



American Democracy Project  
MTSU's Center for Citizenship and Democracy  
Civic Learning Civic Engagement  
#MTSUVotes! True Blue Voter

# Middle Tennessee State University Campus Civic Engagement Action Plan 2020

## Shape Our Future

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### **Plan A + Plan B**

Since we compiled the initial draft of the our campus's civic action plan in Fall 2019, which we submitted to our national partners, the world has seismically shifted, our university has made radical, unprecedented, unrecognizable adjustments, and planning for the Fall 2020 semester and the Fall 2020 elections changes almost daily. As we type this 5/31/20 version of our action plan, the citizens of the state of Tennessee await the outcome of three lawsuits that seek no-excuse, universal, absentee voting for the August and November elections, during the time of coronavirus. MTSU intends to resume on-campus, in-person classes and operations this fall, as announced by our university president, Dr. Sidney McPhee, April 30, 2020; but he added on May 4, "if we can," citing Dr. Anthony Fauci that the virus will ultimately determine the future. May 29, just this weekend, the

university's COVID-19 Operational Task Force submitted its report about how MTSU will function in the coming academic year. We are only now digesting its recommendations. On first read, everything that can be online will be online. Distance learning, digital events, and physical spacing will characterize fall semester. Even though campus will be "open," the task force's recommendations suggest that Zoom will continue to dominate teaching and student interactions.

This we know definitively: major adaptations and accommodations still lie ahead, and radical changes will be regular and continual, to each of which we will make positive, constructive, creative adjustments.

Our civic action plan, therefore, is a moving target. What had originally been written last fall was Plan A. Envisioning that we would not be on campus in the fall was our spring Plan B. What is reality is that hybrid, thinking outside the box, being flexible, ongoing reevaluation and revision, and flying by the seat of our pants is actually our 2020 civic action plan. We're going to be doing the best we can. Therefore, take everything below with a grain of salt. We're adapting moment by moment.

This we also know: there is coronavirus angst, uncertainty, fear, disruption, overload, exhaustion, and preeminence that dominates our institution right now. Being able to position student voting at the very top of the university's Fall 2020 agenda, which absolutely had been fundamental to Plan A just three months ago, with excitement and incredible anticipation, is currently unrealistic. Unimaginable external pressures are bearing down on our university, weighing heavily on administration and faculty.

Embedded implicitly and explicitly in our action plan is recreation, energy, renewal, and uplift. We intend to place civic action and student voting in the fall elections as the wings to fly us forth from the downing difficulties. Stay tuned for our repositioning of fall elections and student voting as the civic action to Shape Our Future.

Also, as we write and submit this plan, not only does contagion abound, American cities are burning. Student voters must "plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize." Students must vote. We can become better than we've ever been before. The opportunity is now, to be counted in the 2020 census and to vote on August 6 and November 3.

Voting is not just a right or a privilege. It is a duty. The civic duty of every citizen. That's what we are communicating with vigor and purpose, at every juncture, in every venue, on all platforms, in the weeks and months ahead. Shape Our Future.

## **Overview**

Since 2005, through MTSU's office of the American Democracy Project for Civic

Learning (ADP), Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) has been proactive in developing, facilitating, and increasing student civic engagement and student voter participation. Over the years our tools have changed, our strategies have matured, and our hard work has yielded varying results. Being a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2014, we have been able to more closely track our successes and challenges. We continually renew and reinvigorate our commitment and campus action planning thanks to student energy, ever-expanding involvement across campus, administrative determination, wonderful county and state partners, and the resources and guidance of our national partners who cheer our efforts and achievements and create for us a wider community. We are also now MTSU Votes! and True Blue Voter. Listed below are the resources we plan to continue to utilize to achieve our goals.

### **Voter Registration**

In Tennessee, voter registration for the November 3, 2020, election ends on Monday, October 5, 2020. We are working diligently throughout the summer of 2020 on remote voter registration assistance and will continue to register students through the October 5 deadline.

