



September 17, 2017

Dear Students:

As the presidents and chancellors of the Big Ten Conference, we are pleased to join together for the Big Ten Voting Challenge, a competition that seeks to increase voter registration and turnout among students on all of our campuses.

One of the most important values we teach at our universities is the importance of civic engagement. Voting in elections gives our students a voice in the democratic process and in the decisions that affect local, state, and national issues. The Big Ten Voting Challenge is a nonpartisan initiative to encourage students to exercise their right to vote, which is among the most fundamental opportunities to be an active and engaged citizen.

Voter turnout for people under age 30 is historically low as compared with older segments of the population, especially in midterm elections. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, only 21 percent of those under 30 turned out to vote in 2014, compared with 36 percent overall. Turnout on university campuses across the country was even lower, at just 19 percent. We know we can all do better. Our democracy thrives best when all voices are represented, and students can play an integral role in shaping our collective future.

The Big Ten Voting Challenge will help to mobilize registration and turnout efforts at all 14 of our universities. After the 2018 election, trophies will go to two universities – the one with the highest eligible voter turnout and the one with the most improved turnout. We hope you will join this effort by getting involved, getting registered, voting, and encouraging others to do the same!

Existing registration and voting initiatives on each of our campuses can partner with the Big Ten Voting Challenge – and all of our get-out-the-vote efforts will count toward awarding the trophies. Our shared goal is activating full participation in our democracy, and supporting habits of robust civic engagement.

Throughout the history of the Big Ten Conference, we have seen that competition brings out the best in our students. Now, as we celebrate Constitution Day this Sept. 17 by announcing this Challenge, we hope that you, our students, will bring that same level of intensity to the voting booth. Thank you, and may the most civically engaged campuses win!

Sincerely,

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