

- Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the Decipher podcast. This podcast is hosted by William & Mary staff members who are committed to student success. We all know that this year has been unlike any other, and our hope is that this podcast provides a fresh perspective on the challenges our students are facing.
- Heather Deere: Navigating college life is no walk in the park, and being a William & Mary student in 2020 is no different. Join experts from around campus as they discuss ways to decipher common college experiences.
- Shelly Laurenzo: [00:00:30] My name is Shelley Laurenzo, and I am joined today by fellow co-host Heather Deere. And we're going to talk about some post-election resources. So, thanks Heather for being willing to have this conversation with me today.
- Heather Deere: Of course, I've been part of conversations in the last couple of weeks, and I thought it was important for us to follow up on our first conversation about how to get involved [00:01:00] in the election, understanding that many of our students, faculty and staff are anxiously looking toward the election day and what is going to happen afterwards.
- Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah, I think there's definitely a palpable tension, I'm not sure if that's the right word, that I'm feeling from our students and from our colleagues, faculty, and staff looking ahead to election day. So I think it's great that folks around campus they're having conversations about what we can do to support our students [00:01:30] post-election. So I guess, tell me a little bit about how you got involved with these conversations around post-election resources.
- Heather Deere: Yeah, I think actually it stemmed from a conversation we had as a student success Dean of students office team of what are we going to do as staff members after the election to process election results. If we have those the day after the election-
- Shelly Laurenzo: Right. It could be some time until we know.
- Heather Deere: Yeah. And I think that [00:02:00] was a piece of the puzzle. Understanding that we want to be able to support students who come to us with anxieties, this feeling of anticipation confusion, or not really understanding the results of the election. And we want to be able to support students who come to us for that conversation, understanding that we too need to be able to process and think through what the days after the election look like. And so we started having conversations of how are we going to gather [00:02:30] as a team to process so that we can help students process. And I think that really tuned me in to what the conversation was around election support for our students as well. And so Melody Porter out of the office of community engagement sent out the call that if we were interested in learning more about ways we're going to support students post election or ideas, a brainstorming session and I hopped on that call eagerly to find out what others are doing.

Shelly Laurenzo: That's awesome. [00:03:00] It's so great to hear about our colleagues around the institution recognizing opportunities to support our students in different ways, just like everything else going on this year. We're all having to get a little creative with what we do to support each other and support our students. So can you share a little bit about what some of those resources will be?

Heather Deere: Yeah, definitely. And I think too, it's important to add that the group that came to the table was very diverse. There were faculty [00:03:30] members from across departments and disciplines. We had staff from across the division of student affairs, outside of the division of student affairs with really the purpose of, and acknowledging really that the election comes at a time this year, that we are facing uncertainties from a variety of perspectives, not just politically, but our own wellbeing. We're living in pandemic. Still 2020 has not been kind to a lot of people. The racial [00:04:00] injustices that we have experienced have really set the stage for an anxiety inducing election. And everyone on the call was like, we understand that students are really going through it right now and we want to do what we can to help them. Whether that's having a conversation in our classroom, offering a space to have conversations while we knit together, what does that look like and how can we create those spaces?

And I think that was like really encouraging for me to hear as a staff [00:04:30] member, because I know that students are going through it. And it was wonderful to hear that everyone across the institution really wanted to put some energy toward helping students process this. One of the things I mentioned that is like a concrete thing that students can do if they're looking to process some of the election results, OCE is hosting a knit night, which I think is a fabulous way to decompress-

Shelly Laurenzo: That sounds amazing.

Heather Deere: Yeah. So Melody is hosting [00:05:00] a night on November 12th where you can just hop on a zoom call and knit with friends. And if you have something that you want to process or chat about, it's definitely going to be a space that's low key and you can share with other students, I believe staff and faculty are invited to that as well. So I think that's a really cool opportunity to connect and engage in some of those discussions. The counseling center is offering a supportive outreach workshop for students who may be experiencing stress or anxieties [00:05:30] related to the election so I think having that dedicated space, it's not a space to debate, it's not a space to talk about the election results, but really to process the feelings and emotions associated with post-election results and what that is going to look like.

I think that's a really awesome space. And so students can hop over to the counseling center webpage if they want to learn more about that resource. But then just a variety of health and wellness resources. [00:06:00] Like our virtual wellness classes are still ongoing. And I know that they're a great resource if you're looking to maybe disconnect and reconnect a little bit in a mindful space.

