong responsible citizens. For example, in hosting debates students learn how to proactively engage in dialogue around difference. This opportunity prepares them for these conversations in their homes, work places, and social settings. This undertaking ties in well with McKendree's mission to "encourage broader vision, enriched purpose, engagement with community, commitment to responsible citizenship, openness to new ideas and dedication to lifelong learning." (McKendree University Mission Statement <http://www.mckendree.edu/offices/president/mission.php>.)



## SECTION II: ALL IN CAMPUS LEADERSHIP

McKendree's Bearcats Vote 2018 team is led by Dr. Ann Collins, Associate Professor of Political Science, and Paula Martin, Director of Holman Library. These leaders work with a larger committee of individuals committed to strengthening civic engagement on our campus.

McKendree's ALL IN Campus committee includes students, staff and faculty from a variety of disciplines and organizations:

### Faculty:

- Dr. Ann V. Collins, Associate Professor of Political Science
- Dr. Darryn Diuguid, Associate Professor of Education
- Dr. Elisabeth Erickson, Assistant Professor of Sport Management
- Dr. Pamela Manning, Assistant Professor of Education
- Paula Martin, Director of Holman Library
- Dr. Lauren Thompson, Assistant Professor of History

### Staff:

- Krysti Connelly, Executive Director of University Communications and Marketing
- Dr. Shruti Desai, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs
- Craig Robertson, Director of Campus Activities
- Colleen Smyth, Program Coordinator for the Lyn Huxford Center for Community Service

### Students:

- Chandler Henson, Sophomore Secondary Education-History major; Member of Phi Eta Sigma, Kappa Delta Pi and Softball Team
- Charles McNeal, Junior Sport Management major; Resident Assistant; Member of Wrestling Team
- Caden Owens, Junior Political Science major; Member of Phi Eta Sigma, Cross County & Track & Field Teams
- Ileanisse Soto, Senior Organizational Communication-Human Resources major; Newman Civic Fellow; Resident Assistant; Member of Lambda Pi Eta, NACWC E.L.I.T.E., Define American and Social Justice and Equity Committee
- Robert Watkins, MBA Student and Graduate Assistant to the President; former President of Student Government Association and National Society of Leadership and Success; New Student Orientation Leader/Peer Mentor; Member of Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Eta Sigma, Sigma Beta Delta, Phi Beta Lambda, Cyber Defense Team, and Volleyball Team

The full committee met once during the Spring 2018 semester and will meet at least two times during the Fall 2018 semester before Election Day. Subcommittees will meet occasionally during the summer and then regularly during the Fall 2018 semester. The ALL IN Committee will organize voter registration drives, offer educational opportunities, and coordinate voter turnout initiatives to fulfill its mission of civic engagement. For

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Student Lobby Day, State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois, April 12, 2018

example, partnering with residence life to create floor competitions for voter registration while educating about the pending election fulfills several goals. The group will also work with other campus organizations, such as Student Government Association (SGA), Black Student Organization (BSO), United Feminists, and Phi Eta Sigma (First Year Student National Honor Society), and athletics to create more buy-in among our campus community.

In addition, the committee will work with the St. Clair County Clerk's office and other local organizations to make connections within the broader community. Team co-leader Ann Collins serves as a Deputy Registrar in St. Clair County, which will help facilitate these collaborative efforts.

## SECTION III: COMMITMENT

All levels of our campus community are dedicated to civic engagement. President James Dennis and Provost Christine Bahr provide strong leadership in their commitment to educating an informed and involved electorate:

“At McKendree University, responsible citizenship and engagement are two basic tenets of our academic mission. We offer our students a wide variety of intellectual opportunities for civic engagement and service learning so that they may be better informed participants in the electoral process.” –President James Dennis

“Our academic programs and co-curricular experiences prepare students not only to understand their responsibilities as citizens, but to take an active role within their communities. We offer an array of volunteer opportunities through the Lyn Huxford Center for Community Service, and many faculty incorporate service learning experiences in their courses. As Provost, I am delighted to support our faculty's commitment to helping our students develop the knowledge and skills they will need to be responsible citizens within their own communities.” –Provost Christine Bahr

Moreover, both the University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan emphasize the significance of civic learning and democratic engagement.

