

ALL IN CHALLENGE Action Plan (due Dec. 2017)

Institution: University of Missouri – St. Louis
Address/City/State: One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121
Contact Person: Patricia Zahn
Title: Director of Community Outreach & Engagement
Email: zahnp@umsl.edu
Phone: 314.516.5267

OVERVIEW

The University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL) is proud to be an ALL IN campus award winner in 2017 after being designated earlier in the year as a “Voter Friendly Campus” which is part of an initiative by the Campus Vote Project and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. UMSL is a land-grant research institution committed to civic learning and democratic engagement work as it meets diverse needs for higher education and knowledge in the state’s largest metropolitan community. Our academic programs are enriched through partnerships that link the University to communities, institutions and businesses throughout the region. In 2010 UMSL received recognition from the Carnegie Foundation as a community engaged campus and later that year hired its first director of Community Outreach & Engagement.

UMSL was an early adopter to the American Democracy Project initiative and regularly hosts related civic and community engagement activities across the campus. Different offices throughout the university have stepped up to take responsibility to sustain civic engagement-focused projects including annual events such as Constitution Day, MLK Day of Service, Civic Engagement Day, and programs such as volunteer resource fairs and faculty seminars. UMSL Constitution Day activities go beyond a mere “observance” of the day and extend to the entire campus community through presentations, forums, contests, and art and word expressions similar to a democracy wall. The UMSL student newspaper, *The Current*, also partners with *The New York Times* for monthly cookies-and-conversation programs on current events and critical issues throughout the year.

In addition to the Political Science and the Public Policy Administration departments, as well as a Public Policy Research Center, UMSL has other offices and centers related to Civic Engagement that support civic learning. Two highlights include:

- The Center for Character & Citizenship—engaging in research, education and advocacy to foster the development of character, democratic citizenship and civil society... the Center focuses on generating and disseminating both knowledge and research pertaining to how individuals develop moral and civic character. By providing scholars, educators and social organizations with the tools they need to contribute to this development, the Center plays the role of a think tank, offering workshops, consulting, and professional development. The Center also provides resources and tool kits to assist educators, parents and scholars in character and citizenship education. (<https://characterandcitizenship.org/about-us/overview>)
- The Sue Shear Institute for Women in Public Life – a non-partisan, non-issue institute focused on making government accessible to all Missouri citizens. Though educational programs are open to everyone, the Institute was founded in 1996 to assist women in developing the interest and skills necessary to succeed as full participants within government, serving in elected and appointed office as well as employed policy makers. (<http://www.umsl.edu/sueshear/>)

Local government is a strand in the Masters in Public Policy program. Students in this field along with others with interest are connected with internships in a variety of civic organizations, and offices and campaigns throughout the community. Further, the Student Government Association and the Office of Student Involvement at UMSL have been hosting local legislators and other elected officials to speak to students at different times throughout the year, and individual faculty have these legislators and others who work in government as guest lecturers in their classes. During the lead up to the 2016 national election and immediately after, UMSL held several events including debate watch parties, issue panels, voter registration drives and listening sessions. These were held in partnership with a variety of student organizations including the UMSL chapter of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri (ASUM), the Student Government Association, the Political Science Academy (PSA) and Political Science Graduate Student Association, Associated Black Collegians (ABC), the Hispanic and Latino Association, Multi-Greek Council, University Program Board, College Democrats & Socialist Students - UMSL, and the Graduate Association of School Psychologists at UMSL.

UMSL has been a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) coordinated by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University for the last four and a half years. The study revealed that UMSL has a high voting rate compared to other universities (even after controlling for student population age, commuter status and the civic health in the state); therefore, NSLVE selected UMSL, along with four other campuses nationally, as a site for a qualitative case study.

Social unrest and protests in the St. Louis community over the past few years continue to spur campus initiatives related to race, equity, health outcomes, trauma, employment, education, etc. These have included forums, service-learning courses, research projects, and health fairs to name a few.

While it is evident that there has been an ongoing, campus-wide effort to increase civic learning and participation, in 2016 UMSL took advantage of interest in the national elections and related opportunities such as the ALL IN challenge to renew this focus. During that time, UMSL created a Civic Engagement Coalition with representation from departments across campus and student organizations in an effort to share ideas for programming and strategize for activities to take place before national elections. The Coalition continues to meet monthly and last year put together a comprehensive Civic Engagement Plan to address several substantial goals. A few of these goals include:

1. Engendering **civil** dialogue around issues that might be contentious.
2. Increasing student participation in mid-year and local elections.
3. Cultivating student leadership by providing meaningful opportunities for ongoing engagement.

UMSL Civic Engagement Coalition representatives

- Academic Affairs
- Admissions
- Community Outreach & Engagement/Des Lee Collaborative Vision
- Counseling Services
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Gender Studies Program
- Political Science Academy
- Public Policy Research Center
- Residential Life and Housing
- Student Administrative Services
- Student Involvement
- Sue Shear Center - Women in Public Life
- Associated Students of the University of Missouri – UMSL chapter
- Student Government Association
- Sustainability/ Environmental Health & Safety
- University Communications
- UMSL Police

- Academic departments: Political Science
Communication & Media, English,

There are shared leadership responsibilities for Civic Engagement with those on the coalition team and within all of the Colleges, particularly Art & Sciences, Education, Honors, the School of Social Work and the School of Fine & Performing Arts.

