



University of Mary Washington

Civic Engagement Report for Fall 2022

Overview

UMW Votes is a non-partisan program dedicated to educating the University of Mary Washington (UMW) community about all aspects of the voting process. Our mission is to create civically-engaged students who are passionate about participating in our democracy. UMW Votes is made up of students, staff, and faculty who work together to support civic engagement and learning on the UMW campus.



University of Mary Washington's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement is reflected in the university's 2022-2027 Strategic Vision. The first goal of this vision is to "Promote the values of service and community and civic engagement." The UMW Votes program was created in 2019 in part to support this strategic vision. This report provides an overview of work accomplished in 2022.

Successes

Fall 2022 went well for UMW Votes and we enjoyed several successes. It is difficult to narrow down our top three success, but we will highlight the following here:

- 1. Increased Engagement:**

Possibly due to the pandemic receding, possibly due to increased outreach and preparation, we had higher levels of engagement this fall in terms of number of volunteers, participation in our

events (such as National Voter Registration Day, etc.) and participation in the leadership team for UMW Votes. We had over 10 regular student leaders working with UMW Votes this fall, as well as many students who helped with the events – about 25 additional regular volunteers providing over 80 hours of volunteer time over the course of the semester. We were happy to be able to reach more students and encourage civic participation and the development of a civic identity among a larger number of students in fall 2022.

- 2. Summer Funding:** We were very grateful to receive a grant from the Ask Every Student organization that provided a summer stipend to two UMW students to help with planning and getting ready for the fall 2022 election season. These students met with staff from the Center for Community Engagement every two weeks over the course of the summer and completed a range of tasks such as updating the class presentation PPT with updated deadlines and dates for fall 2022, creating a Kahoot for class presentations, creating social media posts, conducting an informational zoom meeting for coalition members, and more. This made it much easier to “hit the ground running” for fall 2022.

- 3. Partnership with Virginia21:** In fall 2022 we continued to grow the number of students who participated in Virginia21, which is an organization with a mission to empower college students and young Virginians to be engaged citizens and advocates for issues important to them and Virginia’s future. These students attended several networking events with other student leaders in Richmond and two of them participated in the Virginia21 Summer Leadership Institute where they learned more about communication, advocacy, and lobbying.



All In Campus Plan

UMW Votes was able to successfully meet the goals outlined in their Voter Friendly Campus Plan. The goals included the following, all of which were met or exceeded, except for item 5 (it is too soon to assess this goal):

1. Maintain a culture of civic engagement on campus supported by co-curricular programming.
2. Supporting civic learning for UMW students.
3. Preparing UMW students and our broader community members with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be active participants in a representative democracy and to work for positive change in our communities.
4. Continuing to participate in the NSLVE.
5. Increasing UMW student voter turnout in national elections by 10% over the next 5 years

Analysis of the Work: Fall 2022 Activities

Civic engagement activities were very successful on the UMW campus in fall 2022, and the sections below provide more information on the work carried out by UMW Votes and others. While the campus has not achieved full voter participation, our NSLVE data indicates we have had very high voter registration and turnout among UMW students in previous elections. In addition, UMW students' civic engagement recently earned UMW a spot on *Washington Monthly's* **Best Colleges for Student Voting** honor roll. We will continue to strive for full voter participation, but are proud of the high levels of engagement at UMW. Our work in fall 2022 revolved around four major activity areas:



1. Voter Registration

UMW Votes provided voter registration in a variety of ways.

1. **Tabling:** We registered voters during New Student Arrival, National Voter Registration Day, and weekly tabling on campus walk.
2. **Class Visits:** We visited several classes to talk about the upcoming election and register student voters. PowerPoints were presented that provided information about ways to vote (early, in person, or by mail), key election dates, and the importance of student civic engagement.

3. **Constitution Day:** UMW Votes tabled on Constitution Day and handed out free pocket constitutions in English and in Spanish (partnering with Latino Students Association), and also registered student voters.
4. **Website:** We provided extensive voter registration information on our UMW Votes website.
5. **Tracking:** The QR code we set up for online registration got 133 hits (we tracked it using a bit.ly link).