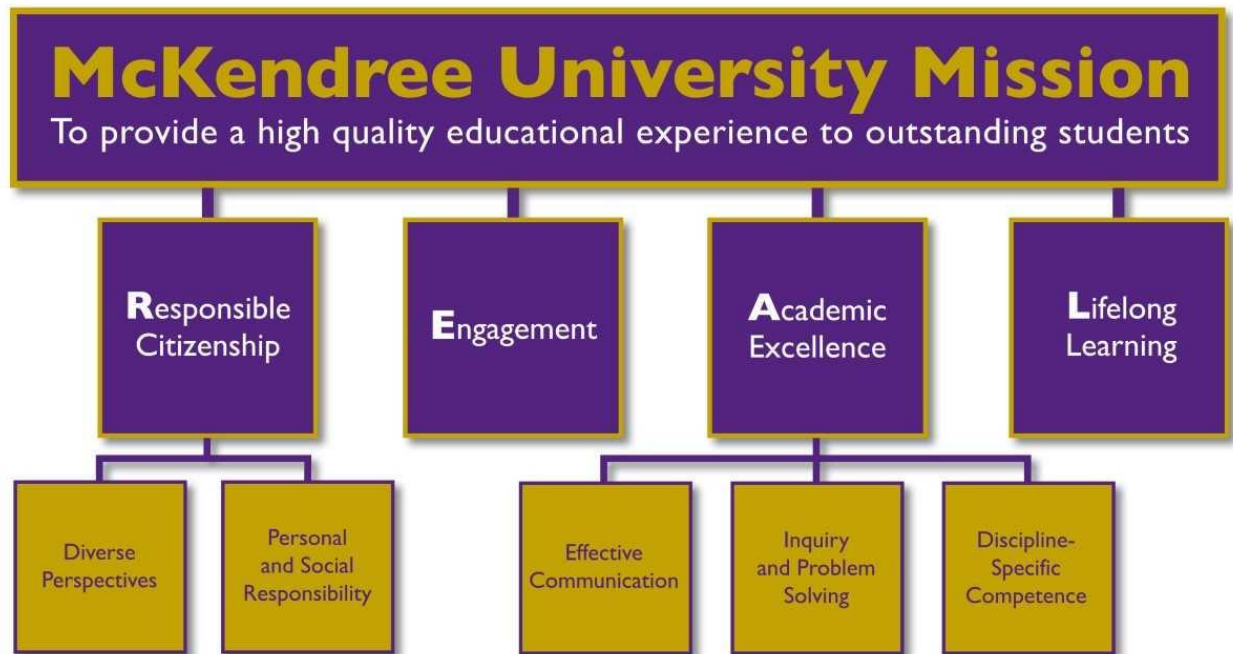
Our mission statement opens with, “The mission of McKendree University is to provide a high quality educational experience to outstanding students. We guide our students in the pursuit of academic excellence which will prepare them for leadership roles in our society. To achieve this end we encourage broader vision, enriched purpose, engagement with community, commitment to responsible citizenship, openness to new ideas and dedication to lifelong learning.” (McKendree University Mission Statement.) Each academic year we feature one aspect of our mission. During the upcoming 2018-2019 year, the theme centers on Personal and Social Responsibility—a perfect opportunity to foster civic engagement.

McKendree's Strategic Plan supports these ideals: “We believe a college education should not be the final culmination of one's educational pursuits; it should be a springboard to lifelong learning. We therefore seek not only to provide an excellent academic experience but also to offer a wide variety of intellectual opportunities beyond the classroom. Our students, faculty and staff will come together as a community of scholars through lectures, theatre, film, art, music, literature and current topics to exchange ideas, express differing points of view or simply enjoy a work of art or a great performance. Our goal in creating this environment is to enrich the

life of our campus and local community, and to inspire in our students the desire to continue to engage in intellectually stimulating activities beyond their formal academic experience.” Specifically, Goal 4 under the Intellectual Climate section of our Strategic Plan focuses on an important aspect of fostering civic engagement: “We will develop a forum for presentations and discussions about current issues and events to further engage our campus community and to encourage greater intellectual dialogue and debate regarding issues of the day.” (McKendree University Strategic Plan, <https://www.mckendree.edu/strategicplan/intellectual-climate.php>.)

