

Middle Tennessee State University
2024 Civic Action Plan

— May 30, 2024 —

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Executive Summary

The MTSU Civic Action Plan for 2024 has been developed, written, further developed, and continuously built, over months, guided by widespread campus stakeholders and overseen by the MTSU American Democracy Project, its students, executive board, leadership, faculty, and staff. Even as we submit it today, it continues to be added to; it’s a robust work in progress. The purpose of the 2024 Action Plan is to have in place fully developed objectives, strategies, and details to commence in full force at the very beginning of Fall semester 2024. It will serve as a daily operational guide to turn out the MTSU student vote for the fall elections. MTSU has one campus – no satellite campuses – so 100% of our efforts focus on this campus, this university, both our in-person student body (87%) and our fully online students (13%). The plan is raise MTSU’s student voting another 20 percentage points, to at least 85% student voting: an aggressive goal. Whereas so much of this work has already taken place, during Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, and the work continues throughout Summer 2024, the primary focus of the current plan begins Monday, August 26, 2024, the very first day of class Fall 2024, when our 20,000 students flood back to campus. And it culminates Nov. 5, 2024, after the polls close. However, there will remain at that point a great deal of potent post-election follow-up, which we anticipate will need to be intense at least from late Fall 2024 into Spring 2025; we are planning accordingly. The full resources of the university support this civic action plan, its work, and student engagement, toward advancing MTSU student voting.

Campus Landscape and Institutional Commitment

Middle Tennessee State University, situated in the geographic center of the state of Tennessee, is a campus of c. 20,000 students. Our student body is made up of students from across the nation and globe and from all 95 of Tennessee's 95 counties, the majority of which are rural. The university is academically known for excellent programs across our ten colleges, but perhaps some of our biggest draws nationally and internationally are for our Aerospace, Concrete Industry Management, and Recording Industry programs, as well for the state centers of excellence in Historic Preservation and in Popular Music. MTSU offers over 300 undergraduate and graduate programs of study and is the no. 1 producer of graduates for the economy of Middle Tennessee.

MTSU is a big school, and our civic purposes are big. The campus work for expansion and institutionalization of civic learning and engagement across and throughout the university is multilayered and, of course, still expanding and developing. Six key achievements in recent semesters have been the inclusion of (1) responsible citizenship as one of MTSU's top three university-wide strategic goals in our [2025 Quest for Success](#); (2) civic learning in MTSU's newly rewritten General Education [True Blue Core Student Learning Outcomes](#) that commence university wide Spring 2024; (3) the university president's establishment of a new [Office of Community Engagement and Inclusion](#); (4) new faculty working groups on community-engaged scholarship and community-engaged pedagogies, and with them increased university-wide focus on deeper institutionalization of community engagement in pedagogy and research in addition to service; (5) a working group on education for American civic life; and (6) a new civic partnership with the Andrew Goodman Foundation.

These forward steps by the university are concrete indicators of MTSU's commitment to civic learning and engagement and to the campus-wide landscape we are creating within and across every department, college, institute, center, office, and program of our university. This commitment grows yearly—having begun in 2003 when MTSU joined the ground floor of AASCU's American Democracy Project initiative and incorporated ADP and civic engagement as part of MTSU's first SACS Quality Enhancement Plan—and the work continues to the present, ever more deeply and broadly institutionalized.

One small component of our university's shared efforts to embed and expand civic learning and engagement is the university's commitment to nonpartisan engagement in increasing student voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout in national, state, and local elections. This 2024 campus civic action plan outlines MTSU's processes and strategies to better ourselves civically, to build on the gains made in the past, to increase civic learning and community engagement university wide, and to continue to grow, strengthen, and centralize our education and support for student voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout for the upcoming 2024 local, state, and national elections.

Middle Tennessee State University's 2024 Civic Action Plan is the work of the university's center for citizenship and democracy, eponymously named the MTSU American Democracy Project, which operates under the auspices of the Office of the University Provost and the University Honors College. In this action plan, Middle Tennessee State University's voting data from 2016 to 2020 (we still have not yet received our 2022 voting data from NSLVE) are put into context; we discuss strategies for increasing civic participation among our students; we provide examples of how we promote civic education across our campus; we outline plans for the future of democratic engagement at MTSU; and we recognize our broad, essential, critically important campus leadership and campus coalition.

Our dedicated students, faculty, staff, and community partners put a tremendous amount of effort into registering new student voters, creating informational materials, and promoting civic engagement across our university. Our plan is implemented across our c. 20,000-student, LGI (locally governed institution) campus located in the center of the state of Tennessee. This action plan outlines the means and methods for advancing our objectives and how the strategies play a part in future initiatives and goals.

Although we have strong online learning options, our campus is primarily in-person higher education. Our student voting efforts aim to reach and assist students both directly in person and also across every available electronic medium.

