

ELECTORAL VOICES



We the People

insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common
Defense and our Posterity, We ordain and establish this Constitution

Article 1

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**



ELECTORAL VOICES TASK FORCE

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AN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT
BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

ELECTORAL VOICES

ENGAGING COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ELECTIONS

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES





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FOREWORD

George L. Mehaffy

Again this fall across the United States, as another national election looms, colleges and universities will engage in a wide array of voter-registration efforts. These activities are part of a growing effort by American higher education to help reverse declining rates of voting among young Americans. Until the 1992 presidential election, declining numbers of young people 18 to 25 had cast ballots in each national election since 18-year-olds were given the right to vote in 1971. Although the presidential election of 1992 witnessed a welcome increase in turnout among young voters, that upturn, regrettably, was not sustained, and voting by young people continued its downward trend in the elections of 1996 and 2000.

Determined to reverse the slide in participation, the federal government, in reauthorizing higher-education programs in 1998, mandated that colleges and universities must distribute voter-registration information to all students. By 2004, the government had been joined by a huge array of groups seeking to promote greater political engagement, particularly voting, among America's college students.

One of the groups joining in the voter-registration activities was the American Democracy Project (ADP), an initiative created by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), in partnership with The New York Times. Created in 2003, the American Democracy Project is an affiliation of more than 200 member colleges and universities, all interested in developing new approaches and strategies to prepare undergraduates to become informed, engaged, and active citizens. Our participating institutions, like many other organizations, have undertaken an array of voter projects and activities designed to increase the number of young Americans who will accept the most fundamental obligation of a citizen in a democracy—casting informed votes for candidates for public office.

As we approach yet another series of national and state elections, we hope this monograph will assist our colleagues in higher education, both within the



American Democracy Project, and beyond. We wanted to capture the best insights, perspectives, and examples that we could find and share them with others for use in the upcoming and future election cycles. For example, as we looked at the array of activities on our participating campuses, we realized that the term “voter registration” was too limited to describe the projects’ goals. Many organizations talk about their efforts to register new voters. Yet registering people to vote provides no guarantee that they actually will do so. Nor does it ensure that they will be informed voters if they do cast ballots.

So we began to describe voter activities as a three-part process: voter education, voter registration, and voter participation. Sometimes a campus or organization will focus only on voter registration. The most effective campuses try to address all three issues—preparing students not only for the next election—but also for a lifetime of participation in voting. Despite the apparent neatness of this three-part framework (voter education, registration, and participation), in the following pages you will find not that neat trilogy but rather the complexity of real campuses and the complicated interaction of different groups and programs in the complex culture of a university. Yet the real stories of campuses and their work offer rich insights and understandings not available otherwise.

The electoral work on our campuses continues to evolve as we seek greater understanding of the precise strategies and approaches that may produce the greatest numbers of informed and registered voters. Happily, it appears that efforts such as ours and those of other groups are having some effect: The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that turnout of voters aged 18 to 24 increased from 36 percent in 2000 to 47 percent in 2004.

This monograph offers a series of contributions that we hope will be useful as campuses attempt to sustain and expand recent improvements in youth voter participation. It presents research findings, comprehensive essays, and individual campus reports. I am indebted to all of the people who worked so hard on this monograph, but most particularly to Jim Perry, who assumed the role of overall project coordinator and monograph editor. We would not have been able to produce this product without his determined and talented efforts. ★



INTRODUCTION

Jim Perry

Until recently, declining youth participation in the electoral process echoed discussion about the weather—we talked about it a lot, but did nothing to change the situation. Now, we can happily report that many groups across America have begun to substitute positive action for passive discussion.

Major foundations, nonprofit educational associations and advocacy organizations, including the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Corporation, AASCU, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) have undertaken the cause of spurring a healthier level of youth participation in America's democratic process.

The purpose of this guide is to share information that may be helpful in advancing the cause of amplifying the electoral voice of America's college students. The information has been organized around four themes:

- ★ voter registration;
- ★ voter education;
- ★ voter participation; and
- ★ assessment.

The chapters concerning the first three themes are organized into two parts. The first is a research review that summarizes what we know about mobilizing young people to register, learn about issues and get to the polls. The second summarizes some of the best practices at AASCU campuses that have made a difference in engaging students in the electoral process.

We give assessment special prominence because our effectiveness in reaching the goals we feature in this guide are so very important to our dual roles as educators and developers of future generations of citizens. We discovered as we solicited and reviewed the case studies for this guide that few campuses devoted resources to assessing their projects in 2004. This is understandable given that many campuses were so immersed in developing significant programming that they



were unable to put assessment plans into place. The assessment section provides recommendations for conducting quality assessments with modest resources.

We conclude this guide with a discussion of challenges, pitfalls and lessons learned. We believe campuses that are able to build on what others have done and learned will produce better results in the future. The appendices to this volume make the evidence we reviewed transparent.

Appendix I provides campus contacts and summarizes the best practices of 30 campuses in 2004. Appendix II contains the case study template and Appendix III sets out the survey on voting projects sent to AASCU members in September 2005. Appendix IV connects readers with organizations that are building infrastructure to increase youths' electoral voice. ★



VOTER REGISTRATION

Harry Basehart and Jim Perry

Efforts to help college students register to vote in the past two presidential elections have been extensive. Between pop culture icons such as Rock the Vote and World Wrestling Entertainment's Smackdown Your Vote!, it is likely that every young adult heard numerous appeals to register and vote in 2004.