In 2016, with old-school paper registration forms and voter registration tables every day on campus during fall semester (until the first week of October when voter registration closed in Tennessee), we registered 1585 students to vote, of our then-23,370 student body of eligible voters. NSLVE reports that 72.3% of our student body was registered to vote. We are quite confident that MTSU registered more voters than any university in the state.

In 2017, Tennessee rolled in our state's online voter registration capability, which the university began integrating into our own websites by winter 2018. It meant though, initially, that while we directed our campus community members to online registration, we had no means to count them.

In mid-September 2018, we added an MTSU-count login page to precede the Secretary of State's online voter registration platform. Beginning at that point, from 9/17/18 forward, we could tally, at least some of, the newly registered voters from MTSU. The number we were able to "count," whom we had registered in the 2018 interim-election year, was 1070. We know that number greatly underrepresents what we accomplished that year, because beginning March 2018, we added voter registration to course registration, and True Blue Voter registered voters throughout Summer 2018 CUSTOMS during new student orientation, not to mention all the voter registrations we accomplished from the first day of classes 8/27/18 through 9/16/18. Before 9/17/18, we could not capture who used the online linkages we provided, so those numbers are also not reflected in our count-tally. NSLVE reports that 71.1% of our then-21,269 student body of eligible voters was registered. That was a 5.8% increase over our student registrations four years before. We

also know for sure that we registered more voters than any other Tennessee campus that fall, because the Secretary of State (SOS) was running a voter registration campus competition, and his office so informed us. (We however did not win his official award because there was a social media component attached to “winning.” Apparently we had not adequately Tweeted. Our registration numbers, though, told the actual story.) We were proud to learn from NSLVE that MTSU students increased voter participation in the November 2018 election by 23% over November 2014. Our university’s student voters joined the student-voting upsurge nationwide in 2018.

In 2019, a non-national-election year, we could count online registrants more fully, we made a point to Tweet/Instagram/ Facebook/Snapchat our registrants, and we officially won the statewide SOS voter registration competition. 2019 was a very low-key voter registration season for us; we did not do voter registration booths every single day as we always do during election years, but we still increased our student voter registrations by hundreds of new voters. See, Nov. 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0i49YBsReUk>.

In 2020, our true objective is 100% student voter registration. We will use NSLVE to measure our success. We intend to Ask Every Student to register to vote, as we advance the duty to vote to shape our future. A tangible registration goal for 2020 is to up our percentage of registrations above the 5.8% increase we achieved in 2018. Therefore, we want at least a 6-point increase over 2016 registrations to be reflected in our upcoming NSLVE report for 2020. We have much work to do!

- ❑ **Ask Every Student:** We are an Ask Every Student Commitment Campus. As stated above, we intend to try to embed institutionally the capacity to ask every student to register to vote. What follows are some of our means to do so.
- ❑ **A six-point percentage increase in voter registration:** Also stated above, although our true goal is 100% voter registration, we aim for a 6% increase in 2020 voter registrations, compared to our registration numbers in 2016.
- ❑ **Voter information in CUSTOMS folders:** New student orientation, CUSTOMS at MTSU, is completely online this summer. Voter registration information (including instructions for voter registration, QR scanning codes for Voter Lookup and online registration, dates and deadlines for registration and elections) is provided for new students in CUSTOMS folders and in their online packet of materials.
- ❑ **Voter information CUSTOMS video:** We are writing a script and will film, in the next few days, an instructional voter registration video CUSTOMS link with instructions for registration in preparation for summer and fall voting. It will provide

students advice, tips, and the QR codes they need to check their registration and to register.

- ❑ **Voter registration tabling during 2020 CUSTOMS sessions:** The True Blue Voter tables have obviously been canceled, since no students are on campus this summer. All orientation, along with our voter registration assistance, has moved online.
  
- ❑ **Online voter resources:**
  - The MTSU website provides students and faculty access to numerous online resources. The portals that are currently available via MTSU's website are:  
<https://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/vote.php>,  
<https://www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote.php>,  
<http://election.rutherfordcountyttn.gov/students.htm>.  
One of our 2020 goals is to increase accessibility of these resources by creating a link in the "quicklinks" dropdown box on the front page of the MTSU website so that students can easily access these online portals.
  