Community partners

- Local elected officials and area governments
- East-West Gateway
- FOCUS St. Louis
- The League of Women Voters
- Missouri Ethics Commission
- The Missouri Municipal League
- St. Louis County and City election boards
- St. Louis Public Radio
- National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)

Resources

- NSLVE reports on past voter engagement for UMSL students
- National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) reports
- Experts and data resources for programs and events
- Enthusiasm from many faculty, staff and students to promote civic involvement
- Accessible public transportation with stops on campus
- Voter registration materials from League of Women Voters
- Civic Engagement calendar through TritonSync which includes all civic engagement related projects and activities taking place on campus and/or supported by the University departments and organizations. Email reminders sent to students through TritonSync and events and programs listed on *UMSL Daily* calendar have campus-wide reminders the day prior to events.

Focus Areas

- Voter Registration
 - Host a training session for students who volunteer to register people
 - Have voter registration materials available in the Office of Student Involvement as well as Political Science and other departments on campus
 - Assign a position in the UMSL chapter of ASUM to focus specifically on voter registration
 - Hold voter registration events monthly and at other times throughout the year, and specifically on special days including:
 - August– Expo/Volunteer Fair
 - September– before/after Constitution Day programs
 - September– National voter registration day
 - October – Leadership Diversity Institute
 - Disseminate information about the student voting guide for all states available online at www.campusvoteproject.org
 - Allocate time in First Year experience classes for students to register online

- Advertise voter registration with posters and campaign in campus housing and around campus
 - Send reminder messages to faculty to mention/promote voter registration to students
 - Promote voter registration with leadership in Student Government assembly to encourage all student organizations to subsequently promote to their membership
 - Utilize QR codes around campus through which students can register to vote
- **Voter Education**
 - Update FAQ sheet for students, area residents, etc.
 - Host interactions with state and local legislators and other elected officials
 - Hold debate watch parties
 - Broaden sponsorship to include these and other student groups: The Political Science Academy, Philosophers’ Forum, Associated Black Collegians, Associated Students of the University of Missouri, and College Democrats and College Republicans
 - Extend invitations to area high school students
 - Support state and local candidate debates being planned on campus
 - Host and publicize workshops/programs on elections, voting, etc.
 - Residence hall programs
 - Continue local Election Day exit-polling research
 - Continue to include writing letters to candidates as part of select Business Writing courses
- **Ballot Access**
 - Host a panel discussion on Missouri Voter Identification laws
 - Send out information to advertise deadlines for registration
 - Provide information about polling places and hours
 - Send out link for online sample ballot review
 - Provide free public transportation/ Metrolink passes to students. (UMSL has two Metrolink stops on campus and one bus stop. Metrolink stops at the St. Louis County Board of Elections.)
 - Encourage students to make a logistics “plan” for voting day (when, where, how, and with whom they will travel to vote)
- **Get Out the Vote**
 - Invite election board representatives to speak in classes/on campus and recruit students to serve on election day
 - Send reminders to faculty to mention/promote voting to students and encourage faculty to be flexible on election day to encourage voting
 - Prompt student organizations through Student Government Association to remind membership about voting
 - Distribute posters and banners around campus to remind people to vote

- Develop a social media campaign including the Instagram “Triton Eyes” filter with themes related to civic engagement and voting timelines
- Partner with student-run media sources (UMSL Radio, The Current Student News, etc.) to publicize efforts and feature voter information
- Send out a campus-wide student email reminder to vote immediately before elections
- **Other Civic Engagement Activities (completed and upcoming)**
 - Coordinate with the Chancellor’s Cultural Diversity Council on a “ready-response” team and draft a strategic response plan to address immediate community issues
 - Construct a useful, informative web page for Civic Engagement activities
 - Review and disseminate NSLVE reports to colleges and units and post to website
 - Monitor, implement and update the UMSL Civic Engagement Plan
 - Review National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) reports on Module for Civic Engagement to identify areas of strength and areas for future focus
 - Identify regular opportunities and means of communication to remind students of Campus Free Speech guidelines available online in an effort for all to “know their rights” and promote civil discourse
 - September - Campus Community Forums on the Shockley Verdict
 - October – “Navigating the Wall – Latinos 2017” discussion on U.S. immigration policies
 - November - Information session about serving on State and local Boards and Commissions
 - November – “Discriminatory Directives” panel on Transgender Rights in the Military
 - December – “Microaggressions” – a discussion of What They Are and Why They matter
 - January 2018 - Pipeline to Local Office campaign workshop designed for individuals interested in running for municipal offices as well individuals interested in volunteering on a campaign.
 - Spring 2018 – launch of bi-monthly current topic discussions
 - Spring 2018 – Develop new awards program to recognize faculty, staff and students for Civic Engagement efforts
 - Spring 2018 – “ Know Your Rights” forum hosted by Chancellor’s Cultural Diversity Council
 - Spring 2018 – ASUM annual “Current Issues” debate
 - May 2018 - 21st Century Leadership Academy - an intensive week-long residential leadership development program designed to inspire civic engagement and encourage women’s public sector leadership
 - September 2018 – Constitution Day events (e.g., Bridge Expressions project)
 - November - Pipeline to Public Office workshop designed for individuals interested in running for office at both higher level/partisan office and nonpartisan local
 - November 2018 –Facilitated discussion after mid-term elections