In fact, the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act required postsecondary institutions to make a "good faith effort" to make voter-registration forms available to all enrolled students. Most campuses actively assist students in registering and do more than simply provide a stack of voter-registration forms in the registrar's office.

With all of this activity, it is surprising that empirical research on what works in registering college students is rather thin. Nevertheless, some relevant information can be gleaned from recent studies.

HOW MANY COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE REGISTERED?

How many college students are registered to vote is a basic question. Unfortunately, an exact answer is difficult to find because the best source, the U.S. Bureau of the Census's Current Population Survey (CPS) of voting and registration, looks at *all* young people—college students and non-college students alike—between the ages of 18 and 24.

CPS estimates the November 2004 population of this age group (including both citizens and non-citizens) at 27.8 million, with 51.5 percent reporting they were registered to vote. The number of U.S. citizens in this age group was 24.9 million, with a reported registration rate of 57.6¹ percent. The registration rate for the entire U.S. population aged 18 and over is 65.9 percent and is 72.1 percent for those who are citizens. Among all age groups, the youngest voters continue to have the lowest registration rate.

¹"Reported Voting;" "Voting and Registration," 2006.



Aside from census data, two national surveys have devoted some attention to college students' voter registration. The first is a November 2004 survey of 1,200 college students, both registered and non-registered, funded by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). The principal investigators, Richard Niemi and Michael Hanmer (2004), found that 88 percent of those students interviewed were registered to vote—a percentage that appears much higher than most researchers would expect and that could be caused in part by student misreporting.

A second survey, the Eagleton National Student Voter Survey of 1,000 college students who were registered voters, was completed in March 2005. The survey was conducted by the Center for Public Interest Polling, part of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Although both surveys provide useful information, the Eagleton survey contained more questions on the registration process; unfortunately students not registered were not part of the sample.

WHERE ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS REGISTERING— AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL?

Niemi and Hanmer's CIRCLE survey found that close to half (46 percent) of their respondents recalled being encouraged "by your college or a group at your college" to register.² Of those who were registered to vote, 67 percent said they were registered to vote in their hometown, while only 33 percent registered in their college town. Three-fourths of those registered at home said they preferred to be registered there. Upper-class students were more likely to prefer registering where they were attending school.³ Home-town versus college-town registration did have a slight affect on voter turnout: those who registered for the first time where they attended college or who switched their registration from their home town to their college town had higher voter turnout, by eight to ten percentage points, than those voting at home.⁴

The Eagleton survey found that 69.9 percent of students were registered to vote in their home towns and 28.1 percent where they went to school, percentages that are close to those reported by Niemi and Hanmer in the 2005 Eagleton National. Respondents also were asked to identify *where* they registered to vote, and a

²Iyengar and Jackman, 2004: 3.

³Niemi and Hanmer, 2004: 4.

⁴Ibid., 2.

large plurality (42 percent) said at “a county clerk’s office or the division of motor vehicles.” The next most popular location was “on campus” (26.3 percent). Off-campus events or concerts and online were selected by about one in 10 students.⁵

Over one-third (34.9 percent) said they did not receive help in the registration process. For the approximately two-thirds who did receive help, it was most frequently given by parents or other relatives (23.6 percent). Next in providing help in the registration process, respondents said, was a “student or university sponsored effort to get out the vote,” which was cited by 13.6 percent, slightly above numbers citing help from a county clerk or division of motor vehicles.⁶ Professors or teaching assistants were mentioned by 6.1 percent, which, if combined with student or university-sponsored efforts, increases the percentage of students citing university-related assistance to 19.7 percent.

When given a list of organizations’ websites, from Rock the Vote to college or university sites, and asked to identify which ones they used to obtain information about registration, 72 percent said that they did not go to any Web sites or did not go to any of the ones identified in the survey.

For students who responded that a person or group gave them assistance in the registration process, about half reported that parents or other relatives encouraged them to register (50.4 percent). Half (50.5 percent) reported that friends had encouraged them to sign up to vote. On the other hand, being given a registration form was the most often-cited type of assistance obtained from a “student or university sponsored effort” (54 percent), followed by “helped you fill out a registration form and submit it” (43.5 percent), and “encouraged you to register” (40.3 percent)⁷. The survey also found that among respondents who received help from a professor or teaching assistant, 44.4 percent reported receiving a registration form, and 40.8 percent received encouragement to register. Students living on-campus were much more likely to receive help than those living off-campus (67 percent versus 50 percent).⁸

HOW CAN WE PERSUADE STUDENTS TO REGISTER TO VOTE?

Based on the research cited above, what do we know concerning registration of college students to vote? The limited amount of research does not support firm

⁵2005 Eagleton National: 5.

⁶Ibid., 2.

⁷Sherr, Levine and Rapp: 10

⁸Ibid., 10.



generalizations, but it appears that students are more likely to be registered to vote in their hometown than in the community where they are attending college. A plurality of students surveyed registered at a county clerk's office or a division of motor vehicles, but a significant number, a little over 25 percent, registered on campus. Registration at off-campus events or concerts was infrequent. Many students reported receiving no help in the registration process. For those who did, parents or other relatives were most frequently cited as giving assistance; next in importance was university-related assistance. The kind of assistance provided tended to differ: parents, family and friends encouraged students to register to vote, while university-related efforts were more often used to obtain registration forms.

