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NMCC, UMPI to host presidential debate events

PRESQUE ISLE – The University of Maine at Presque Isle and Northern Maine Community College will mark the 2012 Presidential Election with a series of U.S. presidential debate events during the month of October to provide campus and community members with a unique educational opportunity focused on the political process and public discourse. The public is invited to attend these free events, which will include viewings of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Debates between President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney, a public discussion afterward, and interactive audience polls before and after the debates.

NMCC and UMPI officials have joined together to offer these evenings of friendly and civil political discourse – which will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 3, Tuesday, Oct. 16, and Monday, Oct. 22 – for several reasons.

UMPI President Linda Schott explained, “We at UMPI felt it was very important to collaborate with NMCC on an educational opportunity like this as the upcoming U.S. Presidential Election has a very real impact on each of us and we want to provide a forum for our community to be able to talk about it. This is part of the public educational role both our institutions need and want to serve in our region.”

“Northern Maine Community College is happy to host a gathering of students and members of the public to view this important political event,” NMCC President Tim Crowley said. “Not only is it important to be informed about what our presidential candidates have to say, but as an educational institution we need to encourage voters of every age to engage in healthy debate about the issues leading to their choices at the ballot box.”

Each presidential debate event will follow a similar structure. Attendees are encouraged to arrive by 8:45 p.m. to take part in audience polling efforts to be led by the *University Times* student newspaper staff. The televised presidential debates will run from 9-10:30 p.m. and, immediately following the program, there will be a discussion led by campus officials. General impression polls will be taken again by *UTimes* staffers after the debate, and results will be shared with the audience.

The first presidential debate event will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 3, **in the UMPI Campus Center**. The evening’s focus will be on Domestic Policy and activities will be facilitated by Jim Stepp, UMPI’s Interim Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students. This evening is being sponsored by UMPI’s Dean of Students Office, Student Activities Office, University Times, and College Democrats.

The second presidential debate event will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 16, on the NMCC Campus in the Edmunds Conference Room. The evening's focus will be a Town Hall Meeting and activities will be facilitated by Dr. William Egeler, NMCC Dean of Students.

The third presidential debate event will be held on Monday, Oct. 22, on the UMPI campus in Folsom Hall Room 105. The evening's focus will be on Foreign Policy and activities will be facilitated by Robyn Raymond, who serves in student affairs capacities at UMPI and NMCC. This evening is being sponsored by UMPI's Dean of Students Office, Student Activities Office, University Times, and College Democrats.

"This is all about civic engagement and thoughtful political discourse," Stepp said. "We really hope to have many community members turn out for this event, as more attendees and greater participation will only help to make it a more productive and enlightening evening."

"As we get closer to Election Day, we want our local college students to join with those from across the country in making their concerns heard and to set an example of civic involvement by taking the time to understand the issues and voting on November 6th," Egeler said.

Voter registration efforts are underway on both campuses, and a table will be set-up during the Oct. 3 Presidential Debate event at UMPI. For more information about these events, contact Stepp at UMPI at 768-9560 or Robyn Raymond at NMCC at 768-9471.

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