



# University of Mary Washington

## Civic Engagement Report

Fall 2023

### Overview

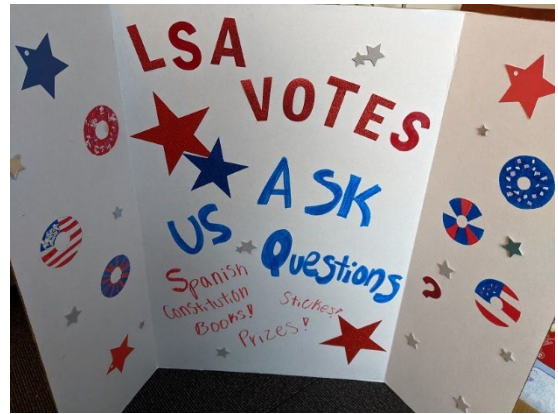
UMW Votes is a non-partisan program dedicated to educating the University of Mary Washington (UMW) community about all aspects of the voting process. Our mission is to create civically-engaged students passionate about participating in our democracy. UMW Votes is made up of students, staff, and faculty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

In fall 2023, UMW Votes students worked with NextGen America and registered over 200 students to vote. On Election Day, UMW Votes worked with NextGen to provide a free trolley ride to the polls on the Fredericksburg Trolley. Over 160 students rode the trolley down to the polling center at Dorothy Hart Community Center. A total of 15 volunteers worked for a total of over 45 hours on Election Day to hand out sample ballots and assist people with same-day voter registration. More details about the work of UMW Votes can be found below.



## Analysis of the Work: Fall 2023 Activities

Our work in fall 2023 revolved around three major activity areas:

### 1. Voter Registration

UMW Votes working with NextGen America registered over 200 student voters on the UMW campus. UMW Votes provided voter registration in a variety of ways.



1. **Tabling:** We registered voters during summer orientation, New Student Arrival, National Voter Registration Day, and weekly tabling on campus walk.
2. **Class Visits:** Working with staff from NextGen America, 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, and also registered student voters.

4. **Social Media:** We used our Instagram account to provide information about how to register to vote and key election dates.
5. **National Voter Registration Day:** For NVRD on Sept. 19, 2023 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. We 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 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 19 volunteers worked over 42 volunteer hours at the event.

## 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 (in English and in Spanish), and provided sample ballots for the City of Fredericksburg. Finally, we also participated in National Voter Education Week.



## 3. Building a Civic Identity/GOTV

### *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 20<sup>th</sup>, 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. We worked with NextGen and

distributed their stickers and materials, including stickers from the [“Hot Girls Vote” campaign](#).

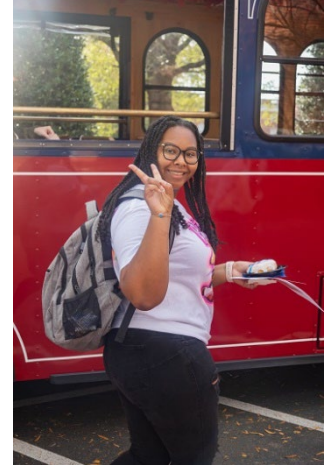
### **After the Voter Registration Deadline**

- 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, tote bags with a voting message, candy, and stickers. We created “grab and go” informational packets to help students decipher the voting process, and gave away small pumpkins as part of our “Pumpkins to the Polls” campaign. We also had free cider and donuts. 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 8 students with 16 volunteer hours who helped with the event.
- 3. 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, including stickers from the [“Hot Girls Vote” campaign](#).



## *Election Day*

1. **Rides to the Polls:** Rides to the polls were provided from 9:00am-6:00pm on Election Day from the Bell Tower on Campus Walk. The Fredericksburg Trolley provided rides to the polling place. This was a popular transportation option. The theme was “Donut Forget to Vote.”
  - a. 160 people were provided rides to the polls on Election Day.
2. **Social Media:** The UMW Votes social media account shared a Cameo video from James Phelps (who played Fred Weasley in the Harry Potter movies) who shared a civic engagement message that was viewed over 4,000 times.