NSLVE

According to the [MTSU NSLVE data](#) generated by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education in 2021, 65% of MTSU students voted in the 2020 election. That percentage, 65%, was huge growth forward for MTSU. In 2016 only 44% of MTSU students voted. The 21-percentage-point jump was healthy advancement in the right direction. In 2018, only 38% of MTSU students voted in the midterm election. But that percentage was actually a powerful 23-percentage-point improvement from student participation in the 2014 midterm elections, in which only 15% of MTSU students voted—an embarrassingly low beginning point.

2014	2016	2018	2020
15%	44%	38%	65%

- 65% MTSU student voter participation in 2020, compared to c. 44% in both 2016 (44.5) and 2012 (44). MTSU student voting jumped by over 20 percentage points in 2020.
- Registration also increased in 2020: 84% of our students were registered in 2020, up from 72% in 2016.
- A huge difference in 2020 was that, of the 84% who were registered to vote, 77% of them did, *versus* only 61% of our voter-registered students who voted in the 2016 election: We think getting more students registered where they could *actually vote in person* was the key to that increase.

(Please note that MTSU’s NSLVE reports do not include our student body’s ethnic demographic information. We are keenly aware of those lacunae, about which there has been much intra-university discussion. MTSU does not supply those data to the National Clearinghouse of Higher Education, arguing that to do so would defy Tennessee state privacy laws. Counter arguments to override that upper-level decision have not prevailed internally within our university.)

Goals

We want to build on our trajectory of consistent improvement, and our true goal, of course, is that 100% of our students actively engage in the civic process and vote. That vision may be more aspirational than achievable, however.

Realistically, we want to increase to at least 85% student voter participation in the 2024 presidential election. We want to raise our student voting by at least twenty percentage points.

Since 2005, through MTSU’s office of the American Democracy Project for Civic Learning (ADP), Middle Tennessee State University has been proactive in developing, facilitating, and

increasing student civic engagement and student voter participation. Over the years our tools have changed, our strategies have matured, and our hard work has yielded varying results.

Being part of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2014, we have been able to track our successes and our challenges more closely, which spurs us on. Equally important are the guidance, reinforcement, and partnerships between our university and national programs that support us and inspire us to do better. We highly value and are proud to work with AASCU, Andrew Goodman Foundation, All-In Democracy Challenge, Civic Nation, Campus Vote Project, Fair Elections Center, Civic Influencers, Students Learn Students Vote, National Conference on Citizenship, and other remarkable national initiatives. For their help and assistance, we are sincerely appreciative.

Pedagogy Goals

Being spurred on by outside higher ed organizations lifts and grows our vision. Presently MTSU is engaged in a planning process to apply for Teagle Foundation funding for Education for American Civic Life. Consistent with the pedagogy goals that the Faculty Working Group on Community Engaged Pedagogy is currently setting for the university in coming years, being clear that community-engaged pedagogy is about civic life, civic engagement, civic and political participation, and self-governance requires fullness across all disciplinary areas. Were a Civic Life Teagle grant possible, the forward steps we are making as a university can be further advanced, spread, and integrated. So that is a university objective for 2024-25.

Additionally, the university is engaging the inquiry and self examination for 2025-2035 strategic planning and to develop our institution's next QEP for SACSCOC. Because civic learning is now embedded in MTSU General Education outcomes, we would like Civic Learning (or a version of the "Beloved Community" or "Belonging" to be the university-wide QEP for the next decade. Civic learning is the larger conceptual objective of all the parts our university has already set in place. Service learning, experiential learning, engaged learning, community engagement are all aspects of our overarching civic goal: working together to build shared society, the beloved community. If MTSU can set as its next primary objective university-wide civic learning and civic vision for all our students, we will have made marked forward progress. Development of a Civic Learning QEP is another systemic goal for our university.

Student Voting Goals

The larger, conceptual, systemic, visionary objectives are reinforced by and support our students voting engagement. Student voting is hands on and measurable.

We want 100% of our students to vote in 2024. And we are aiming and striving and pushing to lift MTSU student voting to at least 85% in 2024. Our true MTSU student-voting goal for 2024 is, fundamentally, to **better ourselves**; to keep moving forward. While we would love for 100% of our students to vote August 1, 2024, in the state primary and local general elections, and November 5, 2024, in the presidential and general elections—and we speak that goal aloud—MTSU is actually just competing against ourselves. We want to improve and increase our turnout in every election. Period.

In the spirit of energizing competition, we are part of the Conference USA Sports Voting Challenge, and we also run a side bet with Western Kentucky University, our key regional rival university. We of course would love to win both the C-USA and WKU competitions. But our true opponent is our own prior-election voting percentage. In 2024, we absolutely are determined to best our presidential-election voting percentage from 2020, when 64.5% of our students voted.

