How do we engage America’s 20 million students in our nation’s elections?

The Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) worked with over 500 campuses in 2008 and 750 in the 2012 election cycle to do exactly that. Drawing on our hands-on experience with students, administrators, and faculty throughout the country, we’ve compiled this list of effective nonpartisan approaches that colleges and universities can use to engage their campus communities. We hope you’ll use this resource to help your students register to vote, learn about issues and candidates, volunteer in campaigns, and get to the polls, all while ensuring their votes count despite all the obstacles.

In the 2010 midterm election, four out of five students stayed home. But in 2013, our off-year elections pilot project in Virginia found that schools implementing our approaches could get increases of 40% or more in student voting rates. Successfully engaging your campus community will depend on collaborating with others to follow through on your existing approaches and complement them with effective new ones. You don’t have to follow all of these steps to make a difference on your campus, but it’s important to address all the key areas of electoral engagement—choosing approaches that fit your campus best, planning them at appropriate points in the election cycle and in your academic year, and delegating tasks to create a sustainable effort.

Think of this as your election engagement checklist. In all cases, the earlier you start the better, especially for areas that take significant institutional planning.
ENGAGING YOUR CAMPUS IN THE ELECTIONS:
SIX KEY WAYS TO ACT

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PART ONE:
BUILD YOUR TEAM, GATHER NECESSARY INFO, AND PLAN FOR KEY TIMELINES

Build your team. It’s hard to engage a campus alone, so create a core group of administrators, faculty, and staff to coordinate campus election-engagement efforts, spread out the work and ensure key people talk with each other across different departments and disciplines.

- **Enlist key campus leaders** to help engage your campus, using approaches drawn from this list. Include Deans, Provost, President, Student Affairs, Service-Learning Coordinator, Registrar, IT department, Residence Life, Campus Newspaper Advisor, Faculty Development, Coaches and academic departments.

- **Research what your campus has done previously and brainstorm ways to build on it.** Talk with program staff, student activists, and recent graduates, getting as much detail as possible about what they did. Try and get program materials from them so you don't have to completely start from scratch.

- **Help students organize students.** Approach student leadership. Connect with student government, organizations and programming boards early on. Encourage them to allocate resources to campus electoral engagement, coordinating with administrators, faculty, and staff.

  - **Form an all-campus student coalition.** Students are the most effective messengers for reaching their peers with a voter engagement message.

  - **Give stipends to engage student volunteers or compensate them with academic credit,** and put them in charge of organizing other students. We did this with excellent success at our 2013 Virginia schools.

  - **Faculty and administrators can also give academic or service credit hours** to help organize campus election-related activities. Try reaching out to faculty as they’re planning their Fall courses.
Research. Pull together key information about voter registration and election regulations and timelines in your area, and about organizations that can provide assistance in navigating complex voting regulations. Integrate this information with the timelines of your campus calendar.

- CEEP will be working with our partners, Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN), to distribute concise summaries and periodic updates of each state’s voting rules. If you haven’t received their summaries, check their site. State voter registration and ID rules may have changed since 2012, so it’s critical to be on top of new rules and ensure you have accurate information to share.

- Each state coordinator will distribute these summaries to your school directly and will also post them on their statewide election engagement website, most likely housed at the local Campus Compact affiliate.

Create a working calendar.

- Identify key electoral dates for your state or city.
  - Deadlines to get an on-campus voting station
  - Voter registration deadlines
  - Fall early voting timelines
  - Deadline to apply for absentee ballots

- Highlight key campus timelines, dates of major events, and critical dates in your engagement effort.
  - Deadline(s) for online class registration, so you can work with your campus IT department to integrate Rock the Vote’s online registration tool (supplied for free)
  - Deadline(s) for submitting election-related materials to be integrated in campus registration packets
  - Deadline(s) to include voter registration and other election-engagement activities into student orientation events
  - Major campus events (e.g., football games and concerts) for engaging and registering students, taking advantage of the large number of people present in one place

At Ohio State University, OSU Votes worked during welcome week and student move-in day to register students as they soon as they arrived on campus, then conducted a coordinated effort to educate the campus on the issues and get students out to the polls. In 2012 they broadened their reach to campus janitors, housekeepers, groundskeepers, and food service workers.
Create an election-related section on your campus website. This shows institutional commitment, gives official legitimacy, and provides a central public presence for your work.

