



**U Decide, U Vote!**

*2020-2021 Campus Action Plan*



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since 2008, the University of Miami (UM) has continually developed and expanded the voter engagement efforts across the institution. The increase in engagement has been accomplished by direct support from the development of a leadership coalition called the Canes Vote Network. The Network is led by Get Out the Vote (GOTV), a student-led initiative along with direct support from the Division of Student Affairs and the William R. Butler Center for Volunteer Service and Leadership Development. The 2020 Action Plan provides an overview of the efforts being taken toward developing and even stronger civic and democratically engaged institution. This plan provides a history and background of UM, leadership structures in place to support these efforts, institutional commitment along with insight into the current campus climate, goals and strategies to reach success and how UM will evaluate and report the progress.

## **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF UM**

A private research university with more than 17,000 students from around the world, the University of Miami is a vibrant and diverse academic community focused on teaching and learning, the discovery of new knowledge, and service to the South Florida region and beyond.

The University comprises 11 schools and colleges serving undergraduate and graduate students in more than 180 majors and programs. Established in 1925 during the region's famous real estate boom, UM is a major research university engaged in \$324 million in research and sponsored program expenditures annually. While the majority of this work is housed at the Miller School of Medicine, investigators conduct hundreds of studies in other areas, including marine science, engineering, education, and psychology.



The mission of the University of Miami is to transform lives through education, research, innovation, and service. Committed to excellence and proud of the diversity of our University family, we strive to develop future leaders of our nation and the world.

The University is absolutely committed to freedom of inquiry—the freedom to think, question, criticize, and dissent. We pursue the value of excellence in our research and educational missions with the single-mindedness that only great commitments deserve. The University provides its students with the foundations for ethical citizenship and service to others, a respect for differences among people, and a commitment to high standards of thought and communication. We also will prepare them for rewarding lifelong careers and will imbue in them a continued and permanent desire for the study of knowledge and the search for truth. We strive to transform the world in positive ways through innovative education, impactful research and scholarship, and the translation of knowledge into solutions.

## LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The CanesVote Network is comprised of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members who are passionate about civic participation in the University of Miami community. The coalition enables the institution to connect individuals with the common purpose of increasing awareness on civic participation and develop active voter engagement. The Canes Vote Network includes Get Out The Vote (GOTV), Schools, Colleges, and Campus Units, Student Organizations and Programs, and our Community Partners.



### Lead Voter Engagement Organization: Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

GOTV is a campaign led by students with the support of the University of Miami's administration. The purpose of the campaign is to reach out to the students, faculty and staff and encourage them to get involved in the political process.

#### **Executive Board**

- **President** – Provides overall strategic and operational responsibility for the organization's members, programs, events, image, and execution of its goals.
- **Treasurer** – Creates both short-term and long-term goals for the funding of the organization and its initiatives, creating and maintaining comprehensive strategy and event budgets.
- **Vice President of Operations** - Works directly with the President, stepping in as needed if the President is unable to perform their duties. Responsibilities include developing and creating initiatives to enhance voter registration on campus.
- **Voter Registration Chair** - Operates and oversees the Voter Registration Ambassador Program and campus voter registration efforts.
- **Programming and Events Co-Chair (2)** - Act as the first level of communication between GOTV and organizations partnering or potentially partnering with GOTV, coordinating any collaboration efforts.
- **Public Relations Chair** - Responsible for deepening and refining all aspects of communications and community presence (social media, marketing, etc.).
- **Administrative Chair** - Maintains and oversees all communication to the UM community, keeps record of currently active Ambassadors and the membership roster.



#### **Voter Registration Ambassadors**

In fall 2016, UM and GOTV created Voter Registration Ambassadors to increase and encourage students to register to vote on campus. Ambassadors are students, faculty and staff that are committed to the mission of GOTV and want to help support voter education and registration on campus. Recruitment for this program is done through the Butler Center for Service and

Leadership by advertising on campus, on social media, and through email. Ambassadors must attend a training which includes in depth tutorials on how to adequately fill out the registration form and understanding the policies and procedures around voter registration in Miami-Dade County. In 2019-2020, the Voter Registration Ambassador program had over sixty members.

Voter Registration Ambassadors are responsible for participating in at least one event per month and attend general body meetings. With year-round opportunities to become an Ambassador, GOTV more than doubled the number of ambassadors from the previous academic year.