McKendree University’s Student Learning Outcomes also speak to civic engagement, particularly the ones that center on Responsible Citizenship—Diverse Perspectives and Personal and Social Responsibility:

- Diverse Perspectives: “Students will understand human and cultural differences, engage with diverse individuals, and embrace variety in viewpoints.”
- Personal and Social Responsibility: “Students will exhibit personal and social responsibility.” (<http://www.mckendree.edu/offices/provost/assessment/student-learning-outcomes.php>)



The University’s required General Education curriculum is designed to offer students the tools to develop the skills necessary for responsible citizenship. We offer courses in disciplines such as Philosophy, Religion, History, Political Science, and Sociology to “stimulate [students] to examine their own values and the values of society through a variety of subjects outside their major program of study.” (2018/2019 Undergraduate Catalog, pp. 51-56, <http://www.mckendree.edu/academics/info/course-catalogs/undergraduate-catalog-2018-2019.pdf>.)

McKendree assesses civic learning several ways by:

- gauging Student Learning Outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level,
- evaluating feedback from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and

- analyzing data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).

This information is shared at workshops and meetings in order to build on the progress we have made over the years in the realm of civic engagement.

## SECTION IV: LANDSCAPE

### Climate

McKendree's campus climate is encouraging. We have substantial buy-in from the administration, faculty, and staff. Many students are passionate about the political scene and social justice concerns. A number of our students also participate in service. However, many students remain apathetic or even cynical when it comes to electoral politics and building social capital.

### Programming

The University has a good track record of sponsoring events during election years. Over the last few election cycles, we have held numerous on-campus voter registration drives, Constitution Day activities, presentations, discussions and debate-watching gatherings. The current buy-in to expand these programs is strong within campus constituents.

### Engagement

Since its launch, McKendree has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE). We used these data to gain insight into student participation in the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections. In 2012, McKendree University had a 78.9 percent student voter registration rate, while in 2016, that rate fell to 75.9 percent. Of the students eligible to vote, 52.6 percent voted in the 2012 presidential election and 50.3 percent did so in 2016. In the 2014 midterm election, 68.7 percent of McKendree students registered to vote, however only 25.1 of eligible student voters actually voted.

In 2016, we joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and were awarded a Bronze Seal for our student voting participation rate in the November elections. While McKendree has made some strides in voter engagement, clearly work remains to be done on our campus, particularly in non-presidential election years. Our ALL IN Committee is dedicated to fostering a strong sense of civic engagement on our campus by expanding our reach, thinking creatively about programming, and engaging students earlier in the process.

### Curriculum and Co-Curricular Initiatives

McKendree University remains resolute to civic engagement being a pervasive component of the student experience on campus. See Section III of this action plan for our commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement.



Voter Registration Drive, Holman Library, McKendree University, March 22, 2018

**Barriers**

Our campus faces a few challenges. Similar to other small, liberal arts institutions, McKendree does not have a vast amount of resources. Funding is limited and mostly earmarked for other projects and organizations. Moreover, as cited above, a number of students—like many Americans—are apathetic and cynical toward politics and government. Other barriers include not having a polling place on campus and low voter turnout in general and during midterm elections in particular.

**Available Resources**

Despite these hardships, we have a dedicated team of concerned individuals and other advocates who are intent on ensuring a campus devoted to civic engagement. Furthermore, Illinois has relatively friendly election laws that allow for easy registration and voting. These factors will no doubt help us fulfill our goals.

**Additional Required Resources**

To help us be successful, our team will need a small amount of funds for marketing and publicity, time and energy from the campus community, and involvement from student groups and organizations to engender more enthusiasm among their classmates.