- Provide easy-to-access information on state voting rules, deadlines and resources.
  - Include links for students to register to vote, find their polling station, learn about issues and candidates

- Highlight visible links to the page on your main campus website
  - Ensure visibility on high-traffic pages like those where students register for classes or buy tickets for campus events
  - Highlight your existing campus voter participation initiatives and those you’ll be developing

- Promote these online resources through campus-wide websites and listservs, media and student organizations

Brainstorm funding sources for ideas not already built into campus budgets. The earlier you start on this the more successful you’ll be.

- Consider costs for printing voter engagement materials, food and sound systems for get-out-the-vote volunteer parties, and transportation for students who want to register voters off campus

- Look at student activities funds, community service funds, and funds from departments or key administrators

- If you have a non-federally funded student philanthropy program, they might be able to help with this. We can also give them ideas for election-related micro-grants to help engage other schools

- Look to other community organizations (like your local League of Women Voters) who may already be producing nonpartisan voters’ guides or other materials that they could make available for free or at minimal cost

- Register at www.Campusvotemap.info so other administrators, faculty and staff on your campus can contact you to help engage your students
People in diverse academic networks will hear about CEEP through their national associations. Our VoteMap lets them connect with you to give you valuable allies.

TEAM BUILDING CASE STUDIES
At Virginia’s James Madison University, four social work seniors received academic credit to coordinate the campus’ successful nonpartisan engagement effort, DukesVote. Find tips on how to replicate this model on your campus in our newly updated resource, Academic Credit for Election Engagement Interns: The James Madison University Model.

In our 2013 off-year pilot project, Virginia Commonwealth University saw a 43% increase in voting rates (and 77% in some precincts) for on-campus students between the 2009 gubernatorial race and their 2013 totals, when they began to implement exactly the kinds of approaches we’re suggesting. They did this despite a late start and a race where the two major candidates had near-record lows of approval and enthusiasm.

PART TWO: REGISTER STUDENTS TO VOTE
The 2008 reauthorization of the Federal Higher Education Act requires that colleges and universities make a “good faith effort” to distribute voter registration materials to all students. In 2008, 87% of students who registered ended up voting.

Take the lead in getting your campus community registered, or changing their registration so they can vote locally. Announce campus-wide goals and goals for departments or residence halls, both to measure progress and to motivate.

Find out your state rules and timelines, then provide critical information and resources.
If your school runs into particular hurdles trying to help your students register and vote, visit 866ourvote.org or call 1-866-OURVOTE to connect with voting rights experts who can advise you.

- In Ohio, for instance, residential may need a school-issued zero-balance utility bill if they don’t have an ID issued by the Federal government or state of Ohio.

- In Pennsylvania, student IDs require an expiration date to meet the state’s voter ID laws. We’ll supply up-to-date state information in our voting rule guides and also hold statewide webinars where campuses in your state can ask questions of Fair Elections Legal Network lawyers.

- If students are cynical about candidates, remind them that they can wait to decide whom to vote for, but lose the option unless they register.

**Bring the vote to campus - literally!** Work with local and state officials to host an on-campus voting station

- This usually takes some lead time, but can significantly increase turnout by making it easier for students to vote. See our resources on how Collin County Community College [turned their campus into a polling place](https://campuselect.org/resource/county-community-college-turned-their-campus-into-a-polling-place).

**Use online registration tools** from organizations like Rock the Vote, or the customized version from the student PIRGs if you have a PIRG chapter at your school.

- Rock the Vote has been developing their online registration tool for years, and it’s well-tested and easy to use.
  
  o [Contact them](https://www.rockthevote.org/partners/) to tell them you want to be a partner and they’ll send you a simple embed code that you can copy and paste into your campus websites, which allows students to register online, or fill out the necessary online forms, print them out, and mail them in with the necessary signatures and identification.

  o You can co-brand this [tool](https://www.rockthevote.org/partners/) with your school logo, which we highly recommend. That will help you integrate it into classroom registration (as described below) or when you sell tickets to campus concerts or sporting events.
Northwestern University’s UVote model uses peer-to-peer outreach to help all first year students register to vote when they receive their student ID for the first time. Students are able to register in any of the 50 states with each state’s mail-in form. Find out more in the Case Studies section below.

- Rock the Vote will send state-specific electronic reminders of key dates and deadlines to all students who’ve registered through their form.

- Using the Rock the Vote form also allows you to track registrations and the eventual voter turnout of those who’ve used it, while protecting individual privacy.

- If you can add it to your budget, Turbovote is another great tool for registering students to vote.

- Like Rock the Vote, Turbovote is a "one-stop-shop" voter registration and engagement platform that helps students (and citizens in general) register to vote, request absentee ballots and receive text and email reminders with important election information, dates and deadlines.