#### Canes Vote Network - Schools, Colleges, and Campus Units:

Division of Student Affairs, Butler Center for Service and Leadership, Department of Political Science, School of Law, University Communications, The Miami Hurricane, Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, Miller School of Medicine, Housing and Residential Life, LGBTQ Student Center, Multicultural Student Affairs, Orientation and Commuter Student Involvement, Student Center Complex, Student Activities and Student Organizations, Toppel Career Center, Office of Civic and Community Engagement, Office of Academic Enhancement, Dean of Students Office and Parking and Transportation.

#### Canes Vote Network - Student Organizations and Programs

Student Government, College Democrats, College Republicans, Association of Greek Letter Organizations, Interfraternity Council, Multicultural Greek Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Panhellenic Association, Greek Ally Unity, Student Athlete Advisory Committee, Graduate Student Association, SpectrUM – LGBTQ Student Organization, United Black Students, Hurricane Productions, Association of Commuter Students, Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Federacion de Estudiantes Cubano, TEDxUMiami, Rathskeller Advisory Board, Freshman Leadership Council, Orientation Outreach, First Year U, and Leadership UMiami.

#### Canes Vote Network - Community Partners

Engage Miami, National Organization for Women, League of Women Voters, UM Women's Commission, Campus Compact, Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, Vote Smart, NextGen, Students Learn Students Vote, NASPA - National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, National Voter Registration Day, Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and the Miami-Dade County Board of Elections.



## **INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT**

Since 2008, the University of Miami has continually increased its support toward civic learning and democratic engagement by building the Canes Vote Network. The majority of this work has been spearheaded by the Division of Student Affairs along with the William R. Butler Center for Volunteer Service and Leadership Development and Get Out The Vote.

UM has been active in civic learning and democratic engagement since 2012 when the institution was selected as an inaugural member of the NASPA- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Lead Institutions. Since 2018, UM continues this commitment by being identified as one of only 14 Lead Advisory Institutions in the country. UM has also been designated a Voter Friendly Campus through Campus Vote Project and NASPA.



Additionally, UM signed the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge 2020 Presidential Commitment and was named a Silver Campus for the 2018 Election.

The Division of Student Affairs and the Butler Center for Service and Leadership will continue to provide the utmost support to the Canes Vote Network along with the Get Out The Vote student-led initiative on campus. Furthermore, UM continues to provide the following:

- Commitment toward civic learning and democratic engagement is clearly reflected in curriculum, program learning outcomes and the mission and vision of the institution.
- Various courses are offered which encourage civic engagement and political participation among students.
- Importance of being civically active in the community is stressed and encouraged in various university programming.

### **DemocrACCy Network**

The University of Miami is a proud member of the ACC DemocrACCy Network. This is a network of professionals from the Athletic Coast Conference institutions to engage in conversations around best/promising practices for curricular-focused initiatives, student-focused initiatives, challenges and competitions, and encouraging campuses to develop action plans.



## CURRENT CAMPUS LANDSCAPE

The University of Miami evaluates and reflects upon the efforts taken toward creating a more civic and democratically engaged campus each year. To successfully evaluate efforts, reflection is done through data received from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) report and the reflections by students engaged on the campus and the community.

### UM Campus Voting and Student Trends

- Overall voter registration has increased since the 2014 Midterm Elections but was significantly higher during the 2012 election.
- Overall the voting rate of eligible students in General Elections has decreased very slightly from 2012 to 2016.
- Overall the voting rate of eligible students in Midterm Elections has increased significantly from 2014 to 2018.
- UM has overall continued to be lower than the national average voting rate except for the General Election in 2012, which had higher voter turnout than the national average voting rate.
- The voting rate in the Midterm Election of 2018 more than doubled compared to the 2014 voting rate for eligible UM students.
- Early voting has continued to increase significantly since 2012.
- Vote by Mail has continued to increase since 2012.
- In-Person Election Day voting has decreased significantly since 2012.
- Absentee voting has continued to decrease since 2012.
- Students majoring in Education and Legal Professions and Studies had the highest voting rate in both the 2016 General Election and 2018 Midterm Election.
- Mathematics and Statistics along with Architecture majors were at the lowest voting rate in both the 2016 General Election and 2018 Midterm Election.