What are the practical implications of these findings for colleges and campus groups working to register students to vote? As a start, administrators, faculty, staff, and students must be aware that colleges are not the principal location where students register to vote or the main source of encouragement and assistance in registration. With a large majority of students registered to vote in their hometown, it is important to inform them that they can change their voter registration to the community in which they are attending college, if they wish to do so. For students who do not want to change their voting residence, organized efforts should be initiated to help them obtain absentee ballots.

Still, colleges are the registration sites for approximately one-fourth of the students who sign up to vote, according to the Eagleton survey. And campus groups are important sources of assistance in the registration process. However, colleges should do more than simply supply voter-registration forms; they should consider developing additional ways to encourage students to register. Providing a registration form is not the same as initiating a dialogue to discuss why voting is important. Web sites and off-campus events are of little use in registering students. Finally, greater efforts should be made to reach students living off-campus.

WHAT ARE AASCU CAMPUSES DOING TO INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION?

A large number of campuses engaged in focused efforts to increase youth registration in 2004. One reason was the federal requirement that campuses provide voter-registration information to students. No doubt another reason was that registering voters is non-controversial because it benefits all political parties. Campus voter-registration efforts fell into four categories: national

programs, integrated campus campaigns, curricular interventions and information campaigns.

National Youth-Mobilization Programs

A national program with high visibility and brand is MTV's Rock the Vote. It is designed to engage and mobilize young people politically by incorporating the entertainment community and youth culture into its activities. **Western Kentucky University** (WKU) was one of several AASCU campuses to stage Rock the Vote events in fall 2004. Its event featured four area bands, free food and beverages, information booths set up by College Republicans, College Democrats, Amnesty International, mayoral candidates, and special-interest groups from campus and the community. The event attracted about 1,500 WKU students, and more than 550 students registered to vote.

California State University, Fresno organized Raise Your Voice (RYV), a project that took its name from the Campus Compact program designed to more extensively engage college students in the democratic process. The project was an extension of California State University, Fresno's designation as a California Campus Compact Regional Center for civic engagement and student voice. The project was designed to engage various groups and individuals from across the university community to help better inform and involve students, staff and faculty in the 2004 electoral process. This included registering students to vote, educating them about various issues, and motivating them to be involved in the overall election process. The project promoted related events and activities from departments, programs, student clubs, and other entities across the campus and surrounding community. It was not centrally controlled or supported by a single entity.

Another national program, the New Voters Project (NVP), was the model for an initiative at the **University of Wisconsin-River Falls** (UW-River Falls). The goal of the non-partisan New Voters Project was to register young people and get them to the polls on Election Day. UW-River Falls sought to ensure that students were engaged in the 2004 general election by becoming informed on the issues, familiar with the voter-registration process, and then casting ballots. NVP drew support widely from the administration, faculty, staff, and students. An NVP Committee established several goals, among them that student voting at the campus polling station exceed voting in the 2000 Presidential election. It also sought widespread participation in the registration process and tried to address



students' knowledge of issues through a dynamic website, discussions, and campus visits by candidates. A total of 837 students were registered by the UW-River Falls NVP project, accounting for all but 17 first-time voters. On Election Day, 1,704 votes were cast in the campus precinct, exactly doubling the 2000 tally of 852.⁹

Other AASCU campuses, though not tied directly to a national program, pursued a similar strategy of coordinated programming across a series of events to raise awareness about issues, encourage voting, and register voters.

Indiana University Kokomo (IUK) enlisted various community and campus organizations to assist in programming that shared the common goal of registering voters. IUK drew upon national programs and online resources such as declareyourself.com, vote-smart.org and rockthevote.com.

Integrated Voter Registration/Electoral Participation Programs

Campuses began to develop programs that integrated a voter-registration campaign with electoral-participation initiatives. Those programs arose as a result of frustrations with previous voter-registration efforts that simply assumed that registering a potential voter would spur him or her to vote. **Fort Hays State University** (Kan.), for example, developed an integrated program that sought to make the acts of registering and voting a celebration of the democratic process, rather than an imposition of civic duty. Vote Slam and White House Party were part of a campus-wide effort to encourage voter registration and actual voting. The Vote Slam party took place the evening of the main voter-registration drive, October 13, 2004, coinciding with the deadline to register to vote for the 2004 presidential election. Voter registrations were solicited during the evening of the Vote Slam party. As a follow up, the White House Party was held on election night.

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) developed "Bronco Voter Rush: Be Heard, Not Herded," which is a year-round, student-led effort designed to increase political awareness and encourage students to become registered voters. Organizers of Bronco Voter Rush (BVR) view voter registration as only one segment of the larger goal of forming students into an active political constituency. Besides emphasizing voter registration, BVR provided students with opportunities to write legislators and lobby for higher-education issues.

⁹For details see: newvotersproject.org/about_the_new_voters_project.

The **University of Nebraska at Omaha's** (UNO) integrated program was called "Who Cares About Politics? Connecting and Mobilizing Young Voters." Its goals were to inform and engage as many young people as possible about all aspects of the upcoming election—the registration process, the issues and candidates, and the process of governing. The program started with a voter-registration drive in spring 2004 and continued throughout that year. Among the activities incorporated into the program were debates, lectures, panels, and online coverage of the election in Nebraska and Iowa, led by UNO student journalists. The young journalists spoke to their peers through their language of Weblogs and streaming video, staking out nontraditional sites on election night to capture the voices of voters.