- Cost is $500-$1,000 for Turbovote set-up. Turbovote can also send ready-to-sign voter registration forms along with pre-stamped and addressed envelopes to make paper registration easy for students to sign up. Cost for this is roughly $1.20 per envelope, and you can set a maximum number that you’ll pay for. Contact Turbovote Partnerships if interested.

Make a coordinated effort to register students during orientation, registration and other key school activities.

- Register students at move-in day to campus residence halls. This may take some lead-time to arrange, but the advance preparation is worth it.

- Nothing will register more students than integrating voter registration with course registration, since all students have to pass through this procedure.

  - Ask your campus IT department to set up a page with Rock the Vote or Turbovote links that you’ll integrate with your course registration pages—ideally set up so that students will need to make an active choice to not register or update their registration information.

- If you have a residential campus, work with student organizations to do a “dorm storm,” where they go door to door to register students where they live.
In 2012, the University of Colorado Boulder and Colorado State University competed to register the most on-campus voters, with great success. You can also compete—using the Rock the Vote Registration tool—on the highest percentage of registered voters who participate at the polls.

- This will require cooperation with Residence Life, Student Activities, and Campus Security to coordinate and waive normal security rules.

- Host a registration or voter participation competition within or between residence halls or departments, or even with a rival campus.

- Get students to register or re-register on campus—and avoid having to drive back home. Deciding where to register determines which issues and races will be on their ballots, so it’s an important strategic decision.
  - Students often don’t realize they can register on campus, so end up not voting because they don’t have the time to drive back home on Election Day.
  - Even if students are already registered, encourage as many students as possible to re-register on campus, to make it as easy as possible for them to participate. The Supreme Court has ruled that students can make this choice without having to give a reason, but many of them don’t know this.
  - Students wanting to vote absentee in their home district/state will have different rules, procedures and deadlines from those on their campus. LongDistanceVoter explains absentee ballot options and provides resources to register either at school or at home.

- Distribute and collect voter registration forms—especially in classrooms. This is the most effective way to reach all the students in your school.
  - Ask faculty to distribute registration forms along with course materials and collect them later in class or set aside time for students to fill them out online.
  - Where possible, visit classes to make a “pitch” for voter registration, to hand out and collect completed forms, or to have students register online.
  - Invite representatives from your local registrar or the League of Women Voters to train students for classroom outreach, and then have them register their peers.
Use all available technologies, and use them to complement each other.

- Create a prominent link on the university homepage to your designated election-engagement website and voter registration resources.
  - Promote these links through campus-wide email, social media blasts and pop-ups on pages where students order tickets for entertainment or athletic events.
- Integrate a QR code linked to your election-engagement site into other election-related posters, banners, and other forms of visibility.
- Send out campus-wide voice and text messages for key registration-related deadlines with links to your registration tool.
- Create a simple campus-specific video on why voting matters. You could use Bowling Green’s or Virginia Commonwealth’s as templates.

Create student-run, off-campus registration drives.

- Work with your Service-Learning Center to have students register community members through their service work, particularly in underrepresented communities. See the Virginia Commonwealth University, North Carolina A&T, and University of Miami examples below.

VOTER REGISTRATION CASE STUDIES

At Ohio State University, OSU Votes worked during welcome week and student move-in day to register students as they soon as they arrived on campus, then conducted a coordinated effort to educate the campus on the issues and get students out to the polls. In 2012 they broadened their reach to campus janitors, housekeepers, groundskeepers, and food service workers.

Northwestern University’s UVote model uses peer-to-peer outreach to help all first year students register to vote when they receive their student ID for the first time. Students are able to register in any of the 50 states with each state’s mail-in form, and staff processes and mails the completed forms to the appropriate Boards of
Elections. They register between 90 and 95% of incoming freshman by the end of orientation week. Contact Rob Donahue at Northwestern for more information.

Students at **Norfolk State University** worked together to create an “Each One Text One” approach — a phone tree series of text messages to remind their friends of registration and voting deadlines, and encouraged them to forward them to other friends.

In 2008, **North Carolina A&T University** registered over 12,000 students, staff, faculty, and community members by combining on-campus registration with service projects where students registered voters on six successive weekends in nearby low-income neighborhoods.

Students at the **Virginia Commonwealth University Honors College** used their mascot to encourage their peers to register to vote using the catchy slogan, “**Uncle Ram Wants You**.” Students wrote issue briefs and posted them to social media sites created as a part of their mass communications classes and of the school’s comprehensive election engagement effort.