Whereas, therefore, 66% student voting is our minimum bar, 85% would make us proud: We advanced 20 percentage points 2016 to 2020, so we would like to accomplish that same jump again, 2020 to 2024. A 20-point bump was achieved previously, so is considered realistic, but to do so again is of course ambitious. It's a concrete shift our students know took place before, and it is inspirational. Setting specific future goals (for 2028, 2032, and beyond) is beyond our vision at present, but adhering to the principle of ever-increasing our student voter participation through deep campus cultural maturation is indeed our long-term trajectory.

Goal-setting for the midterm cycle (2026, 2030, ...) must be built on data. We continue to count on NSLVE, and trust that problems IDHE is having vis-à-vis Secretary of State data can soon be resolved.

Strategies/Tools

Voter Registration

We are a **Vote Everywhere** commitment campus and an **Ask Every Student** commitment campus. We work to institutionally embed the capacity to make voting accessible to every student and to ask every student, directly, to register to vote. To get our students ready for the 2024 elections, we had voter registration tables set up across campus every day in September 2023 and we continued on strategic days and at events throughout Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, the entire AY23-24 academic year. What follows are some of our means and methods to register voters and keep MTSU students informed about their civic responsibility to vote.

Summer 2024, we provide incoming **CUSTOMS orientation** students with full information about registering to vote and voting in the Fall 2024 elections. We include student voting in the CUSTOMS booklets for every student.

Whereas in past years we have tabled at every CUSTOMS orientation day at MTSU throughout the summer, registering students to vote throughout Summer semester, at incoming students' CUSTOMS orientations, we actually do not do that any longer. The reason we decided to stop that effort is that incoming freshmen and transfer students, arriving with their parents, are still physically living in their home counties. They do not yet self-identify as university students. They do not yet understand the reality that MTSU/Murfreesboro/Rutherford County is their home. When we *used* to register students during CUSTOMS, they registered to vote in their parents' counties. As a result, in our NSLVE data, our MTSU registration numbers were high but our voting percentages were significantly lower. However, waiting until students are fully vested here, residing here, on our campus, makes clear to them that they are living in a new community and have a new home. When they register here after classes start, they vote here.

MTSU hosts a Register to Vote! button (hotlink) on almost all of our office/departmental/college/program websites. Click on almost any mtsu.edu webpage and a direct link to our university's voter registration portal is immediately accessible.

Register to Vote! in Pipeline is prominently placed on the students' dashboard inside their daily-use Pipeline login, on every student's personal MTSU homepage.

Our Register to Vote! button is also included with course registration so that students see the button reminder and act on it internally every semester when registering for each upcoming semester's classes.

Register to vote is customized for MTSU students. Our register to vote portal asks specific questions that our students need to respond to about specific MTSU issues vis-à-vis voter registration. Our portal is very much a voter education portal, to help students get registered where they can actually vote. We ask the same questions inside the portal that we ask when we talk about voting plans in person with each individual student.

Our [mtsu.edu/vote](https://www.mtsu.edu/vote) short URL is the easy-access descriptor we've developed to verbally and in print get our students to our voter registration site quickly and simply. We also have a QR code for that purpose.



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Register to vote information is on course syllabi at MTSU. ADP sends reminder emails through the Provost's office to all faculty in August before the fall semester starts, to be sure that the [mtsu.edu/vote](https://www.mtsu.edu/vote) link is entered into course syllabi. The Provost provides that information reminder to all faculty as well, on the Provost's [Suggested Syllabus Statements](#) website. In Fall 2023, MTSU's Student Government Association (SGA) unanimously passed a bill requiring register-to-vote information on every syllabus. Faculty absolutely include it.

MTSU websites that provide students, faculty, and staff access to numerous online resources are plentiful. Just a couple of portals that are currently available via MTSU's website are <https://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/vote.php> and <https://www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote.php>.

MTSU voter registration tabling begins at MTSU on the first day of classes in the fall semester. Fall 2024, we will hold voter reg tables every day starting the first day of class – Monday, August 26 – through the end of Tennessee voter registration – Monday, October 7. Tabling will move around all across campus. There are permanent voter registration locations on campus, and mobile/pop-up ones that aim to serve every college, every building, every dorm, every region, every campus population.

National Voter Registration Month. September, Voter Registration Month, right at the beginning of the school year, is when the Tennessee Secretary of State hosts a College Voter Registration Competition. MTSU chooses to participate vigorously to take advantage of this challenge as another incentive to elevate student voter registration during the active month of September. For four-year public universities, MTSU wins every year: [MTSU won the state of Tennessee competition \(again\) Fall 2023](#) and absolutely will do so in 2024.