Kelly Cray said something that really stuck out to me in the conversation that, it's likely that post-election is not going to be a sprint, it's going to be a marathon because we're going to be feeling the effects of this election one way or another, probably for quite a long time. And spending time with ourselves to [00:06:30] understand how we process emotions, how we're processing the stress and anxiety we might be feeling is going to be really helpful for us longterm. That nugget stuck with me as something that I hope students maybe take time to process and really understand their selves so they can get through this marathon that's probably about to happen

Shelly Laurenzo: Well, and that's a really good point too because I think one of the challenges that we've all been facing this year is everything feels uncertain. Every aspect [00:07:00] of our lives feels really uncertain and so as we're approaching election day and election results, number one, like you mentioned earlier, realizing that it might not be immediate. We might not know before we go to bed, if you choose to go to bed on election night, the results might not be finalized by then. And even after that, thinking back, this will date me with our current students who are thinking back to the 2000 election [00:07:30] and how long it took for results to come in and how things were processed. So reminding everyone to take time, to take space, to step away if they need to, to unplug, to recharge is going to be really important because it will be a marathon, whatever happens, however long it takes for us to know what's going on and to process what it all means. It's not going to happen by midnight on election day.

Heather Deere: Yeah. I think something too, that really stuck out to me, [00:08:00] a couple of the faculty members on the call were talking about, what can we bring to the table as educators to help our students? We are not licensed counseling professionals. We might not be able to help them process emotion, but we can help our students process fact, and what is happening in terms of what the election results are, what those may mean, what the legal complications and things may be. And so I heard that faculty members are [00:08:30] preparing to have an open forum where students can just ask logistical questions. And I know for a lot of our students that might ease some of the anxiety that they're experiencing, just answering some of those questions of, so what does this mean, or what does the litigation look like in this instance and really providing the space for students to ask those questions and get answers, which for some may be a really great way to process what happens on November 3rd.

Shelly Laurenzo: Right. [00:09:00] And I love that idea because, I don't know about other folks, but every now and then I'll be listening to NPR and one of the folks that they're interviewing is one of our faculty members. And so we have experts on campus among all of our schools that can talk to these different matters. So I think that's a great idea that our faculty members are willing to lend their expertise to help students understand what's going on here, whether that's folks from the law school or government [00:09:30] faculty or sociology, you name it. Any discipline that exists at William & Mary probably has some stake in what's happening right now on the national scene. So I liked that idea of faculty getting

involved. I do know... So Heather works in the Dean of students office and student affairs.

I work in academic advising in arts and sciences and so I know a lot of the messaging that our faculty had been getting is trying to do as much asynchronously [00:10:00] as possible on election day on the day after the election. So really looking at what's on the syllabus, what's on the agenda for the classroom and being cognizant of that in relation to the election and anticipating it taking time for us to get results or taking time to process whatever the results are. So I know that that's something that our faculty are doing and as part of their process to support students as well as making sure that they're being [00:10:30] conscious of what's on the syllabus in relation to election day and what follows after.

Heather Deere: Yeah. And I think something that sticks out to me about the multiple resources that we've touched on today is that everyone is going to react a little bit differently to what happens on election day and beyond, and coping and processing is going to look different for everyone. Regardless of outcome of election, we are all going to process and handle [00:11:00] news a little bit differently than the next person and so I think if you're listening to this and you're like, how do I support my fellow student and helping them through this time? I think it's a great idea to just ask, like "What would be helpful to you in this moment? How can I help you through this time?" And really just asking that open-ended question can help you better understand maybe the perspective from which they're coming and what resources might be out there that you can help with. And really just lending [00:11:30] a listening ear is going to go a really long way as we navigate the next week and next couple of weeks after election day.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah. I think that's a really good point in terms of reaching out to friends, and you know yourself better than anybody in terms of what would make sense for you as far as support being a listening ear. Maybe you want to go for a walk with that friend. Maybe you want to properly socially distanced and masked up, but maybe you guys want to bench a show together. Or I think [00:12:00] you can even do benching shows remotely, I don't know that's beyond my technical expertise, but whatever that looks like for you supporting each other. William & Mary has a really strong sense of community and so I think whatever we can do to support members of our community in the next few days, few weeks is going to be really important like Heather said.

Heather Deere: Yeah. I think it's important to note that you don't have to have all the answers when someone may be processing with you, but you can validate [00:12:30] their experiences and you can validate their feelings and you can listen to what they have to say. And I think when it comes down to it, when we're thinking about ways to support ourselves and one another after the election, you need to listen to yourself and how you take care of yourself and what's really

important to you, but also have a listening ear and really understand and validate the experiences of your fellow students.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah. Another thing [00:13:00] as we're talking Heather, I'm thinking, we are recording this episode on October 30th, we're going to release this episode on election day, but thinking about, on election day, you voted, you've casted your vote. You're good. You've done that piece. So in that sense, you've done all you can up to that point in time. So maybe taking a look at your calendar and taking a look at your schedule and seeing what you can schedule in over the next week, next few days, next [00:13:30] month, whatever that looks like for you, things that are going to maybe bring you some joy or bring you some peace, or bring you some quiet, whatever that looks like for you.