  - In the Spring 2018 semester, in partnership with MTSU Information Technology Division, we successfully implemented our red "Register to Vote!" button that appears in the sidebar of many pages of the MTSU website. When pressed, this button directs student to the [www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote](http://www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote) page. On this page, students have access to voter registration assistance, information on upcoming elections, and campus programming. All of these resources are located directly in the sidebar and they are incredibly simple to navigate. We plan to push for the wider expansion of the button and to increase its visibility and accessibility.
  
  - So another goal for 2020 is that 100% of MTSU webpages will prominently display the red button, to have it added to departmental, college, program, center, and institute pages that do not yet display it.
  
  - The [www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote](http://www.mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote) front page is one of our most valuable tools for getting students registered to vote. The students are prompted to answer a handful of yes or no questions regarding their registration status and residency, and they will then be directed to the Tennessee Secretary of State's website (<https://ovr.govote.tn.gov/>) to complete the registration process. This is a tool that students are also able to access independently at home and on their own time. And, we anticipate that we will, with social distancing, still be able to hold outdoor voter registration

tabling events in the fall. Tabling outdoors is consistent with best practices for COVID-19.

- Online voter registration as part of students' course registration is another of our tools. As they have the last two academic years, our returning students, who make up the majority of the student body, have the opportunity to register to vote upon completion of their course registration for the coming semester. Before exiting the course registration page, the students see a button on the screen that they can click to take them directly to the [mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote](https://mtsu.edu/amerdem/register-to-vote) website to support the registration process.
  - ADP is developing an instructional video on the step-by-step process of getting registered to vote online, which we will post on all media platforms.
  - In addition to other platforms, ADP will use internal D2L News Items to notify and communicate to students about key dates for student voting.
- ❑ **National Voter Registration Month:** September, Voter Registration Month, right at the beginning of the school year, is when the Tennessee Secretary of State hosts his annual campus voter registration competition. MTSU chooses to participate vigorously, to take advantage of the challenge, as another tool, another carrot, and another incentive to elevate student voter registration.
- ❑ **National Voter Registration Day (NVRD):** MTSU is a NVRD partner institution through Campus Vote Project. NVRD in 2020 falls on September 22, 2020. The date is just days before Tennessee's voter registration deadline (October 5) for the 2020 presidential election, so we will bring out all our resources for this occasion. In addition to on campus promotion, we will promote NVRD on all media platforms well in advance to ensure the reach of the day is as effective as possible. We will encourage CSIL campus organizations to get involved, including Greek life, which assisted with voter registration in 2019. SGA typically hosts the Tennessee Secretary of State and the Rutherford County Election Commission on NVRD, and we will appreciate their proactive efforts Fall 2020.  
<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/about/>
- ❑ **National Voter Registration Week:** From Constitution Week into MT Engage Week in September, ADP wants to claim space in the yellow banner across the top of every MTSU webpage to promote NVR Week.

- ❑ **#MTSUVotes and #GoVoteMTSU:** Since our Secretary of State asks us to post social media photographs of every voter registrant holding up #MTSU Votes and #GoVoteMTSU signage, we try to comply. We have printed posters students can hold to have their picture taken. If it's fun for students and encourages them to get registered, we're all for it.
  
- ❑ **#1 in Campus Voter Registration:** We were named #1 of 48 colleges and universities in the Tennessee Secretary of State's Campus Voter Registration Contest during National Voter Registration Month in 2019. Our goal is to earn this distinction again in the fall of 2020.
  
- ❑ **Connection Point locations on campus:** Connection Point events are sponsored by the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL), and MTSU Votes will invade them. They are fun activities that students are encouraged to attend, to interact and meet fellow students. Connection Point opportunities are set up across campus throughout the semester, and students receive different buttons that can be collected and placed on their backpacks. How this will look come fall 2020, we await word from CSIL. We have created various voter registration, ADP, and Constitution Day Connection Point buttons specific to MTSU Votes work, and we will push forward with these opportunities to the extent that we can through October 5, our state voter registration deadline.
  