In 2012, the **University of Colorado Boulder** and **Colorado State University** competed to register the most on-campus voters, with great success. You can also compete—using the Rock the Vote or Turbovote registration tools—on the highest percentage of registered voters who participate at the polls.

CEEP projects in Florida, Virginia and several other states sponsored the **Democracy Cup**. Awards were given for the best campus engagement projects statewide. **University of Miami** students won the first Cup for registering 4,000 students on campus and 10,000 off campus.

At **Delta College** in Saginaw, Michigan, teams of students competed to register their peers: Students who brought 10 or more individuals to register won **DeltaVotes! t-shirts**, and the team that engaged the most peers won a pizza party.
PART THREE: EDUCATE ON ISSUES, CANDIDATES AND, AND WHY OFF-YEAR ELECTIONS MATTER

Distribute and display nonpartisan information on candidate stands. Students often say they don’t vote because “they’re all lying and spinning. You can’t tell what they believe.” Offering clear information on where candidates stand therefore plays a critical role.

- Distribute and widely publicize the nonpartisan voter guides that CEEP is creating for major state-wide races, like U.S. Senator and Governor.
  - Encourage the student newspaper to use the voter guide as a starting point for their election coverage, highlighting the impact candidate positions can make in student lives.
  - Send out the guides through all-campus email, or print them and put them in students’ physical mailboxes.
  - Link to them on your election-related website.
  - Use them to spark discussions in classrooms and residence halls.
  - Think big: display information on candidate positions blown up large enough to be visible to passing students. Display in high-traffic areas of the student union, classroom buildings, or residence halls.

Create your own guides to down-ballot races and key issues, and build conversations around them.

- If CEEP isn’t already doing so, create your own nonpartisan guides to down ballot races, like Secretary of State, Attorney General, Congressional and local legislative races, and local and statewide initiatives. Have students draw up these guides under the supervision of political science, communications, or honors faculty, or have the faculty create them. Distribute them in the campus and community as you would the CEEP guides.

- If your local League of Women Voters is creating guides, you can promote and distribute them as well.
Hold debate watch parties and follow-up conversations in major common spaces like large auditoriums or more intimate spaces like residential dorms.

- Hold watch parties in large spaces and have faculty give credit for attending, as in the Florida Atlantic University example to the left.

- Work with Residence Life to hold simultaneous parties in every dorm, which gives you a chance to reach a large number of students.

- Use social media to foster discussion on the themes of the debates.
  - Create a social media toolkit with relevant usernames and hashtags so students can easily focus on and join in the conversation.

- To engage with the larger community, invite students to attend debates or forums hosted by the League of Women Voters or other community groups.
  - The goal should be to get the campus community talking about the issues that were raised, so you always want to include some way to bring the discussion back to the broader campus community

- Hold classroom follow-up discussions after major debates.
  - Faculty can have students reflect on the debates through presentations, papers, or classroom-specific debates, exploring relevant policy aspects.

Use sites like Flackcheck.Org to explore misleading ads in the classroom

Also check these sites for accurate information on candidate positions:

- votesmart.org
- Factcheck.org
- Politifact.com

Work with local media and your student newspaper to highlight issues relevant to young voters.

- Ask them to explore specific policy differences between candidates, including important local races, and lower profile state races like Attorney General, so students have more to go on than ads, sound bites and personality spin.
Stress that students have few trusted information sources on political candidates, that campus newspapers can play a key role, and that it’s not enough just to cover candidate visits or alumni who are running for office.

Encourage them to cover your nonpartisan voting efforts and more general student participation in campaigns. They could even run columns by the Young Democrats and Young Republicans.

Ask them to print CEEP’s nonpartisan candidate guides as inserts or use them as a departure point for coverage.

See our toolkit on Working with Your Student Newspaper for additional specific ideas.

**Ask faculty to engage students via their courses**, including giving course credit for volunteering in campaigns of their choice, as described in the Baldwin Wallace example below, or in your school’s nonpartisan campus election engagement effort.

Encourage students to explore the complementary relationship between electoral choices and social movements, from the civil rights movement to the Tea Party and Climate Change movements.

Talk about where candidates stand on key issues of student interest. Be accurate and fair, whatever the political views you may hold as a faculty member or student.

See the article, My Vote Doesn’t Matter for ways to combat cynicism, written by CEEP founder Paul Loeb, UCLA’s Alexander Astin, and education writer Parker Palmer.

**Foster student discussions.** If enough students hold one-on-one or small-group election-related discussions these can be the most powerful ways of engaging their peers.

