

# Montclair State University

## ALL IN Campus Action Plan 2020



## **Executive Summary**

The Montclair State University Voting Action Plan is developed by the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement in conjunction with the Montclair State Votes Coalition. The purpose of this action plan is to create a clear and concise document that states our campus' goals and objectives for the upcoming year. This action plan will be implemented on our main campus located in Montclair, New Jersey and will begin in January 2020 and conclude in December of 2020 when an evaluation and reflection period will begin.

## **Leadership**

The Office of Civic and Voter Engagement is responsible for the education, motivation, voter registration, and voting efforts at Montclair State University; however, the office could not be successful without its partnerships both on and off campus. Dr. Mariel Pagan, the Director of the Center for Student Involvement, has created lasting relationships with offices and organizations that have proved to be crucial in the University's efforts and plans to continue forming new partnerships in the next year. All campus partners will be invited to the Montclair State Votes Coalition, a coalition of key players in the efforts of the University to increase voter turnout, registration and education on campus. Coalition members range from students, administrative offices and departments. Student groups include members of the Student Government Association, the student chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Femvolution, a feminist group dedicated to activism. Administrative offices on the coalition include the Offices of Residence Life, Greek Life, Student Activities, Commuter Life, Social Justice and Diversity, and the Volunteer Center. The coalition also includes members from the Political Science department, University College, the Harry Sprague Library, and the Office of the President. The members of the coalition are representative of the diverse population of students at Montclair State University and bring a unique perspective to the table to ensure our efforts are effective and inclusive. Additionally, having such a wide spectrum of campus partners on the coalition will allow for greater exposure as well as access to resources. The Montclair State Votes Coalition meetings will be run once a month by Dr. Mariel Pagan and James Clark, the Graduate Coordinator of the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement. The coalition will not only focus on ways to impact civic efforts on our campus but

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also in the surrounding community by partnering with off-campus partners such as the League of Women Voters, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, TurboVote, and the Andrew Goodman Foundation.

**Commitment**

The commitment to democratic engagement runs deep within the heart of Montclair State University. The students, administration, faculty, and leadership work to ensure civic learning is present from the moment a student arrives on campus until the day they graduate. The Office of Civic and Voter Engagement is present at all new-student orientations, new-student seminar classes, student organization fairs, and maintains a constant presence at university functions all the way through the graduation fair. The importance of civic engagement is also stressed in the wide array of courses offered across the eleven different schools and colleges within the University.

**Landscape**

Civic learning and democratic engagement are at the core of Montclair State University's mission statement. The mission statement reads "all University programs will develop in students the ability to discover, create, evaluate, apply, and share knowledge in a climate characterized by tolerance and openness in the exploration of ideas. Curricular and co-curricular programs will cultivate the ability to think critically, to act ethically, and to become informed citizen-participants prepared to assume leadership roles in a democracy. Recognizing the increasing connectedness of the world, the University will ensure that all students develop an understanding of global issues and of their responsibilities as citizens of the world."

Montclair State University not only states its commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement but has integrated it into the curriculum offered to students. Through a wide variety of course offerings, academic research, and even minors, students have ample opportunities to engage in civic learning. The minor offered is titled Leadership Development Through Civic Engagement and is designed to integrate with any major and teach students the intersection of their chosen field and civic engagement and participation. Outside of this minor, there are many courses offered between the different schools and colleges at the University. Some of these

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courses include: Teaching Music As Democratic Practice, Democracy and Communication, Public Purposes of Education: Democracy and Schooling, and Building Bridges through Dialogue.

Beyond in-class learning, civic learning and democratic engagement is present in the co-curriculum as well. These efforts are done collaborative between different offices and organizations in the University and the Montclair State Votes Coalition is the meeting place for representatives. As stated in the leadership section, there are many offices and organizations that are working towards our goals including Residence Life, Commuter Life, Student Activities, Student Government, the student chapter of the NAACP, and more. Together this group has hosted events such as Party at the Polls, National Voter Registration Day activities, Meet the Candidates, We The People Week activities, tabling for Constitution Day. This group has also put forth initiatives such as voter registration in the school's library and internal ballot bowls between residence halls.

