



## **Voter Registration and Engagement Action Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

The following action plan has been created as a working document to help guide voter engagement and education at Mississippi State University (MSU). A working group has been established with members from the Center for Student Activities, Student Leadership and Community Engagement, Political Science, and Student representatives from multiple organizations that focus on voter education and engagement.

Mississippi State University is committed to providing an environment for increased voter education and engagement at the local, state and federal levels. As noted in the 2017 National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement for Mississippi State University, MSU has seen a slight decrease (-0.4%) in the registration rate of our students (NSLVE, 2017, p. 3). However, over the four years of the study MSU has seen an increase (+925) of students who are registered to vote (NSLVE, 2017; p. 3). With the increase in Mississippi States total enrollment over the last five years we are committed now, more than ever to engage our students to become responsible citizens and let their voices ring true.

With the implementation of this action plan, MSU hopes to improve the voter registration rate among our students as well as increase overall turnout for not only federal elections, but of also local and state elections. The plan will be implemented on the Mississippi State University campus in Starkville, MS for the 2018-2019 academic year and will be evaluated and modified as needed to increase the impact to our student population. The plan will be implemented ~~will be~~ through three strategic areas: voter registration, voter education and voter turnout.

### **Voter Engagement and Education Working Group**

The Voter Engagement and Education Working Group (VEEWG) will meet regularly throughout the year to make recommendations for increased engagement and education, as well as assess the current and future initiatives outlined in this document.

**Jackie Mullen** – Director of Student Activities and Fraternity & Sorority Life

**Brad Hill** – Assistant Director for Student Activities

**Dr. Cade Smith** – ~~Asst.~~ Assistant Dean & Director for Student Leadership & Community Engagement

**Stephen Williams** – Program Manager – Student Leadership & Community Engagement

**Dr. Thessalia Merivaki** – Department of Political Science

**Betty Thomas** – Graduate Student

**Morgan Goebel** – Undergraduate Student

Student Volunteers

Representatives from MSU Student Association, Mississippi Votes, She Should Run, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and Stennis Montgomery Association.

### **Voter Registration**

Voter registration efforts over the past three years have increased on our campus with voter registration drives being initiated by the Mississippi State Student Association (SA), multiple fraternities and sororities; as well as the establishment of two new student organizations whose specific mission is to engage student voters to advocate for more education and engagement in local, state and federal elections.

1. Throughout the Fall 2018 semester members of the working group will investigate options available to streamline voter registration for new and returning students.
  - a. Through creation of an online form via the university Information Technology Services Department
  - b. Through partnerships with other established services available to the masses (i.e. Rock the Vote, TurboVote, etc.)
2. Speak to incoming freshman going through the New Maroon Legacy Camp, Fraternity and Sorority Recruitment, Montgomery Leadership Classes, Day One classes, as well as peer mentors for students in regard to how to register to vote.
3. Co-Promote the Department of Political Sciences' National Voter Registration Week activities, including speakers, general registration as well as how to seek out candidate information.
4. Partner with the Oktibbeha County Election Commissioners in ~~of~~ creating a voter registration (educational) event where the commissioners will bring a

current voting machine used by the Commissioners office to provide an opportunity for students to be oriented with the machine before elections day.

5. Continue to advertise the centralized campus mailing address established by the MSU Student Association for students to be able to register to vote without having to purchase a personal P.O. Box.
6. Work with MSU Office of Public Affairs to create an advertising campaign for voter registration efforts utilizing social and digital media.
7. Work with the Vice President for Student Affairs office to draft an email to students regarding the processes available to register to vote in Starkville, MS.
8. Establishment of a “Bulldogs Vote” website to centralize the voter registration, education and mobilizations efforts.
9. Working Group members will help to promote voter registration drives initiated through local student Organizations.
10. Voter Registration flyers will be available at Annual Involvement Fairs.
11. Work with the Election Commissioners office to host a “How to Register People to Vote” event, where individuals interested in hosting a voter registration drive can come and learn the proper procedures as told by the Election Commissioners office.

### **Voter Education**

1. Posters and digital advertising will be on display around campus noting significant dates for students to be aware of in regards to registration and candidate information (i.e. debates, registration deadlines, etc.)
2. MSU Student Association in conjunction with other MSU Departments and Student Organizations are working to host a congressional debate on campus for both House of Representatives and Senate federal elections.
3. We will work with the Oktibbeha County Elections Commissioner to find a way to provide precinct information for students that may not be aware of their current voting precinct.
4. Work with MSU Office of Public Affairs for a “State Spotlight” on why voting and being civically engaged is important.
5. Hosting an Election Day watch party for live results of the elections as local and national media reports them.
6. Work with MSU Student Organizations to have issue debates (not with particular candidates, but utilizing different political ideologies).

### **Voter Turnout**

1. We will work with the MSU Office of Public Affairs and/or the President’s office to provide a video or letter to the MSU student community as a reminder to vote on Election Day.

2. Seek the aid of our campus dining partners to provide a discount to any student and/or staff member that has an "I voted" sticker to receive a specified discount at participating locations.
3. Work with the Oktibbeha County Board of Supervisors and/or the Election Commissioner Office to identify another appropriate location for on campus voting, due to the Humphrey Coliseum no longer being an option.
4. Seek partnerships with local sponsors to provide transportation to students that may need a ride to their polling place.
  - a. Shuttle buses
  - b. Cowbell Cart rides
5. Utilize posters, digital mediums and social media accounts throughout campus to remind students to vote on Election Day.
6. Provide a comprehensive list of Notary Publics available to students that may be voting absentee to have their ballots notarized.

### **Evaluation**

Mississippi State University will once again look to register for the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. The results from the previous NSLVE survey and the pending NSLVE survey will be compared to provide measurement of the success of the above action plan. The action plan will also be modified as needed throughout the year depending on the priorities realized throughout the year.