Political Campaigning on the Galloway for Governor 2020 Team

Vishnu Arun ('21)

"Good morning! This is Vishnu Arun with the Galloway campaign! How's your day been?"

On my computer, I have my callee's information pulled up on NGP VAN, our campaign database. I spent countless hours extrapolating and analyzing Missouri voter data to effectively phrase my fundraising calls. I peruse the list of data I had gathered earlier on his page as I read through my preliminary script.

Occupation: Steel Union Worker. Previous Donations: None. Location: Northern Springfield

Boom. Springfield had voted to approve an expansion of Medicaid in Missouri three months ago. As a locked red city beforehand, the approval came as a surprise for most Missouri residents. It was one of four cities to vote for the approval: those cities ended up edging the percentage above 50%, passing the measure. Northern Springfield specifically had been marked with crises since the early '80s: Opioids, closed hospitals, and a declining economy.

"Sir, I'd like to talk to you about Auditor Nicole Galloway's platform on expanding healthcare. Nicole knows that healthcare is a right, not a privilege. Together, Missourians need to tackle the rising costs of healthcare." "...Yeah, you're absolutely

right." He says. We get much more personal, with him divulging that his brother was an opioid addict. He never received rehabilitation due to lack of funding, and sadly passed away from an overdose last year.

In November of 2019, I joined Nicole Galloway's campaign for Governor of Missouri. After reaching out to her campaign manager, I was interviewed and swiftly brought onto the team as a finance intern.

A day at the office or working from home would look like this: First I would log on to NGP Van, our database for all our voter information. Next, I would reach out to my supervisor for the day and ask what needed to be done. While my title was that of a finance intern, my job was never a set line of work: I helped in whatever way the campaign needed me to. As a result, my assigned work varied quite a bit.

My main responsibility was to help build a database of all Missouri voters, which entailed collecting biographies and contribution history. For example, I gathered data on candidates a voter had contributed to previously through pre-existing databases like OpenSecrets and Missouri Ethics Commision. I also dug for publicly available biographical data on a voter, which included information such as age, occupation, and marital status. From there, I would input that information into NGP Van, which would then be incorporated into our calls,

making them more informed, personalized, and persuasive. My supervisor described this part of my work as the "base of the pyramid", because the work done here was used in every other stage of the campaign.

I was also tasked with these fundraising calls, where I transformed this data into a story . Ultimately, my job as a fundraiser was that of a storyteller, drawing from data science and marketing concepts to deliver the best tailored campaign messages to individual voters. At times, my fundraising call greeting seemed monotonous. Nevertheless, I remembered that greetings like mine facilitate political efforts across the country. My seemingly robotic introduction led to some of the most life-changing calls. These calls taught me valuable lessons in empathy: while I may not personally be affected by some political issues, it's important for me to advocate for issues that affect others.

Additionally, in the earlier stages of the campaign, I engaged in voter pattern research. As the campaign had a long time till the election, we wanted to select specific geographical areas so we could carry out grassroots events based on how receptive we thought they would be. In voter pattern research, my team and I found many irregularities we deemed necessary for more investigation. For example Springfield was rarely touched upon by other past democratic campaigns in spite of its large size. Surprisingly, and as outlined above, Springfield had voted blue in the proposition elections in August. After investigating this irregular voting pattern from a large locked red city, I suggested more resources and time be spent in this area, as well as other leaning red counties like Clay and St. Charles. For far too long, democratic campaigns in Missouri had been focused on increasing voter turnout in

larger blue cities like St. Louis and Kansas City than swinging rural and suburban voters. While increasing voter turnout in big cities was critical for a victory, we were forgetting about many Missourians who had not been reached out to for ages.

Through working for Galloway's campaign, I continued to investigate the "Why?" of voting. Identifying voter patterns is one thing, but I have learned that analyzing *why* those voter patterns exist is an integral element of informed policy-making. Specifically, why do people vote how they vote, and how can gathered data be used to influence that decision in an informed manner?

In the future, I'd love to investigate ways that public data can be intelligently used to improve grassroots campaigning, involving and engaging those who feel cast out by our electoral system. By using analytical methods in data science and marketing, positive social change can be brought about in our democracy. I can't wait to engage in campaigns in the future!