Have students create teams to hold one-on-one nonpartisan discussions where they’ll ask fellow students to pledge to vote, volunteer for election-related events, and help distribute nonpartisan election materials, like CEEP’s candidate guides. If they can then get some of the students they talk with to join the nonpartisan teams, it’s a great way of multiplying their impact.
To help facilitate debates, see the guidelines and manuals of the Public Conversations Project, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, and the small conversations model of LivingRoomConversations.

North Carolina Campus Compact held a statewide “Why I Plan to Vote” contest to collect and distribute the best student video testimonials on why elections mattered.

- Hold formal and informal debates and discussion sessions in public places and residence halls where students can discuss issues and candidates and help decide how to vote.
- Hold dialogues across political lines. Bring students and community members to find common ground while respecting differing perspectives.
- Have political science, sociology, or communications classes survey other students for their perspectives, then publicize the results.
- Encourage specific campus constituencies to hold forums and educational events and comment in the student paper on how differing candidate stands can affect their lives, linking their particular experiences with the issues at stake.
  - For instance, veterans could host or co-host a forum on our current wars or issues surrounding treatment of veterans
  - Disabled students could address where candidates stand on issues of accessibility and inclusion
  - The campus multi-cultural center or groups representing immigrant students could talk about candidate stands on immigration or disparate racial sentencing
- Screen election-related films such as Iron-Jawed Angels (discussion guide here), The Youngest Candidate or Journeys through the Red, White and Blue.
- Help students personalize the issues by sharing their reasons for voting or creating video testimonials to publicly affirm their choice to vote.

Encourage students to sign a “Pledge to Vote.”

- Distribute pledge cards for students to sign, including information on
  - Where they’ll cast their ballot
  - How they’ll get to the polls

- Hold formal and informal debates and discussion sessions in public places and residence halls where students can discuss issues and candidates and help decide how to vote.
- **When** they will mail their absentee ballot, if necessary
- **Who** they’ll take to the polls — **voting with friends** increases the likelihood of actually voting and gets others to vote as well!

Students can also join in a nation-wide online pledge collection, like the one at [Rock the Vote](https://rockthevote.org).

**VOTER EDUCATION CASE STUDIES**

**Florida Atlantic University** gave extra credit to 1,100 students who attended a 2012 Debate Watch party in their football stadium. You can do the same thing for a statewide Senatorial or Gubernatorial debate.

New Mexico’s **Santa Fe Community College** joined with the city’s public radio and TV stations to create a series of 60-second ads on why youth voting matters.

**University of Nevada Reno**’s journalism school organized a team of graduate and undergraduate students to design and launch a [website](https://rockthevote.org) that provided statewide nonpartisan election information specifically tailored for students.

**Michigan State University** teamed up with the city of East Lansing to create a similar [YouVote](https://youvote.org) initiative with a website featuring voting rules, registration links, and information on local, state, and national races.

**University of Miami** hosted a “Healthcare Games” event where the college Republicans and Democrats debated the Affordable Care Act.
PART FOUR: ENCOURAGE STUDENT VOLUNTEERING

Students can multiply their impact by volunteering—with partisan or nonpartisan campaigns of their choosing. Encourage them to volunteer at the polls or for initiatives and campaigns on Election Day and in the period leading up to it. Talk about how they can multiply the power of their individual vote by enlisting others.

Our campus efforts have to be meticulously nonpartisan, but there’s nothing wrong with encouraging students to embrace their own beliefs, and act on them, particularly since patterns of early civic involvement tend to stick.

- Make information on volunteering (on- and off-campus) widely available—but make sure to give equal visibility to the contacts for both major parties. If a third party candidate has a significant presence, give their campaign information as well.

- Promote volunteer opportunities not just with the political parties, but also outside grassroots groups like the student PIRGS, or campus affiliates of the NAACP, the Tea Party, NARAL Pro Choice America, National Right to Life, etc.


- Encourage students to knock on doors, make calls, or volunteer as poll-watchers—playing a critical role by getting people to vote that might otherwise stay home.

Remind students that they can volunteer in their own voice, voicing their own complex feelings.

- If they’re ambivalent about the candidates for a key office, but still distinctly prefer one over the other, suggest that when they do volunteer, they can voice their mixed sentiments to voters they approach—acknowledging areas where they have differences, yet talking about why they still believe their candidate is still worth electing.
Leadership students at Baldwin Wallace University incorporated campaign volunteering with their coursework. See more in the Case Studies below.

- This is likely to draw much greater participation than if students feel they have to line up behind a set “party line” or imply that their preferred candidate is a saint.