- ❑ **Tabling on-campus during large events:** We will set up registration tables throughout the fall at the events that may still be able to take place, such as home games with MTSU athletic teams, homecoming activities, student organization events, MT Engage Week, Constitution Day events, as well as many more. These outreach locations, with outdoor tabling, enable us to both be safe and reach broader subsets of students on campus.
  
- ❑ **Residence halls:** One area of improvement planned for fall 2020 is increased voter registration in campus residence halls. One of our very active ADP student members is an Resident Assistant (RA) who will oversee dormitory outreach, including RA training at the summer RA-training institute in August. We will Ask Every Student in the dorms.
  
- ❑ **Early Arrival Programs:** MTSU's Scholars Academy and STAR programs, welcoming students to university early to increase their academic success, will assist students to register to vote this fall, for the first time ever. One of the program's directors is on board to spearhead this effort with us. We will Ask Every

Student in early arrivals to register, to take on his/her/their civic study, and shape our future.

- ❑ **Presidium Workshop for student organization presidents:** Our MTSU student organization president will attend Presidium in August to educate campus organization officers to Ask Every Student in their club, fraternity, or organization to register and vote. Our campus student orgs are active participants in voter registration, voter education, and getting out the student vote.
- ❑ **Student Government Association (SGA):** Similarly, SGA is one of our most powerful campus partners. The SGA Attorney General is an ADP student member and works in direct liaison with the Secretary of State's office. SGA advances voter registration every year and will do so again this fall.
- ❑ **University Studies (US):** University Studies is the university's first-year program, overseen by University College. We intend to lead a voter registration and student voting workshop at US training this summer, via video, to assist US faculty to assist us in bringing voter registration tools directly to their students and incorporating student voting in their syllabi. US faculty are among the university's most engaged and supportive faculty.
- ❑ **Voter registration in every classroom:** Although this objective is aspirational, it is supported by the University Provost every year, who emails all faculty and asks all faculty members to walk their students through online voter registration during class time. He does not "force" faculty to comply but requests it and advocates for it. Ask Every Student is proactively embedded in the facilitation of direct in-class support.
- ❑ **University Advisors:** Also aspirational, getting advisors, who have direct one-on-one conversations with every student, to add voter registration to their to-discuss checklist is something we're still working on. Adding a voter registration script to every college's advisor talking points would be major. We hope it's accomplishable.

## Voter Education

- ❑ **NSLVE data:** Our partnership with the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement over the past election cycles has been a vital resource for our campus. We are able to track our improvements in voter registration across the campus, as well as identify barriers that are present, compare them to previous election cycles, and work to resolve them. NSLVE data are the backbone research tool on which we base voter registration (above) and student voting (below). But,

NSLVE's existence, information, and utility advance voter education since we use it to educate our campus community about our real lacunae and our objectives and to set our strategy for forward progress.

- ❑ **African American History Month:** The month of February was African American History Month. The theme that MTSU chose for 2020 was “The Vote.” This was a perfect opportunity to partner with the faculty and student leaders in Intercultural and Diversity Affairs (IDA) and the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL) to engage in events to educate students in important race and social justice issues during the month of February that have impacted, and continue to impact, black and white voting; and we registered students to vote as well.
- ❑ **Women’s History Month:** Half of Women’s History Month on campus was intact and accomplished before COVID-19 sent everyone home. Our campus planned a full month of powerful activities for Women’s History Month (WHM), March, centered on voting, woman suffrage, and the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment. In partnership with CSIL, the June Anderson Center for Women and Non-Traditional Students, and the Power of One, we tabled for voter registration throughout the WHM events, which included a kickoff event on March 3, 2020, the Super Tuesday presidential primary, with walks to the polls from campus.
- ❑ **Tennessee Statewide Campus Civic Summit (TCCS):** The statewide campus civic summit, held February 21, 2020, was a kickoff educational conference that brought together Tennessee's higher education institutions to learn and share best practices in student voting. It was an energizing think tank to get our campus—and all the Tennessee campuses—educated about the needs ahead in this election year. The day was loaded with guest lecturers and discussion leaders, in which our national and state partners participated, including American Democracy Project, All In Challenge, Campus Compact, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Scholars Strategy Network, Campus Vote Project, Students Learn Students Vote, Campus Election Engagement Project, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, and the Tennessee Campus Democracy Network. To promote the event, we created a geotag on Instagram and Snapchat for attendees to use during the course of the event. A film we can post with all the program’s breakout sessions is being compiled for fall release.
- ❑ **Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2020 (CLDE):** The annual CLDE conference, hosted by ADP and NASPA, is online June 4-5, July 24, and September 11, 2020. MTSU has recruited a full team of faculty, staff, and students to attend the conference to further campus civic engagement and voting work this summer and in the fall.