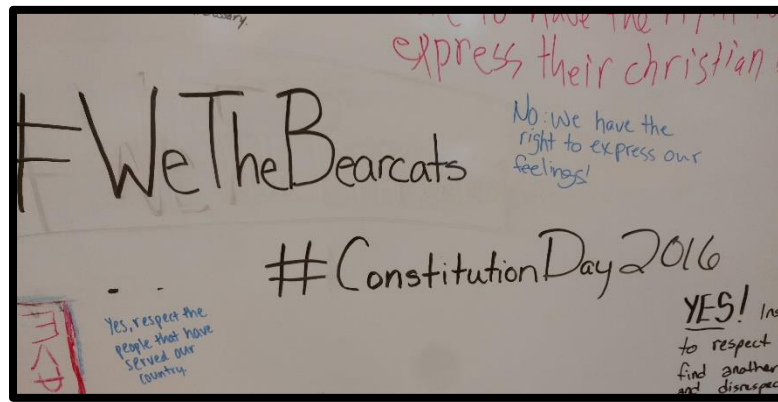
## SECTION V: GOALS

McKendree's goals regarding civic learning and democratic engagement revolve around the basic tenets of its mission and strategic plan: Responsible Citizenship, Engagement, Academic Excellence, and Lifelong Learning. Our long-term goal is to make steady progress in student voter registration and turnout rates.

Short-term goals center on specific actions:

- Continuing voter registration efforts and increasing the number of students who register and turn out to vote in the 2018 midterm election to 27% (compared to 25% in 2014)
- Partnering with on-campus and off-campus organizations to improve democratic engagement
- Soliciting members from our Student Government Association, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Eta Sigma, Residence Life and the Lyn Huxford Center for Community Service to take on leadership roles and assist in our voter registration and education efforts
- Working with the St. Clair County Clerk's office to hold voter registration drives, train election judges, and build an opportunity to host elections on McKendree's campus
- Increasing out-of-state absentee voting and registration by reaching out to nonresidents and planning events for these students
- Planning programs and activities aimed at targeting incoming first-year students, on-campus students and student athletes





## SECTION VI: STRATEGY

McKendree University will carry out several strategies to boost student voter registration and turnout in 2018 and beyond.

### Strategy #1: Continue what we have been doing and expand it, including:

- Investigating how to host a polling site on McKendree's Campus
- Informing out-of-state residents on how to register and absentee vote
- Increasing interaction with new students through New Student Orientation, the Involvement Fair, and University 101
- Partnering with Residence Life to have contests on each residence hall floor
- Planning programs, speakers and events that are supported by students
- Collaborating with faculty to allow programming to be required or serve as extra credit
- Visiting University 101 courses to promote events. Ensure that all University 101 faculty and student peer mentors are notified of upcoming events
- Scheduling Brown Bags to discuss voting and elections

### Strategy #2: Use student resources more effectively:

- Forming an ALL IN student subcommittee for publicity to enhance student engagement through social media
- Partnering with student organizations to co-sponsor events
- Creating an interest survey to distribute to gauge student interests
- Collaborating with the debate team to host events on campus
- Encouraging students to take more ownership as civic engagement ambassadors
- Communicating with diverse campus groups to inspire politically minded students
- Motivating students to be election judges and involved in the process of voting
- Working with student organizations and athletics to reach more of our campus community
- Partnering with athletics to promote ideas and possibly participate in contests to see who could get the most members registered to vote

**Strategy #3: Branding and marketing:**

- Working with University Communications and Marketing to spread the message of civic engagement on campus
- Making buttons and t-shirts to advertise and generate curiosity about events and activities
- Creating a hashtag, snapchat filter, and other items to increase a social media presence

## SECTION VII: REPORTING

This action plan will be distributed to the campus community and posted on the University's website. The action plan will also be discussed at a Brown Bag presentation.

## SECTION VIII: EVALUATION

We will measure success in several ways to determine if we have met our goals in fostering civic engagement on McKendree's campus. NSLVE feedback will give us data to compare past student registration and voting rates with current ones. We will also tally participation in voter education efforts. Beyond campus, we will count the community partnerships we develop to encourage engagement between our students and the surrounding municipalities and political campaigns. Finally, we will seek feedback from committee members, faculty, and staff on successful initiatives and areas that can be improved.



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