6. **Social Media:** We used our Instagram account to provide information about how to register to vote and key election dates.

7. **National Voter Registration Day:** For NVRD on Sept. 20, 2022 UMW Votes sponsored a carnival-like celebration to create excitement about voting. UMW Votes had a prize wheel people could spin, a Plinko game, and other activities to celebrate voting and voter

registration. The Bookmobile of Fredericksburg set up on campus walk and provided free books to students. UMW Votes gave away ~300 free UMW Votes T-shirts, and ~200 tote bags with a voting message. We had a shaved ice truck offering free shaved ice, free ice cream, and free stickers and games on campus. We created “grab and go” informational packets to help students decipher the registration and voting process. We had “Do-nut Forget to Vote” coupons that we handed out for a free doughnut in partnership with a doughnut shop close to campus. Over 17 volunteers worked over 37 volunteer hours at the event.

8. **All-Campus Emails:** Our University Relations division sent out an all-campus email reminding people to register to vote.
9. We registered a total of 48 students to vote using paper registration forms this year.

2. Voter Education before the Election

We provided a great deal of nonpartisan voting information over social media. We informed people about what was on the ballot, and shared information about all the different ways to vote (early, by mail, in-person on Election Day, etc.). We also shared information while tabling and during class visits. We distributed a State of Virginia voter education guide, and provided sample ballots for Fredericksburg. Finally, we also participated in National Voter Education Week.

3. Voter Turnout/Building a Civic Identity

Before the Voter Registration Deadline

Before the voter registration deadline, we sponsored several activities to help UMW students develop an interest and pride in voting and growing their civic identity. This included different events and programs:

1. **National Voter Registration Day:** Details provided above.
2. **Tabling:** Starting Sept 21st, the day after National Voter Registration Day, we tabled weekly, first registering students to vote, and then educating students about voting early. We distributed a State of Virginia voter education guide, and provided sample ballots for Fredericksburg, as well as free stickers and candy.



3. **Pumpkins to the Polls:** “Pumpkins to the Polls” was an activity in October that had “take and make” kits that people could pick up from tables on Campus Walk. They could take mini-pumpkins home, decorate them, and then enter them in a contest for prizes on Vote Early Day. The “take and make” kits were gift bags that had painting supplies, but also had a sample ballot and the State of Virginia voter education guide reminding people of the date for Election Day, as well as the different ways to vote, including voting early.
4. **Don’t Ghost the Vote:** “Don’t Ghost the Vote” was an activity in October where we gave out Halloween-themed cups filled with candy and information about registering to vote, sample ballots, and information about ways to vote in the fall 2022 election (early, by mail, or on Election Day).

After the Voter Registration Deadline

1. **Vote Early Day:** Similar to NVRD, UMW Votes students had an event on campus walk that had activity stations, a prize wheel people could spin, and other activities to create excitement around voting early. We gave away ~100 free UMW Votes T-shirts, customized cookies that read “Student Voter”, tote bags with a voting message, candy, and stickers. We created “grab and go” informational packets to help students decipher the voting process. In addition, this year we had “Pups to the Polls” and a local animal shelter brought dogs that



students could pet, and that was a very popular activity. We also had free cider and cookies. Rides to the polls were offered, and two students voted early. A great number of students who stopped by the table reported that they already voted early, and we gave them “I voted early” stickers and thanked them for voting. We had a total of 17 students with 23 volunteer hours who helped with the event.

2. **Tabling:** We continued to table after the voter registration deadline, and switched to information about ways to vote (early, by mail, or in-person on Election Day) and what was on the ballot. We distributed a State of Virginia voter education guide, and provided sample ballots for Fredericksburg, as well as free stickers and candy.



