



VOTER REGISTRATION & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN 2024

Executive Summary

Founded in 1964, Montgomery County Community College (Montco) is a public, 501(c)(3) higher education institution that offers associate degrees, professional certificates, and job-training programs. The College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and has two physical locations in Pennsylvania –Blue Bell and Pottstown - and a Virtual Campus. In 2023-2024, Montco’s enrollment was 13,750. Approximately 75 percent of the student body is enrolled on a part-time basis and over 80 percent of students work while they attend classes.

Montco has received recognition as being one of the most technologically advanced community colleges in the nation as well as for excellence in faculty and staff. An Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction, Montco has been included on the list of Best for Vets Colleges in *Military Times*, and has been recognized as one of the Most Promising Places to work by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* for the past seven years.

For the 2020 General Election, Montco was recognized as having the highest student voter registration and voter turnout of 2-year schools in Pennsylvania.

Montco is committed to engaging students civically and providing opportunities for all students to become involved in the democratic process. As a 501(c)(3) institution, all efforts are non-partisan in nature the College does not advocate for or oppose any individual candidate or political party.

Who developed this action plan?

This plan was developed primarily by the Office of the President, Department of Government & External Relations, the Student Government Association (SGA), Office of Student Life, and Academic Affairs. Montco leadership provided overall guidance and support throughout the process of developing the plan. Montco continually seeks to incorporate more student-focused voter registration initiatives that involve the Student Government Association, fellowships from external civic organizations, and various student clubs.

What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?

This plan was developed to the institutionalization of the importance of voter registration and voting to develop and foster a greater sense of civic duty among Montco’s students, faculty, and administrators. As a primarily taxpayer-funded, public institution of higher learning, it is important that Montco students and stakeholders understand the impact of their engagement and have the proper tools available to engage civically. Many Montco students are also members of underserved communities, and it is important for these students to have access to resources and opportunities that might otherwise not be available to them.

Where will this action plan be implemented?

This plan intends to be implemented through our virtual campus, student portal, student emails, in the classrooms at Montco’s physical locations, and through all possible social media platforms.

What is the duration of time that the plan is in effect?

This plan is developed for the 2024 election year. However, many of these initiatives are a continuation of efforts from previous years, and will also be implemented throughout the College’s operations every year thereafter. Many events will be repeated each year to maintain a continual, consistent student engagement program after being evaluated for effectiveness by Montco staff.

Leadership

Execution of the Action Plan rests with a number of college-wide departments and includes student leadership, faculty, and administrators:

Office of the President

- Dr. Victoria Bastecki-Perez, *President*
- Dr. Jenn Meehan, *Chief of Staff*

Student Government Association

Office of Government & External Relations

- Michael Bettinger, *Director*

Office of Student Life

- Tyler Steffy, *Director*
- Sarah Schenk, *Coordinator*

Department of Political Science

Office of Strategic Communications

- Diane VanDyke, *Director*
- Eric Devlin, *Public Relations and Communications Coordinator*

Throughout the year, MCCC partners with a number of external organizations to engage students in voter registration, engagement, and education efforts:

Pennsylvania Department of State

Accion Comunal Latinoamericana de Montgomery County (ACLAMO)

- *Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County*

Montgomery County Office of Voter Services

Members of the Montgomery County Legislative Delegation

The League of Women Voters

New Pennsylvania Project

Woori Center

- *Korean & Asian American non-profit community organizing organization*

Commitment

Montco is committed to providing initiatives and resources to encourage civic engagement and democratic participation among students for each election year. As an institution, Montco understands that every election is important and affects the lives of our students, staff, and faculty.

President Dr. Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez has signed on to *ALL-IN's Higher Education Presidents Commitment to Full Voter Participation*. This action further codifies Montco's leadership's commitment and full support to institutionalize civic engagement throughout the Montco community and strive toward 100% voter participation among its students.

Landscape

Unfortunately, Montco does not have current voter registration and/or participation data to analyze as we have not yet received our 2022 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report. However, many of our student demographic areas remain as they were pre-pandemic.

As we await our 2022 NSLVE report data, our most recent reports show that Montco voter registration rates (77.3%) are slightly below average among all institutions participating in the study. However, those who are registering are voting in high numbers (86.5%), above the national average. Personnel and institutional support are in place to provide increased focus to voter registration and participation, and the development of this plan represents a continued, deliberate effort to institutionalize the importance of civic participation among the students and staffs. A more in-depth look at the NSLVE data is examined in this section as well.

