

Every Vote Matters at Middlesex Community College Voter Friendly Campus Designation End-Of-Year Report 2018-2020

I. Overview

Middlesex Community College (MCC) provides access to affordable education for a diverse community from all ethnic backgrounds and identities, preparing individuals for success and lifelong learning. We promote academic excellence, provide workforce development opportunities, and empower all learners to become productive and socially responsible members of our local and global communities.

MCC was accepted in the inaugural Voter Friendly Designation process. MCC's Voter Friendly Campus Coalition consists of campus members from diverse areas working to develop and support the implementation of a campus wide effort to increase civic learning and participation among our students. Middlesex continues to affiliate with the Campus Vote Project and the ALL IN Challenge to encourage and assist students as they establish participatory habits to last beyond their college experience.

While MCC abides by and exceeds the requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965 that mandates availability of voter registration forms to all students, MCC is continuing to further democratic engagement into campus life as students explore their political beliefs and engage in the democratic process.

MCC sought to carry out democratic engagement in 2018 by providing voter registration opportunities from the start of the fall semester until the voter registration deadline (October 17, 2018), offer voter education opportunities throughout the fall semester until the midterm election (November 6, 2018), and to ensure a wide variety of democratic engagement opportunities were offered to students throughout the year. Examples of the democratic engagement opportunities offered include MCC's Constitution Day & Citizenship Day celebration, National Voter Registration Day events, annual Diversity Summit, monthly Coffee and Conversation dialogues, and many more.

MCC was successful in meeting our 2018 goals. Within MCC's Student Affairs division, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning was central to the dissemination of voter registration information. New Student Orientation, Opening Day activities, in classrooms and at campus events including Activity and Club Fairs all had voter registration and voter education information available to students. Voter registration information is also continuously available to students in the Office of Civic & Service-Learning, Office of Student Engagement, Student Lounge, and through the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, TurboVote, social media, flyers, and tabling.

Additionally, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning hosted several events focused solely on registering students to vote. These events included National Voter Registration Day and Every Vote Matters. Each event was held on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses. To amplify our impact, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning partnered with MASSPIRG for each of these events. Combining our resources and working in tandem allowed for our events to reach more than 500 students across MCC's two campuses.

The Office of Civic & Service-Learning offered two events focused on providing students with information about the midterm election. The events (Get Out The Vote! and Make a Choice, Raise Your Voice!) provided students with nonpartisan information on the candidates for election and the ballot questions. All of the information offered to students was provided by the Massachusetts Secretary of State's Office.

Other democratic engagement opportunities offered by the Office of Civic & Service-Learning and our partners include Constitution and Citizenship Day, Coffee and Conversation dialogues, Alternative Spring Break to Houston, TX, service-learning, monthly community service opportunities, Make a Choice, Raise Your Voice!, How to Write to Your Legislator workshop, and many more.

While MCC was successful in meeting our 2018 goals, there are areas we seek to improve upon. For example, TurboVote is available to students, faculty, and staff. However, it is not a resource that is as well-known as it could be. Our hope is to market TurboVote in a variety of ways to increase awareness throughout our campuses. In the future, we will seek to build upon the successes of 2018 and continue to offer our students a multitude of democratic engagement opportunities.

II. Coalition

MCC's coalition consisted of the following stakeholders:

- Office of Civic and Service-Learning staff
- Director of Office of Student Engagement and Retention and Staff
- MCC Web and Applications Manager
- MCC Library Staff
- Dean and Assistant Dean of Students
- Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities
- Deans and Campus Managers
- Admissions Staff
- Advising staff
- MCC Honors Program
- Office of Marketing and Publications
- Student Government, Organizations and Clubs
- Office of International and Multicultural Affairs
- Program for Asian American Student Advancement

- Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society
- Provost and Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs
- Executive Director of Government & Community Relations

MCC's coalition worked in tandem to offer a variety of voter registration, voter education, and other democratic engagement opportunities throughout the fall semester. For example, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning staff worked with the Program for Asian American Student Advancement to host a discussion on civic engagement entitled "Make a Choice, Raise Your Voice!" The collaboration was designed to specifically encourage students served by the Program for Asian American Student Advancement to become civically engaged and boost participation in the midterm election.

Our partners also worked together to support events focused on democratic engagement throughout the college. For example, the Executive Director of Government and Community Relations provided significant support for MCC's Constitution and Citizenship Day celebration by assisting in the development of the event's topic and identifying appropriate guest speakers. In addition, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning worked with the Office of International and Multicultural Affairs on their Social Justice Conference by planning and implementing a workshop on how to write to your legislator.

MCC's coalition worked effectively together in 2018 and will continue to work together to develop and support the implementation of a campus wide effort to increase civic learning and engagement. In the future, the coalition will work to determine the best ways to leverage our resources to bolster the democratic engagement opportunities available to MCC students. For instance, the Office of Student Engagement, the Office of Civic & Service-learning, the Executive Director of Government and Community Relations, and the Office of Marketing and Publication are currently partnering on a "View 360 – Vital Conversations about Critical Issues" event. MCC will be hosting Parkland Survivor, David Hogg, as part of the series.