At the **State University of New York College at Cortland**, the Institute for Civic Engagement (ICE) and the New York Public Interest Group (NYPIRG), a student organization, worked together on a voter-registration, voter-education, and get-out-the-vote campaign in the fall of 2004. The project was largely a grassroots effort. Students and faculty were encouraged to invite students into their classes to register to vote. Faculty response was tremendous, and ICE interns and NYPIRG volunteers went into just about every class for which a faculty member requested a student volunteer. The voter-registration portion of the project resulted in about 1,400 students registering to vote, according to the number of registration forms turned in to the county registrar of voters. The voter-education component of the campaign was not assessed. However, at the two polling places used largely by students, the get-out-the-vote campaign was estimated to have increased student voting by around 40 percent, based on the increase in voting in the presidential election of 2004 over that in the 2000 presidential election.

Curricular Interventions

Although extra-curricular or co-curricular programming was probably the most common means of encouraging students to register, curricular interventions are becoming more common. To reach large numbers of students over time, **Morehead State University** (Ky.) developed a lesson plan that incorporates civic responsibility and voter registration into its "first-year experience" course. The lesson plan was written jointly by the campus coordinator for the American Democracy Project and a student peer advisor. The lesson was typically taught by the peer advisor. The plan sought to engage students in discussing the importance of their civic roles and why voting is important. Students were given an opportunity to complete voter-registration forms as part of the course. More than 500 registration forms were collected the first semester the lesson plan was used.



Since 2000, **Salisbury University** (Md.) has used a variation on the Morehead State University's curricular intervention. Teams of two students visit classes to discuss why voting is important and to assist students in correctly completing voter-registration and absentee-ballot applications. Prior to the classroom visits, which last 15 to 20 minutes, the student teams receive instruction concerning application forms and discuss how they can persuade their peers that their votes count. They eventually found the following message effective: If more college students vote, they can break the vicious cycle of students saying, "I'm not going to vote because politicians don't listen to young people," and politicians saying, "I don't have to listen to young people because they don't vote."

The social-sciences department and student organizations, including Black Men for Change, the Political Science Club, and the Model United Nations, sponsored the Voter Awareness and Registration project at **Winston-Salem State University** (N.C.). As part of the campus initiative, political-science faculty members offered extra credit to students enrolled in the American Government and Constitutional Law courses if they helped to encourage student involvement.

Information Campaigns

Many campuses became involved in communicating with students to motivate them to register and vote. The **College of Staten Island/CUNY**, for example, began sending voter-registration forms to all students the day after the last day they can register for classes. This assures wide distribution to prospective student voters. In a single week in September 2004, **Middle Tennessee State University** held five major events designed to engage students politically and register new voters. The drive included different activities at different times that required varying levels of commitment from participants. The week culminated with a voter-registration drive at a Saturday afternoon football game.

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and **South Dakota State University** engaged in year-round campaigns to educate and motivate students to participate in the electoral process. ★



VOTER EDUCATION

Richard Kendrick and Jim Perry

The question of how to get college-age students to become knowledgeable voters is complex. For one thing, the question quickly leads us to the literature on civic education and the part it plays in the development of our students as citizens. (Along these lines, Galston's 2002 overview is excellent.) The question takes us, in turn, to issues about the extent to which our society encourages or discourages civic participation and the extent to which programs intended to foster civic participation can be successful if they do not tackle the larger question of the cultural context in which the civic participation is to take place¹⁰.

Leaving those larger, but nevertheless important, questions aside for the time being, our intention here is to conceive the question more narrowly: How can we educate college-age students about the specific candidates and issues upon which they will be voting in a particular election? There are several aspects to even this narrower question. One is the extent to which students seem to be generally educated about governmental process and policy. Do they understand the overall context in which electoral decisions will be made? A second is the extent to which students are aware of candidates and issues specific to particular elections. What does research indicate about the degree to which college students pay attention to candidates and issues? A third facet concerns the extent to which various techniques may be helpful for getting students to pay attention to candidates and issues. Are there any studies that could help us understand what works to get students to focus on the choices they have to make when casting a ballot?

HOW MUCH ATTENTION DO COLLEGE STUDENTS PAY TO POLITICS AND CURRENT EVENTS?

The first aspect of this question is addressed, at least to some degree, by surveys that assess the extent to which college students pay attention to politics and current events. These surveys may be helpful for establishing baseline

¹⁰Friedland and Morimoto, 2005.



comparisons that individual institutions may use to assess how much attention their own students pay to public issues. On the question of whether students even view politics as important, a survey commissioned by the Leon and Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy found that, prior to the 2004 presidential election, only 19 percent believed that politics was very relevant and 37 percent believed that it was fairly relevant.¹¹ By contrast, a survey commissioned by Harvard's Institute for Politics that was conducted closer to the time of the election found that the percentage of college undergraduates who said that "politics is relevant to my life right now" reached a high of 87 percent prior to the 2004 elections.¹²

More recent surveys that address similar variables include those done by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California at Los Angeles. Its survey of college freshmen, *The American Freshman: National Norms for 2004*, found that the percentage of freshmen who believed it was important to keep up with politics and who discussed politics was on the rise. The percentage of freshmen who said "keeping up to date with political affairs" was either a very important or an essential goal in life rose to 34.3 percent. At the same time, the percentage of freshmen who discussed politics frequently also continued to rise—to 25.5 percent in 2004.¹³

On the question of whether college undergraduates aged 18 to 24 pay attention to current events, a 2003 poll commissioned by Harvard's Institute of Politics found that 85 percent of those surveyed reported following current events to at least some degree. Twenty-six percent of the respondents said they followed current events "very closely."¹⁴

A 2004 report by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press reported that the average number of minutes per day spent following news has been declining among all those aged 18 to 24, not just college students. In 1994, members of this age group spent an average of 51 minutes per day following the news. Ten years later, individuals in this age bracket were spending 35 minutes per day. To some degree, this decline can be attributed to an increase in Internet usage. Thirty-six percent of those aged 18 to 29 said they went online regularly to find news. According to the Pew report, 16 percent of those aged 18 to 24 paid a high degree of attention to hard news, 59 percent paid a moderate degree of attention, and 25 percent said they paid little or no attention to hard news.

