

2020 Campus Engagement Plan | University of MT

Collaborating Partners: Forward Montana Foundation | Montana Campus Compact | MontPIRG | SLSV Coalition Democracy Days/ALL IN Challenge

Context

This is the Campus Engagement Plan for University of Montana, located at 32 Campus Dr, Missoula, MT, 59812. This plan will help to increase representation of student voices in government and foster lifelong habits of civic engagement among students. The plan will adhere to local, statewide, and federal elections policies.

From 2014 to 2018, youth voter turnout in Montana increased from 8% to 11%. During the midterms, young people in Montana turned out with the highest rates in the nation. As we learned in 2018, young people have the skills to cast their ballot and make their voice heard by providing simple and accessible voter registration opportunities, access to educational materials and candidates, and further building power among young Montanans to increase participation and accountability.

When civic engagement is institutionalized --from our colleges to our places of work --young people create lifelong habits of civic engagement and involvement in our democracy. With the help of administrators, faculty, staff, community organizations, and students at University of Montana, we will create a culture of year-round civic engagement on our campus building a more representative democracy in which the voices of our students are valued at every level of government.

Purpose

As a result of this engagement plan, students at University of Montana will have access to the resources needed to register to vote, make informed decisions based on non-partisan information provided by civic engagement organizations on candidates and ballot initiatives, complete their respective ballots, and have the skills to encourage a healthy environment of civic participation not only with their fellow students on campus, but all throughout their communities.

Goals

1. Each student at University of Montana will have accessible, open access to ample voter registration opportunities and multiple opportunities and ways to cast their ballots during all elections. This will be achieved by:
 - Expanding voter registration into all previously implemented programs such as orientation, advising, and residence life.
 - Online outreach to students who may be only online, or did not need to attend any orientation (e.g. transfer students).
 - Voter registration drives.
 - Comprehensive and accurate voter registration instructions/training and access to resources.
 - Assessing need for supplemental voter registration and voting information for students and collaborating with local, state, and national partners to fill any information and/or access gaps.
2. Provide a healthy, open, and welcoming environment for students to discuss and learn about their civic environment and the issues that surround them. This will be achieved by:

- Hosting in person and online events such as guest speakers, panels, fairs, volunteerism activities, and/or additional activities encouraging civically-minded discussion and thoughts.
 - In addition, these activities should be inclusive to all students, and engage every demographic on campus. One way to encourage this inclusivity is to intentionally and enthusiastically include student leaders/voices from different backgrounds to plan and participate in these events.
- Adhering to campus anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies that protect students from retaliation or harassment, based on ALL of the following; race, religion, national origin, political affiliations, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability.
 - This, along with reinforcement of this policy, allows UM to promote a healthy civic engagement environment for all students, which is vital to every other aspect of this Campus Engagement Plan.

Methods

MontPIRG and Forward Montana Foundation (FMF), and campus volunteers associated with the partnership between FMF and student groups/campus-based volunteers will be granted access to a complete, updated list of professors' contact information in order to reach out for non-partisan voter registration presentations.

FMF, MontPIRG, and UM volunteers shall have access to all relevant college-sponsored events and programs, for the purposes of non-partisan voter registration, education, Census work (where applicable), and voter engagement and turnout.

Student and staff partners will be responsible for holding at least one voter registration drive each semester and additional voter awareness events.

Voter registration drives will include volunteers trained on the best practices of voter registration, a dedicated volunteer attentive at the table at all times, and voter registration should always remain accessible, nonpartisan, unbiased and inclusive. Voter registration drives must also adhere to campus safety procedures with regard to COVID-19.

Voter registration will be incorporated into the orientation tabling events. MontPIRG and FMF will be allowed to table at appropriate freshman welcoming events to provide further opportunity to register and answer student questions.

Communications

UM's Civic and Voter Engagement Committee will have access to the student email list to send at least one email reminding students to register to vote and provide important related information (election deadlines, mail-in ballot reminders, election dates, community candidate forums, polling location information, voter registration drive information/dates), and reminder to vote.

The UM Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) Fellow will work with FMF/MontPIRG to create and approve at least one email a year to professors. The email will include information from this plan, general statistics for voter engagement and turnout on the campus, contact information for key leaders in the plan, and encouraging them to approve one in-class presentation on voter registration per semester.

FMF, MontPIRG and other civic engagement organizations shall have access to tabling areas on Campus. This is as long as there are no prior paid bookings, and the organization(s) have a non-partisan, civic engagement and student-forward mission -all fees will be waived. This will allow students optimal chances to register to vote, receive educational materials, and experience voter engagement; which has all been proven to lead to higher turnout capacity among student voters. All UM health and safety guidelines must be followed.

In order to further institutionalize voter registration on campus, UM will provide voter registration forms and a secure drop box in at least one, but ideally several centralized, secure, and accessible locations on campus -possible locations include in an administration office, at check-in desks in the dorms, and in the Library. FMF and volunteers associated with the partnership between FMF and student group/campus-based volunteers will provide a short training for all staff working near the secure drop boxes and the resident advisors of on campus dorms concerning voter registration and the established collection locations. FMF and volunteers associated with the partnership between FMF and student group/campus-based volunteers will be responsible for turning in the voter registration forms from the box every week.

Faculty, Administration and Community Partners

UM is a participating campus of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement through Tufts University. Data from the study will inform campus voter engagement strategy.

The responsibilities and procedures above will be reviewed and updated as needed every year by the UM Civic and Voter Engagement Committee.

Important election dates will be included on the UM academic and events calendar to reinforce the importance of elections as a norm, not an elective.

Additional Campus Ideas/Considerations (Optional):

- Host two additional voter registration events on campus per semester.
- Collaborate to provide unbiased candidate forum or issue forum.
- Host a voting party (example: rock 2 vote, party to the polls, absentee fill-out party, etc.) (SIN?)
- Collaborate to send monthly campus-wide emails updating people on the importance of civic engagement, or civic engagement opportunities (example: election dates, candidate forums, community conversations, dates of city council meetings)
- Providing a space on the school website that holds resources for civic engagement (links to MT My Voter Page, MT SOS website, local election offices.
- Collaborate with campus entities to provide shuttle service.

Endorsed by UM President Seth Bodnar, _____ Date: _____

Adopted as a resolution by ASUM Senate, _____ Date: _____