### Campus Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

UM emphasizes the importance of providing students with civic learning and democratic engagement within and outside the classroom. This engagement is provided through a multitude of courses and programs that students can engage within during their time as a student.

- **Civic Courses** - Students can choose to take classes under the CIVIC category tag in the academic course catalog; for example, the Elections course and English 106 (Civic Participation) are popular options.
- **Campus Programming** - Students can decide to enroll in the Civic Scholars program and the Leadership UMIAMI program. Both programs provide for civic learning as a co-curricular experience. Additionally, campus programs are coordinated each year to support voter education and registration.

### Student Reflections

“My first year at UM was the first time I really understood the importance of being engaged in the democratic process of our country. Get Out the Vote’s continuous presence on campus made me want to get involved to further engage my peers.”

*-Albany Muria, GOTV President*

“Student organizations at UM provide students with numerous opportunities to register to vote and become active and engaged. The climate for voter and democratic engagement on campus has become increasingly active and engaged, however, there is always more work to be done.”

*- Rachel Stempler, Voter Ambassador*

## GOALS

The University of Miami has set multiple goals in coordination with the Get Out the Vote student-led initiative. These goals include both short term goals and long term goals.

### Short Term Goals

- Implement a campus-wide voter awareness program.
- Promote an atmosphere of democratic engagement.
- Increase student voting rates above 2016 and 2018 levels.
- Increase the number of the Voter Registration Ambassadors to 40 active students.
- Register 2,000 students to vote.
- Provide voter registration information to all first-year students during orientation.
- Developing a Pledge to Vote drive with 5,000 pledges by the UM community.
- Due to health emergency, encourage the UM community to Vote by Mail and/or complete Absentee Voter Ballots.
- Create non-partisan issue guides and make them readily available to the UM community.
- Partner with School of Architecture and College of Arts and Sciences to boost voter registration and voter rates for students majoring in Mathematics and Statistics along with Architecture.
- Host at least three institution wide events.
- Provide transportation to the polls during the early voting period.



### Long Term Goals

- By 2024, institutionalize the Canes Vote Network across the campus and engage every School, College, and Campus Unit.
- Increase campus voting rate to exceed national average year after year.
- Ensure every eligible student that can vote is provided access to voter registration information and encouraged to vote.
- Developing voter education programming that directly impacts every first-year and/or new student at the University of Miami.

## STRATEGY AND CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

In order to carry out all of the short term and long term goals, UM will implement various strategies and campus engagement opportunities. These opportunities will be available to students, faculty, and staff to allow the UM community to engage and promote civic learning and democratic engagement.

### Mobilization Campaign

*The University of Miami and GOTV will schedule multiple events to further engage the campus community. These include programs to increase voter registration, educate the campus and assist students in easily getting to the polls and voting.*

### **Voter Registration Ambassador Program**

*Overview: Program was created to engage UM students, faculty and staff and help increase voter registrations on campus and assist in educating students about the democratic process. Ambassadors will attend a training, which includes in depth tutorials on how to adequately fill out the registration form and assist and encourage students to vote at events and programs.*



### Strategy:

- GOTV will work with campus partners and the Canes Vote Network to market and recruit for the program to allow students to serve as ambassadors for the academic year.
- Ambassador trainings will take place during the summer and throughout the academic year.
- Recruitment for this program will be completed through email and online social media.
- GOTV will develop a criteria for serving as an ambassador and how to keep status.
  - Responsible GOTV Board Member - Vice President of Operations

### **Voter Registration Drives**

*Overview: Voter Registration is at the heart of democratic engagement and encouraging students to register and/or become registered in their local community. UM hosts and encourages voter registration through drives both online and in-person.*



### Strategy:

- Campus voter registration drives and online outreach will be held on campus each week during the fall and twice a week during the spring semester.
- Education about online voter registration will be shared through email and social media.
- Voter Registration Ambassadors will be instrumental in staffing all voter registration drives.