III. Analysis

Voter Registration

MCC offered a wide variety of voter registration opportunities throughout 2018. Please find a description of these opportunities below:

- National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) is a national holiday on the fourth Tuesday of September and was observed on September 25, 2018. MCC had volunteers on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses to register voters and distribute voting information to students. MCC engaged with more than 100 students on both the Lowell and Bedford Campuses.

- MCC hosted “Every Vote Matters” tables on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses. These tabling events were held on October 15, 2018 and October 16, 2018, and were designed to register voters before the voter registration deadline. Students had the opportunity to register online, with paper forms, determine their registration status, and sign up for TurboVote. Volunteers engaged with 115 students on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses.
- This year, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning partnered with our MASSPIRG chapter for our Voter Registration and Get Out The Vote initiatives. Our partnership focused on leveraging our shared resources to engage our students in the 2018 Midterm elections by providing opportunities for students to learn about our democratic system, register to vote, and identify ways they can work to create change. Our partnership involved cross-promoting events, sharing volunteers, organizing class visits to provide voter registration information to students, and developing joint events. In all, the Office and Civic & Service-Learning were able to engage with more than 500 students and provide them the opportunity to register to vote as well as voter education information.
- Voter registration information was continuously available to students in the Office of Civic & Service-Learning, Office of Student Engagement, Student Lounge, and through the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, TurboVote, social media, flyers, and tabling.

From these efforts, MCC learned the importance of building partnerships in order to bolster capacity to reach students. Partnering with MASSPIRG along with the Office of Student Engagement and others allowed MCC to provide voter registration opportunities in a wide variety of ways, engage with more students on both campuses, and generate buzz about the election among our students. Building strong internal and external partnerships is critical to our future voter registration efforts.

Voter Education

MCC offered various voter education opportunities throughout 2018 where students were able to obtain nonpartisan voting information. Please find a description of these opportunities below:

- MCC joins universities and colleges nationwide to commemorate the adoption of the United States Constitution on Constitution and Citizenship Day. Constitution and Citizenship Day was observed on September 18, 2018. On this day, MCC hosted retired Superior Court Judge Robert A. Barton and Attorney Ryan Sullivan to campus to speak about the importance and implementation of the United States Constitution.
- MCC hosted an event entitled “Coffee and Conversation” on both the Lowell and Bedford campuses. The event took place on October 23, 2018 and November 15, 2018.

The events encouraged students, faculty, and staff to engage in an open dialogue focused on the upcoming midterm election and other prominent issues such as the Supreme Court Nomination of Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

- On October 31, 2018, MCC held an event titled, “Make a Choice, Raise Your Voice!” The event consisted of an open dialogue about the importance of being an active and engaged citizen. Students were encouraged to become democratically involved in their communities and received nonpartisan voting information.
- MCC hosted “Get Out the Vote” events on both the Lowell and Bedford Campuses. The events took place on November 5, 2018 and November 6, 2018. Each event was designed to provide all students with nonpartisan voting information, an opportunity to find their polling place, and encourage them to participate in the midterm election.
- The Office of Civic and Service-Learning collaborated with the Office of International and Multicultural Affairs in their Social Justice Conference by holding a Write to your Legislator Workshop. The workshop provided students with the skills and resources to advocate for issues important to them. This conference took place on December 7, 2018.

From these programs, MCC learned that it is critical to offer voter education information to students in a variety of ways and to meet students where they are. While some students may have the time in their schedule to attend an event such as “Coffee and Conversation” or “Make a Choice, Raise Your Voice!”, others may not be able to attend due to work, school, and family responsibilities. It is important for MCC to continue to offer passive programs (i.e. tabling) along with the events described above in order to ensure that MCC is able to provide suitable voter education opportunities for all students.

Ballot Access

MCC ensured student access to the ballot through direct outreach such as tabling, class visits, and events as well as providing the appropriate information to students through the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, social media, and flyers. Additionally, MCC offers students access to TurboVote which assists students with finding their polling place, requesting an absentee ballot, and voter registration. TurboVote also provides election reminders to students via text message and/or email. The election reminders include the date of the election as well as their poll location and hours of operation. During tabling events, MCC assisted students in determining their polling location and their voter registration status.

The advantages MCC students had in accessing the ballot were the resources provided to them by MCC. Additionally, MCC is composed of commuter students. The majority of the students are residents of the surrounding communities and generally vote in person at their polling

location. It can be difficult to navigate the absentee ballot process for out-of-state students at residential institutions. MCC students who vote in Lowell also had access to an early voting location within walking distance. Several polling locations on election day are also a short distance from the Lowell Campus.

A hurdle that some students encountered was transportation. MCC students are from a variety of urban, suburban, and rural communities. In some communities, students do not have access to reliable public transportation. This can create a barrier for some students.