Election Day

1. **Rides to the Polls:** Rides to the polls were provided from 11:00-3:00 on Election Day from the Bell Tower on Campus Walk. From 12:00-3:00, the Fredericksburg Trolley provided rides to the polling place. This was a popular transportation option. The theme was “Donut forget to vote.”
 - a. 44 people were provided rides to the polls on Election Day.
2. **Tabling:** Students worked at an informational table at our Bell Tower on campus walk, handing out free doughnuts and coffee, sample ballots, and information on same-day registration. Free pizza was also provided from 11:30-3:00. We had a total of 8 volunteers and 20 volunteer hours over the 4-hour period.

3. **Cameo video:** With funding from the NOW Foundation, we wrote the script for and purchased a [Cameo video](#) of “Jeff Winger” from Community (Joel McHale) that was viewed over 1,300 times. In the video “Jeff” provides information about how to vote as a UMW student and encourages voting. We posted it on our social media on Election Day.



4. **Election Watch Party:** In the evening on Nov. 8th this year, UMW Votes co-hosted an Election Watch Party in the University Center on Campus (Cedric Rucker University Center) that was attended by over 45 people. UMW Votes and Day on Democracy provided free pizza and soda using grant funds.

4. Student Voting Rights

Historically, student voting rights are supported by our campus administration and by the General Registrar of the City of Fredericksburg. This was true again in fall 2022. This year, individuals were allowed to ask for same-day voter registration. The Electoral Board reported that the majority of people doing same-day registration were university students. While students are able to successfully register this way, in the future we will continue to encourage people to register to vote before the voter registration deadline.

Coalition

Internal partners

The UMW Votes program recruited student leaders from a pool of previous UMW Votes interns (students who had worked with UMW Votes in previous years) and new, interested students. In addition, we worked with the Honors Service Learning and Community-Engaged classes to recruit students seeking volunteer hours. We had over 10 regular student leaders working with us this fall, as well as many students who helped with the events – about 25



additional regular volunteers providing over 80 hours of volunteer time. Two of the student leaders received a fellowship from Campus Vote Project and four students received a paid fellowship from Civic Influencers. Two students worked closely with Virginia21. In addition, one student was a Newman Civic Fellow through Campus Compact. In 2022, a Dr. David Stahlman taught a First Year Seminar focused on Civic Engagement that coordinated with the Day on Democracy organization. Many students from this class also joined the coalition.

UMW Votes student leaders met bi-weekly in three teams: Social Media Team; Events Team; and Voter Reg/GOTV Team. There was a separate group of students who worked on a Day on Democracy program for Election Day. The UMW Votes team worked closely with the FSEM dedicated to the Day on Democracy, and one member of that class became an active participant in UMW Votes. More information about the Day on Democracy and our collaboration can be found on this [website](#).

Our coalition also worked with several programs on campus:

- **Student Activities and Engagement:** SAE and student government reposted UMW Votes' information on their social media, amplifying its reach.
- **Honors Program:** We had volunteers from the Honors Program and a student who was in a class called "Honors Service Learning" and they committed to work 20 volunteer hours with UMW Votes.
- **First Year Experience:** We worked with the First Year Experience program to provide voter registration information in their online modules.
- **James Farmer Multicultural Center:** We worked with JFMC to host a presentation from Abigail Spanberger, a candidate on the ballot this year.
- **Residence Life:** We paid to Resident Assistants (RAs) to hang informational posters in Residence Halls on campus.
- **Faculty:** Several faculty invited us to speak to their classes, and also a few helped with NVRD and Vote Early Day, as well as sharing information on Election Day.
- **University Relations:** University Relations posted on their social media about our events and [wrote a story about Election Day](#). They also helped publicize many civic engagement messages.



