



## University of Tennessee at Chattanooga 2020 Civic Action Plan

Building on the successes and lessons learned from UTC's 2018 midterm election efforts, the goals for Mocs Go Vote 2020 reflect similar efforts and incorporate the changing nature of civic engagement given the uncertainties of potential public health and safety challenges this year. Similar to those in 2018, the goals for this year are: 1) to increase student registration at UTC (80%); 2) to decrease the gap between registered voters and actual voters at UTC (50%); and, 3) to increase understanding of civic engagement and responsibility beyond the ballot box.

In order to achieve these goals members of the Mocs Go Vote ad hoc committee reengaged in campus-wide efforts to reach students and engage in partnerships with government and civic organizations to facilitate expanded participation in 2020. This year, a number of initiatives and events are planned, including...

1. We worked with student organizations and the Campus Election and Engagement Project to increase student voter registration. This effort used our 2016 NSLVE data to help target unregistered voters on our campus. Tables were set up daily during the second half of September outside of the Computer Science and Engineering buildings to help target non-social science majors who are less likely to be registered voters at UTC. Additional tables were set up at the University Center and the Library.
2. We engaged in a systematic effort to turn registered voters into actual voters. This was a multi-step plan.
  - a. We engaged the faculty at UTC by presenting our plan at the Faculty Senate. We drafted a resolution espousing our commitment to civic education and the resolution will likely be passed in November.
  - b. We work with our community partner, The League of Women Voters, to hold "Exercise Your Right!" This was a daily walk or bike ride to the election commission to vote early during the early voting period. While we did not have a ton of students join us, we did speak with a few hundred students about voting and helped them to develop a voting plan. We learned that many students were unaware that they could vote early in Tennessee. We handed out #MocTheVote buttons for student to wear to help increase awareness of the election.

- c. We will have two vans providing rides to the polls on Tuesday, November 6th. We crowd sourced faculty volunteers to drive the vans and had more volunteers than we could accommodate.

3. We will engage students beyond the vote at our #MocTheVote party taking place at UTC from 4:30-7p.m. On November 6th. We have secured food, a DJ, games, and prizes. This is a celebration of our democratic franchise and, while not required that you vote to attend, is meant to increase the students psychological attachment to their vote. The literature on voting behavior and engagement supports this type of activity. We engaged an array of faculty, staff, and student organization in planning this event and received more than \$4,500 in grants from CivicNation, CEEP, and SCAN to hold this event.

It is clear from the broad support at the university, city, and national level that these efforts are valued. UTC has not systematically engaged in voter turnout efforts beyond the occasional voter registration table in many years. The members of the Mocs Go Vote 2018 committee see this as an building year and we attempted to engage in a number of experimental voter registration and turnout plans. We hope to take what we have learned and build a better strategy for 2020. We would like to thank CivicNation and CivicTN for their continued support of our efforts here at UTC.

#### New for 2020:

- New opportunities
  - Voting is Vital (BriteHeart)
  - Mayor Berke's office
    - National League of Cities, Cities Vote program
    - When We All Vote's Civic Cities program
      - My School Votes program
  - [Campus president/chancellors' all-in challenge](#)
- Challenges/concerns
  - COVID
  - Working with election commission to verify identification for first-time voters
    - Also, effectively communicating these requirements, deadlines, etc.
  - Lowest group participation, from NSLVE 2018 report:
    - Freshmen/sophomores (we need to reach youngest students)
    - Lowest majors/fields of study:
      - Parks&Rec/Fitness/Leisure studies
      - Multi/interdisciplinary studies
      - Liberal arts/humanities
      - Biology

- Engineering
  - One of the major things coming out of this year is we need to institutionalize the Mocs Go Vote activities somewhere. Ideally, the Dean of Students' office(?), but we can discuss this. Right now, it's hard for faculty/staff to coordinate this in an "ad hoc" fashion, and elections/registration-related activities are continuously going on (not just in even years).
- Other comments/questions
  - ...?

