



Creative Campus Voting Project A2 City Clerk's Office @ UMMA

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Read about our other projects at:

www.creativecampusvoting.org

Our most successful project of the 2020 Election season was the design and facilitation of a satellite office on campus for the Ann Arbor City Clerk.

Grounded in behavioral science research, the project sought to increase civic engagement on the University of Michigan campus by providing education about and access to voting. We designed the City Clerk's office experience to be welcoming and reassuring for new college-age voters. Throughout the process, students could ask questions of peer volunteers, read explanatory materials and interact directly with city clerk staff. The office, visible in the center of campus life, made it possible for students to register, request and receive an absentee ballot, vote and return their ballot all in one visit. **Over six weeks, the satellite office registered 5,412 voters and collected 8,501 ballots!**

Our project was built upon 1) the partnerships we established in prior election cycles, 2) the urgency and opportunities created by the disruption of COVID, and 3) the vision and critical funding provided by the University of Michigan's Democracy & Debate Theme Semester.

The A2 City Clerk's Office @ UMMA provides a model for collaboration across the arts, social science, and local government. Our design of the space and experience offered students multiple ways to engage concretely and meaningfully in a cornerstone of democratic participation.



Insights : successes

The office was a visible, accessible, and welcoming site for new voters.

Located in the center of campus life, the office normalized voting and encouraged participation. Students were comfortable in the office. One called it “a pleasant, well known, and calming place.”

Another observed that **“it felt like a place where students were invited and meant to be.”**

Student survey respondents overwhelmingly chose the words welcoming, clear and easy to describe their experience.

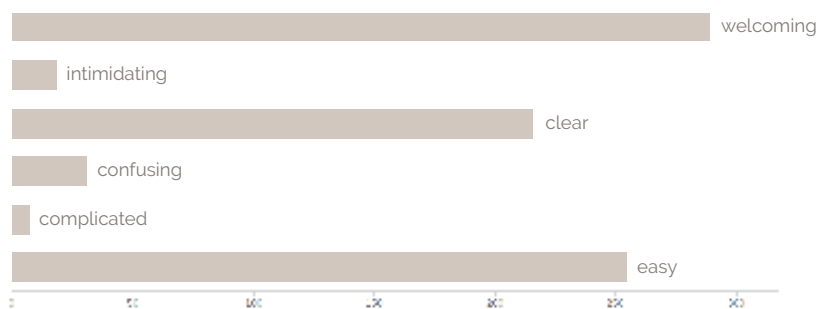
Assessment Tools

16 semi-structured interviews with: student visitors (5), student volunteers (5), and city clerk staff (6) conducted by project research team

300 student respondents to a Qualtrics Survey

62 semi-structured interviews with peers conducted by Stamps students enrolled in our F20 voting-related classes.

Which adjectives best describe your experience using the A2 City Clerk's Office at UMMA (check all that apply)



“loved the satellite clerks office! whenever i passed it there was always a line of people waiting to vote <3”

The innovative installation of a city clerk's office inside an art museum created a joyous civic space within a trusted setting.

Students indicated that visiting the clerk's office at a University site reassured them that the process was trustworthy. Throughout the run of the project, the aesthetics and positive civic experience in the space inspired students to spread the word to friends and helped to make the project a fun, communal way to participate in the voting process.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson came for the office opening on National Voter Registration Day. We were so honored to have her join us and grateful for the valuable message her visit sent to the U-M community and beyond.

“Pretty much all of my roommates were voting at UMMA so it was a sort of collective thing that we could all get excited about and share that experience.”



A sequence of touchpoints — design elements, peer mentors and comfortable interactions with clerks — created multiple opportunities to clarify the process and reduce anxiety for student voters.

Trained student volunteers welcomed their peers and helped them navigate forms and documents so they would be prepared for their turn with a clerk. Clerks were particularly attuned to the needs of first-time voters, both logistically and emotionally. Students valued the guidance. As one noted, “there was no awkwardness of trying to find things on your own and being unsure.”

“It felt nice to be personally engaged, almost like having a voting butler to help you every step of the way.”



“The volunteers were so incredibly helpful and made everything so easy.”

“It was the best voting experience I’ve ever had. Least intimidating, and nicest.”



“It was sooo easy!”

We thought carefully about the guidance that new voters might need and designed a sequence of information delivery at each phase of the process. A small slip clarified the correct way to fill out the registration form. Within the privacy of the voting booth, the rules for filling out the ballot were explained; a checklist at the drop box helped visitors make sure their vote would be counted.

The value of design was recognized and shared as a model by local and state election officials.

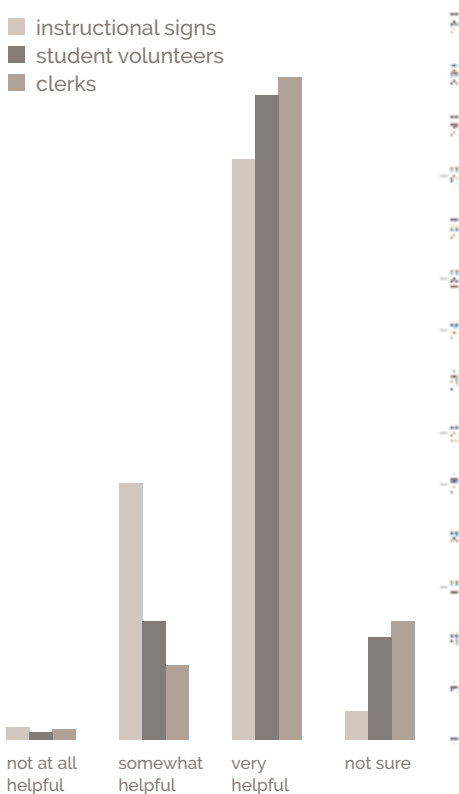
Our sign at the ballot drop box was so successful at decreasing the number of invalid ballots that the city ordered a duplicate to install at City Hall.

