

Research shows millennial voters engaging online

A national social media campaign focused on engaging millennial voters in the presidential election has reached more than one million users since its June launch. Five of the top 10 most active states are key swing states.

In the past three months, [College Debate 2016](#) (#collegedebate16) has engaged social media users in online conversations focused on the issues being discussed by millennial voters in the run-up to the U.S. presidential election. College Debate 2016 is a first-of-its-kind national initiative created by [Dominican University of California](#) to use technology and social media to engage young voters in a discussion of major issues in the 2016 presidential debates. Dominican is a Voter Education Partner for the [Commission on Presidential Debates](#).

Illinois State University School of Communication's [Social Media Analytics Command Center](#) (SMACC) tracked the use of #collegedebate16, the hashtag being used by College debate student delegates to engage their peers.

“By combining the total engaged Facebook accounts, the potential network reach and spread of Twitter and Instagram posts, and the total views on YouTube videos, we estimate that #collegedebate16 has reached over one million social media users since June 2016,” says Nathan Carpenter, assistant director of convergent media in the Illinois State University School of Communication.

“Our analysis concludes that social media mentions since June were extremely viral,” said Carpenter. “On average, there is one post per hour containing the hashtag #collegedebate16.”

The SMACC data shows that five of the top 10 most active states using #collegedebate16 are swing states: Ohio, North Carolina, Colorado, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The other top states are California, Kansas, Tennessee, Illinois, and New York.

Meanwhile, according to data from Facebook, during the month of July, the most discussed issues on the platform among 18-24 year-olds in the U.S. were: racial issues; crime & criminal justice; government ethics; homeland security & terrorism; and guns. The data cover all users in this age group, not just those using the #Collegedebate16 hashtag.

Dominican worked with 10 [national higher education partners](#) to identify student delegates to be national ambassadors for College Debate 2016. The delegates come from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

After attending a June training session at Dominican University of California the student delegates were charged with engaging their peers in the presidential election through issues-based conversations and activities both on campus and online.

The students reconvened at Dominican September 6 & 7 to identify their top issues and create specific questions to be provided to the moderators of the U.S. presidential debates as the voice of the millennials.

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About Dominican University of California

Dominican University of California is an independent university located in the San Francisco Bay Area. The University's focus on multidisciplinary thinking and collaboration purposefully connects the liberal arts with professional training. Founded in 1890, the University promotes applied learning experiences through the Dominican Experience, which includes continuous mentoring, civic engagement, guided

projects, and student portfolios. As a result, students graduate with the broad set of skills and experiences necessary to lead successful lives and careers.

About SMACC

Illinois State's School of Communication completed construction on the Social Media Analytics and Command Center (SMACC) in fall 2014. The SMACC is a specialized computer lab whose primary goal is to analyze public conversations from social media outlets, popular discussion forums, and major blogs. SMACC researchers use customized software that identifies social media conversations and displays them as dynamic charts, graphs, word clouds, and other visualizations. These visualizations help researchers analyze social media trends, sentiment, share of voice, and geo-location.

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