National Voter Registration Week. During National Voter Registration Week, ADP MTSU hosts vigorous voter registration booths across campus and shares helpful registration information on all their social media platforms.

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD): MTSU is a NVRD partner institution through Campus Vote Project. In addition to on campus promotion, we promote NVRD on all media platforms well in advance to ensure the reach of the day is as effective as possible. The university

sent out texts to all students on NVRD and upped our registration numbers. The day was a great success, and record numbers of MTSU students registered to vote on NVRD.

In 2024, NVRD and Constitution Day fall on the same day, Sept. 17, so there will be increased emphasis.

#MTSUVotes and #GoVoteMTSU. Our Secretary of State asks us to post social media photographs of every voter registrant holding up #MTSU Votes and #GoVoteMTSU signage. If it's fun for students and encourages them to get registered, we're all for it!

#1 in Campus Voter Registration in Tennessee. We were named #1 among all Tennessee colleges and universities in the Tennessee Secretary of State's Campus Voter Registration Contest during National Voter Registration Month. Our goal is always to earn this distinction every academic year in which the competition is offered, and indeed, in [2023 MTSU won](#) again and we will win again in 2024.

Connection Point locations on campus: Connection Point events are sponsored by the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL), and #MTSUVotes invades them with voter registration at campus events, supported by student organizations who help sponsor the registration drive. Connection Point opportunities are set up across campus during the semester, and students receive different buttons that can be collected and placed on their backpacks. We have created I-Registered-to-Vote buttons, ADP, and Constitution Day Connection Point buttons specific to our #MTSUVotes work, and we push forward with these opportunities when we can, throughout the state's voter registration period. Our students love and collect the Connection Point buttons.

Blue Raider Athletics voter registration is ongoing with our MTSU sports teams. MTSU is in the Conference USA Voting Challenge, and we have also set up a one-on-one voting challenge with our nearby collegiate rival Western Kentucky University. Being sure our athletes are registered to vote is such an important step. Go Blue Raiders! Our athletes led the way in 2020 and we count on them to do so again in 2024.

Tabling on-campus during large events. We set up registration tables throughout the fall such as home games with MTSU athletic teams, student organization events, MT Engage Week, Constitution Week events, and many more. These outreach locations, with tabling indoors or outdoors, enable us to reach broader subsets of students on campus at different times and locations.

Early Arrival Programs. MTSU's Scholars Academy and STAR programs welcome students to university early to increase their academic success and assist students to register to vote in the fall. These programs are other means to Ask Every Student during early arrival to get them registered to be ready to vote in next election. They arrive on campus in August, so we go to them when they settle in early, before the start of classes.

University Studies is the university's first-year program, overseen by University College, with whose faculty we partner to register new voters. University Studies faculty are among the university's most engaged and supportive faculty to assist their students in getting registered.

Voter reg in classrooms. Wherever ADP is invited to come to a specific class or activity to register students voters, we absolutely do.

Voter reg in dorms. ADP connects with dorm heads and RAs to go into dormitories to register students voters on their halls. AY23-24 we entered into a new “civic partner” relationship with the Deere-Nicks, Cummings, and Corlew dorms to advance our dorm work with Residence Life. We are expanding our work in the dorms Fall 2024.

Presidium is the MTSU retreat for all student organization officers. Our American Democracy Project student organization officers will attend Presidium in August 2024 to educate campus organization officers to Ask Every Student in their respective clubs, fraternities, and organizations to register and vote. Our campus student orgs are active participants in voter registration, voter education, and getting out the student vote. We will invade Presidium again in 2024.

Our social media campaigns pushed voter registration all spring, summer, and fall 2023 and will throughout 2024. New videos were made for use Fall 2024.

Campus emails—to faculty/staff and to students—are sent out as regular reminders about voter registration, deadlines, applying for absentee ballots, and basic voter-planning information. Registration increases after every email.

Campus-wide texting to students is made available to us again on specific days. We use texts as last-chance reminders of the Tennessee state voter competition deadline. The texting capability is a really powerful tool for us, for which we are most appreciative. Registration numbers bump up following every text opportunity. We have pre-selected texting dates scheduled for Fall 2024.

SGA/Student Government Association. ADP works closely with SGA on student voting. SGA has an officer dedicated specifically to work on campus student voting efforts. SGA senators assist in registering students to vote, and many of our ADP members are SGA senators. For AY24-25, the SGA Election Commissioner is an experienced ADP member with solid voter registration knowledge. He is working closely with us in fall planning.

Sign-ups for volunteers to assist in Fall voter reg are open: tinyurl.com/mr3yeban. Our SGA has been provided the link. Our community partners have been provided the link. Classes/faculty are provided the link. Sign-ups will be embedded in fall pedagogy and syllabi, to utilize class credit to assist fellow students to get registered to vote.

