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With less than two weeks until Election Day, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney are making their final appeals to voters, especially those in swing states like Ohio.

Recent polls show a slim 2-4 percent of Ohio's likely voters are undecided on their choice. These same polls show a close race between the two candidates, with a slight lead for Obama. Convincing undecided Buckeyes could be the key to victory in Ohio.

Faculty experts at the University of Dayton, Ohio's largest private university and among the top Catholic universities in the U.S., weigh in on what the candidates can do to woo undecided voters and win Ohio.

FORGET UNDECIDEDS, FOCUS ON TURNOUT (ESPECIALLY HAMILTON CO.)

"Ohio is going to be very close, but with fewer and fewer undecideds left to fight for, the campaigns are focusing on their get-out-the-vote efforts in their strongest areas of the state. Ohio is projected to make the difference in this election, and Hamilton County may prove decisive. Hamilton County went for Obama in 2008, marking the first time since 1968 that a Democrat won there." — Dan Birdsong, lecturer, political science; 937-229-2594 or dbirdsong1@udayton.edu

"The battle for undecided voters is likely over. The challenge now is mobilizing those voters who support the candidates to cast their ballots. Ohio is a very evenly divided state, so either candidate has real opportunity for victory. Because President Obama won Ohio in 2008, Mitt Romney will need to look at the county level where there might be potential for changes in his direction. Romney's best chances for changes from 2008 will be in Hamilton County (Cincinnati) and some of the northern counties near Lake Erie and Cleveland (Lake, Sandusky, Ottawa and Ashtabula counties)." — Grant Neeley, associate professor, political science; 937-229-2595 or gneeley1@udayton.edu.

"The polls are trending towards a tie in Ohio — much too close to call. There may be a handful of undecided voters out there and the TV ads will be appealing to them. The question is whether the Obama campaign can execute a turnout effort that manufactures a 2008-level vote for Obama. The enthusiasm on the Republican side is definitely greater than four years ago. It reminds me very much of 2004 when I was governor and George W. Bush was running an aggressive Ohio campaign down to the precinct level. The Bush campaign got the job done, pulling far more votes than in 2000 and defeating John Kerry, despite Kerry's higher turnout compared to Al Gore's in 2000." — Bob Taft, distinguished research associate, School of Education and Allied Professions, former Ohio Governor (1999-2007); 937-229-4012 or rtaft1@udayton.edu

JOBS THE NO. 1 ISSUE

"Jobs are still the No. 1 issue for most people simply because it would be a rare Ohio voter who does not have family or close personal friends who have lost work. The Ohio economy continues to perform better than the country as a whole with its September unemployment rate (7.0 percent) well below the rate for the U.S. (7.8 percent) and well below the rate from a year ago (8.6 percent). However, some of the improvement in the unemployment rate can be traced to a decline in the civilian labor force over the last year. Unemployment in Ohio is down by 91,000 in the last year — with 40,000 attributed to a decline in the labor force and 51,000 attributed to a growth in employment — based on the local area unemployment survey. The employer survey is slightly more positive, showing an additional 88,000 jobs in the last 12 months." — Richard Stock, director of University of Dayton's Business Research Group; 937-229-2453 or rstock1@udayton.edu.

"So many Ohioans are concerned about employment and the direction the economy may be going that "higher order needs" like caring for the environment or international relations and foreign policy have become secondary at best. Unless a major terror plot is uncovered or Iran suddenly develops the bomb, I do not think that the few remaining undecided will be swayed by the nuances of foreign policy. The only "non-security-related" foreign policy decisions that may have an impact on voters would deal with trade and macroeconomics. And these would need to have an immediate or short-term impact on the economy for voters to find them relevant." — Tony Talbott, lecturer, political science; 937-229-4326 or atalbott1@udayton.edu.

STAY POSITIVE, STAY CIVIL
"Typically, as elections draw near, undecided voters break in large numbers for the challenger over the incumbent. The question is, though, how many of these voters still exist? One thing is clear from watching all the debates: Voters want civility and a clear, optimistic, positive vision for the future. Both candidates need to avoid small issues, ‘gotcha’ politics and attacks on their opponent.” — Joe Valenzano III, assistant professor, communication; 937-229-2376 or jvalenzanoiii1@udayton.edu

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For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.