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Voter Education & Engagement

MASTER PLAN

WOFFORD COLLEGE

429 N. Church Street | Spartanburg, SC 29303

Wofford College

Voter Education and Engagement Plan

Campus Contact:

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Voter Education and Engagement Steering Committee:

Roberta Bigger, *Dean of Students & VP of Student Affairs*

Linda Powers, *English Faculty*

Allen Lollis, *Resident Director & Coordinator of Student Activities*

Osborne Brown, *Student*

Jake Brice, *Student*

Mary Beth Grant, *Student*

Community Partners:

Spartanburg Republican Party

Spartanburg Democratic Party

Spartanburg County Board of Voter Registration and Elections

League of Women Voters

CONTEXT & PURPOSE:

Wofford College is a national, liberal-arts college located in the upstate of South Carolina. As an institution, Wofford prides itself on cultivating students prepared for “lives of fulfillment, effective citizenship, and service to others” who “will be ever sensitive to the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship and [who will] render effective leadership and generous service to the communities in which they live.” (*adapted from the Goals and Purpose of the College*)

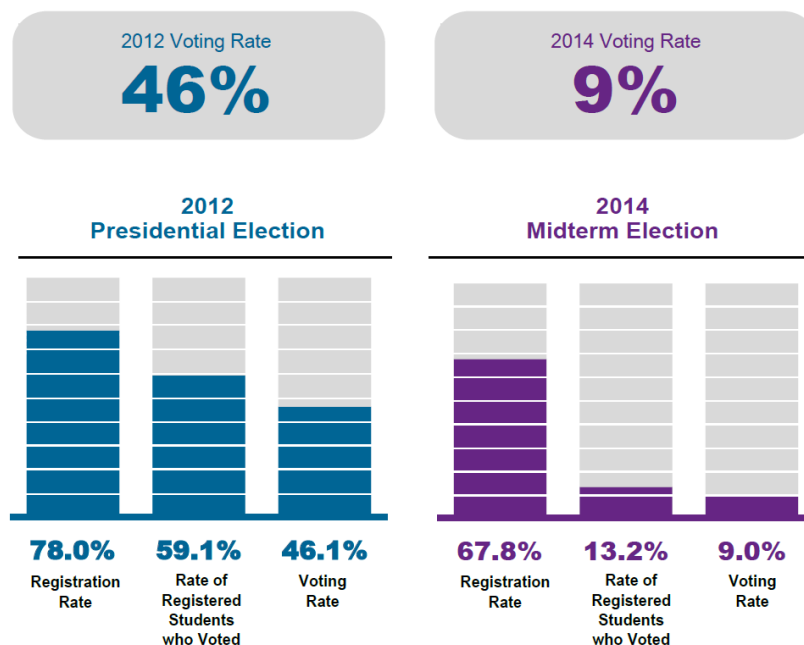


Figure 1. from the 2016 NSLVE Report Campus Report.

In the 2014 Midterm Elections, however, only 9% of eligible students cast ballots – 6% less than the average for private colleges, and a full 9.8% fewer than the national institutional average, and a substantial decline from 2012 participation. The 2014 Midterms also represented a significant drop in the number of students registered to vote (see **Figure 1**).

In an effort correct these troubling statistics, Wofford College has created a Voter Education &

Engagement Steering Committee and is joining with the other member institutions of the Southern Conference to take part in the “SoCon Votes Challenge,” and is participating in NASPA’s Voter-Friendly Campus Designation program. Through these efforts, the College hopes to not only raise voter turnout levels, but increase the registration rate and improve student’s knowledge about candidates, issues, and voting.

This Voter Engagement and Education Plan represents a deep and abiding commitment to the Purpose and Goals of Wofford College and to certain bedrock principles of liberal education: good citizenship and stewardship of our communities and nation.

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

With almost 1700 undergraduates from over 25 states Wofford achieves the best results through the coordination, collaboration, and cooperation of many different entities. To that end, our master plan to improve engagement in the democratic process is built around unique and important partnerships both within the campus and without. The Voter Engagement and Education Steering Committee will continue to cultivate additional partnerships within the College and throughout the community to improve the quality of our efforts to increase democratic engagement on our campus.