Potential Timeline/Events:

- **August**
  - First day to request an absentee ballot: Wednesday, August 5
  - Fall classes begin: Monday, August 17
- **September**
  - Constitution Day: September 17
  - National Voter Registration Day: September 22
- **October**
  - Voter registration deadline: Monday, October 5
  - Early voting: Wednesday, Oct. 14 -- Thursday, Oct. 29
  - Absentee ballot request deadline: Tuesday, October 27
- **November**
  - Election Day: Tuesday, November 3

Other ideas from the Civic Summit Materials:

- Host some type of educational/informational events (via Zoom, etc.) about voting, civic engagement, etc.
    - "Lunch and learns," speakers/panels, etc.
  - Work with UTC Echo about including articles/information about voting, candidates, etc.
  - Set up some discussions with candidates, if possible (maybe not a "debate," but give equal time to partisan candidates to answer student questions if they're interested) ●
- What other types of events are realistic/feasible?

To Do for 2020:

- Create a UTC-specific voter guide
  - Shawn made a video last time; is this an opportunity to get students/groups involved in creating things to share?
  - [Campus Voter Project](#) has some good resources, as does Tre Hargett's office ○ [Voter Friendly Campus](#) also has good resources
  - Can we host information on an "official" UTC website? We can work with them on

creating links, calendars of events, etc., if possible.

- Also, can we have social media accounts post periodic announcements/reminders about registering, voting, etc.?
- Coordinate campus activities
  - This seemed to be fairly decentralized, particularly with off-campus groups ■ Are there contacts with the LWV and other groups that we can reach out to -- can Kelley help with this? YES!
  - Get with campus student groups about what events they have planned so we can promote, announce, etc. (College Dems/Republicans; SGA, greek orgs...others?)
  - What can/will student housing, student affairs, etc. do?
  - Is it worth doing regular tabling, or just push students to register on the GoVoteTN website?
  - Can we put information on Canvas (e.g. election deadlines, links, etc.)?
- Reach out to the HamCo Election Commission
  - With COVID concerns, there may be an increase in the number of students requesting absentee ballots
  - Also, there needs to be some type of communication and/or “official” policies/procedures surrounding the verification of people’s identities (for those who haven’t registered/voted in person)

#### “Asks” & Meetings for 2020:

- Dean of Students
  - Get with SGA/GSA members (executive leadership)
  - See if Jim Hicks (or someone) is still willing to meet regularly with us
  - Talk to Hannah Turcotte about reaching out to all of the student groups in terms of planning activities, distributing information, etc.
    - Political Science Club (Jeremy); UTC ICMA (Acuff); TISL (Acuff); College Democrats (Advisor?); College Republicans (Tina Benkiser); SCAN (Jessica); Spectrum (advisor/contact?); Young Democratic Socialists (Advisor/contact?); NAACP (Advisor/contact?); other groups...?
  - Get in touch with Greek life about their planned activities, getting information out, etc.
- Communications/social media
  - Sarah Worthington - Work on effective ways to regularly update the campus community through our social media platforms (and, also, defer to her/that office on effective communications strategies).
  - Anyone else...George/Gina?
  - Maybe get with video and graphics once we figure out what our strategies are for putting info out?
- Other departments/entities
  - Sociology, History, Gender & Women’s Studies...others?

- See what events they're doing; try to coordinate efforts. Ask that someone meet with the Mocs Go Vote group.
  - Talk to UTC Echo about running periodic articles/info
    - Briana Brady can help with this
  - Chancellor's office
    - See if we can create some centralized calendar with all of the outside groups who are coming to campus
    - Figure out what (if anything) we need to do to work with Mayor Berke's office about the "challenge" we're participating in.
  - IT/Canvas, etc.
    - Create a Mocs Go Vote "landing page" on our website
    - Add info to Canvas about registering, deadlines, etc.
- Outside groups/orgs
  - Hamilton County Election Commission
    - See if they have someone who can come to campus and help register/verify students IDs prior to early voting.
    - See if they have a preferred method of contact/coordination for students who want to have their ID verified and/or vote absentee.
      - Do they need poll workers, etc.? We could distribute information.
  - Civic groups
    - League of Women Voters
    - BriteHeart/Voting is Vital
      - They're going to do concerts and periodic virtual meetups for students; Becca Finley should update us on that in the next few weeks
    - Others?

Potential Information for Social Media/Website/Panel Discussions, etc:

- Voter information
  - Registration deadlines
  - Registration/identification/residency requirements
  - Information on absentee voting
  - Info on early voting (times, locations, etc.)
  - Precincts on Election Day
  - How to get to the polls (public transit, parking, etc.)
- Discussion/information sessions