

# 2020

# STUDENT VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

## **MCCC OVERVIEW**

Founded in 1964, Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) is a public, 501(c)3 higher education institution that provides Associate's Degrees, Professional Certificates and other job-training programs. The College is accredited by the Middles States Commission on Higher Education and has four campus locations – Blue Bell, PA, Pottstown, PA, a Culinary Arts Institute in Lansdale, PA, and a Virtual Campus. The College is funded through a combination of county assistance by way of a millage on county property taxes, state appropriations, and student tuiton.



As of FY19, there was an enrollment of 19,246 (16,485 credit and 2,761 non-credit). The student body is extremely diverse with regards to age, residency, ethnicity and approximately 70% of the student body are enrolled on a part-time basis, and 75% working while they attend classes. MCCC offers over 50 areas of study with over 100 individual programs, and the College has over 35 4-year transfer partner schools with the largest number of students transferring to

Temple University, West

Chester University and Drexel University. MCCC is also home to The University Center, which allows students to complete a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree on campus through a partnership with 5 surrounding 4-year institutions. Through community partnerships and student engagement, MontCo provides a vibrant campus experience including intercollegiate athletics, student clubs, and a state-of-the-art Health Science Center and fitness center that is free for all students.

The College has received recognition in the past as being one of the most technologically advanced community colleges in the nation as well as excellence in faculty and staff.

It is an Achieving the Dream Leader College, ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the nation for adult learners in *Washington Monthly*, and has been recognized as one of the Most Promising Placed to work by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* for the past four years. It been included on the list of Best for Vets Colleges in Military Times. Economically, Montgomery County Community College supports 9,170 jobs through day-to-day operations & spending and has a total regional impact of \$700.8 million in added income.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) is committed to engaging students civically and providing opportunities for them to become involved in the democratic process. Currently involved in these efforts are the offices of Government & External Relations, Student Life, Integrated Learning, and a number of key faculty members. Efforts will be made to expand this group to ultimately include more institution-wide areas such as the President's Office, Marketing & Communications, and Academic Affairs. As a 501(c)3 institution, all efforts must be non-partisan in nature and cannot advocate for or oppose any individual candidate or political party.

MCCC will be looking to incorporate a more student-focused voter registration initiative that will involve the Student Government Association, Fellowships from external civically engaged organizations, and various

Student Clubs that are organized each semester. Additionally, we will be focusing on a more technology-based voter registration initiative. Examples of this will include formally instituting a digital voter registration platform for MCCC students as well as incorporating tablets and laptops to allow students to easily register online.

The College also currently has opportunities focused around voter education. On a number of occasions throughout the semester, local and state legislators visit campus to speak with students about their real-life experiences and different areas of government and civic participation. During the Spring Semester, students have an opportunity to participate in the annual Lobby Day in Harrisburg. For this, MCCC will transport students to the state capitol building and organize several sitdown meetings with state representatives and senators in the Montgomery County delegation. Students have an



opportunity to speak directly with legislators as well as observe House or Senate session taking place that day. Typically, a press conference is also conducted with community college leadership throughout the state to emphasize the importance of fully funding community colleges on the state level.

MCCC is committed to expanding our initiatives on civic engagement and democratic participation for 2020. We will be looking to utilize our marketing and communications departments to generate additional awareness and expand our voter education opportunities to include more issues-focused programming such as discussions on LGBTQ interests, civil rights, immigration, climate change, and others. We'll be working to ensure that our 2020 voter registration and student engagement opportunities are significantly more accessible and more formalized than those currently in place.

# **GOALS**

- 1) Produce a framework for a formal voter participation plan in order to achieve an <u>over 60% voter</u> participation rate among students for the 2020 general election.
- 2) Use the plan to transition towards a fully modernized voter-registration program through online platforms and the use of tablets and laptops.
- 3) Provide for a more student-led civic engagement initiative, and maintain a consistent schedule of engagement opportunities throughout the academic year. Obtain recognition for our efforts to let the external community understand our commitment to democratic engagement.