- ❑ **Constitution Day 2020 Constitution readings:** Constitution Day falls on Thursday, September 17, 2020. Every year we organize a campus-wide celebration of the Constitution and hold outdoor readings of the Constitution in front of every college on campus. Since these readings are outdoors and can easily be socially distanced, we may well be able to continue them this fall. If not, we'll Zoom read or make fun accommodations. Knowledge of the U.S. Constitution is the foundation of voter education.
- ❑ **Constitution Day 2020 programming:** We know we will not gather in Tucker Theatre for our annual Constitution Day event this fall. We will Zoom it. We have a great educational idea developing to be implemented over the summer, to be ready for Constitution Week activities in September.
- ❑ **Presidential Debate viewing party:** The final presidential debate for 2020 is scheduled to be held October 22, 2020, at one of our neighboring institutions, Belmont University in Nashville. We had planned to reserve either the movie theater in the Student Union or the Lecture Series room in the Honors College and invite students to watch the debate together and engage in dialogue, with food and drinks provided. Doing an online party is likely the accommodation we will engage in instead. We will host a mass Zoom call where the host will screen-share the debate and participants will get the chance to dialogue in the chat box.
- ❑ **Debate watches and discussions in the dorms:** Not only for the 10/22/20 debate, we will encourage engagement in all the presidential debates and for any senatorial and Congressional ones that the League of Women Voters may develop for this fall. In past election seasons we've worked with University Housing to hold discussion sessions in the dorms after debate-watch parties. The model will be adapted for this fall; we will work with our campus partners to develop fun, smart alternatives.
- ❑ **Calendar handouts:** We will be creating a simplified election calendar to pass out to students at every fall university event with a breakdown of all of the election dates, polling locations, absentee ballot deadlines, etc. Obviously all this information will be online and sent out by social media as well.
- ❑ **Sample ballots:** ADP will provide a sample ballot on the ADP website for students to reference. An email link will be provided on the page for any student who has questions about candidates or about filling out the application for a ballot and the ballot itself. Students have anxiety about what to expect at the polls. We will provide information to help them feel more comfortable with the procedural details of voting.

- ❑ **Absentee ballot information:** By-mail voting is already utilized by some of our students, and we will be active about educating students on the absentee ballot process and its deadlines. We will assist students in requesting ballots, filling them out, and submitting them. Because students are apprehensive about the process, we intend to work with them at every step, especially since we expect absentee balloting to increase markedly this fall.
- ❑ **Polling places mapped out:** We will map out the polling locations in our area and post them throughout the campus in heavily trafficked areas. Some examples of locations where these visuals will be placed are the residence halls, student union buildings, and the entrances to all of the colleges. This information will also be online, and posted and reposted on social media.
- ❑ **Candidate information:** We will provide information sheets on the different candidates running for public office in the fall. Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) helped create candidate profiles in 2018, which we placed on campus. We turned the candidate data into posters in the ground near Student Union in 2018 and are prepared to do the same in 2020. The candidate position information will also be available on the MTSU ADP website, and the same email address, as for the sample-ballot page, will be used for any student who has questions to contact us.
- ❑ **City street banner:** As part of voter education and community engagement, we are preparing a banner to hang over Main Street near the entrance into the university, to encourage voting publicly and citywide. We have applied for the Murfreesboro city permit and are designing the banner now.
- ❑ **Civic Virtue Honors lecture series:** Among many other wonderful educational opportunities offered by programs all across campus this fall, the Honors College will run a fall lecture series on “Civic Virtue, The Common Good.” Themes in all the lectures examine, and ask students to grapple with, civic responsibilities, national purposes, and students’ roles in them. The Civic Virtue scholarly discussions will all be held as video conferences this fall.