¹¹Peter D. Hart Associates, 2004.

¹²Schneiders, et al., 2004.

¹³Sax, et al., 2004.

¹⁴Schneiders, et al., 2003: 2.

ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS PAYING ATTENTION TO CANDIDATES AND ELECTION ISSUES?

The second aspect of the question is addressed by surveys that ask students whether or not they paid attention to specific elections, the candidates involved, and the relevant issues. The Panetta Institute's report cited earlier found that only 22 percent of college students who registered to vote were paying a lot of attention to the 2004 presidential election, but that 54 percent were paying some attention to it.¹⁵ Yet more than three quarters of students believed that the outcome of the election mattered.

A related question is: How do college students learn about candidates and issues? What are their sources of information? A 2005 Panetta Institute report found that 79 percent of the college-age students surveyed identified television as a primary (59 percent of respondents) or secondary (20 percent of respondents) source of information. In addition, 70 percent used the Internet as a primary (48 percent of respondents) or secondary (22 percent) source; 75 percent cited family and friends as main sources of information (37 percent as primary and 38 percent as secondary); and 54 percent used community or city newspapers as a primary (26 percent) or secondary (28 percent) source.¹⁶

The 2004 Pew report cited in the previous section found that, among all those surveyed aged 18 to 29 (not just college students), only 18 percent watched television network news regularly and 29 percent watched cable TV news regularly. Only 23 percent reported having read a newspaper the previous day. Young people aged 18 to 24 prefer pictures or videos to reading or listening to the news (65 percent versus 32 percent).

WHAT PROGRAMS IMPROVE COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTENTION TO CANDIDATES AND ISSUES?

We probably have the fewest data about the third aspect of the overall question about the extent to which college-age students are educated voters: What works (or constitutes "best practice") for encouraging students to pay attention to the candidates and issues upon which they will be voting? Motivating students to learn about candidates and issues is one part of this question. Whether students become *knowledgeable* about candidates and issues by virtue of the fact that they

¹⁵Peter D. Hart Associates, 2004: 11.

¹⁶*ibid.*



become attentive is another part. Even if they are paying attention, are they discerning consumers of the information they find? Galston's (2002) review of the literature on civic education suggests that courses that include civics education, especially courses that include discussions of current events, along with service-learning courses, show promise for improving students' civic knowledge. Several resources are available for those who would improve the civics curricula in their institutions. For example, the Center for Civics Education (civicsed.org) offers a variety of materials for use by educators.

Curricula aside, however, little research exists concerning what kinds of *programs* might encourage young people to become educated about the candidates and issues they will find on the ballot. A report by Lake Snell Perry and Associates/Bellwether Research for the Youth Vote Coalition (2002) suggests that one way to motivate young people to become educated is to highlight and discuss those issues of most concern to them personally. Those issues change, but a number of surveys have asked young people which issues are of most concern to them. The Lake Snell Perry study found that the top three concerns among young adults (aged 18 to 24) were terrorism, jobs and the economy, and crime. As might be expected, the high cost of a college education was also a concern. A study commissioned by Harvard's Institute of Politics¹⁷ found that the war in Iraq and Social Security were the top two concerns of college students. It seems logical to conclude that one effective approach to voter education might be to offer programs that provide background information about the issues troubling today's college age students.

Another strategy, investigated by Iyengar and Jackman (2004), involves using technology to improve both the propensity of young people to vote and to learn about specific candidates and their issues. They conducted a research project in which young people in California were sent CDs with information about the 2002 gubernatorial race. Two versions of the CD were sent, including a version for youths and a version for adults. Those who received either version of the CD were compared, after the election, with those who did not receive a CD. The researchers concluded that "CD recipients voted at a much higher rate, showed more interest in the campaign, and expressed greater faith in the act of voting than members of the control group (or the same age group in the general population)."¹⁸

¹⁷Schneiders, et al., 2005.

¹⁸Iyengar and Jackman: 2004: 11.

WHAT ARE AASCU CAMPUSES DOING TO EDUCATE YOUNG VOTERS?

As the preceding section on voter registration illustrated, many campuses integrate voter education into activities related to voter registration and participation. Some campuses have developed voter-education initiatives that are largely independent of their voter-registration and voter-participation programming.

Designated public space

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis created Democracy Plaza to provide an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and the community to practice free speech in a safe, autonomous environment. The plaza, a student run project, began in the summer of 2004 when a group of students, faculty, and staff worked together to address the benefits and drawbacks of developing a physical structure that would provide a common area for students, faculty, and staff from across the university to consider important issues. The project has become more than a physical location, and it now provides an array of programs that seek to stimulate civic awareness on current political, economic, and social issues in the city, state, nation, and world.

The goals for Democracy Plaza are to provide a safe space for students and the university community to practice free speech while becoming educated about current issues of concern such as elections, the economy, and world affairs. The plaza contains chalkboards on which questions pertaining to important issues are posted. The space helps to engage students and others by obtaining responses from them regarding questions posted by the student organizers (for example, what does the U.S. Constitution mean to you?).