Encourage students to join our non-partisan campus engagement teams.
- For many, volunteering with partisan campaigns will be a perfect fit, and it’s an important form of civic engagement. But there are lots of students who will prefer to work on getting their fellow students to vote and not have to publically promote a particular candidate. Those are the ones that we want to recruit for our nonpartisan teams.

Ask faculty to require students to volunteer in campaigns of their choosing and report back through journals, papers or classroom presentations.

- Faculty can’t mandate particular partisan allegiances when they do this—that would be grossly inappropriate. But they can encourage students to select campaigns that resonate with the students’ individual values, and encourage them to give voice to their convictions.

Reach out to a variety of student organizations, not just the College Democrats, Republican, Libertarians, etc.

- Approach your College Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, etc, and try to get them to collaborate on your nonpartisan campus efforts. It’s a great way to model cooperation.

- Be sure to also reach out to groups like disabled students, veterans, LGBT students, commuter students on residential campuses, and students involved with campus multi-cultural or diversity centers.

- Encourage these students to hold forums and educational events for the general campus, as well as reaching out to their own specific groups. If you have living/learning communities have them make election-engagement a core common theme.
Encourage students to sign up as nonpartisan poll-workers (and even get paid in some states), including at the precincts where their fellow-students will be voting.

- Work with your local county clerk to arrange this. Law students can volunteer through nonpartisan Election Protection coalition.

STUDENT VOLUNTEERING CASE STUDIES

Local elections can be opportunities for students to get involved and have a huge impact, because turnout tends to be low. They could even run themselves, like a 22-year-old William & Mary senior who was elected to the Williamsburg City Council with the help of his fellow students, and a recent James Madison University graduate who was re-elected to his second term. If graduates of your school hold electoral office or are running for office, invite them to speak at forums along with their opponents.

In 2008, Dr. Tiffany Hansbrough of Ohio’s Baldwin Wallace University assigned her leadership students to volunteer with a campaign of their choice. She gave them the contact information for the McCain and Obama field offices and for the nonprofit Greater Cleveland Voter Registration Coalition, then required the students to volunteer for 15 hours with a presidential campaign of their choice, a local or state election race (including ballot initiatives), or a nonprofit group engaging in election-related activities. She had her students log their experiences in journal entries, providing details about what occurred, the participants, and their impressions. After the election, students were required to write a paper evaluating their experiences.
PART FIVE: BUILD ELECTION EXCITEMENT

In order to turn out student voters, it’s important to build excitement and visibility on your campus leading up to Election Day. Here’s a few ideas about how to do that:

**Educate on the mechanics of voting,** in order to decrease anxiety or other barriers to voting.

- Encourage students to make a logistical plan for how and when they’ll cast their vote. Research shows that asking people to make a concrete plan significantly increases the likelihood of voting.

- Set up mock polling places and hold mock elections, perhaps in the student union, with sample ballots, voting machines if you can obtain them, and related information for students to practice voting and consider how they’ll vote.

- Mock elections and “dry runs” can assure new voters they’re bringing the proper ID and filling out the ballot as they intend. They also encourage them to learn about issues and candidates in advance of Election Day.

**Hold rallies, absentee ballot parties and election-related festivals leading up to the vote.**

- These should be combined with concrete activities like registration drives, and solicitation of volunteers and pledges to vote.

**Entertain as you engage and educate.** Capture students’ attention with “guerrilla theater.”

- Use flash mobs and theater to gather crowds in visible places and then hand out voter pledges as well as registration and voting information.
Use Halloween to highlight the election.

- **Trick or Vote** encourages canvassing on or around Halloween using trick-or-treating as an opportunity for door-to-door contact with potential voters. Take advantage of parties to spread voter education, voter rights, and get out the vote messages.

- Hand out candy messages. Get some bags of candy and stick or tie small messages to them (“Vote Nov 6”, “Bring ID to the polls”, “What time are you voting?” or “How are you getting to the polls?” Then put on a costume and hand them out on campus (people are much more likely to take a flyer if it comes with a piece of candy).

- Hold Halloween parties with election-related themes—Minnesota’s **Anoka-Ramsey Community College** held one called “Are You Scared to Vote?”

Create a visual presence to encourage voting, remind of key deadlines, and educate about what to bring to the polls on Election Day.

- Display posters, banners, signs and sandwich boards (as permitted).

- Hand out **stickers** to go on everything from book covers to water bottles to bicycles.

- Create voter-participation commercials to play on the football stadium Jumbotron.

- Provide chalk so students can draw messages and images on campus walkways to encourage voting, share key websites and reasons they are voting this year, and announce activities.

- Schools should combine these kinds of visual approaches with email and social media outreach through Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat and/or Vine.
Use social media to promote campus events, remind of key deadlines, and connect students to the larger election conversation.