## Get Out the Vote

- ❑ **Voter Friendly Campus:** We are a Campus Vote Project Voter Friendly Campus, and as such, we lay out specific objectives to move our campus positively forward in increasing MTSU student voter participation. These objectives constitute our campus engagement plan.

- ❑ **Vote Everywhere:** Following the phraseology and impetus articulated by the Andrew Goodman Foundation, this year, like never before, MTSU students really must vote everywhere. Whereas in past years we strongly urged re-registration for our students to vote locally, to Live Here Vote Here. But this fall, even though technically our students may, in part, be on campus, we are keenly aware that that idea is, on 5/31/20, just a vision. In truth, most students will likely still be learning remotely, from home. Voting will be difficult, confusing, and fraught with complications. Our students will and must Vote Everywhere, wherever they find themselves. And we will assist each and every one of them in determining his/her/their best choice in order to be able to vote in the November 3 election.
  
- ❑ **A six-point percentage increase in student voting:** In 2016, 44.5% of MTSU students voted. The national average, across all institutions of higher education in the NSLVE study, was 50.4%. There was an MTSU participation gap of 5.9% from simply meeting the national average of student voting. Parallel to our goal for voter registration, we'd like to meet the challenge from 2016, and raise it, to at least a 6% increase in MTSU student voting. Our true goal is for 100% of our students to vote. But if we can achieve the goal of a 6% increase, to be determined by the data in our upcoming MTSU 2020 NSLVE report, we will be proud. We will work diligently to accomplish this serious step up.
  
- ❑ **Above 50% student voting in 2020:** MTSU received the Silver Seal from the All In Challenge for having a 2018 campus voting rate between 30-39% in the 2018 midterm elections. We intend to achieve 50.5% or above student voter participation in 2020, actualizing our goal.
  
- ❑ **Create energy among our students:** Students are much more likely to go to the polls if they have a friend or group to go with. We know that students are highly influenced by their peers, so if we can create high energy among the student body, that energy can spread throughout the whole student body! To build cohesion and support, we'll have Zoom couch parties to talk about voting. Our walks to the polls, which may be able to continue this fall, will be encouraged.
  
- ❑ **Early Voting (EV):** To vote early in Tennessee, a person must appear in person at either the county election commission office or at a satellite voting location opened by the county election commission. The early voting period begins twenty (20) days before an election and ends five (5) days before an election. Although closed from voting on holidays, a person may vote early on any Saturday that falls during this time frame. Early Voting for the State/Federal and County/General Primary Election begins July 17, 2020, and ends August 1, 2020. Early Voting for the State/Federal General Election begins October 14 and closes October 29, 2020. We will be

informing our students this summer about the summer EV dates and, in the fall, about the fall EV dates. We encourage students to vote early, to take advantage of weekend voting opportunities and times that will fit their unique schedules. Getting the job done, not procrastinating, is part of the college-level skill set of time management that universities help their students master.

- ❑ **WAVE:** MTSU has been involved with the Wake Up and Vote Early program since 2012. WAVE encourages students to participate in Early Voting in hopes of a larger voter turnout by the end of the voting cycle. Various groups on campus will be voting on the very first day of Early Voting, primarily at the Rutherford County Election Commission office on the square in downtown Murfreesboro.
- ❑ **Early Voting as a class:** Because EV is flexible—MWF classes can take advantage, TuTh classes can take advantage, weekend classes can take advantage—we urge faculty to take a day of class time, take students, and go to the polls together. Some faculty do indeed work this into their syllabi and make it happen during class time.
- ❑ **Vote Early Day:** National Vote Early Day is Saturday, October 24, 2020. We will work to energize our students around that date, to create buzz, and develop EV events for that date, on campus and online. Polls close in most counties at 12:00 Noon on the EV Saturdays, so we'll need to get students to set their alarms!
- ❑ **Election dates:** The State/Federal and County/General Primary Election is August 6, 2020. The State/Federal General Election is November 3, 2020. We will be working all summer and fall to prepare our students to vote on or before these election dates.
- ❑ **Absentee voting under current Tennessee law:** The August 6 election is coming up fast, and most of our students have left campus and are at home out of county due to COVID-19. Students who are currently registered to vote in Rutherford County, who have already voted once in person, such as in the March 3, 2020, Super Tuesday party primary, and who now live outside of Rutherford County, will be able to vote absentee in Rutherford from their home county. They will first have to apply for an absentee ballot. Our summer CUSTOMS instructional video informs students about this opportunity and how to accomplish it. If many remain in a remote learning location in fall, they will also be able to vote absentee in Rutherford County in the November 3 election.
- ❑ **Absentee voting if court cases prevail over the summer:** If vote-by-mail policies change in Tennessee in the coming weeks, we will have a page on the MTSU ADP