While we have seen great success in our efforts over the past few years, there are some internal and external barriers that affect the levels of success. Some internal barriers that we have identified include limited resources both financially and full-time designated staff for our office. Some of the external barriers that we face stem from our campus' location. Our main campus is uniquely situated in three different cities, two different counties, and two different legislative districts. This location poses many different challenges for our campus in terms of voting including registration location, differing ballots and voting locations for students who live on campus, and collaborating with two different board of election offices.

Despite these obstacles our campus remains optimistic for future success based on the resources that are available to us including partnerships with the Andrew Goodman Foundation, the League of Women Voters, and our collaborative relationship with the Passaic County Clerk's office. Looking forward, Montclair State is hoping to form a relationship with the Essex County Clerk's office as well as secure additional funding and staffing.

## **Goals**

### **Long-Term Goals**

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1. Develop a civic and voter engagement course for first-year students to learn about the democratic process and their critical role in it. This course will also ensure majority of first-year students have an opportunity to get registered.
2. Increase voter turnout by 15 percent by election year 2024 and continue to have a higher voting rate than the national average reported by the NSLVE campus report.
3. Establish a full-time staff position for the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement. We recognize the importance of civic and voter engagement and want to have a staff member solely dedicated to the success of the office.

**Short-Term Goals**

1. Increase social media presence on Instagram and Twitter.
  - a. 3 posts and 5 story posts per week on Instagram and 1 tweet per day on Twitter
  - b. Implement paid social media ads on Instagram
  - c. 50% increase in followers on both platforms
2. Register over 250 students on National Voter Registration Day
3. Increase voter registration and turnout in the 2020 election by 10 percent
4. Include more institutional agents on the Montclair State Votes Coalition, including but not limited to:
  - a. Office of the Registrar
  - b. Office of the Provost
  - c. Information Technology
  - d. Graduate School

**Strategy**

**Voter Registration**

*Freshman/Transfer Orientation*

Voter registration efforts will begin for incoming freshmen before the official start of the Fall semester. Starting in June, there will be a voter registration table at the organizational fair, reaching out to freshmen and transfer students. The organizational fair serves as a way to introduce students to campus organizations and services, before the official start of the semester. Starting voter registration early on will give us an early advantage to show the

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students the university's dedicated to civic participation.

*University Library*

The Montclair State Votes Coalition works with the Harry A. Sprague Library to set up a computer dedicated to voter registration on TurboVote located at the front entrance of the library. The Office of Civic and Voter Engagement is across campus from the library so this allows us to reach students we may otherwise not have interacted with.

*Pre-Filled Voter Registration Forms*

With several residence halls throughout the campus, the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement will continue with issuing its prefilled voter registration forms, making the voter registration process easier for students. The forms are distributed to other campus organizations as well ensuring that the information on the form is correct. After filling out the forms students will also be informed of their polling station, according to their campus address.

*National Voter Registration Day*

Each year for National Voter Registration Day the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement hosts an event in the quad to register students to vote. This event includes a voting machine provided by the Board of Elections, a citizenship quiz to get a free t-shirt, and features tabling opportunities for campus partners, student organizations, and local organizations and campaigns to raise awareness for an issue of their choice. This event also includes cross-collaborations with other offices.

*Tabling*

Tabling in the Student Center has been a regular tactic used by the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement in the past. The office plans to continue these efforts but will be expanding them. Tabling will be done for voter registration as well as voter education. These efforts will be expanding out of the Student Center and into some academic buildings to catch new students who may not frequent the Student Center. Tabling will be done on a bi-weekly basis, and a weekly basis in the weeks leading up to the voter registration deadline.