A challenge to engage Montco students exists because students are commuters. Many students typically come to campus for classes and then leave to go to work, attend to family matters, etc. Approximately 75% of Montco students are part-time and over 80% are working while they are enrolled. This situation reduces the amount of time when students are on campus and have down time or non-class hours that they can use to attend events or become engaged in activities.

Yet, many students do remain on campus each day and in-person registration and engagement opportunities will continue to be implemented so they have opportunities to participate. To enhance these efforts and reach greater numbers of students, Montco will continue to provide opportunities through virtual means such as messages sent directly to students through email, text messaging, and push notifications through a newly developed student portal. Additionally, when possible, efforts will be made to greater incorporate voter registration and civic engagement into the curriculum and classroom experience expanding on some of the civic-focused coursework already in place.

Voter Registration

Montco's voter registration rates - the percentage of all Montco students registered to vote – has continued on a consistent upward trend over the past four years according to our most recent NSLVE report. In 2020, the percentage of registered Montco students surpassed the state-wide registration rate for the first time since tracking began in 2012.

Election Year	Pennsylvania (Statewide)*	MCCC Student Voter Registration Rate**
2020	76.3%	77.3%
2018	68.3%	67.3%
2016	72%	67.4%
2014	64.4%	55.5%
2012	71.9%	63.9%

*US Census Bureau, Reported Voting & Registration of the Citizen Voting Age Population for States

** National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Voter Participation Rate

In addition to the registration rate, Montco’s voter participation rate continued to show an above average level of voter participation among Montco students when compared to all institutions participating in the NSLVE study. However, unlike the registration rate, the overall voting participation rate falls below the Pennsylvania state-wide averages. The significant decrease in participation state-wide in 2014 can also be seen among MCCC students and all NSLVE institutions.

Election Year	Pennsylvania	MCCC Student Voting Rate	All NSLVE Institutions
2020	76.5%	66.9%	66%
2018	54.6%	44.9%	39.1
2016	62.6%	59.5%	50.6
2014	40%	20.8%	19.7%
2012	61.6%	50.9%	57.6%

Further analysis of the NSLVE data does show encouraging trends. When comparing each mid-term election and each presidential year Montco student voter participation rates also grew dramatically over the past four cycles, particularly in mid-term elections. The reasons for this increase could be institutional efforts combined with a greater civic participation among students given the increasingly politicized national conversation.

<u>2016</u>	<u>2020</u>	MCCC Participation Rate Change
60.6%	66.9%	+6.3%
<u>2014</u>	<u>2018</u>	
20.8%	44.9%	+24.2%

When looking only at voting rates of Montco students who are registered to vote, as opposed to all Montco students generally, an increasing number of them are turning out to the polls. Like the overall data, the greatest participation can be seen during presidential elections with a significant increase in the 2018 midterms compared to 2014.

Election Year	Voting Rate of Registered Students (MCCC)
2020	86.5%
2018	66.7%
2016	83.5%
2014	37.4%
2012	79.7%

Method of Voting

For the 2020 election, 66% voted in-person and 32% voted by mail-in or absentee ballot. Breaking down student participation by race/ethnicity, every category showed an increase from 2016, and voting rates for those identifying as black, white, two or more races and Asian were all above the national average.

Additionally, all age groups showed an increase in the voting rate except for the 50+ group. Students aged 18-21 showed the largest voting rate growth over 2016 with a 9% increase. 50+ with -2% decrease. This can be seen as an example of the younger electorate becoming more engaged, at least within the Montco community.

As with previous years, the highest levels of participation were seen in the Social Sciences and Communications & Journalism areas (73%). These students would potentially have a greater interest in the civic conversation, and the data does show discipline areas where outreach could be increased, such as Biomedical Sciences (58%) or Computer & Information Sciences (58%). Every area, however, did show an increase from 2016.

In terms of gender, more female students are voting than males; however, the reason for this is likely a higher enrollment for females. Percentages were even with 66% of females and 66% of male students voting.

Goals

- 1) Achieve an over 70% voter participation rate among students for the 2024 general election.
- 2) Increase the voter registration rate among Montco students to over 75% for the 2024 general election.
- 3) Work to increase the voting registration and participation rates for students in typically under-served communities and those who identify as black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) to rates higher than those in the 2020 general election.