- **Create a hashtag for your campus election efforts** (something like #UWvotes) and encourage students to share their election activities and GOTV messages through their social media networks.

- Create and distribute a **social media toolkit** for campus organizations that includes relevant hashtags, usernames, and suggested tweets or post language.
  
  - Share this toolkit with all of the key campus leaders you have been working with throughout your election engagement efforts, and ask them to use their Twitter or Facebook pages to encourage their followers to vote.
  
  - Ask prominent campus leaders like athletic stars and prominent alumni to retweet your content using your election-related hashtag.

- If you have a small budget, consider placing Facebook ads targeting students on your campus.
  
  - Try a new ad each day in the period close to the election with a slightly different message, including a countdown to remaining deadlines and to Election Day.

- In the weeks before the election encourage students, faculty, and staff to set computer homepages to nonpartisan voter education sites like Project Vote Smart or to CEEP’s nonpartisan candidate guides, which you can also feature on your election-engagement web page.

- Hold absentee ballot parties for students registered out of state. Westfield State (Mass.) held an absentee ballot party with snacks.
  
  - Students can get their necessary ID info photocopied while privately casting their ballots, addressing them, and stacking them to be mailed.
  
  - You can give students stamps to mail back their ballots, or make them available to buy.
ELECTION EXCITEMENT CASE STUDIES

**Miami Dade Community College** ordered 4,000 “This is Why I Vote” buttons with their Center for Engagement’s logo and a blank space where students, faculty, and staff wrote in why they were going to vote, and students used these personalized responses to spark individual election-related conversations.

**North Carolina Campus Compact** held a statewide “Why I Plan to Vote” contest to collect and distribute the best student video testimonials on why elections mattered.

**Florida State** students formed a flash mob, gathering in the student union with t-shirts promoting the voting date and slogans like “I vote for education” or “I vote for health care.” They froze for five minutes to let the crowd look at them. Then they moved on, did the same thing elsewhere on the campus, and repeated it again.

**James Madison University**’s 18,000-student campus got 10,000 people attending a series of convention and debate-watch parties, then arranged election-day vans and buses when local transportation authorities refused to help.

PART SIX: GET OUT THE VOTE

Election Day is what all of your election engagement efforts have been leading up to. Make use of the following strategies to get as many people to the polls as possible.

Start with combining face-to-face and online technologies, so all of your election efforts complement each other.

- Work with your campus IT department to send reminder emails, voicemails and texts to every student. (Text messages have been found to have the strongest impact!)
• Messages can include links to resources such as Vote411.org where students can find out where to vote and what they need to bring, and sites where they can verify registration.

• Ideally send at least one message before the absentee ballot ordering deadlines as a reminder for those cannot get to their polling places or vote in other states. Send follow-up messages leading up to the election, and then a final election-day message to remind all students to vote.

• Check that key campus websites have updated information, like links to key voter information sites including the 866ourvote.org voter protection site. Include a countdown to Election Day.

• Publicize the Election Protection Smartphone app and encourage students to download it for free from the iTunes or Google Play store. It allows students to verify their registration, register to vote, look up their polling place, review key state rules and regulations, see what kind of machine they vote on, and contact the national Election Protection coalition if they have questions or encounter problems.

Encourage early voting where possible, to avoid schedule conflicts or long polling place lines.

• Piggyback early voting efforts with reminders for students to vote absentee if they’re from other states. Have students call students.

• Electronic reminders are great, but research shows that nothing is more effective than direct peer-to-peer outreach. Enlist student groups to call their peers.

• Phone bank all registered voters for whom you have phone numbers, especially those whose contacts you gathered during registration drives

  • If you have no records of your own, the county election board may have lists of those registered from your campus

Ask faculty and administration to let students miss classes, if need be, to vote.
- This is particularly valuable at community colleges, where students often have little time between work and school, so can’t afford to stand in long lines

Help students get to the polls.

- See if local transportation authorities or community groups can run special buses, as they would for major stadium events
- Publicize polling locations—include directions, hours, and transportation options
- If your prime polling place is off-campus, encourage your campus to rent buses or vans to shuttle students from campus to their polling places, posting departure and return times in central locations. Also have a central site to arrange carpooling rides.

Make voting reminders highly visible ... and creative.

- Organize election-day dorm storming. Knock on doors and offer rides or company going to the polls to registered students considering staying home. Ask faculty to give reminders in class.
- Encourage “Take a Date to the Polls” and “Real Friends Don’t Let Friends Vote Alone” messages to foster support within peer groups (publicize through posters, fliers, text messages, Facebook ads, etc.)