Weblogs

Indiana University South Bend presents a Weblog and public radio commentary series focusing on active citizenship, public policy, elections, and related topics. The project is sponsored by the university in collaboration with National Public Radio affiliate station WVPE. The Weblog (<http://ee.iusb.edu/index.php?adp/>) publishes new column-length, op-ed style pieces most weekdays, and WVPE broadcasts the best of them in a regularly scheduled series, thus extending the reach of the project. Writers from the university and the region address issues of local, national, and international concern. The goal was to use frequent, somewhat informal Web publication and radio commentaries to enrich



the region's public discourse about democracy and to engage the university with its wider community in new ways.

Usage figures indicate that the Weblog has been enormously successful. Weblog software tracks the number of times a site or portion of a site has been visited, and the results showed that various portions of the site have been visited from 125,000 to 300,000 times between late July 2004 and March 2006. The front page is visited about 1,000 times a week, and the printer-friendly page, where readers can print out copies of articles, has been visited more than 50,000 times. The radio series is broadcast three times each Tuesday, and the independent rating service for the South Bend region estimates that 15,000 radios are tuned into the station at those times.

Debates

Debates have been a fixture of the American political scene since at least the Lincoln–Douglas era and also are effective pedagogically for engaging and stimulating students. Thus, many campuses have turned to this device as a means for voter education. On September 30, 2004, **Rhode Island College** (RIC) hosted the first-ever statewide DebateWatch as part of a national voter-education program sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). DebateWatch encourages citizens to watch the televised presidential debates, discuss them, and provide feedback to the commission. The college's DebateWatch broke all participation records nationwide with more than 800 people attending. It combined watching the debate with a town-hall twist: It began with commentary from politicians and experts who were interviewed by political reporters. Following the debate, 60 trained student facilitators led focus-group discussions about the debate's impact on the election. Organizers forwarded participants' opinions to the CPD, which later released them to news outlets. The college also conducted independent focus-group research and released results to the media.

Organizers achieved their goal of establishing interaction between citizens and political leaders, as a host of political dignitaries—including a former governor, several state legislators, party leaders, mayors, and city council members—participated in the pre-debate forum. Despite the late hour of the televised debate, 70 percent of the attendees participated in the focus groups. Rhode Island College dominated the news with coverage from the campus on all three network television affiliates' newscasts both before and after the debate, as well as major coverage the following day with two articles in *The Providence Journal* (state's leading newspaper), and a follow-up piece two days later. The event helped to place the college in the forefront of public programming for civic engagement

in the state, and organizers have continued an aggressive schedule of activities involving members of the community.

Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania's honors program organized a series of four debates, held in September and October 2004, to encourage students to actively engage in the dialogue surrounding the 2004 presidential election. The debates focused on the environment, women and family, foreign policy, and the economy. The director of the honors program developed the format for the debate series—four students, organized into teams, conducted research and prepared arguments in conjunction with a faculty member. During the spring 2004 semester, the director recruited faculty members to work with the four groups of students. Students on the teams expressed strong interest in engaging in the debates and worked collaboratively with faculty members in preparing their materials. The debates were held in a venue seating approximately 150 people. The moderator introduced the debate topic and explained the format for the program and then two debate teams engaged in a dialogue about three propositions related to their general topic. Audience members engaged in a question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the 90-minute program.

Turnout for the debates was greater than expected. Approximately 400 students attended the debates, as well as faculty members, staff, academic administrators, and community members. *The Slate*, the campus weekly newspaper, and the *Shippensburg Sentinel*, the community newspaper, covered the debate series.

Candidate Forums and Dialogues

Candidate forums are a staple of pre-election voter education efforts. **Brooklyn College, CUNY** annually stages a unique event, a college civic breakfast, which shares some features of traditional candidate forums. At the breakfast, students meet with community leaders and elected officials to share ideas about the implementation of voter and civic-engagement projects and to discuss campus student elections and student participation. The goal of the breakfast is to encourage students to become more civically engaged by helping them to understand how important that is and to allow them to meet and share ideas with elected officials and community leaders. The students also are given information on engagement opportunities on and off campus, as well as access to other resources. ★





VOTER PARTICIPATION

Matthew Manweller and Jim Perry

Much research has documented the fact that younger citizens vote at lower rates than older citizens (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Miller and Shanks, 1996; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Green and Gerber (2000) note, “Low voter turnout among young citizens has grown more acute since 1972, when the nationwide voting age was lowered to 18. The proportion of eligible citizens aged 18 to 24 who went to the polls declined from 49.6 percent in 1972 to 40.8 percent in 1984 to 32.4 percent in 1996, three presidential elections in which incumbents won by large margins.” According to Moseley (1999), turnout among voters aged 18 to 24 reached an all time low of 12.2 percent in the 1998 election cycle. In the 2000 presidential election, youth voting rates rose to 36.1 percent and then climbed again to 46.7 percent in 2004.¹⁹ However, among college students, voter participation was estimated at 77 percent.²⁰

Glenn and Grimes’ (1968) early work indicated that voting spikes during a person’s late 20s and then holds constant for the rest of the individual’s life. Miller and Shanks’ later work (1996) supports the earlier conclusions. They found that voting by younger citizens stays low for their first three elections and then mimics that of older voters afterwards.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (“Voting and Registration” 2006), citizens aged 18 to 24 make up 13 percent of the total population, but only nine percent of the voting electorate.

WHAT EXPLAINS VOTER TURNOUT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS?