Working with the Rutherford County Election Commission (RCEC) is important in our work. Our county election commission is a close partner in voter registration. They want us to register voters on campus, and they directly support MTSU in the Tennessee Secretary of State’s registration competition every fall. One of the great services/gifts they provide us is that when students register out of county, RCEC mails the registration forms to all the other Tennessee counties for us; we no longer have to do that ourselves. And if we submit forms to them on the

deadline date, they certify that the registration met the deadline, even if the distant county may receive the form some days/weeks later.

Voter Education

NSLVE. Our partnership with the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement over the past election cycles has been a vital resource for our campus. We track our improvements in voter registration across the campus, as well as identify barriers that are present, compare them to previous election cycles, and work to resolve them. NSLVE data are the backbone research tool on which we base voter registration and student voting efforts. NSLVE's existence, information, and utility advance voter education since we use it to educate our campus community about our real lacunae and our objectives and to set our strategies for forward progress.

Tennessee Statewide Campus Civic Summit (TCCS). MTSU was thrilled to once again host the [TCCS in 2024](#). The statewide campus civic summit was Friday, February 23, 2024, in the Miller Education Center at MTSU campus. MTSU was the single summit location this past academic year; all Tennessee colleges and universities were invited and encouraged to send teams to join us at our annual statewide get-out-the-college-vote educational conference that brings together Tennessee's higher education institutions to learn and share best practices in student voting. It was all about getting every campus in Tennessee ready for fall work. It is an energizing think tank to get our campus, and all Tennessee campuses, informed about and ready for the upcoming election year. The day was loaded with guest lecturers and discussion leaders, in which our national and state partners participated, including AASCU's American Democracy Project, an Andrew Goodman Foundation, the Rutherford County Election Commission, the League of Women Voters of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, All-In Democracy Challenge, Campus Vote Project, Students Learn Students Vote, and the Tennessee Campus Democracy Network. We created civic fellowships for the summit. Our 2024 Civic Fellows will play primary roles in the 2024 election cycle and in MTSU's ongoing petitioning of our local county election commission to institute Early Voting polling on the MTSU campus.

African American History Month. African American History Month was a midwinter opportunity in which we partnered with the faculty and student leaders in Intercultural and Diversity Affairs (IDA) and the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL) to engage in events to educate students in important race and social justice issues that have impacted, and continue to impact, student voting. We used the opportunity throughout the month of February to register more students to vote. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are critically important. We added the Tennessee Campus Civic Summit to the AAHM-MTSU calendar.

Women's History Month. In partnership with CSIL, the June Anderson Center for Women and Non-Traditional Students, and the Power of One, we tabled for voter registration during the WHM events.

National Voter Education Week. NVEW is Sept. 30 through Oct. 4 this coming fall. At MTSU, it overlaps with our on-campus MT Engage Week, so we integrate both to educate and engage. We are still in the process of developing this fall's plans – but building in a community forum on candidate education will be part of it. Posters go up all over campus (and on our website)

with district maps, ballot issues, Tennessee constitutional amendments, and nonpartisan candidate guides. Some voting information is provided by [guides.vote](#), and much of it we develop ourselves.

Ballot information posters are posted all across campus and on our website through Election Day, which include Tennessee U.S. Congressional districts, Rutherford County State House and State Senate districts, nonpartisan candidate position guides, details about the amendments to the Tennessee Constitution, and details about where and when to vote.

Our ADP students have done extensive research on local candidates, which will be some of the material printed and posted across campus this fall. One first-draft of student research, for example, can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15aE7uMCwJoc4X2b5xi26brKCwjyl0Q-Z/view?usp=drive_link.

Candidate forum moderators. ADP works with the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County League of Women Voters, and we provide, from among our faculty, moderators for the League's public candidates. Forums are in person and are posted for online viewing afterward. Local forums begin June 2024.

Main Street banner. ADP MTSU hangs a 25-ft. banner across Main Street in downtown Murfreesboro as a community service for voter education. Aug. 19-28, 2024, is the week reserved for the coming fall, right as the new school year begins, to remind everyone in town of the imperative of voting and the important dates to remember. Students and their families will see it as they move onto campus.

Absentee ballot information: By-mail voting is utilized by some of our students, and we actively educate students about the absentee ballot process and its deadlines. We have added an "Absentee Voting" tab on our mtsu.edu/amerdem webpage that continues to be updated with valuable information for voters. We assist students in requesting ballots, filling them out, and submitting them. We provide stamps and envelopes. We provide access to free Notaries Public on campus, for our students who need their ballots notarized.

Sample ballots. ADP provides a Rutherford County sample ballot on the ADP website for students to reference. We also create sample ballot yard signs that are posted around campus leading up to Election Day. An email link is provided on the webpage for any student who has questions about candidates or the ballot itself. Students have anxiety about what to expect at the polls. We provide information to help them feel more comfortable with the procedural details of voting.