#### **MCCC TEAM MEMBERS**

For student engagement programing, the College relies on the expertise of a number of dedicated administrators and staff. For the development and implementation of this plan, specifically, those individuals include:

- Michael Bettinger
   Director of Government & External
   Relations
- Sean Hutchinson
   Coordinator of Integrated Learning
- Tyler Steffy
   Director of Student Life
- Jared Brown
   Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs

- Kelly Strunk
   Assistant Dean of Academic
   Affairs. Social Sciences Division
- Dr. Aaron Shatzman
   Dean of Social Sciences
- Jodi Empol-Schwartz
   Assistant Professor of Political Science

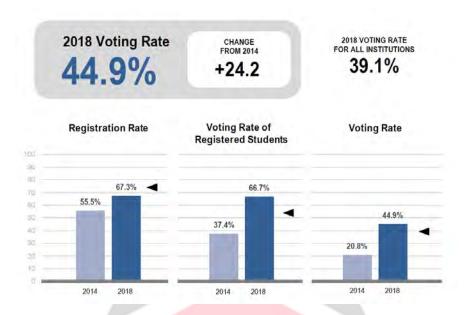
#### PAST VOTER REGISTRATION EFFORTS

MCCC's current civic learning and democratic engagement work is focused on two main areas: voter registration and voter education. Over the course of the semester, a number of external groups are invited onto campus to host voter registration drives. These events typically involve providing students information on how they can register online, provide them with absentee ballot applications, and an opportunity to complete and submit a paper voter registration form itself. Current external groups that have come to campus include the League of Women Voters, NextGen America, Accion Comunal Latinoamericana de Montgomery County (ACLAMO) which translates to Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County, and Korean Americans for Civic Participation.

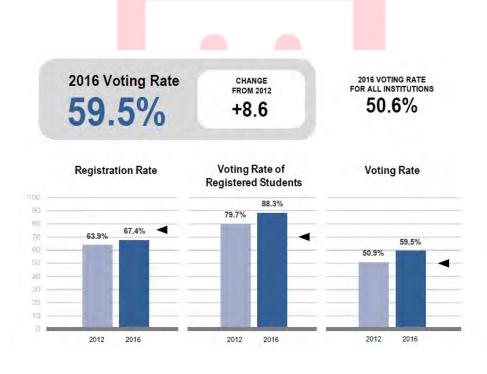


## **DATA DRIVEN PROCESS - NSLVE REPORT**

GOAL: Produce a framework for a formal voter participation plan in order to achieve an over 60% voter participation rate among students for the 2020 general election.



The College has recently joined the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and will be using the data from these reports as a baseline to measure goals moving forward.



#### **VOTER REGISTRATION MODERNIZATION**

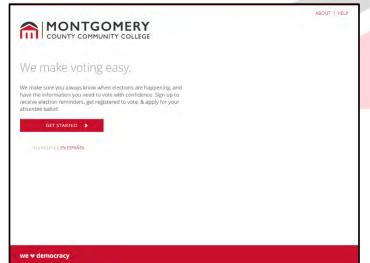
GOAL: Use the plan to transition towards a fully modernized voter-registration program through online platforms and the use of tablets and laptops.

#### **TurboVote Online Registration Platform**



In the summer of 2019, MCCC entered into a partnership with TurboVote, an online platform which allows users to register to vote, request absentee ballots, and sign-up to receive important election information such as deadline, polling locations, etc.

This platform is co-branded with the College, and allows students to use a unique URL – mc3.turbovote.org - to access the platform. From there, students enter basic identifying information and answer a few, short question in order to be registered in as little as ten minutes.



The presence of the TurboVote platform helps registration immensely. Large stacks of paper registration forms are no longer needed and, in most cases, it eliminates the transfer time of either having to mail in or drop off large amount of paper forms which greatly reduces the potential for human error or missed deadlines. This link can also be easily shared through email, social media, or text which virtually eliminates the need for a location-based voter registration program with tables, clip-boards, etc.

Although the TurboVote platform creates an entirely digitally based process, tabling events and in person voter registration drives will

continue. Past efforts have shown that students respond more positively to initiatives that are run by other students, and in-person registration drive also produce a sense of community, fellowship, and shared purpose among the student body.

