



## **Voter Registration and Engagement Action Plan 2020**

### **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 task force 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 2016 National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement for Mississippi State University, MSU has seen a slight decrease (-1.3%) in the registration rate of our students from the previous presidential election year (NSLVE, 2016, p. 3). As we look towards the challenges ahead this year, we want to not only educate students and register them to vote, but we want to increase our voting rate. 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 also local and state elections. The plan will be implemented on the Mississippi State University campus in Starkville, MS for the 2020-2021 academic year and will be evaluated and modified as needed to increase the impact to our student population. The plan will be implemented through three strategic areas: voter registration, voter education and voter turnout.

### **Voter Engagement and Education Task Force**

The Voter Engagement and Education Task Force 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.

**Amelia Rogers** – Associate Director for Student Activities

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

**Stephen Williams** – Interim Director & Program Manager for Student Leadership & Community Engagement

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

**Brian Tesch** – Graduate Student

**Mallory Amos** – Undergraduate Student (Student Association)

**Georgie Swan** – Undergraduate Student (College Democrats)

Representatives from MSU Student Association, MSU All-In Democracy Challenge, Holmes Cultural Diversity Center, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Mississippi State College Republicans, 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 student organizations; as well as partnering with the Department of Political Science to work to engage student voters to advocate for more education and engagement in local, state and federal elections.

1. Throughout the Fall 2020 semester members of the task force 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 posting information and resources on the university's engagement platform, Cowbell Connect
  - c. 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 and the importance of civic engagement.
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 creating a voter registration (educational) event where the commissioners will be able to talk about how the local polling places will look and familiar students 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 and the Student Body President to draft an email to students regarding the processes available to register to vote in Starkville, MS.
8. Task force members will help to promote voter registration drives initiated through local student organizations.
9. Voter Registration information will be available at Annual Involvement Fairs.

10. Encourage registration in coordination with the Homecoming and the Student Association Elections and events.
11. Implement registration manual at each Residence Hall and train staff to use each site.
12. Talk with the Office of Admissions and Orientation and Events to build voter registration into new student orientation in coming years.

### **Voter Education**

1. Posters and digital advertising will be on display around campus noting significant dates for students to be aware of in regard to registration and candidate information (i.e. debates, registration deadlines, etc.)
2. 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.
3. Work with MSU Office of Public Affairs for a “State Spotlight” on why voting and being civically engaged is important.
4. Hosting an Election Day watch party for live results of the elections as local and national media reports them (this could be virtual).
5. Work with partners to have conversations / Lunch & Learn events about how their community is impacted and barriers they may face (these could be held virtually).
  - a. MSU Student Organizations
  - b. Motivated Faculty
  - c. HCDC
6. Establishment of a “Bulldogs Vote” page on the SA’s website to centralize the voter registration, education, student focused voter guide and mobilizations efforts.
7. Work with the elections clerk and the Maroon Volunteer Center to recruit students to be poll workers.

### **Voter Turnout**

1. 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. Work with the SA to have a student takeover on social media, to talk about the importance of voting.
3. Seek the aid of our campus partners to decorate their facilities during the day/week of the election.
  - a. Dining facilities
  - b. Mitchell Memorial Library
  - c. Parking and Transit Bus stops
4. 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.
5. Seek partnerships with local sponsors to provide transportation to students that may need assistance to walk or ride to their polling place.
  - a. Shuttle buses

6. Utilize posters, digital mediums and social media accounts throughout campus to remind students to vote on Election Day.
7. Provide a comprehensive list of Notary Publics available to students that may be voting absentee to have their ballots notarized.
8. Host an absentee party to assist people in completing and sending off their ballots (this could be virtual).
9. Date registration and election dates to university calendars:
  - a. OPA
  - b. Cowbell Connect
  - c. Registrar
10. Have the conversation to encourage faculty to not host exams on Election Day.

### **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.