Student visitors confirmed that these multiple methods of support and direction were crucial to helping them complete the voting process successfully and feel confident and excited as they left.



How helpful were the:

- instructional signs
- student volunteers
- clerks



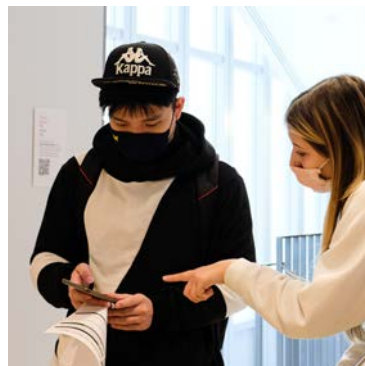
“I thought it was going to be more confusing and overwhelming then it ended up being. I felt really calm and comfortable asking questions if I needed further clarification.”

Student volunteers, recruited by TUT and BTVC, found the peer mentoring experience to be empowering and fulfilling.

We heard lots of enthusiasm from the students who worked on site greeting voters, facilitating the process and helping to answer questions. Several noted how much they learned and how energized and positive they felt at the end of their shifts.

“I’m really grateful for the experience, for feeling like I was able to make an impact...

There are so many places in the voting process for things to fall through the cracks, especially when it’s your first time, or you don’t understand it very well... I had this feeling like I was actually able to do something tangible... It just really feels like important work.”



Students were grateful.

We heard an outpouring of appreciation from students. Daily in the office. In interviews. In survey comments.

“Voting at the UMMA made me feel accomplished and proud to be a Michigan student.”

A student without a license mentioned not being able to register online. “So if it weren't for the UMMA (office) I don't think I would have been able to vote.” Another, who wasn't planning to vote at all, went to UMMA on Election Day “because I had heard it was really easy so it seemed like the obvious thing to do.”

UMMA OFFICE STATS

5,412
voters registered

8,501
ballots collected

Of the 7 dropbox locations in Ann Arbor, UMMA was the second most used, after City Hall.

80-90%
of visitors did 1-stop shopping

Voters registered, voted and dropped off their ballots in one visit.



Insights : future opportunities

- **UMMA Office 2022 + 2024**

Ann Arbor City Clerk Jackie Beaudry is already working to formalize plans to set up a satellite office at UMMA in 2022 and 2024.

With advance planning, and hopefully a COVID-free campus, we will aim to resolve some of the logistical challenges encountered this year (ie., clearer exterior signage, circulation paths, entry protocols, etc.) as well as develop additional opportunities to create civic community and celebrate voting.

- **North Campus expansion**

There was lots of feedback from students, faculty and staff about the value of providing a similar resource on North Campus. Additional funding would be required for the city to operate two satellite offices for multiple weeks. Therefore, we are working with Jackie Beaudry and Professor Goldenberg to plan an installation at the Duderstadt Gallery featuring peer mentors to help students over the course of a month and a full capacity, pop-up City Clerk's Office for only one week.

- **Student Peer Mentor Training**

Building on the work of Turn Up Turnout, we are eager to create a more integrated program to train students as peer mentors. In addition to receiving substantive training on voting rules and regulations, students will be trained explicitly to understand the critical role they play to welcome, reassure and support their peers.

- **Voter Education Resources**

Since Michigan voters can register and vote in one trip to a clerk's office, the project contains a valuable access point for providing non-partisan, educational ballot resources. We will continue our work to develop accessible, reassuring tools to help students feel confident navigating the voting process, including materials that can be available on site.

- **Voter Outreach**

We hope to reach a broader cross-section of students on campus through more coordinated multi-channel communication, partnerships with student orgs and student life, and the allure of voting swag!

“Having the satellite office was awesome and I think it should be continued for every election!”

Key Takeaways

“If you build it they will come.”

Cross-unit, cross-campus partnerships are crucial.

It takes time to build partnerships.

Funding needs to be in place early.

Learn more about the Creative Campus Voting Project as well as our other 2020 Election research initiatives **10 Tuesdays** and **SparkVotes Parties**:
www.creativecampusvoting.org

The Ann Arbor City Clerk's Office @ UMMA would not have been possible without the vision and efforts of Ann Arbor City Clerk Jacqueline Beaudry and her longtime collaborator Professor Edie Goldenberg (Ford School). Briannon Cierpilowski spearheaded the initiative at UMMA, which welcomed the project with open arms. Michael Rein (U-M Office of the Vice President for Government Relations) facilitated the complicated behind-the-scenes logistics and dedicated U-M student volunteers with Turn Up Turnout and the Big Ten Voting Challenge worked long hours to assist their peers and keep democracy rolling!

Thanks to the University of Michigan's Democracy and Debate Theme Semester for generously supporting this project.