#### **Digitizing Vote Registration Tabling Events**

Efforts will be made to move away from the traditional paper form voter registrations to a more online-focused process. MCCC allows tablets and laptops to be lent out for various uses. These will be used to assist students in registering online as well as signing up for absentee ballots online which is a newly passed law in Pennsylvania.

#### **STUDENT-DRIVEN EFFORTS**

When possible, MCCC will partner with external, engagement focused organizations to host student fellowships as well as internal student groups to ensure students have to opportunities to lead engagement effort. Some of these groups are, but not limited to:

**Campus Compact - Newman Civic Fellow** 

**Voter Friendly Campus Fellow** 

**Campus Election Engagement Fellow** 

**Student Government Association (SGA)** 

#### **VOTER EDUCATION**

GOAL: Maintain a consistent schedule of engagement opportunities throughout the academic year.

Obtain recognition for our efforts to let the external community understand our commitment to democratic engagement.

As we move into the presidential election year, SGA & Student Clubs will become more active and events that are relevant to voter education or focus current civic issues will gain increased interest. MCCC staff will work with these student groups to facilitate & promote these events as effectively as possible.

The College itself will continue to produce programing focused around significant civic issues facing college students today. Past examples of these types of programming include:

- ➡ The Long Road to LGBTQ+ Equality in Pennsylvania traveling art exhibition.
- Safe Zone training for MCCC faculty and staff
- Supporting LGBTQ Students: How to Build Inclusive and Affirming Environments
- Building Gender Inclusive Environments in Health and Educational Settings
- 4 1981-Until It's Over…A walk through timeline of the past 30 years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- ♣ The HIV/AIDs Epidemic Effects on the LGBTQ Community
- 🖶 LGBTQ 101 Lecture
- 🖶 The Stories We Tell: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Film and Television
- Film Screening of Garden of Eden w/ Director Discussion
- The Annual Presidential Symposium on Diversity
- Locan's Lecture Series First Generation College Student Experience
- 🖶 Environmental Club Sustainability Week, Earth Day
- 🖶 International Club Trips to Ellis Island
- 🖶 Honors Club Trip to D.C. to meet with Congresswoman Madeleine Dean

#### Legislator in Residence

Each semester MCCC invites approx. 8-9 legislators to visit campus for guest lectures on a number of individual topics involving government & political science. The majority of these legislators are state representatives and senators; however, the county commissioners have been involved as well. The discussion is non-political and focuses on their backgrounds, legislation they might be working on, and their experiences in either the House or Senate. Depending on where they are in the course, they might ask them to focus on a specific area (i.e. state budget process, committee structure, etc.) The program is incorporated into the course syllabus, and the students do research on each legislator before the visit and typically have prepared questions for Q & A.









State and Local Elected Officials participating in the 2018 & 2019 Legislator in Residence Program

#### **Trustees Scholarly Series**

Starting with the Spring 2020 Semester, in order to increase engagement between students and college leadership, MCCC will be producing a lecture series featuring members of the Board of Trustees. These lectures are intended to be incorporated into the classrooms, and feature discussions focused on each of the trustees' background an areas of expertise. For the purposes of this plan, many of MCCC trustees have extensive political experience.

For example, a trustee of the MCCC will be giving a lecture on the importance of voting among younger age groups by pulling from his experience as the former Chairman of the Montgomery County Democratic Party as well as Chairman of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party. Another trustee of the College owns her own political consulting firm, and efforts will be made to incorporate her experiences into the lecture series as well.



Each year, the MCCC joins countless others across the country in celebrating Constitution Day on September 17. Previous instances have includes faculty panel discussions, voter registration drives, and free pocketsized constitutions give-away for students. In 2019, a lecture was given by the Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. Aaron Shatzman titled, "What was Revolutionary about the Revolutionary War and Constitution." Parts of the discussion focused on the lead-up to the Revolutionary War and it's causes; however, a majority was devoted towards understanding why our form of government is so much different from another in history and why it has been able to survive when others have not. It allowed attendees to discuss the meaning of our constitutional principles when they were written as well as what it means to be a citizen today.



