



Abstract:

The University of Alabama, through the VOTES Coalition, will host Alabama Collegiate Summit with the same intent and similar format as the annual Youth Summit, but with college, law and graduate students as well as young professionals from the state of Alabama.

Proposal:

In Alabama, there is a growing consensus that our state needs an extensive series of reforms to remain a viable and prosperous place to live and work in the 21st century. The great hope of the next generation of politicians is that they will have the wherewithal to carry out these reforms and carry Alabama into a new era. With this in mind, it should be understood that the newest generation of leaders needs a forum in which they can discuss their ideas and opinions without undue influence of political consideration, with the intent that they will solidify their commitment to solving the problems that face our state, and develop their proposals for its eventual transformation.

The VOTES Coalition proposes to establish Alabama Collegiate Summit in order to foster communication between the next generation's statesmen. This summit will take a two-pronged approach: constant, online communication, and face-to-face assemblies.

The online capabilities of the VOTES Coalition will facilitate an electronic forum that will be open to all interested parties from around the state. Continual discussion of topical issues will be encouraged through in-depth analysis as well as casual dialogue. This online system will allow interaction among young leaders on a regular basis, setting precedence for clear and simple communication that will be beneficial later in their careers.

The physical meeting of students will take place at least once a year on a college campus. For the first three to four years, this will take place at the University of Alabama, and later will be subject to rotation, to be chosen by the VOTES Coalition's Board of Directors. At each summit, representatives from all four-year postsecondary educational institutions in the state, as well as young professionals under the age of 25 and out-of-state students with primary residence in Alabama, will be invited to discuss their concerns and create policy proposals for state and local officials in both executive and legislative branches.

The primary model for Collegiate Summit is the already successful Alabama Youth Summit, held each year to gather high school leaders from around the state. Collegiate Summit is intended to be a continuation of the goals and traditions of Youth Summit, but with an older and more mature group of leaders who have a more defined view of their goals and ideals, are able to discuss issues in a substantive manner, and are more capable of personally influencing politics with a professional approach.

It is important to also recognize the existence of YMCA's Collegiate Legislature. The VOTES Coalition does not wish to supersede the importance and usefulness of Collegiate Legislature; in fact, it should be envisioned that Collegiate Summit and Collegiate Legislature will maintain a healthy relationship, in much the same way that Youth Legislature and Youth Summit retain a working association.

Schedule:

The 2005 Summit will be held during the early spring semester, on March 11th-12th, on a Friday evening and Saturday morning to afternoon.

On Friday evening, a welcome convocation will be followed by the delegates dividing into Commissions, which will serve as interest groups in which attendees discuss related issues. Delegates may choose among the following proposed Commissions:

- Alabama Constitution
- Economic Development
- Education
- Environment & Agriculture
- Health Care & Medicine
- Judicial and Prison Systems
- Taxation

A potential addition to these Commissions is the inclusion of experts on each of the topics. For example, Congressman Artur Davis would be an excellent choice for the Commission on Economic Development; Dr. Thomas Corts or Dr. Wayne Flint would be excellent choices for the Commission on the Alabama Constitution. The ability of delegates to have a deliberative discussion with such experts would be a significant improvement in the value of the experience, and would raise the profile of the Summit itself.

On Saturday, the Commissions will again meet to propose and write resolutions to be debated on the floor of the Summit's General Assembly. Once the Commission meetings have ceased, a formal luncheon (with a keynote speaker) will be served, followed by a meeting of all the delegates in the General Assembly. In the Assembly, the delegates will debate and pass resolutions, with the goal of creating a specific set of mandates for both current and future action at the statewide level of government.

For the purpose of accepting these mandates, Collegiate Summit will invite both Governor Bob Riley and Lieutenant Governor Lucy Baxley to the General Assembly, in hopes that they will address the delegates and recognize their work. However, the schedules of both of these officials are very tight, and the VOTES Coalition would be happy to have them at any time during the Summit.

Finance:

Ideally, the VOTES Coalition would be able to fund the Summit through its own budget. Unfortunately, the grant funding that the Coalition hopes to obtain in the future will not be available in time for the first Summit. The University of Alabama, in conjunction with various other sponsors, will fund the Summit in addition to hosting the event on its campus. By unofficial agreement, the Summit will be held at the Capstone for the first three years.