The Athletic Department (Athletic Marketing & Promotions)

Through a partnership with the Wofford Athletics Department we gain a valuable teammate, especially for the "SoCon Votes" Initiative. Through this partnership, we will be able to:

- host voter education and registration events at home athletic contests.
- Broadcast voter education and engagement initiatives to the student body and the general public in a collected setting through the use of the stadium TV and in-game PA system

The Office of Residence Life

Through a unique partnership with the Office of Residence Life we will be able to reach students where they are and where they live. Through this relationship we hope to:

- create and host educational opportunities within the residence halls regarding voter education and registration.
- use Resident Assistants as an additional point of contact with students to educate them about our efforts.

The Office of Student Activities

Through a partnership with the Office of Student Activities we will be able to access resources to improve our reach and bring more students to the table in organizing events. Through this partnership we will be able to:

- host campus-wide activities related to our efforts.
- take part in the student organizations fair held at the beginning of the semester.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Turn-out among minority students at Wofford has been exceptionally poor, through a partnership with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion we will be able to partner with each of the clubs and organizations that are advised through this office to specifically target and tailor our message.

FYI (Orientation and First-Year Introductory Courses)

Through a partnership with the FYI office we will be able to reach each of our nearly 500 first-year students individually. Specifically, we will be able to:

- include information about civic engagement, registration deadlines, absentee ballots, and important voting dates in the FYI courses.
- Provide access to voter registration tools as a part of the FYI curriculum.

The Office of Marketing and Communications

Through a partnership with the OMC we will be able to access additional resources to reach more students. Through this partnership we will be able to:

- send out voter information emails with important dates, deadlines, and community resources.
- create a unified and consistent message for our campus-wide initiative.

Wofford Campus Union

Through a partnership with the Wofford student government we will gain a key ally in our efforts. Specifically, we will be able to:

- gain additional funds to host events and market the initiative
- access nearly 50 student leaders at one time to spread information and gain buy-in from the student body

TIMELINE & SUMMARY

End of Summer (August 1 – August 31)

- Meet with OMC and Athletic Marketing to develop a marketing campaign
- Meet with RA staff to discuss their role in the effort
- Student members of the Steering Committee will recruit additional student volunteers
- Create a non-partisan voter guide to be distributed to students

Move-in and Opening Week (September 1 – September 9)

- Distribute non-partisan voter guides and voter registration information via RAs
- Hold a Voter Registration Drive during the Student Involvement Fair

Pre-Election (September 10 – November 1)

- September 16 – Constitution Day events
- September 20 – Pizza & Politics event at volleyball and soccer matches
- September 24 – Voter Registration Drive at home football game vs. ETSU
- September 26 – Host “Celebrate the 26th...on the 26th” – a celebration of the 26th Amendment (Debate Watch Party, Kick-off to Voter Registration Day)
- September 27 – Hold Voter Registration Drives in campus “hot spots” ; host a speaker to discuss voting rights and their importance
- October 4 – Host a Debate Watch Party (potential to partner with Gov. Dept.)
- October 9 – Host a Debate Watch Party with Office of Student Activities
- October 19 – Host a Debate Watch Party and Straw Poll with College Republicans and College Democrats
- Use OMC and RAs to disseminate information to students
- Partner with Residence Life to host informational programs and registration drives with individual residence halls
- Create sample ballots and information to give to students
- Send out absentee voting information
- Hold an absentee voter drive
- Partner with student-run media sources (OG&B, WoCoRadio) to publicize efforts and feature voter information
- Provide Voter Registration/Information Tables at home athletic events

GOTV (November 1 – November 8)

- Send out reminders about Election Day
- Partner with community organizations to provide local students with transportation to polling places
- Host an Election Night Party with College Republicans, College Democrats, and the Office of Student Activities
- Provide incentives for proof of voting

Post-Election (November 9 – Spring Semester)

- Review NSLVE data as soon as it becomes available
- Evaluate engagement and education strategies
- Update the master plan to take the college through the 2018 Midterms