Dr. Aaron Shatzman conducting the 2019 Constitution Day Lecture

#### **Legislator Events Held on Campus**

Efforts are consistently made throughout the year to host legislators on campus for various events. This could include allowing them use of many of the state-of-the-art facilities available, or including them as an important voice in College planned events. Previous examples of this have included:

- 📥 Congressional Town Hall <mark>on S</mark>tudent <mark>Debt</mark>
- Montgomery County Delegation Legislative Breakfast
- County Commissioners Candidate Forum
- ♣ Public Policy Hearings on pending legislation
- Labinet in your Community Town hall Events featuring members of the PA governor's cabinet
- Legislator's Veteran Expo, Senior Expo, and Community Wellness Expo events







Top: 2019 MCCC Legislative Breakfast; Bottom: 2018 Veteran's Expo

#### **PACCC Lobby Day**

Each spring, MCCC participates in the annual Lobby Day for the PA Commission for Community Colleges (PACCC), a non-profit, state-wide advocacy organization that coordinates communication and legislative advocacy for all of Pennsylvania's 14 community college.

For this event, student visit the State Capitol in Harrisburg and participate in six to eight face-to-face meetings with state legislators and their staff. Also involved in these visits are MCCC President, Trustees, and relevant leadership depending on availability.







The students take the lead in facilitating the discussions with the legislators. They speak about MCCC, their experiences there, as well as some of the challenges they face and how MC3 has helped them accomplish their goals. In the middle of the day, the students participate in a press conference emphasizing the importance of community colleges.

The legislative visits help students learn more about the legislative process and provide an opportunity to interact directly with elected officials. For 2020, the College will be making efforts to expand participation in this event to not only include Political Science student, but also MC3 Student Ambassadors and members of the Student Government Association.

#### Legislative Shadowing Program

Each spring semester, students from MC3 participate in the MCCC Legislative Shadowing Program. This daylong event is organized and hosted by a state representative and participation is open to female MC3 students.





Typically, 7-8 students visit the state capitol during a House session day and shadow the representative as she does about her daily session routine. While schedules differ base on the legislative agenda, students meet with the representative in her office upon arrival and the conversation is focused around legislative initiatives she is working on as well as what it is like to be a female in a leadership position working in an area that has been maledominated for so long. After the initial meeting, students are invited to attend committee hearings and are then recognized on the House floor during session. The students



then accompany the representative for a working lunch with other female legislators as well as female senior staff from different government agencies or departments. The day is entirely non-partisan and individuals from both sides of the aisle participate in the discussion and give their unique perspectives.

#### **Dine & Dialogue Series**

Each semester, MCCC holds a series of information sessions on various topics. In March 2020, one of these sessions will be titled, *Voting and the Census: Why they matter to you.* This session will focus on answering questions about the 2020 Primary & General Election as well as connecting students with important election & census resources.

#### 2020 Census

In the Spring 2020 semester, a coordinated effort will be made to increase awareness and participation in the 2020 Census. These efforts will include general campaigns to increase the student body's understanding of what the Census is, what it affects, and why it is important to complete. Slides will be produced to circulate among campus tv screens and monitors with information on the census giving specific data points as well as debunking misinformation about what will or will not be asked. Faculty will be asked to incorporate U.S. Census information into their courses and lectures as applicable, and institutional-wide emails will be send with information and a link to the online census form itself. Additionally, MCCC is a member on the MontCo Counts Subcommittee on Education which it a part of the greater MontCo Counts 2020 Committee. This group is tasked with coordinating census efforts across the county through a number of different avenues and to different constituencies. The Education Subcommittee is tasked with coordination between the K-12 community as well as higher education institutions. U.S. Census job opportunities are already being posted on campus and they are participating in MCCC Career Fairs, and U.S. Census staff will be invited onto campus to conduct training and information sessions.

#### **Marketing & Communication Efforts**

MCCC has a robust and centralized marketing a communications operation. This team will be utilized to increase awareness among both the internal student community as well as the external population regarding important deadlines and information regarding voter registration, polling places, election day reminders etc.

They will also be engaged in providing civically-focused information to students. For example, the College is currently working on and outreach and awareness plan focused on the 2020 census. This plan will include important reminders, links to the online census forms, as well as information describing the different areas the census affects such as representation, Pell grants, etc. Marketing & Communications will also be enlisted to help promote individual civic events on campus.