



Middle Tennessee State University Campus Civic Engagement Action Plan 2020

Overview

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 a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2014, we have been able to more closely track our successes and challenges. We continually renew and reinvigorate our commitment and campus action planning thanks to student energy, ever-expanding involvement across campus, administrative determination, wonderful county and state partners, and the resources and guidance of our national partners who cheer our efforts and achievements and create for us a wider community. Listed below are the resources we plan to continue to utilize to achieve our goals.

Voter Registration

In Tennessee, voter registration for the November 3rd, 2020, election ends on Monday, October 5th, 2020. We will work diligently throughout the Spring and Summer of 2020 and continue to register students through to the October 5th deadline.

- ❑ **Voter information in CUSTOMS folders:** We will continue to provide full information sheets (including election dates, instructions for voter registration, and polling locations) to new students during CUSTOMS orientation sessions throughout the year.

- ❑ **Voter Registration Tabling During 2020 CUSTOMS Sessions:** As an integral component of the university's True Blue Voter initiative, with the help of the Rutherford County Election Commission (RCEC), voter registration tables will be set up in the MTSU Student Union during all ten of the new student CUSTOMS orientation sessions throughout the Summer of 2020. www.mtsu.edu/truebluevoter

- ❑ **Online Voter Resources:**
 - The MTSU website provides access to students and faculty to numerous online resources. The portals that are currently available via MTSU's website are:
 - <https://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/vote.php>,
 - <https://www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote.php>,
 - <http://election.rutherfordcountyttn.gov/students.htm>One of our 2020 goals is to increase the accessibility of these resources by creating a link in the "quicklinks" dropdown box on the front page of the MTSU website so that students can easily access these online portals.

 - In the 2018 school year, in partnership with our MTSU Information Technology Department, we successfully implemented our red "Register to Vote!" buttons that appear in the sidebar of many pages of the MTSU website. When pressed, this button will direct the student to the www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote page. On this page, students have access to voter registration assistance, information on upcoming elections, and campus programming. All of these resources are located directly in the sidebar and they are incredibly simple to navigate. We plan to push for this button to be made a permanent feature on all pages of the website and increasing the visibility of the button.

- The www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote front page is one of our most valuable tools for getting students registered during tabling events on campus. The student will be prompted to answer a handful of yes or no questions regarding their registration status and residency, and they will then be directed to the TN Election Commission website (<https://ovr.govvote.tn.gov/>) to complete the registration process. This is a tool that students are also able to access independently at home and on their own time.
 - Online Voter Registration as part of student's course registration: As they have the last 2 school years, our returning students, which make up the majority of the student body, have the opportunity to register to vote upon completing their course registration for the coming semester. Before exiting the course registration page, the students will see a button on the screen that they can click through to bring them directly to the mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote website to support the registration process.
- ❑ **National Voter Registration Day (NVRD):** The NVRD in 2020 will fall on September 22nd, 2020. This date is just weeks before the voter registration deadline for the 2020 Presidential Election, so we are planning to bring out all of our resources for this occasion. We will PLAN and PROMOTE this event well in advance to ensure that the reach of this day is as effective as possible. <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/about/>
- ❑ **Invade Connection Point locations on campus:** Connection Point events are sponsored by the Office of Student Affairs and the events are fun activities that students are encouraged to attend to interact and meet fellow students. These Connection Point locations are set up across campus throughout the semester and students receive different buttons that can be collected and placed onto their backpacks. We have created a pin specific to our voter registration "Connection Point" and we plan to continue to set up tables alongside these events throughout the course of the semester.
- ❑ **Tabling On-Campus during large events:** We will set up registration tables throughout the academic year at a variety of events such as any home games with MTSU athletic teams, Homecoming activities, MTSU

engagement week, as well as many more. We believe that this will enable us to reach a broader variety of students on campus.