website that has the most recent updates on any judicial decisions that will impact student voting.

- ❑ **Absentee ballot deadlines:** The absentee ballot request period for the State/Federal and County/General Primary Election commenced May 8, 2020, and its closing date is July 30, 2020. Absentee ballot requests open for the fall State/Federal General Election on August 5 and end October 27, 2020. We have already begun announcing, via video release and social media, the May 8 opening date to request an absentee ballot for the summer election, and we will continue to make these dates action items for our students to use, benefit from, and act on in the weeks and months ahead.
- ❑ **Stamps for absentee ballots:** Our ADP office provides students with stamps and envelopes to mail in the application for an absentee ballot and then, second, to mail in the actual absentee ballot itself. We will provide these supplies to students at a distance as well, if they're in need; meaning, ADP will be happy to mail these supplies to students' homes if that service assists them, with ample time in which to do it. We have requested an account at the University Post Office so that our students can go directly to campus P.O. and ADP will be debited for the cost of students' stamps for envelopes mailed to any county election commission. This proposed billing system, however, has yet to be approved for institutionalization.
- ❑ **Snapchat and Instagram filters for Election Day:** We will create an #MTSUVotes! filter for both Snapchat and Instagram for students to use after they vote!
- ❑ **Text reminders before elections:** Students are able to opt-in during the online registration process when they register through the MTSU portal, so that we can know who has registered, to be able to access their cell number and send them text reminders about Early Voting and Election Day. We will continue to utilize data capture so that we can text students to encourage them to get to the polls!
- ❑ **TurboVote:** We support TurboVote registration, which also assists its membership in text-reminders of important dates.
- ❑ **Party at the polls 2020:** We intend to again host an event on the day of the General Election, November 3, 2020. SGA will organize walks to the polls, on the hour every hour, from MTSU Student Union to the nearest polling station, which is located about one mile away. At the site, we provide food, games, music, and community involvement to encourage students and the voting public to get out the vote! Working with #VoteTogether in 2018, our 2018 party at the polls was fun and

it built happy enthusiasm. We intend to develop a 2020 version that will conform to COVID-19 guidelines as they are spelled out for Fall 2020.

- ❑ **Conference USA Voting Challenge:** MTSU has been working on spearheading a Conference USA Voting Challenge across Conference USA universities, through our national partner All In Challenge. A team from our university athletics division, our ADP group, MTSU Marketing and Communications, and the ED of All In Challenge met in late February at MTSU to discuss logistics. And then COVID-19 happened. Perhaps we can still move this objective forward.
- ❑ **Commitment to Full Voter Participation:** We will ask that our university president sign the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Voter Participation, in order to Shape Our Future.