3. **Tabling:** Students worked at an informational table at our Bell Tower on campus walk, handing out free doughnuts and coffee, pizza, sample ballots, and information on same-day registration. Three Latino Student Association volunteers gave away Latino Voting T-shirts, stickers from Next Gen, UMW Votes tote bags, and pocket constitutions as well as Virginia voter pocket guides in both Spanish and English. Free pizza was also provided from 12:00-7:00pm. Next Gen America provided free food from the Juan More Taco truck and sponsored a “Puppies to the Polls” puppy petting party. We had a total of 15 volunteers and 45 volunteer hours over the 10-hour period tabling period.



## Coalition

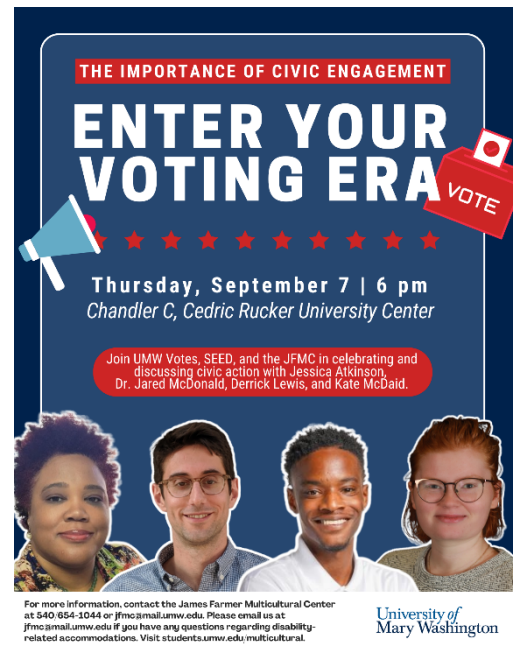
### **Internal partners**

The UMW Votes program recruited student staff 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 9 regular student volunteers working with us this fall. Two of those students received a fellowship from Campus Vote Project, and a third had a fellowship from CVP over the summer. Two students worked closely with Virginia21. The UMW Votes students met twice a week in three teams: Social Media Team; Events Team; and Voter Reg/GOTV Team.



We 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.
- **Student Government Association:** The UMW Student Government Association (SGA) reached out to UMW Votes to partner with National Voter Registration Day activities. Many SGA members signed up to volunteer during that event, and SGA continued to amplify the social media messages from UMW Votes. SGA staff also helped out on Election Day.
- **James Farmer Multicultural Center:** We worked with JFMC to host a civic engagement presentation in Sept. titled "Enter Your Voting Era."
- **Residence Life:** We worked with Residence Life to provide a training for Resident Assistants (RAs) about civic engagement, and we handed out informational posters to all of the RAs to hang 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, and sent out an all campus email.



### **External Partners**

UMW Votes works with a range of off-campus partners:

- Virginia National Organization for Women (NOW) and NOW Foundation

- Campus Vote Project
- Virginia21
- Newman Civic Fellowship (Campus Compact)
- Ask Every Student
- Local Elected Officials
- Students Learn, Students Vote
- ALL IN for Democracy

**Funding:** We were fortunate to work with several external partners this fall, bringing a bit over \$4,000 into the university in the form of fellowships and generous grants. We received grant funding the NOW Foundation facilitated by the Virginia National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter to purchase T-shirts, tote bags, donuts, coffee, and the Cameo video, and a grant from Campus Vote Project to purchase balloons and pizza for Election Day. Faculty members donated a total of approximately \$150 to help purchase pizza, soda, and donuts for students. As mentioned above, we worked with Campus Vote Project and NextGen American, who both provided a lot of information and resources, and fellowships for our students (three students on our campus have received fellowships of \$500 each from Campus Vote Project; NexGen paid an hourly wage). The Virginia National Organization for Women also provided a stipend for one student this fall. NextGen America paid for the trolley on Election Day, as well as the Juan More Taco food truck and the Puppies to the Polls activity. They also paid for one full time employee and one student employee to work on campus this fall focusing on voter registration, class visits, tabling, and get out the vote efforts.

### 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.