We received the Silver Seal from the ALL IN Challenge for having a 2018 campus voting rate between 30-39% in the 2018 midterm election. We were named #1 of 48 colleges and universities in the Tennessee Secretary of State's Campus Voter Registration Contest during National Voter Registration Month.

Voter Education

- ❑ **NSLVE Data:** 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 are able to track our improvements in voter registration across the campus as well as identify any barriers that might be present and compare them to previous election cycles.
- ❑ **Black History Month:** The month of February is Black History Month. The theme that MTSU chose for the 2020 Black History Month events is "The Vote". We see this as the perfect opportunity to partner with the faculty and student leaders in Intercultural & Diversity Affairs (IDA) and the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL) to create events to educate students during the month of February and register students to vote as well.
- ❑ **Women's History Month:** Our campus is planning many activities for Women's History Month which falls in the month of March. In partnership with CSIL, the June Anderson Center for Women and Non-Traditional Students, and the Power of One, we will be tabling throughout the events of the month and supporting the efforts of our fellow campus organizations.
- ❑ **Constitution Day 2020:** Constitution Day falls on Thursday, September 17th, 2020. Every year, we organize a campus wide celebration of the Constitution and hold readings of the Constitution in front of every college on campus. We will continue with this tradition in the coming year. The knowledge of the U.S. Constitution is truly the foundation of voter education.
- ❑ **Presidential Debate Viewing Party:** The final Presidential Debate for 2020 is set to be held on October 22nd at one of our neighboring Universities, Belmont. We plan to rent out either the movie theater in the Student Union or the Lecture

room in the Honors College and invite students to watch the debate together and engage in dialogue. Food and drinks will be provided!

- ❑ **Calendar Handouts:** We will be creating a simplified calendar to pass out to students during our tabling events with a breakdown of all of the election dates, polling locations, absentee ballot info, etc.
- ❑ **Sample Ballots:** ADP will provide a sample ballot on the ADP website for students to reference if they have any anxiety about what to expect at the polls.
- ❑ **Absentee Ballot Info:** We will be active about educating students on the absentee ballot deadlines as well as assisting them with filling them out and submitting them. Many students are apprehensive about the process, so we plan to work with them every step of the way!
- ❑ **Polling Places Mapped Out:** We will map out the polling locations in our area and post them throughout the campus in heavily trafficked areas. Some examples are the residence halls, student union buildings, and the entrances to all of the colleges.
- ❑ **Candidate Information Sheets:** We will provide information on the different candidates who are in the running for office. We will get in touch with our contacts at the Campus Election Engagement Project to assist with creating these candidate profiles to place on campus.

Get Out the Vote

- ❑ **Create Energy Amongst Students:** A student is much more likely to go to the polls if they have a friend or group to go with. We know that students are highly influenced by their peers, so if we can create high energy amongst members of the student body, that energy can spread throughout the student body!
- ❑ **TN's Statewide Campus Civic Summit**, a conference bringing together Tennessee's higher education institutions to learn and share best practices. This year, a same-day summit will be held at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro February 21, 2020. Guest speakers will include Representative London Lamar, Representative Charles Baum, Executive Director for Democracy in Higher Education and Director for NSLVE Study Dr. Nancy Thomas, Verdis Robinson (Director of Community College Engagement at Campus Compact, a

representative from the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Pericles Project and Bonner Scholars Program. To promote the event, we will create a “geotag” on Instagram and Snapchat for attendees to use during the course of the event.

