



Voter Registration and Engagement Action Plan 2022

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 2020 National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement for Mississippi State University, MSU has seen an increase (+16.0%) in the registration rate of our students from the previous presidential election year (NSLVE, 2020, p. 4). 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 continue to increase our voting rates. 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 2022-2023 academic year and will be evaluated and modified as needed to increase the impact on our student population. The plan will be implemented through three strategic areas: voter registration, voter education and outreach and voter turnout.

Voter Engagement and Education Task Force

The MSU Voter Friendly Campus Task Force make recommendations for increased engagement and education, as well as assess the current and future initiatives outlined in this document.

Kylie Forrester – Associate Director, Center for Student Activities

Dr. Thessalia Merivaki – Department of Political Science and Public Administration (PSPA)

Stephen Williams – Associate Director, Student Leadership & Community Engagement

Alexis Wallace – Assistant Director, Student Leadership & Community Engagement

Kennedy Guest – Undergraduate Student (President, Student Association)

Cameron Fox – Undergraduate Student (Director of Policy, Student Association)

Jessica Pettis – Undergraduate Student (Political Science and Public Administration)

Chris Denmark – Undergraduate Student (President, College Republicans)

Justin Childs – Undergraduate Student (President, College Democrats)

Representatives from Center for Student Activities, MSU Student Association, Student Leadership & Community Engagement, and the Department of Political Science & Public Administration.

Voter Registration

Voter registration efforts over the past three federal elections (2016-2020) have increased on our campus, from 39% in 2016 to 48.7% in 2020, a 16% increase (NSLVE 2020). To achieve this, MSU invested in campuswide voter registration events during National Voter Registration Week, in collaboration with the Mississippi State Student Association (SA), multiple student organizations, such as MSU College Democrats, College Republicans and the Stennis-Montgomery Association, as well as the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (PSPA).

Building upon our institutional and administrative capacity from previous election cycles, the Task Force intends to implement the following voter registration initiatives:

1. **Voter registration for new and returning students:**
 - a. Inclusion of voter registration materials in students' welcome packets during MSU's *Move-in Days* (August 13, 2022).
 - b. Three-day voter registration drives during MSU's *Dawg Days* (August 13-21, 2022).
 - c. Availability of nonpartisan voter information and resources on the university's engagement platform, Cowbell Connect.
 - d. Series of talks by peer mentors from the New Maroon legacy Camp, Fraternity and Sorority Recruitment, Montgomery Leadership Classes, Day One classes.
2. **Voter registration events conducted by the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (PSPA)**
 - a. National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) events (September 20, 2022).
 - b. Mississippi Voter Registration Deadline (October 10, 2022).
3. **Education about voter registration by state and local election officials visit to MSU Campus**
 - a. Mississippi Secretary of State visit on NVRD.
 - b. Oktibbeha County circuit clerk to assist with voter registration drives on NVRD.
4. **Accessibility of information about voter registration on campus**
 - a. Centralized campus mailing address established by the MSU Student Association for students to be able to register to vote.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Voter Registration information available at Annual Involvement Fairs.
 - d. Availability of stamps for mail-in voter registration forms and absentee ballots

during registration events.

5. **Social and Digital Voter Registration Campaign**

- a. The MSU Office of Public Affairs will create an advertising campaign for voter registration efforts utilizing social and digital media.
- b. The Student Association Marketing Team will advertise voter registration drives hosted by the Student Association, College Democrats, College Republicans, and other on-campus entities on their social media accounts and on the digital ad space across campus.

Nonpartisan Voter Education

1. Print and Digital Media

- a. Posters and digital advertising will be on display around campus noting significant dates for students to be aware of o registration and candidate information (i.e., registration deadlines, requesting an absentee ballot, information on notaries, etc.).
- b. Run a “how elections work” series in the MSU newspaper, the Reflector between September 1 and November 3, 2022.

2. Online Voter Education

- a. Establishment of a “Bulldogs Vote” page on the SA’s website to provide information about elections and important deadlines.
- b. Frequent information sharing by SA on social media.

3. Campus wide civic engagement events

- a. Run a campus wide [Unify Challenge](#) competition, for students to engage in civic dialogue.
- b. Host an Election Day watch party for live results of the elections as local and national media reports them.
- c. Run a poll worker and student poll intern recruitment program through the Maroon Volunteer Center.

Promoting Voter Turnout

1. Work with the SA to have a student takeover on social media to talk about the importance of voting. Coordinate with other on-campus political organizations (College Republicans, College Democrats, Young Americans for Freedom, Young Democratic Socialists of America) for a large-scale social media campaign.
2. 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
3. Work with the Oktibbeha County Board of Supervisors and/or the Election Commissioner Office to solidify a polling place on campus, hopefully in the Newell-Grisson Volleyball Facility.
4. Host a “March to the Polls” where students all travel together to their polling place after meeting up on campus.

5. Utilize posters, digital advertisements, and social media accounts throughout campus to remind students to vote on Election Day. These will use a common graphic to further remind students about the upcoming election.
6. Run a section in The Reflector about the importance of voting.
7. Provide a comprehensive list of Notary Publics, but on campus and in Starkville, available to students that may be voting absentee to have their ballots notarized.
8. Host an absentee event to assist people in completing and sending off their ballots.
9. Add election dates to university calendars:
 - a. OPA (Office of Public Affairs)
 - b. Cowbell Connect
 - c. Registrar
10. Send a memo out 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.