- Voter registration drives will be held at campus resource and organization fairs, new student orientation, campus service days, Hurricane athletic events, National Voter Registration Day, student organization meetings and classroom presentations.
- On the last day of voter registration for the General Election, strategies will be implemented to ensure that all students wishing to register to vote can be registered before the deadline.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member - Voter Registration Chair*

### **National Voter Registration Day**

*Overview: National Voter Registration Day is a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating our democracy. UM will participate with NVRD on September 22, 2020 when it is scheduled to take place in the fall semester.*

#### Strategy:

- GOTV will hold an event throughout the day (online and in-person) to encourage students to register to vote in the State of Florida.
- Provide a space for students to register to vote and/or pledging to vote while also providing answers for any voter related questions.
- Voter information and educational forms will be provided to students.
- Students will be incentivized and provided GOTV giveaways and food/snacks.
- Campus and community partners will be invited to table and provide information to the UM community about voting. Partners include members of the Canes Vote Network.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member - Voter Registration Chair*



### **Outreach Request Form**

*Overview: GOTV, this past year, implemented a request form for faculty, staff, student organizations, and departments to request the presence of a Voter Registration Ambassador to encourage voter registration.*

#### Strategy:

- Utilized to help support members of the UM community to register to vote.
- Instead of being in a set location and expecting students to come find voter registration sites, GOTV will come to them, enabling a variety of students from all parts of campus to be able to register.
- Voter Registration Ambassadors will be deployed to areas of the campus (meetings, classrooms, student organizations, etc.) that have requested support in helping students register to vote.
- Form will be publicized throughout the year to reach an even greater number of students.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member - Vice President of Operations*

## Campus Voter Education

*Overview: In order to promote educated voting, events will be held by GOTV to encourage civic participation and increase voter education before students vote on Election Day and throughout the academic year.*



### Strategy:

- Events will be hosted and based on specific issues, presenting the issues and sharing positions by various elected officials.
- Programs will be held such as Candidate Forums and Campus Debates with members of the Canes Vote Network.
- Sessions on how to vote, such as a “Decoding the Ballot” event will be hosted in collaboration with the Canes Vote Network to discuss the issues which will be on this year’s ballot, as well as resources on where to find your polling location, and voting options.
- Work will continue with organizations both on and off campus to expand the reach and make voting issues engrained into campus culture.
- Convening with faculty, GOTV will encourage professors to make voter education and civic participation at least a small part of their courses, such as offering extra credit to those who register to vote and attend educational events/programs.
- Provide both online recorded and in-person sessions so students can have ample opportunity to attend events and go back and review points they may have missed.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member – Programming and Events Co-Chairs*

## Voter Turnout

*Overview: The University of Miami has a voting precinct on campus for Election Day but in person voting by students has significantly decreased since 2012. A voter registration campaign will be developed to help encourage voter turnout and increase the voter rates at the institution.*

### Strategy:

- GOTV will partner with Student Government and Parking and Transportation to provide transportation to polls for the early voting period.
- GOTV in collaboration with the Canes Vote Network will mobilize on Election Day to encourage students, faculty and staff to vote.
- Provide campus updated information, and encouragement for students to go vote.
- GOTV will table and handout schedules of when and where to vote early
- A “Pledge to Vote” campaign will be implemented that includes a banner for students to sign, an Instagram and social media challenge, along with small cards that students will sign to pledge to vote.
- Those that signed pledges will be sent a reminder by the Administrative Chair as it gets closer to the election date.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member - Public Relations Chair*



## **Absentee Voting and Vote by Mail**

*Overview: Since UM has students residing on campus from all over the world and across the country, GOTV will encourage absentee voting or ballots by mail. UM has seen the rates of Vote by Mail increase since 2012 and In-Person Election Day Voting has decreased significantly during that same time. At the same time, Absentee Voting has continued to decrease. This strategy is even more critical for 2020 due to the challenges faced with Covid-19 and the uncertainty of a student being on campus in case another lock-down or public health emergency would take place.*

### **Strategy**

- Provide an increased emphasis on vote by mail and absentee voting to better prepare students in case of another quarantine, lock-down or public health emergency.
- Provide assistance to students in requesting an absentee or vote by mail ballot through tabling, online education, emails, and social media.
- Provide regular updates on social media about any news regarding policies around vote by mail or absentee voting procedures.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member - Public Relations Chair*



## **Canes Vote Election Day Extravaganza**

*Overview: On Election Day, GOTV sponsors a campus-wide celebration in coordination with all members of the Canes Vote Network. Throughout the day, members of the University of Miami community are encouraged to vote in person and stay engaged online through social media. In evening, after polls are closed, the campus community comes together to watch the elections results at the campus Rathskeller.*