I think the more that you can schedule those pieces in advance, sometimes that can be really helpful. So maybe that scheduling FaceTime with someone you loved dearly, but hadn't able to see, maybe that's taking a look at those wellness classes [00:14:00] that we offer here at William & Mary and adding some of those to your calendar, or plugging them into your calendar to take advantage of those. So just using your calendar to help you to plot moments of peace, renewal, joy, whatever it is you think you need being really intentional, because again on election day it can just be really stressful. So maybe if you can just take a step away from the news, from your social media and schedule some of those pieces for yourself that's a really good way to demonstrate self care.

Heather Deere: [00:14:30] Definitely. It takes me back to, I was a college student during the 2016 election, and I have very vivid memories of what I did that day and what that day felt like for me. And I feel like I learned a lot from that experience. So I know what I need to do coming up for this election day in terms of what is really healthy for me and what is not necessarily healthy for me. And for me, that means maybe I don't watch election [00:15:00] coverage all night long, because that might not be the best way to spend my time and energy. But maybe for me, that is cooking a really good meal and taking my dog out for a tennis ball session. Cause he really enjoys that. And maybe I check in every now and then with the news source that I like to check in with just to see how it's going.

But maybe that means I don't plant myself in front of the TV and watch it all night long. But that's what's best for me, but maybe for somebody else watching the election coverage [00:15:30] will really give them some sense of peace or some sense of understanding of what's going on. So I think it's taking stock in what really works best for you.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah. I think that's a great point in terms of thinking through, even just the basics of, okay, on election day now that I've voted or I've already done my early voting or absentee, or however you did that, what do I need to do as a student, what do I have to do this day? What lectures do I need to watch? What things do I need to participate in, assignments [00:16:00] that sort of thing. But then looking at, okay. Yeah. When do I want to tune into the news? How do I learn

and tune in. Do I want to have a hard cutoff. Like is there a time where I'm just like, I just need to go to bed, I'm going to turn everything off at a certain time and I'll see it in the morning. Or again do you need to stay on top of it? Is that going to be something that is really important to you?

So figuring out those things, you know yourself best and just planning accordingly. Second I think if you can take a [00:16:30] quick stroll around campus or wherever you're listening to us. You can get some movement or turn off the screen, whatever you need to be still with yourself, not necessarily physically still and take stock of what you need, I think is going to be really helpful as you think through today and the next few days.

Heather Deere: Definitely. And then I would say, if you are unsure of what resources exist, the office of community engagement on their voter engagement website has a full [00:17:00] list of post-election resources that they are continually adding to as need arises and as folks get together to have conversations like Shelly and I are having about what works best, this podcast might make an appearance on that way page. Who knows?

Shelly Laurenzo: I hope so. That'd be great.

Heather Deere: So I know, right. Great resource. So I think that's one place to look if you're like, I don't really know what I need or I don't really know what kind of conversations I want to be having right now or what even exists [00:17:30] for me. That's a great place to search. You can search post election resources on the William & Mary website and it should take you straight there and it'll give you a full list of everything that we're aware of that's going on.

Shelly Laurenzo: That's a really good point. And so what we'll do is we'll post this on our podcast website and in our show notes so folks can access it there as well. So be sure to plug that link in for students to check out if they want to see, especially if that list is going to be updated as new resources [00:18:00] are announced. I think that'll be really helpful for students.

Heather Deere: Definitely.

Shelly Laurenzo: Yeah. Well, any final thoughts Heather as we wrap up our conversation on post-election resources?

Heather Deere: Yeah. I think my last thought is lot of us on campus understand that for so many of our students, this election day is very anxiety inducing, and it's abnormally stressful due to the pandemic and just the really high stakes that so many in our community are [00:18:30] perceiving this election to be. And I want to say, we hear you and we're doing our best to create resources to help you through, but just know you can reach out to the Dean of students office. You can reach out to your mentors on campus. If you feel like you are needing some help processing and really thinking through what happens next steps after the election, know

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that we are ready to have those conversations with you [00:19:00] and we want to help you as best that we can.

Shelly Laurenzo: But thank you so much, Heather. It was fun talking to you today.

Heather Deere: Of course. Anytime.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much for tuning in. To check out our show notes, please visit our website. Decipher.blogs.wm.edu. Take care.