



Oct. 25, 2022

Dear Friends,

With the U.S. midterm elections quickly approaching, I am writing to our University community about two topics of utmost importance as it relates to civic engagement on our campus and in our world: civil discourse and voting.

The past several years have seen deepening divides in our nation, fracturing friendships and even families. Our campus is not immune to this polarization nor the risks that come with it. Issues at stake in elections invoke strongly held ideals and beliefs sometimes charged with emotion. Now more than ever, I ask our campus community to be true to our mission as a Catholic and Jesuit institution that is dedicated to "freedom of inquiry and personal development."

Freedom of inquiry should always be grounded in the Ignatian principle of *cura personalis* or care for one another. We must challenge ourselves to remember that differences of thought and opinion within our community are a source of strength and resilience. Far too often these days, contrasting views lead to anger and even violence. And we can forget so quickly that sharing different perspectives can often lead to deeper learning. Please talk to each other in a spirit that seeks understanding, always assuming the best in the other, as St. Ignatius calls us to do.

Earlier this fall, I joined more than 500 presidents across the nation as a signatory of the ALL IN Democracy Challenge's Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. The mission of ALL IN Democracy is to "foster civic culture and institutionalize democratic engagement activities and programs at colleges and universities, making them a defining feature of campus life."

Plans are underway for the University to again host facilitated dialogues designed to provide a structured way to burst political bubbles and build understanding. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities as they arise.

On campus, Student Government is collaborating with the Office of Community and Government Relations on the Royals Vote initiative with information and resources available online at www.scranton.edu/royalsvote. This site will continue to be updated with additional information and upcoming events leading up to Election Day.

Also, the University's Center for Ethics and Excellence in Public Service has collaborated with the League of Women Voters of Lackawanna County to host a series of debates for Pennsylvania House and Senate candidates with the final event scheduled for this Thursday, October 27, on campus.

I strongly encourage all members of the University who are eligible to exercise their civic duty on November 8 by voting. And I pray that our community will face its differences in a spirit of mutual respect by keeping in mind all that unites us.

Thank you for reflecting on all the above.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.
President