Explaining why younger citizens are less involved in the electoral process has occupied a significant portion of the literature on electoral behavior. Researchers have tried to identify variables that affect, both positively and negatively, youth voting. The variables most commonly identified as relevant to youth voting

¹⁹Lopez, et al., 2005.

²⁰Niemi and Hanmer, 2004.

behavior are: registration rules, education, political “connectivity,” interest in politics, mobility, and early participation in civic-oriented groups.

Strong evidence exists suggesting that voting rates among young people are low due to the burdensome registration procedures in the United States. Piven and Cloward (1988) identified institutional rules as the main cause of low voter turnout in the United States in general. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau confirm that registration rules disproportionately affect younger voters. According to the 2006 report, “Voting and Registration,” only 58 percent of citizens aged 18 to 24 are registered to vote, while 75 percent of voters aged 45 or older were registered. The Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey reports that 24 percent of non-voting younger citizens cited missing the registration deadline as a reason for not voting, and another six percent noted that they did not know how to register.²¹ The response rates for these obstacles were significantly higher than among older voters. Patterson’s (2004) analysis of the youth voting in the 2004 presidential election confirms this hypothesis. He notes:

*[Y]oung voters were more likely to cite eligibility obstacles as a reason for their failure to participate. A third of young non-voters, compared with a fifth of older ones, said that the reason for their non-participation was that they had moved and had not yet registered at their new location. More narrowly, young non-voters were more likely to cite registration mistakes or a lack of registration knowledge as a reason for why they did not vote.*²²

Closely connected to the impact of registration rules is the concept of mobility. Teixeira (1987) and Conway (2000) show that the more mobile citizens are, the less likely they are to register and thus vote. Since younger voters are very mobile (moving to college, moving out of their parent’s house, changing roommates), they are also more likely to need to re-register in order to keep their voter eligibility current.

Education Levels Also Impact Youth Voting

The more education a younger voter has, the more likely he or she is to vote. According to the Census Bureau, only 24 percent of people aged 18 to 24 who lack a high school diploma cast ballots, compared with 38 percent of those with a high-school diploma and 67 percent who have a college degree. Of course, by the

²¹“Voting and Registration” 2006.

²²Patterson 2004: 6.



time they obtain a college degree, people are going to be at the older end of the 18-to-24 age group.

Pirch (2004) and Southwell (2003) look at “political connectivity” as a variable affecting young voters’ turnout. In a study of draft-aged men during times of war and peace, Pirch found that younger male voters were more likely to vote when they were directly affected by political events. Southwell notes that when young voters are more focused on “rights of passage,” such as school, work, and finding a job, they are less likely to vote.

Some newer data on youth voting seem to reject the conventional wisdom that young people do not vote because they are not interested in politics in general. Glenn and Grimes (1968) and Hays (1998) suggest this is the case. However, recent data reported by Patterson (2004) show that younger voters were less likely than their older counterparts to identify lack of interest as a reason for not voting.

Other positive findings reported by Frisco, Muller, and Dodson (2004) indicate that, after controlling for race and socio-economic status, participation by high-school students in civically orientated activities (student government, debate clubs, and community-service projects) has a positive effect on youth voting. Voting by young people also is positively correlated with participation in non-civically oriented activities such as band and sports, but to a lesser degree. Less encouraging are the Baer (1993) and Zaff et.al (2003) findings suggesting that civically engaged college students are not more likely to vote than the general college-aged voters.

Identifying reasons for non-voting among younger voters is difficult because so many of the causal variables are correlated with other non-age-based causes of non-voting. As Roksa and Conley (2001) point out, education, income, marital status, and mobility all affect voter turnout, but all of these variables are also affected by age. It becomes difficult to disentangle the effects of one variable from those of another.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF LOW VOTER TURNOUT AMONG YOUTH VOTERS?

Low levels of youth voting merit serious consideration by academic and civic organizations. Miller and Shanks (1996) point out that early voting behavior sticks with a generation even as its members mature. In their study of cohorts, they note that if a generation’s initial voting behavior is low, despite increasing

over time, it will never achieve levels as high as if the initial rates of voting had been higher. Additionally, there is the problem of under-representation. If younger voters aren't represented in the electoral process in proportion to their segment of the population, the political responsiveness to issues that concern them will also be dampened. Bennett (1991) has shown that because younger voters participate less, campaigns ignore the issues important to young voters.

WHAT PROGRAMS IMPROVE TURNOUT OF YOUNG VOTERS?

Despite traditionally low turnout among younger voters, some programs have succeeded in increasing such turnout. Burgess, et al. (2000) identified the positive effects of MTV's Rock the Vote campaigns. Specifically, they found that if college students sign a voting contract or "pledge card" promising they will vote, they are, in fact, more likely to vote. Green and Gerber (2001) conducted a variety of field experiments to determine what approaches motivated increased youth turnout. They concluded that telephone contacts improved turnout by 5 percent, face-to-face canvassing increased turnout by 8.5 percent, and informing young people about the location of polling places increased turnout by 3 percent. Their overall study concluded that it costs get-out-the-vote organizations about \$12 to \$20 per additional vote. Unfortunately, they also concluded that such contacts produced only short-term results. Post-election surveys concluded that they had no noticeable effect on the long-term voting behavior of students.

In the McDevitt and Chaffee (1998) study of Kids Vote USA, they found that school curricula that encourage students to participate in mock elections or other simulations increased their political awareness and likelihood to use media that provide political knowledge. Because the study focused on children too young to vote, direct connections cannot be made to voting behavior. Nevertheless, we can conclude that such curricular innovations develop other behaviors that indirectly lead to higher rates of voting in adulthood.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN THE FUTURE?