Calendar handouts. We created a simplified election calendar to pass out to students with a breakdown of all the upcoming election dates, absentee ballot deadlines, etc. We will continue to create these calendars and all sorts of printed and online materials for future elections. All this information is made available online and on social media as well.

Constitution Week. Constitution Week at MTSU is part of voter education. Every year we organize a campus-wide celebration of the Constitution and hold outdoor readings of the Constitution in front of every college on campus. We understand that knowledge about the U.S. Constitution is a critical foundation of voter education and for voter participation. Constitution Week is an important week of the fall semester for our university and MTSU's American Democracy Project, which oversees it for the university. We partner with the many colleges and university offices that are part of our coalition to host public readings of the Constitution at multiple locations. The main event of the week is always a major program or panel discussion at MTSU's Tucker Theater, where we host distinguished guest speakers who provide unique and informed perspectives for student discussion on issues of justice, equity, and access.

The Fall 2024 program is titled "Defining Democracy," and our primary speaker/panelist will be a controversial former vice president of the U.S.

Honors College Lecture Series. Among many wonderful educational opportunities offered through programs across campus, the Honors College hosts an annual fall lecture series as part of our university's voter education programming. The Honors College Lecture Series is an upper-division class and public lecture opportunity with a new topic each semester. Both MTSU faculty and off-campus experts join the discussion and share their knowledge at weekly discussions. The topics of discussion often tie into citizenship to support our voting programs. Previous lecture series topics have included "Youth Activism," "Civic Virtue," "The Common Good," "Governors: Principles, Programs, Politics, and Policies that Govern," "Suffrage," and "American Values," to name a few. Every lecture series program—no matter its topic—engages the students in voter registration, Constitution Week activities, and student voting. Fall 2023 included a lecture on civic responsibility and voting. Fall 2024 will focus the full semester on Democracy.

RCEC Election Administrator Mr. Alan Farley assists our students any time we ask in terms of speaking to students, coming to campus when we need him, offering training as we need, educating students. He's an MTSU alum, former colleague, and we appreciate the ways in which he assists us.

Voter Turnout

Voter Friendly Campus. We are a Campus Vote Project Voter Friendly Campus, and as such, we lay out specific objectives to move our campus positively forward in increasing MTSU student voter participation. MTSU received the Silver Seal from the All-In Democracy Challenge in 2018 for having a 2018 campus voting rate between 30-39% in the 2018 midterm elections. In 2020, MTSU's campus voting rate jumped from 36.8% to 64.5%, for which we received the Silver Seal again. We hope to earn the Gold in 2024. We're really clear: Helping students register to vote where they live during college, so that they can readily get to the polls in person—the "live here, vote here" principle—increases student voting. We work hard to get students registered in the county where they can best vote in person during Early Voting or on Election Day.

Vote Everywhere. We are an Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere campus, and we are confident our involvement with AGF further advances our efforts to "register voters, bring down voting barriers, and tackle important social justice issues on campus."

Vote Early Day for MTSU is the first day of Early Voting in Tennessee. For the Presidential Preference Primary, Early Voting began February 1, 2024, and the university did a big push to the polls that day. Whole classes went. University programs such as the MTSU Experiential Learning Program provide funds to take classes out to breakfast or lunch after voting. The national Vote Early Day program sent pizza to our last EV polling place party.

Note that National Vote Early Day (Oct. 29, 2024) in the fall is always *too late* for us at MTSU and in Tennessee. We hold MTSU's Vote Early Day on the *first day* of Early Voting: This fall that day is Wednesday, October 16, which is also the first day of class following our university's Fall Break, so it's a good day to go vote together. (We want our students to have already voted by Oct. 29. Our Early Voting in Tenn. ends just two days later, Oct. 31. We want to take advantage of the full two weeks available to students in mid-October.)

Email and text reminders are sent to students, to be sure they are aware that in Tennessee, there are two Saturdays of Early Voting—this fall, Oct. 19 and Oct. 26. We urge students to take advantage of those two weekends if they need to drive home.

Hop on the Bus. MTSU's Transportation Services department reroutes the campus Green Line on Election Day. When we again do an all-day Bus to the Polls, 11/5/24, the busses will take our students from the James Union Building on campus to the nearby polls at Central Magnet School, and back. We will have posters all over campus with the bus route information.

Walks to the polls from Student Union, organized by campus organizations, happen during the Fall election because the close-location Central Magnet School voting precinct is near to campus. Unfortunately Central Magnet is not a location during the two weeks of Early Voting, so walks to the polls are not be easy during EV, but we do them on Election Day.