Strategy

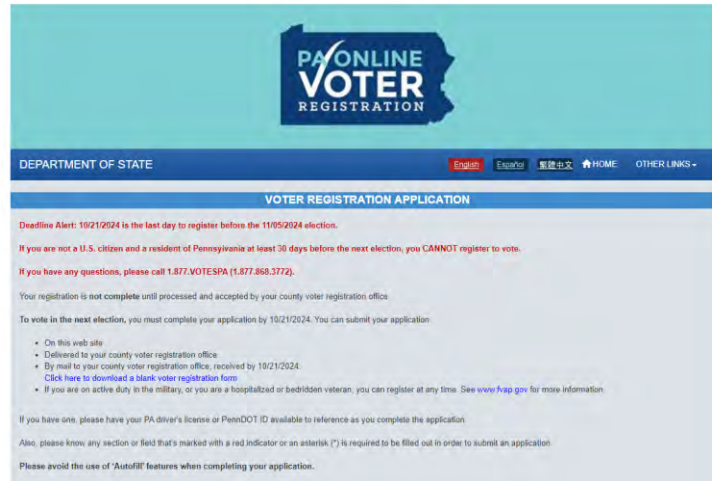
Voter Registration

Pennsylvania Department of State

The College uses the PA Department of State voter registration site as its primary for registering students through digital means. Various links to areas of the site are provided to students through email at various intervals throughout the semester.

Due its efficacy, Montco continues to utilize this platform through a number of mediums:

- Embed the link onto the Montco Connects student portal
- Send college-wide emails to students, faculty & staff
- Provide voter registration forms with information and the link to Enrollment Services.



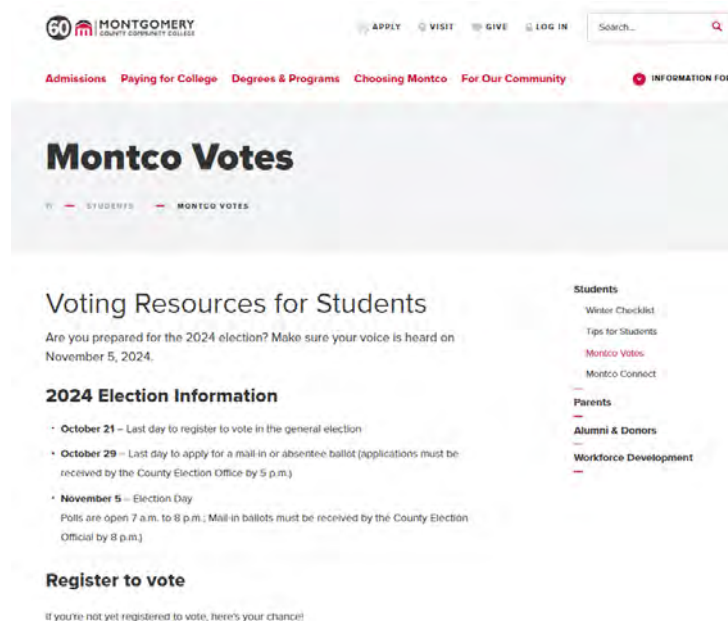
Spring Fling & Weeks of Welcome

As part of our work Spring Fling & Weeks of Welcome programming to both celebrate the completion of the spring semester and welcome student back in the fall, respectively, voter registration tabling events will be incorporated to allow students to engage with civic engagement organizations and register to vote in-person. Organizations currently scheduled include the League of Women Voters and the Woori Center, a Korean & Asian American grassroots non-profit organization based in Greater Philadelphia.

Montco Votes

The College has developed developing a landing page on its website dedicated specifically to voter registration, voter education, and civic engagement. The page includes:

- Links to online voter registration.
- Information on voter registration requirements.
- Links to find a user’s legislator and polling place.
- Information and applications for mail-in ballots.
- Voter information on who is on the ballot for each election.



The page will be continually updated to reflect up-to-date information, changes to election law, and event schedules.

In-Person Voter Registration

Although online voter registration creates an entirely digitally based process, tabling events and in-person voter registration drives will continue in an effort to engage directly with students on campus. Tabling events have been, and will continue to be, scheduled throughout the year placing an emphasis before registration deadlines and elections.

Faculty engagement is also a priority without disrupting class schedules. To engage faculty, a spreadsheet is developed listing the dates and times of available tabling events in one-hour shifts. This spreadsheet is then circulated by the Office of Integrated Learning so faculty members can sign-up to participate according to their availability.

External Non-Profit Organizations

The College also works with volunteers from a diverse group of external non-profit organizations that focus on voter registration and civic engagement initiatives. These partnerships will continue throughout each year and will become particularly more active as the 2020 General Election approaches. These organizations include:

- League of Women Voters
- New PA Project
- Montgomery County Voter Services
- Accion Comunal Latinoamericana de Montgomery County (ACLAMO)
 - Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County
- The Woori Center
- The New PA Project

Civic Engagement

Legislator in Residence

Montco invites approximately legislators throughout each semester for guest lectures on a number of individual topics involving government and political science. Many of these legislators are state representatives and senators; however, the county commissioners also have been involved. The program is incorporated into the course syllabus, and the students do research on each legislator before the visit and have prepared questions for Q & A.

