



**Michigan  
Technological  
University**



**CAMPUS  
DEMOCRACY  
CHALLENGE**

# Michigan Tech All In Campus Democracy Challenge 2020 Action Plan

**DRAFT**

**December 19, 2019**

## Section I: Institutional Context

Michigan Technological University is a public research university, home to more than 7,000 students from 60 countries around the world. Founded in 1885, the University offers more than 120 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in science and technology, engineering, forestry, business and economics, health professions, humanities, mathematics, and social sciences.

Michigan Tech joined the All In Democracy Challenge in 2017. A team of students, faculty, staff, and community partners have coordinated annual voter registration events over the last three years resulting in about 500 new Michigan voter registrations. From the 2014 midterm election to the 2018 midterm election, the Michigan Tech student voting rate increased by 17.5 percentage points. Student voter registrations also increased in this time period by 10.1 percentage points to 61.2%.

## Section II: Leadership

### Committee Members

The All In Democracy Challenge committee at Michigan Tech consists of:

- Kari Henquinet, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology & Pavlis Honors College
- Richelle Winkler, Associate Professor of Sociology
- Angie Carter, Assistant Professor of Sociology
- Blair Orr, Professor in School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science
- David Watkins, Professor in Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Susanna Peters, Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, Law and Society Program
- Bonnie Gorman, Dean of Students
- Lorelle Meadows, Dean of Pavlis Honors College
- Anna Ellis, Undergraduate Student Government Political Affairs Committee chair
- Zoe Ketola, Michigan Secretary of State Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force member
- Beka Horsch, Student Leadership and Involvement Office
- Jessie Stapleton, Student Leadership and Involvement Office
- Elise Cheney-Makens, Pavlis Honors College
- Heather Simpson, Associate Director of Waino Wahtera Center for Student Success

**Section III: Goals and Measures of Success**

Michigan Tech’s goal for the 2020 election cycle is to increase both eligible registered voters and voter participation. We aim to achieve an 80% rate of registered voters and a 50% voting rate in the next NSLVE report for the 2020 election. In light of the increases in past years, the Committee believes this is an attainable goal.

	2016		2018		2020 (target)
	MTU	National Avg	MTU	National Avg	MTU
% Registered	62.3	75	61.2	75	80
% Voted	34.3	50.4	26.9	39.1	50

**Section IV: Landscape**

**Campus climate:** In general, the current rate of civic and political engagement on campus is low. However, there has been an upward trend in engagement in recent years, possibly due to greater outreach efforts and support for these efforts from different groups across campus.

**Internal barriers:**

- Financial resources—in the past, there have not been resources dedicated to improving voter registration and voting rates at Michigan Tech. Through grassroots efforts, a small budget was secured for the Fall 2019 voter registration drive. This budget will continue for the Fall 2020 to support voter registration.
- Leadership—expanding voter outreach efforts has been limited by the lack of time that Committee members have to dedicate outside the normal scope of their responsibilities.

**External barriers:**

- Polling place accessibility—there are no polling places directly on campus and there is no readily-available public transportation to bring students to polling. This makes voting difficult for students who lack their own transportation.
- Steps for submission for absentee ballots—many students are registered to vote in their home districts or are out-of-state students, making it especially difficult to vote. A recent change in Michigan law has removed some barriers for voting absentee in Michigan. We expect it to be easier for students to do so in 2020, as long as they have the correct information about obtaining and mailing absentee ballots.

**Section V: 2020 Strategy**

**Orientation:** One strategy that has been identified as a way to drastically increase student voter registration is by integrating it into orientation week programming (all students attend orientation the week prior to classes starting in the fall). During the Spring 2020 semester, Committee members will be working with the Waino Wahtera Center for Student Success, which leads orientation programming, to plan voter registration activities during orientation week.

**Class involvement:** Student involvement in voter registration initiatives have been essential in increasing voter registration and voting rates at Michigan Tech. For the past three years, students from the SS 2700 Introduction to Sociology have served as volunteers for the annual campus voter registration drive. We also coordinated with a required first year general education class to hand out forms and encourage students to register to vote. For Fall 2020, the Committee will work to bring more classes into voter registration and education efforts. These classes could include SS 2610 Intro to Law and Society, SS 3661 Constitutional Law, SS 2600 American Government, and more first year seminars.

**Voter registration drive:** The voter registration drive on campus has been successful at increasing student registration rates on campus. During Fall 2020, we anticipate there will be a mobile Secretary of State office on campus to assist with voter registration efforts. As in previous years, stations around campus will be staffed by volunteers and equipped with voter registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and laptops for volunteers to check students’ registration status.

**Absentee ballot request distribution:** During the voter registration drive, volunteers will also provide absentee ballot request forms for students if they would like to vote in their home state or district. In previous years, there was high demand for absentee ballots so each station around campus will be equipped with plenty of request forms for Michigan and neighboring states.

**Voter education:** Another important component of the fall voter outreach efforts will be voter education. This may be workshops on how to register and file for an absentee ballot or a keynote speaker. The Committee will identify these in the spring semester for fall 2020.

**Transportation to polls:** The Committee is exploring ways to provide transportation to local polling stations for students on election day.

**Section VI: 2020 Schedule**

The following is a proposed timeline for 2020 voter registration and outreach efforts.

**Spring 2020**

<b>February:</b> Hold planning meeting for fall voter registration and orientation week activities
<b>February:</b> Invite guest speaker, such as SOS Jocelyn Benson
<b>February:</b> Coordinate mobile office with SOS
<b>March:</b> Order swag for orientation and fall
<b>April:</b> Hold final planning meeting for fall activities

**Fall 2020**

<b>Late August:</b> Orientation activities for new student voter registration
<b>September:</b> Voter registration day and absentee ballot distribution coordinated with Secretary of State
<b>September:</b> Host speaker and/or other educational event on voter education and civic engagement
<b>October and November:</b> Follow up with email reminders to students about deadlines to register to vote and election day
<b>Election day, November:</b> Work with student groups to provide transportation to polling stations

## Section VII: Evaluation

When available, we will obtain new NSLVE data to review any changes in the fall 2020 election compared to the last presidential election to evaluate if we have met our goals. We also internally track (in collaboration with the SOS mobile office and/or city and county clerks) new registrations for Michigan and how many absentee ballots were handed out at campus events.