Ballot Access. MTSU is a university that does not have a polling place on our campus, an effort for which we have strongly advocated for literally decades. The students work on this objective continuously and attend almost every public meeting of the Rutherford County Election Commission. Our students spoke directly to the RC Election Administrator on Nov. 28, 2023, on this very topic, at which time he informed that all decision-making (no polling at MTSU) has been locked in for 2024. So our students informed him that they will continue to attend RCEC meetings to commence the request process for 2026. They are not deterred! The work goes on.

For the September 2023 MTSU Homecoming, which was themed "Once In a Blue Moon," our students used their platform in the annual parade to advocate publicly for "Space to Vote!" on the MTSU campus. Their call to action was picked up by multiple [local and state-wide news outlets](#). Whatever the Fall 2024 Homecoming theme turns out to be, ADP students will again take advantage of it to push voting as part of their fall work. Homecoming 2024 is Sat., Sept. 21, so it is smack in the middle of the voter registration effort.

Until voting on campus comes, we are busing students to the polls, walking to the polls, driving to the polls, ride-sharing to the polls, taking our friends to the polls, and Lyft'ing to the polls. Whatever it takes.

RCEC allows Rutherford-County-registered student-voters, with out-of-county drivers licenses and with out-of-state passports, to vote without hassle. We very much appreciate that they work well with our student population to get them to the polls.

Our Coalition and Leadership

Key Local/State Community Partners

Civic Engagement Office, Office of the Tennessee Secretary of State
Rutherford County Election Commission
League of Women Voters of Murfreesboro/Rutherford County
League of Women Voters of Tennessee
American Association of University Women
Tennesseans for Legislative Change
Tennessee Campus Democracy Network
Civic Tennessee

Other resources include both the local and state Democratic and Republican parties, which contribute to our campus voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts at MTSU. There are active College Democrats and College Republicans at MTSU, with their chapters fully registered with Student Affairs.

Key Campus Partners

The organizational and departmental team members from across campus who proactively work to advance engagement and student voter participation and to increase our students' understanding of and commitment to the American democratic process include

American Democracy Project MTSU
Student Government Association
MTSU Center for Student Involvement and Leadership
Albert Gore Research Center
Center for Educational Media
Free Speech Center
MTSU Poll
Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies
MTSU Information Technology Division
MTSU Marketing and Communications
MTSU University Honors College
MTSU College of Liberal Arts
MTSU University College
MTSU Office of the University Provost
MT Engage Program
MTSU Experiential Learning Program
Office of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs
Center for Fairness, Justice, and Equity
Office of Community Engagement and Inclusion
Center for Women and Nontraditional Students
Political Economy Research Institute
University Housing
and many, many more

Key University Administration, Faculty, and Staff Partners

Dr. Mark Byrnes, University Provost
Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle, Associate Provost for Special Initiatives

Vice President Andrew Oppmann, MTSU Marketing and Communications
Dr. Dan Kelley, Asst. Vice President, Student Affairs
Dr. Ken Blake, Director, MTSU Poll
Prof. Ken Paulson, Director, MTSU Free Speech Center
Prof. Deborah Fisher, Director, Seigenthaler Chair in First Amendment Studies
Prof. Lara Daniel, Jones College of Business and ADP MTSU Board
Dr. Louis Kyriakoudes, Director, Albert Gore Research Center
Dr. Laura Clark, Director, Center for Educational Media and ADP MTSU Board
Dr. John Vile, Dean, University Honors College
Dr. Philip Phillips, Associate Dean, University Honors College
Dr. Leah Lyons, Dean, College of Liberal Arts
Mr. Matthew Hibdon, Strategic Communications Manager, College of Liberal Arts
Dr. Monica Smith, Asst. to the President for Community Engagement and Inclusion
Prof. Carol Swayze, Director, Experiential Learning
Ms. Nancy Prescott, GRA, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning
Ms. Luis Esmurria, Student Government Association Election Commissioner
Mr. Michai Mosby, President, MTSU Student Government Association
Dr. Mary Evins, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning
and many, many more

Student Leadership

We will not name all our fabulous MTSU students, but we surely appreciate every single one of them! Our student leadership is The Very Best. Our students come from across every department, college, and organization on campus. We have two Andrew Goodman Foundation Fellows, who are ADP officers and serve on our executive board. Our students make the ADP center for citizenship and democracy viable. Our students carry the load with love and dedication and unflagging energy for the work. They have been *rocks* throughout AY23-24, are working with commitment throughout Summer 2024 on this work, and will drive the work in Fall 2024.

Our student leaders of course transition. Our leadership team from AY23-24 is shifting; new students are stepping up for AY24-25. The transitions though are wonderfully seamless, as the students already do the work and self-select to step up to increased commitment. There has always been universal buy-in about who the next team leaders should be.