Constitution Day

Each year, the College joins colleges and universities across the country in celebrating Constitution Day on September 17. The day includes a voter registration drive and free pocket-sized constitutions give-away for students.

PACCC Community College Week

Each spring, Montco participates in the annual Community College Day in Harrisburg hosted by the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges (PACCC). For this event, students visit the State Capitol and participate in face-to-face meetings with state legislators and their staff. Also involved in these visits are the President, Trustees, and relevant leadership depending on availability. Student participation includes Political Science students, Montco Student Ambassadors, and members of the Student Government Association.

The students take the lead in facilitating the discussions with the legislators. They speak about Montgomery County Community College and their experiences, as well as some of the challenges they might face and how the College has helped them accomplish their goals. The day provides students the experience of “lobbying” their legislators on a particular issue. While the general focus is support for Montgomery County Community College, other areas ultimately are addressed, including mental health resources and student debt.

Marketing & Communications

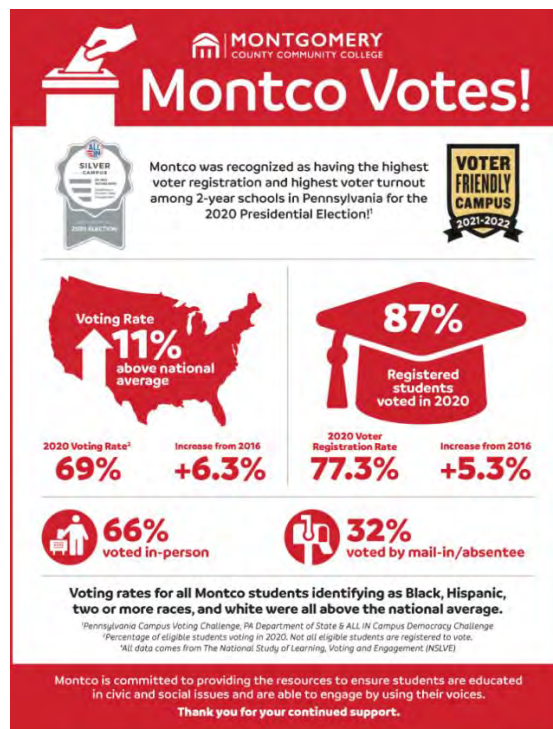
The College has a centralized marketing a communications (MarCom) operation. This team has been utilized to increase awareness among both the internal college community as well as the external population about important deadlines and information regarding voter registration, polling places, Election Day reminders, etc. The MarCom team has played an integral role in the development of graphics for display throughout campus; creating content to distribute to students, staff, and faculty; and general promotion of civic engagement events throughout the year.

Community Polling Places

Each year, Montgomery County Community College serves as a polling place for the surrounding precincts. Both Blue Bell and Pottstown campuses are utilized, and this provides a well-known, centralized location for local residents - many of them Montco students - to cast their votes in person.

Reporting

For the 2020 election, Montco received ALL-IN’s Silver Seal and was recognized as having the highest voter registration and voter turnout among 2-year schools in Pennsylvania. An info graphic was prepared utilizing various NSLVE data points and was distributed to the College’s, students, faculty, staff, elected officials and community partners.



A press release was also shared on social media, and it was distributed to a number of news organizations. The President recognized the accomplishment and the development team at the Board of Trustees meeting, and the

press release also was included in the President’s Report, which is created monthly for the Board of Trustees and shared with the internal college community and with external stakeholders, including alumni and legislators. The press coverage was included in Montco’s monthly News Brief, a compilation of college news that is circulated among the community. Depending on the publication, the articles have a potential viewership of several million readers.

Montgomery County Community College has given permission and encourages groups such as ALL-IN to share action plans and NSLVE reports whenever possible. Future NSLVE reports will also be shared on the Montco Votes page and on social media as they become available.

Evaluation

Individual NSLVE reports are used as the primary resources for analyzing our voter registration and voter engagement efforts. Simple data points such as voter registration and participation rates will be used as benchmarks to set goals and measure progress. However, more specific NSLVE information will be utilized as well. For example, recent NSLVE reports show that very few Montco students utilize absentee ballots, choosing instead to vote in person. Using this information, messaging may be focused more on ensuring that students know where their polling place locations as opposed to requesting absentee ballots, although this information will be included, too.

#MontcoMomentum

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Instagram: mcccpa

Twitter: @mccc