Voter Turnout

The Office of Civic & Service-Learning hosted two “Get Out The Vote” tabling events (one tabling event was held on each campus). The events were held on November 5, 2018 and November 6, 2018. At each table, students were provided nonpartisan information on the candidates for election and the ballot questions. All of the information provided to students was from the Massachusetts Secretary of State’s Office. Students were also provided resources to find their polling location, the hours of operation for their polling location, and determine their voting registration status if they were unsure of it.

In addition to the tabling events, Middlesex Community College President, Dr. Jim Mabry, sent an email to the campus community reminding students about the election, student volunteers visited classrooms, and voting information was made available to students on social media, the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, and flyers.

IV. Successes

MCC had several successes throughout 2018. Please find a brief list below:

- Voter Registration Initiative - MCC’s voter registration efforts throughout 2018 were able to reach a large number of students, relied on successful collaboration with partners, and created awareness of the voter registration process as well as the midterm election across both campuses.
- Voter Education Initiative – MCC’s voter education efforts reached a large number of students, provided them with relevant nonpartisan voting information, and demonstrated the commitment of the campus community to democratic engagement.
- Building Partnerships – MCC utilized several partnerships in the majority of our democratic engagement efforts in 2018. Throughout the year, MCC was able to bolster those partnerships and leverage our resources effectively.

V. Barriers

The main barrier MCC encountered while implementing democratic engagement work in 2018 is as follows:

- Since MCC is a commuter institution, reaching all students can be a challenge. MCC strives to provide democratic engagement opportunities to all students and offers voter registration, voter education, etc. opportunities through a variety of avenues to ensure each student has access to relevant information. However, it is still a challenge to directly engage all students.

VI. Beyond 2018

MCC is planning a number of events and other opportunities for our students to learn about upcoming local and state elections, legislative issues, and other important community issues throughout 2019 and beyond. Please find information on events and plans for the upcoming year below:

- On February 6, 2019, MCC will be hosting David Hogg, a survivor of the Parkland school shooting and student activist. David Hogg will be visiting a class to lead a discussion on civic engagement and hosting a campus-wide talk focused on the importance of civic engagement and active citizenship.
- MCC will continue to host “Coffee and Conversation” events monthly. These events will provide students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to engage in a dialogue focused on our current political climate and issues of interest to the community.
- MCC will be offering ongoing voter registration opportunities for local races taking place in the spring and fall of 2019. These opportunities will include tabling, class visits, information on the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, registering for TurboVote, and information distributed through social media and flyers.
- MCC will be offering ongoing voter education opportunities for local races taking place in the spring and fall of 2019. Nonpartisan voting information on candidates for election as well as polling locations and hours of operation. Voter education information will be distributed through tabling events, the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, TurboVote, social media, and flyers.
- MCC students will attend the Massachusetts Higher Education Advocacy Day on March 21, 2019. On this day, hundreds of students from institutions across the Commonwealth will join together to meet with their representatives and advocate for increased public funding for higher education and the issue of mounting student debt.

- MCC is currently planning a visit to the Edward M. Kennedy Institute in Boston. Our hope is to bring a group of students to the institute sometime during the spring 2019 semester to explore and participate in a Senate Immersion Program. This program is designed to show students what it is like to be a United States Senator. Students will take on the role of a U.S. Senator and will spend the day working to build legislation for a contemporary or historical U.S. topic.

Planning for 2020

The MCC coalition will be engaged in ongoing discussions to plan our democratic engagement initiatives for the 2020 national election. MCC has begun to discuss possible events and other democratic engage opportunities for students. Some of the ideas for potential events include issue-based forums or panels where students can engage with experts on a particular topic of interest, a variety of voter registration opportunities, and monthly “Coffee and Conversation” dialogues focused on the national election and issues. Additionally, MCC will be continuing to utilize tabling events, class visits, the EVERY VOTE MATTERS website, TurboVote, social media, and flyers to provide democratic engagement opportunities to students. Lastly, the Office of Civic & Service-Learning staff will engage regularly with Lowell and Bedford election officials as well as the Massachusetts Secretary of State’s Office to ensure all voter registration forms and other voting information provided to students is current.

VII. NSLVE Data

After receiving our NSLVE data, the MCC coalition will review and discuss the data regarding our students. This data will be used to inform our voter registration and voter education efforts for the 2020 national election. NSLVE data will allow for the MCC coalition to make more informed decisions when deciding how to best engage with students and distribute voter registration and voter education information for upcoming elections.

VIII. Photos and Stories

The photos below are from MCC’s 2018 Constitution and Citizenship celebration. For our annual celebration, MCC hosted retired Superior Court Judge Robert A. Barton and Attorney Ryan Sullivan to campus to discuss the importance and implementation of the United States Constitution. The event was attended by approximately 100 members of the campus community and sparked a lively discussion regarding the U.S. Constitution and its impact on our everyday lives.



Photo of the voting information table at the entrance of the event.



Group photo with guest speakers retired Superior Court Judge Robert A. Barton and Attorney Ryan Sullivan.



Photo of the Constitution & Citizenship Day celebration in progress.

Submitted by Patrick Kenney
Office of Civic & Service-Learning
Phone: 978-656-3159
Email: kenneyp@middlesex.mass.edu