Our students, faculty, and staff are always engaged in ongoing work to recruit new students to join our campus voting coalition (ADP student org). Every voter reg tabling is also ADP recruitment tabling. In each-one-teach-one programming, when MTSU students register to vote, they often sign up then to assist others to register to vote. It's an active co-recruiting system that is ongoing, interactive, and works for us at MTSU. The hard workers do more and more, and they self identify as the next team leaders. All of our current leaders developed through that very system, and bring others with them.

Similarly, through MTSU's in-place civic and community engagement structures across campus, our campus faculty-staff team members continue to replace themselves. They volunteer to help, and they get connected. Having an engaged campus means that faculty welcome the chance to step up and be part of this work.

AY24-25 ADP Executive Board

Dante Buttrey, ADP Student Org President

Nancy Prescott, ADP GRA and Student Org Secretary

Marcus Rosario, ADP Student Org co-Vice President & AGF Ambassador

Hannah Ferreira, ADP Student Org co-Vice President & AGF Ambassador

R.J. Ware, ADP Student Org Treasurer

Victoria Grisgby, ADP Student Org Immediate Past-President

Dr. Mary Evins, ADP Director, Stud Org Faculty Advisor, AGF Champion

Evaluation and Reporting

Assessing, evaluating, and reporting MTSU's fulfillment of our objectives is fundamental to what we do. We will review reflectively the qualitative aspects of our AY2024-25 programming in order to add to and improve upon AY24-25 for following years. We will also most assuredly evaluate our programs for student engagement in light of the programs' impacts and effectiveness on the overall civic learning/civic engagement/campus climate objectives of our university.

Additionally, we *still* await with expectation our NSLVE report from IDHE from 2022, to be able to look more concretely into our university's student voting in the 2022 interim elections.

We always happily and openly share our NSLVE data, which we post publicly [here](#) on our ADP MTSU website:

2020: https://mtmailmtsu-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/person/amerdem_mtsu_edu/EesSyngOChJHpFps1yUOdOABveeCVbGnvU1sbaF8-0XTzA?e=Z2UdNL

2018: <https://w1.mtsu.edu/amerdem/nslve.pdf>

2016: https://w1.mtsu.edu/amerdem/docs/NSLVEReport2012_2016MTSU.pdf

2014: https://w1.mtsu.edu/amerdem/docs/NSLVEReport2012_2014MTSU.pdf

2012: <https://w1.mtsu.edu/amerdem/docs/NSLVEVotingReportMTSU.pdf>

We also forward all of these report to All-In Challenge as the reports become available to us.

Also, we post all of our Civic Action Plans on our ADP MTSU webpage. They are publicly available to all to read. [Please note that in late-May 2024, the university changed our webpage and some of our URLs, so please bear with us while we get everything back online again and easily accessible.]

We know our voter registration work is effective on campus annually because our Secretary of State's office tells us so. He provides us precise numbers for the month of September each year, of both paper registrations (through the RCEC) and online registrations. These represent only a one-month sample of course, but we take the numbers as representative of all the engagement we develop. The fact that we top every other university in the state in voter registration is hard data. We fully understand that Tennessee numbers may not compare nationally, so we appreciate NSLVE for that wider information and comparison.

We know from NSLVE which MTSU programs/departments/colleges need more attention than others in terms of student engagement. We interact closely with those deans, chairs, and faculty members to get their voter-participation information to them.

We share our data with our local RCEC, which uses the information in its own statewide work, vis-à-vis modeling how college-town commissions can assist their own college populations.

We use the data to goal-set and motivate our students, faculty, and administration. Setting our 20-point-growth goal for 2024 was directly the result of MTSU students seeing the 2016-to-2020 jump we made four years ago and wanting to replicate it.

We definitely disseminate the student-voting results to all quarters of campus to grow participation. Every time we get press for the work, the university broadcasts it and claims it as university achievement, so our data have traction. MTSU's voter registration and voting successes get reported in the president's annual State of the University reports.

Embedded in university best practices are the many, many HIPs that MTSU utilizes as part of our classroom pedagogies. Integrative analytical reflection is a powerful HIP employed across MTSU Experiential Learning programming and MT Engage programming, in hundreds of MTSU classes. Student voting is highly linked into written reflection. Many classes have students self-evaluate their citizenship, as part of our university's student-assessment processes—which will expand even more in the coming fall as our new General Education Civic Learning outcome officially commences Fall 2024. Students write thoughtfully and profoundly about their voting experiences. Thinking and writing about engagement deepens the why-we-vote queries we pose to students to consider. The more comprehensively a civic culture is embedded across and throughout our campus, the richer and more pervasive it grows in student understanding.

A new faculty learning community AY24-25 on Civic Learning will disseminate this information further among our faculty and in turn expand the capacity even more through the departments to the students.

We use student voting as a litmus test, carrot, and prod in campus culture change.

Contact Information

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