## **Our Coalition**

The organizational and departmental team members from across campus who proactively work to advance engagement, student voter participation, and increasing our students' understanding of and commitment to the American democratic process include:

- Student Government Association
- MTSU Center for Student Involvement and Leadership
- American Democracy Project MTSU
- Albert Gore Research Center
- Center for Educational Media
- MTSU Poll
- Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies
- MTSU Information Technology Division
- MTSU Marketing and Communications
- MTSU University Honors College
- MTSU College of Liberal Arts
- MTSU University College
- MTSU Office of the University Provost
- MTSU Board of Directors
- MT Engage
- MTSU Experiential Learning Program
- Office of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs
- Center for Women and Nontraditional Students
- University Housing

## **Our Leadership**

### **Key Students**

Will we not name all our students. Our student leadership is spread across every organization on campus. We have had Campus Election Engagement Project Fellows, Campus Vote Project Fellows, Scholars Strategy Network Fellows. (We have not had Andrew Goodman Fellows yet, but we aspire to them.) Our students make ADP viable and they carry the load with their dedication and energy for the work.

### **Key Administration, Staff, Faculty, and Allies**

Dr. Mary Evins, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning  
 Ms. Miranda Johnson, American Democracy Project for Civic Learning  
 Major Steve Daugherty, American Democracy Project Community Volunteer  
 Dr. Mark Byrnes, University Provost  
 Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle, Associate Provost  
 Vice President Andrew Oppmann, MTSU Marketing and Communications  
 Dr. Dan Kelley, Asst. Vice President, Student Affairs  
 Dr. Ken Blake, Director, MTSU Poll  
 Professor Ken Paulson, Director, MTSU Free Speech Center  
 Prof. Deborah Fisher, Director, Seigenthaler Chair in First Amendment Studies  
 Professor Lara Daniel, Jones College of Business, Co-president, LWVMRC  
 Dr. Louis Kyriakoudes, Director, Albert Gore Research Center  
 Ms. Donna Baker, Archivist, Albert Gore Research Center  
 Ms. Sarah Calise, Archivist, Albert Gore Research Center  
 Dr. Laura Clark, Director, Center for Educational Media  
 Dr. John Vile, Dean, University Honors College  
 Dr. Philip Phillips, Associate Dean, University Honors College  
 Ms. Susan Lyons, Coordinator, University Honors College  
 Dr. Karen Petersen, Dean, College of Liberal Arts  
 Ms. Connie Huddleston, Coordinator, College of Liberal Arts  
 Mr. Matthew Hibdon, Strategic Communications Manager, College of Liberal Arts  
 Professor Daniel Green, Director, Intercultural and Diversity Affairs  
 Professor Carol Swayze, Director, Experiential Learning  
 Dr. Beth Harwell, Distinguished Visiting Professor

## **Our Community, Local, and Tennessee Partners**

Civic Engagement Office, Office of the Tennessee Secretary of State  
 Rutherford County Election Commission  
 League of Women Voters of Murfreesboro/Rutherford County  
 American Association of University Women  
 Tennessee Campus Democracy Network  
 Tennessee Civic Engagement Task Force

## Other Resources

Both the local Democratic and Republican parties contribute to our campus voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts at MTSU. There are active College Democrats and College Republicans at MTSU, with their chapters fully registered with Student Affairs. Our College Democrats and College Republicans tend to work together, table together, and support each other. We trust that will continue to be their pattern this fall.

## Ballot Access

MTSU is a university that does not have a polling place on our campus, although many universities do. An effort we strongly advocated and worked for, Tennessee House Bill 1674, was defeated in subcommittee on March 11, 2020, in the Tennessee General Assembly. There are therefore no prospects for a polling place on our campus any time in the near future. Despite this fact, we have carried out walks to the nearest polling station, to a nearby local high school, on Election Day, and, COVID-19 permitting, we intend to continue these group walks to the polls in 2020. We will also work with the rideshare companies Uber and Lyft to obtain discount codes for students who need a ride to the polling stations on Election Day.

## Your Timeline

- ❑ **How often will your coalition meet?** The core ADP members met weekly throughout the 2019-2020 school year through mid-March. In April 2020, we began meeting every two weeks via Zoom to maintain momentum and the energy needed to meet our goals. Also, we text and email a lot! Beginning in July, regular meetings for fall action will recommence, as we push toward the opening of school, voter registration through October 5, and meeting all programmatic benchmarks.

## Point of Contact for Designation Process

Dr. Mary Evins

MTSU American Democracy Project for Civic Learning Director

University Honors College Research Professor

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**#MTSUVotes**