*We The People Week*

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This event is a week's worth of events typically beginning the week before National Voter Registration Day and ending with National Voter Registration Day activities. This week includes tabling events to educate the campus about a variety of issues, presentations from the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement and other campus partners, education sessions done by the Passaic County Clerk's office and other fun, attention-grabbing events based around civic learning.

*Internal Ballot Bowls*

Montclair State University has participated in the New Jersey Ballot Bowl for the past two years. This is a competition between New Jersey colleges and universities to see which school can register the most amount of students. As a way to entice student leaders to get other students registered, we have created an internal ballot bowl between Greek Life and Residence Life. All the different Residence Halls will be competing against each other and the different Greek sub-councils will compete. The winning residence hall and sub-council will receive a prize.

**Voter Education**

*Campus-Wide Emails*

Students will be educated on the upcoming events, deadlines, and registration efforts through campus wide emails sent by Student Communications. The emails will detail information on how students can register to vote and the relevant deadlines. A special email will be sent on the NJ voter registration deadline and Election Day containing information on how to find polling location and the hours of the polling places. The emails have proved in the past to be a great resource in reaching out to students and staff on campus and we expect similar success in the future.

*Ballot Access*

Montclair State University maintains polling stations nearby and directly on campus. The three polling locations serve the various residence halls on campus. With one polling location directly on campus at Machuga Heights students living in that district will be a walking distance from the location. One of the other locations is an elementary school that is only a five minute walk from campus. However, the third location is not within walking distance so the university is planning to have all day shuttle service on election day to this location. In order to make the process

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more exciting we want to have the shuttle be a party bus and invite our school's mascot, Rocky the Red Hawk to ride the shuttle with students for select hours of the day.

*Party at the Polls*

Since there is a polling location on campus, the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement will host a party outside of the polling location to celebrate democracy. This event will include free themed food (e.g., Freedom Fries, Left or Right Buffalo Wings), a photo booth, giveaways, and more. In the past, this event has been extremely successful in both raising awareness for election day and getting students to be interested in the democratic process; we anticipate continued success.

**Reporting**

Montclair State University's plan and data will both be shared both internally and externally. Internally, the action plan and NSLVE data will be shared with the Montclair State Votes Coalition, sent to university faculty and staff through email, and posted on the Office of Civic and Voter Engagement OrgSync page for all students to view. Externally, the action plan and NSLVE data will be shared with our community partners including the Andrew Goodman Foundation and posted on the university's website.

**Evaluation**

The purpose of evaluation in our civic engagement efforts is to gain a better understanding of what is working and at the same time identify areas for improvement. By evaluation both quantitative and qualitative data, we will be able to continuously improve and shape our efforts to fit our ever changing community.

Evaluation of our efforts will be carried out bi-annually by the Montclair State Votes Coalition. The group includes representation from all on-campus stakeholders including students, faculty, administration, and leadership. By including the coalition in our evaluation, we can ensure diversification of perspective and determine how we can create efforts that benefit all campus stakeholders. Evaluation will take place shortly after election day and at the end of the academic year.



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The information we will be analyzing will come from a variety of different sources.

1. **NSLVE Data.** First and foremost, we will be analyzing our university's NSLVE data since it will give us the most detailed quantitative data. NSLVE data gives us the opportunity to hone in on groups with particularly low voter turnout to cater programs towards them to increase those numbers. This data also allows us to measure our improvement and evaluate the success level of previous efforts.
2. **Event Attendance.** In order to determine the success of our programs in terms of attendance, we swipe students' IDs upon their arrival. This metric gives us insight in terms of the level of interest for the content of our events as well as our promotion of the events.
3. **Social Media Engagement.** In the next year, we plan to increase our social media presence, as stated in the goals section. As a means to evaluate our success, we will look at our number of followers, likes/comments/retweets on our posts, and engagement with our stories.
4. **Voter Registration.** While our NSLVE data compares voter registration numbers to voter turnout, we also focus on the amount of students we register. Each year, we plan to increase this number which will be a key factor in our evaluation efforts.