Make voting a community activity.

- Hold parades to early voting sites. Many schools did this in 2012, building on a sense of school pride. Schools where sites are further away can do this with carpools
- Encourage local restaurants and businesses to give special discounts to students with “I voted” stickers
Make sure students’ votes count and protect their voting rights.

- Publicize state voter ID requirements and help students secure all necessary materials, like letters from the president or the right kinds of student or other IDs

- Educate students about potential voter intimidation practices and how to avoid being turned away at the polls

- Encourage student groups to organize poll watching activities to guarantee voter rights

- Let people know about the 1-866-OURVOTE hotline so students can call for expert advice if problems develop or they think they’re being unfairly denied their rights at the polls

Hold get-out-the-vote rallies and poll parties on Election Day.

- Plan for entertainment and snacks near the polling places while students wait in line or wait for their friends to make it through

- Organize election night parties to watch returns in student unions, dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and other places where students gather — and request proof of voting to get in

- Distribute a list of community parties around town so students can join in with those who’ve volunteered in the campaigns

GET OUT THE VOTE CASE STUDIES

University of Minnesota hosted a Party at the Polls at their 50,000-student campus: printing posters and flyers to publicize the day; providing hot beverages and snacks to encourage students to withstand lengthy voting lines despite bitter cold; and bringing laptops to answer last-minute questions regarding local races, same-day registration rules, and which precinct to select.
Faculty at Virginia’s Longwood University offered a great model by organizing carpools to drive students to the polls.

FOLLOW UP:
DOCUMENT AS YOU GO, MEASURE YOUR IMPACT, AND BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

Document your most effective electoral engagement efforts through student videos

- Have students, particularly communications and digital media students, create and edit concise videos where they interview those involved in your campus engagement efforts and document their outreach, as the VCU students did.

- Post the most inspiring videos on your campus website, and send them to your state CEEP coordinators so we can suggest your approaches to schools in other states, and help them learn from your approaches.

Track your on-campus or near-campus voting rates

- Have your senior administrators sign up for the National Study of Student Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).
  - If you participate, you’ll be able to get precise data on the percentage of your eligible students who register to vote and turn out at the polls, going back several elections.
  - Anonymity of individual students is strictly protected, so you don’t need Institutional Review Board approval, but NSLVE will give you invaluable data to measure your success in engaging your campus, and give CIRCLE invaluable data to measure student participation in general.
- We’d also greatly appreciate your permitting the release of your electoral participation summary to CEEP, so we can measure our (and your) effectiveness as we refine and hone our nonpartisan engagement strategies in each electoral cycle.

- You can also track your on-campus or near-campus voting rates by precinct participation.
  - Figure out which precincts students vote at, get the numbers from your state election board, and tally the percentage of active voters who showed up at the polls.
  - Whenever possible, compare the numbers to the comparable precincts from four years ago.
  - Either way, forward the data to your state CEEP outreach person.

- If you registered students through the Rock the Vote or Turbovote tools, you can set up your own page to track how many students registered and voted.
  - Please forward this information to your state CEEP contact. Like the rest of the data, it’s critical to measure our impact and progress.

Write up your notes as a follow up to help your team and others continue the work of engagement.

- Who was involved? What’s their contact info and position at the school?

- Which approaches worked best for the culture of your campus, both in terms of getting people excited about the work and in producing concrete results, like numbers of students registered and numbers who turn out at the polls?

- What approaches didn’t work well, or had less impact than you’d hoped.

- Which approaches would you have wanted to do if you’d had more lead-time?
• Which could you continue to pursue before the next election, like integrating voting registration into classroom registration and first year orientation, or securing an on-campus voting station? The teams at two major Virginia universities secured on-campus stations following the 2013 elections.

**Celebrate your good work, but keep your team going.**

• Rest and relax. Let participants know how much they’re appreciated!

• Then continue plan ways to continue engaging your students in elections and other ways of having their voice heard no matter whoever wins the vote in November.

**APPENDIX:**

**ADDITIONAL CEEP RESOURCES**

• [Academic Credit for Election Engagement Interns: The James Madison University Model](#)

• [Let’s Get Engaged: A Non-Partisan Voter Registration and Get-Out-The-Vote Toolkit for University/Community Partnerships](#)

• [How Collin County Community College Got On-Campus Polling Sites](#)

• [Working with Your Student Newspaper](#)

• [2014 State Voting Rules for students](#)
Check campuselect.org as we continue to update resources and voter guides for the 2014 midterm elections!