External Partners

UMW Votes also worked with a range of off-campus partners in 2022:

- Virginia National Organization for Women (NOW) and NOW Foundation
- Campus Vote Project
- Virginia21
- Civic Influencers
- Newman Civic Fellowship (Campus Compact)
- Ask Every Student
- Local Elected Officials
- Students Learn, Students Vote
- ALL IN for Democracy

The coalition was effective this year because we made a few extra efforts to inform people of our work and give them chances to engage. With support from an Ask Every Student grant, two UMW students composed a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the proposed activities for fall 2022. We shared this presentation in a live Zoom meeting and also shared a copy of the presentation with a range of partners, including faculty and staff who were not able

to attend the Zoom meeting, and our Provost and Associate Provost for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer. This funding from Ask Every Student over the summer really helped us be prepared for the very busy start of the semester and we were thankful that we could support these students as they planned, prepared, and communicated with others as we got ready for fall 2022.

Those who were able to actively engage in our coalition functioned well throughout the fall semester and supported the campus commitment to continue democratic engagement work. Some organizations and individuals who would like to be part of the coalition were too busy (as is often the case during fall semester) but we made every effort to keep them updated. Finally, we plan to continue in fall 2023, and each year beyond, with the coalition and the continued outreach to community partners. We will continue to recruit student leaders each year from the incoming class and existing volunteers. We will also seek funding for the summer to support student work over the summer to prepare for the fall election season.



Funding: We were fortunate to work with several external partners this fall, bringing a bit over \$9,300 into the university in the form of fellowships and grants. As mentioned above, we worked with Campus Vote Project and Civic Influencers. They both provided a lot of information and resources, and fellowships for our students (six students on our campus received fellowships of \$500 each). We worked with several other funders and are grateful for their support.

Awards

- UMW has been awarded the **ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for College Student Voting** recognition from ALL IN.
- Students' civic engagement also recently earned UMW a spot on *Washington Monthly's* **Best Colleges for Student Voting** honor roll.

Media Coverage

- University Relations posted on their social media about our events and [wrote a story about Election Day](#). They also helped publicize many civic engagement messages.
- [UMW Votes' social media](#) received a high level of engagement.

Barriers

UMW Votes did not face many barriers during the fall 2022 election season. For the most part, we achieved the goals we set out in our campus plan. Our campus climate is favorable for civic engagement work and we feel supported by the UMW administration. The only barrier that comes to mind is the large volume of work that needs to be done in a small amount of time between late August, when students return to campus, and early November when the elections occur. In 2022, we had a grant that supported students to complete some of the work during the summer, which was a big help. We hope that we have similar support in the future.



Beyond 2022

Virginia has important elections every year, and in 2023 the State House of Delegates and the State Senate both have very important electoral races. We plan to continue to carry out all our regular activities in fall 2023, celebrating the civic holidays, educating student voters about the importance of state elections, and continuing democratic engagement activities. We are taking all the same steps to prepare for the fall 2023 elections as we take for other important “on-year” elections, with the added task of seeking funding for 1-2 students to work over the summer to help with preparation for the fall 2023 election season.



NSLVE Data

When we received our NSLVE (National Survey of Voting, Learning and Engagement) report in 2023, we will share the data with members of UMW Votes and the broader UMW campus community, including members of our coalition. As we have in previous years, we will analyze the data in regards to the differential voter turnout among different majors (areas of study) on campus with the goal of making sure we are able to share information with all majors on campus. In the past, voting rates have been lower among science and business majors, so we will see if this trend has continued and brainstorm ways to better reach these students. In addition, we will examine the data in relation to demographic characteristics such as race and ethnicity to see if we can identify any patterns. If we do identify patterns, we will also discuss ways to better work with, and share information with, different demographic populations on the UMW campus.

Measuring Campus Successes

Our campus climate contributed to our successes because we have institution-wide support for civic engagement and it is part of our new strategic vision for UMW. We receive support in the form of staff and resources, and we have a campus-wide culture that encourages students to develop a civic identity and engage in the world around them in the form of service, volunteerism, and voting, among other things. We measured our successes in fall 2022 by using databases to collect volunteer data (we use SignUp Genius and Presence) and with direct observation. We continue will to celebrate our success with campus stakeholders and others (including funders) by sharing our reports and working with our University Relations staff to elevate our civic engagement messages and stories.

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