- ❑ **Early Voting** To vote early, a person must appear in person at either the county election commission office or at a satellite voting location opened by the county election commission. The early voting period typically begins twenty (20) days before an election and ends five (5) days before an election. Although closed from voting on holidays, a person may vote early on any Saturday that falls during this time frame (TN Secretary of State website). Early voting is February 12 - February 25 for the Presidential Preference Primary Election. Early Voting for the State/Federal and County/General Primary Election will begin July 17, 2020 and end August 1, 2020. Early Voting for the State/Federal General Election begins October 14 and closes October 29, 2020.
- ❑ **Election Dates** Presidential Preference Primary Election day is March 3, 2020. State/Federal and County/General Primary Election is August 6, 2020. State/Federal General Election is November 3, 2020.
- ❑ **Absentee Ballot Deadlines** Absentee Ballot Request for the Presidential Preference Primary Election deadline is Tuesday February 25, 2020. Absentee Ballot Request for the State/Federal and County/General Primary Election deadline is July 30, 2020. Absentee Ballot Request for State/ Federal General election is October 27, 2020.
- ❑ **WAVE:** MTSU has been involved with the Wake Up & Vote Early program since 2012. WAVE encourages students to participate in early voting in hopes of a larger voter turnout by the end of the voting cycle. Various groups on campus will be going to the polling stations on the very first day of early voting to our nearest polling station which is located at Central Magnet School just one mile from MTSU.
- ❑ **Snapchat and Instagram Filters for Election Day:** We will create an #MTSUVotes! Filter for both Snapchat and Instagram for students to use after they vote!
- ❑ **Text Reminders Before Elections:** Students are able to opt-in during the online registration process for election day reminders. We will continue to utilize this to encourage students to get to the polls!

- ❑ **Party at the Polls 2020:** We will be hosting an event on the day of the General Election (November 3rd, 2020). We will collectively parade to the nearest polling station, which is located about 1 mile away. Following the parade, we intend to have food, games, music, and community involvement to encourage students to attend!

Our Coalition

The Organizational and departmental team members from across campus engaged in advancing engagement, student voter participation, and increasing our students' understanding of and commitment to the American democratic process:

Student Government Association
 MTSU's Center for Student Involvement and Leadership
 American Democracy Project MTSU
 Albert Gore Research Center
 Center for Educational Media
 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 Office of the University Provost
 MTSU Board of Directors

Our Leadership

Key Students, Faculty, and Staff.

Dr. Mary Evins, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning
 Miranda Johnson, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning
 Courtney Thatcher, ADP President, Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow
 Miura Rempis, ADP Vice President
 Delanie MacDonald, SGA President
 Preston George, SGA Attorney General
 Dr. Mark Byrnes, University Provost
 Prof. Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications
 Dr. Dan Kelley, Asst. Vice President for Student Affairs
 Dr. Ken Blake, MTSU Poll
 Professor Ken Paulson, Director, MTSU Free Speech Center

Prof. Deborah Fisher, Seigenthaler Chair
 Dr. Lara Daniel, Jones College of Business, Co-chair of LWV
 Dr. Louis Kyriakoudes, Director, Albert Gore Center
 Dr. Laura Clark, Director, Center for Educational Media
 Dr. Philip Phillips, Assoc. Dean, University Honors College
 Ms. Susan Lyons, Coordinator, University Honors College

Our Community, Local, and Tennessee Partners

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

Other Resources

Both the local Democratic and Republican parties contribute to our campus voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts at MTSU this fall. There are active College Democrats and College Republicans at MTSU, with their chapters fully registered with Student Affairs. Our College Democrats and College Republicans tend to work together, table together, and support each other. We trust that will continue to be their pattern this fall.

Ballot Access

MTSU is a university that does not have a polling place on campus, though many universities do. It is something we need and in fact, have been working on a bill with Representative London Lamar to make this a reality for MTSU.

Despite this fact, we have done a walk to the nearest polling station on Election Day at the local High School, and intend to continue this in 2020. We will also work with the rideshare company Lyft to obtain a discount code for students that need a ride to the polling stations on election day.

Your Timeline

- ❑ **How often will your coalition meet?** The core ADP members will continue to meet weekly throughout the 2020 school year to maintain the momentum and energy needed to register students on campus leading up to the voter registration deadline on October 5th, 2020.

Point of Contact for Designation Process

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Murfreesboro, Tennessee

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