### **Strategy:**

- Send information out throughout the day about voting and encourage the UM community to vote.
- Work with the Vice President for Student Affairs and the President of UM to join in the celebration for a watch party.
- Provide food and drinks and entertainment for voters during the day and at the Election Watch party.
  - *Responsible GOTV Board Member  
– Programming and Events Co-Chair*



## Long Term Voter Engagement Strategies

*The University of Miami has determined multiple long term voter engagement strategies. These include strategies around campus communication, student civic participation, online resources, and voter registration and turnout*

### **Campus Communication**

- Provide annual communication to all students, faculty, and staff about voting and voter registration opportunities.
- Collaborate with Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of the Butler Center for Service and Leadership to help encourage students to register to vote, vote using the on-campus polling site, promote early voting, practice healthy dialogue and communication with others around the election season, and send out correspondence at various time frames during the election year.
- Develop partnership with University Communications to share information about voter education, voter registration deadlines and election day information for local state and national elections.

### **Student Civic Participation**

- Collaborate with the Butler Center for Service and Leadership to create more volunteer opportunities centered around civic learning and democratic engagement.
- Strengthen relationships with other volunteer or activism-based student organizations to enhance student democratic engagement.
- Host trainings to educate students on how to become more engaged within the community.



### **Online Resources**

- Continue growing social media presence to create more content for students to view online.
- Enhance the GOTV and Voter Engagement website at the institution for students to find voter registration non-partisan voting related information.

### **Voter Registration and Turnout**

- Using the NSLVE data, UM will develop programs and tabling more focused on groups and communities with a lower voter registration and/or turnout rate.
- Provide additional programs for first-year students on campus to register them sooner and provide continued focus and growth on new student orientation.
- Organize and develop focus groups to understand the reasons behind a gap between the voter registration and voter turnout rates.



## **EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

The University of Miami action plan will be available and published on the campus website. The action plan will serve as an accountability document for the institution to assess progress throughout the year.

- Check-in points will occur at various times during each semester to ensure that UM is meeting the goals set and implementing all strategies listed above.
- Attendance will be taken at events to be analyzed and to develop ways to increase engagement and produce greater impact on students.
- Program evaluations will be provided after each event and UM will internally assess the results of these events.
- By revising our action plan in the future, our team will be able to assess our weaknesses and tackle them for the following years.



UM also utilizes data from Tufts University and the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) Report. UM has made a commitment to implement strategic civic participation endeavors across campus by creating a coalition committed to increasing our voting rates and democratic participation by examining data from future and past general, midterm and local elections.

### **Overall Campus Voting Data**

#### *General Election – 2012 and 2016*

- 49.3% of eligible UM students voted in the 2016 general election. This voting rate was similar but less than the 2012 voting rate for eligible UM students (50.1%).
- Voter Registration rates of UM students declined from 85.1% in 2012 to 79.2% in 2016.
- In 2016, UM was 1.1% lower than the national average of college campuses but declined from 3.2% higher than the national average in 2014.
- Students under 25 years old comprised 62% of NSLVE student voters in 2012 and 65% in 2016.
- Students majoring in STEM fields voted at the lowest rate in both general election years, with mathematics and statistics showing the largest decrease.
- The early voting rate increased by 18.3% from 2012 to 2016, while the in person voting on election day decreased by 17.9% from 2012 to 2016.

### *Mid Term Election – 2014 and 2018*

- 38.8% of eligible UM students voted in the 2018 midterm election. This voting rate is more than doubled compared to the 2014 voting rate for eligible UM students (15%)
- Voter Registration rates of UM students increased from 69.5% in 2014 to 76.7% in 2018
- In 2018, UM's Voting Rate was 0.3% lower than the national average of college campuses but improved from 4.7% lower than the national average in 2014.
- In a review of voting method data, the 2018 election indicated that fewer students voted absentee or in person on election day since 2014, but more students voted early in 2018 and by double the amount from 2014. There was also a slight increase in mail-in ballots from 2014-2018.
- First year students have the lowest voting rate from 7.3% in 2014 to 22.7% in 2018, illustrating the need to have more programming for first year students specifically.
- The voting rate of all majors increased, however, architecture, mathematics and statistics, and philosophy and religious studies all have a rate under 24% in the 2018 midterm election.
- Education majors had the strongest voter engagement rates and this increased by 28% between 2014 and 2018 midterm elections to 49.8%.