In the future, there exist three possibilities for the Summit. First, assuming grant funding does succeed, the VOTES Coalition could serve as the primary source of funding, allowing the Coalition to have greater control over the time, place, and format of the Summit. The second possibility is a "highest bidder" system between universities in the state, in which the institution willing to host and fund the Summit to the greatest advantage of VOTES and the Summit would win the bid. The third alternative is that the University of Alabama could become the permanent home of Collegiate Summit, in much the same way as Alabama Youth Summit, allowing the University of Alabama to maintain consistent funding and administration.

The costs of the latest Alabama Youth Summit ran over \$7000; the VOTES Coalition believes that a Collegiate Summit could be run with a budget under \$4500. Additional money will of course be

welcomed, but it should be understood that a no-frills approach will be most appropriate for the first Summit.

In order to fund the first Summit, the costs must be spread out across as many different sponsors as possible. The following is an approximate itemized budget:

| VOTES: ACS Budget (tentative) | |
|---|-------------------|
| <i>Item</i> | <i>Cost</i> |
| photography/marketing | \$100.00 |
| office supplies | \$200.00 |
| brochures | \$250.00 |
| mail correspondence | \$100.00 |
| banners | \$0.00 |
| facilities | |
| food | \$200.00 |
| soda | \$0.00 |
| formal lunch | \$3,000.00 |
| hotel rooms | \$500.00 |
| total | \$4,350.00 |

The current budget projection does not include costs of facilities, and also assumes that Coca-Cola or Pepsi will be willing to continue promotional sponsorship on banners and soda. President Robert Witt of the University of Alabama has agreed to assist with most or all of the cost of the first Summit. The Coalition intends to ask for a discount rate on facilities from the UA Law School because of the excellent potential for recruitment at the graduate level. UA's Student Government Association has also traditionally provided food at other times when refreshments were needed, and the Coalition hopes to extend that to Collegiate Summit as well. Hotel accommodations may also be necessary for the official guests who will work with the Commissions.

Facilities:

It is fairly evident that excellent facilities will be required for this event. The VOTES Coalition proposes that the University of Alabama Law School could fully or partially host the Summit. This would enable the Law School to recruit potential students by showing its facilities to the delegates. To give further incentive for delegates to come to the Summit, the Coalition also proposes that the Law School hold a special recruiting session for interested Collegiate Summit delegates, either prior to or at the end of the Summit itself.

The following three conditions are necessary for a proper Summit, and transportation must be taken into consideration if delegates are expected to move from one facility to another:

1. Several small- to medium-sized rooms to house the Commissions
2. A large lecture hall to house the General Assembly
3. A large dining area to host the luncheon and keynote address

From this standpoint, the largest obstacle to using the Law School facilities is its lack of a large dining area. The Summit's luncheon will require a large space with room for many tables as well as a raised dais for the keynote speaker.

One possible compromise is to use the Law School on Friday evening, followed by the Ferguson Center and the Alston Hall lecture rooms on Saturday. This would allow the University of Alabama to show even more of its facilities, and perhaps allow the Manderson MBA Program to perform recruitment activities as well.

Conclusion:

The VOTES Coalition believes that by holding Alabama Collegiate Summit at the University of Alabama, the Coalition, the University, and the state will benefit in the following ways:

- Meaningful discourse and awareness on state politics among college students and young professionals, including a much-needed set of mandates from the collegiate electorate
- Increased profile of both the University of Alabama and the VOTES Coalition in the leadership arena
- Potential recruitment of students for UA's graduate schools
- Potential proliferation of VOTES Coalition chapters to other campuses

Additional possibilities exist in spreading this arrangement to other states. Alabama Collegiate Summit is not a format exclusive to Alabama, and to create a Mississippi or Georgia Collegiate Summit will additionally raise the profile and prestige of the original institution. In any case, this Summit will create an incubator for new ideas and statewide policy initiatives at the University of Alabama, rooted in the vision of the young people of the state.

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