Although most data on youth voting are not encouraging, some recent data from the 2004 election may merit optimism. In the 2004 presidential election, voting by citizens aged 18 to 24 increased by five million voters.²³ Registration rates jumped seven percent and that resulted in an 11 percent increase in voting by this age group (U.S. Census Bureau). However, these numerical increases did not improve

²³Patterson, 2004.



the overall impact of youth voting, because all other age groups experienced similar increases.

WHAT ARE AASCU CAMPUSES DOING TO ENCOURAGE VOTING BY YOUNG PEOPLE?

Case studies reflect that few campuses have focused exclusively on actual voting—and for good reason. After all, students who are not registered cannot vote unless election-day registration is an option. Even if students register in advance, that is only a weak indicator of their likelihood to vote. They are more likely to cast ballots when they perceive their choices are well informed. But some campuses have given special attention to voter turnout, and their efforts have paid off.

Comprehensive Campaigns

Three campuses, **Castleton State College** (Vt.), **Indiana State University**, and **San Francisco State University** (Calif.) illustrate three different strategies for increasing turnout of young voters. Their strategies were comprehensive, but each had a different twist. Castleton focused on a targeted audience: first-year students. Indiana State employed a curricular and co-curricular strategy campus-wide. San Francisco State emphasized outreach to what historically has been an engaged student body.

Castleton State College focused its attention on about 120 first-year students, about one-third of its incoming class. It created a learning community and “A Reason to Vote in ’04 Campaign” within its first-year seminar program. Several election year programs and events were staged, including several voter-registration drives and a speaker and film series. The campaign culminated with a Walk the Vote parade to the polls on Election Day led by the president of the college. To advance the American Democracy Project’s campus efforts, Castleton took the novel step of rewriting its mission statement to give primacy to civic-engagement and public-citizenship opportunities in students’ educational experiences.

Castleton’s assessments showed the programs made a difference. The 120 first-year students who participated in the learning community and a comparison group of 94 non-participating first-year students completed pre- and post-assessment surveys. Participating students had a stronger focus on quality-of-life issues, such as helping others, and were more likely to maintain their newspaper readership than non-participating students. The most significant findings dealt with voter registration and voting. Although 50 percent of students in both groups

entered college as registered voters, 87 percent of participating students had registered by Election Day, compared with 72 percent in the comparison group. Sixty-nine percent of participating students voted, compared with only 46 percent in the comparison group and the 51-percent national average for voters under the age of 30.

Indiana State University (ISU) developed a campus-wide voter-turnout campaign, entitled “4002 in 2004.” Its primary objective was to get 4,002 first-time voters to the polls on November 4, 2004. The campaign was a multi-department, multi-semester initiative involving both curricular and co-curricular components for students in several departments, including those in basic-studies courses, communication studies, journalism, political science, economics, ecology, biology, and psychology. ISU’s “infusion” model took advantage of the 2004 national election to accomplish sustainable curricular changes, successful co-curricular collaboration, and the immediate goal of increasing the number of students who voted in national elections.

The array of activities and events throughout fall 2004 was extensive and culminated in a rally early on Election Day and a Party with the Parties on election night. Election Day began with ISU’s president leading a rally and march to the student polling location. Print and broadcast media covered all of the events of the day. Students in a public-relations class developed a brochure telling first-time voters what to expect at the polls and how to cast a vote. Students at the polling precinct were seen going in and out of the precinct clutching those brochures throughout the day.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the campaign focused primarily on counting voter turnout and “outputs” such as media hits and products like the brochures. Qualitative anecdotal information was collected, but no rigorous scientific assessment was conducted. Identifying the exact number of students who were new voters is complex, but the polling place designated for campus residents experienced a 400-percent increase in turnout compared with the previous election.

San Francisco State University (SFSU), which has a long and rich history of student engagement in campus life, politics, and the surrounding community, turned its attention to a comprehensive outreach program that sought to mobilize students in the electoral process. In 2004, in response to the high level of campus commitment to earlier efforts in voter registration, education and mobilization, SFSU Provost John Gemello sought to institutionalize and formalize the voting



and registration activities. He charged a Voter Registration Steering Committee, consisting of those who previously worked on voter outreach along with additional campus organizers, to reach out to the urban university's roughly 28,000 students. What historically had been the role of the California Faculty Association was to become an institutionalized, campus-wide effort to get SFSU students to the polls. The Voter Registration Steering Committee included the academic senate, Associated Students Inc., the California Faculty Association, several units of the university including the Educational Opportunity Program, financial aid, government and community relations, the political-science department, the president's cabinet, the provost's council, public affairs, the registrar's office and the San Francisco Urban Institute.

The steering committee agreed to work collaboratively on all voter-registration, voter-education, and get-out-the-vote efforts. That included bringing all proposed activities and goals to the table for discussion and ensuring that all registration and education efforts would be non-partisan.

SFSU's strategy proved to be a huge success, getting unprecedented numbers of students registered and to the polls to vote. During the 2004–2005 academic year, San Francisco State University registered 3,635 new voters, more than double the number of new voters from the previous year. According to the Public Research Institute, in an Internet-based survey of SFSU students conducted immediately following Election Day, 95 percent of citizen respondents reported being registered to vote, and 89 percent of all eligible students said they voted. The study also showed that 81 percent of respondents were aware of at least one on-campus voter-outreach event—up from 57 percent in 2002 (<http://pri.sfsu.edu/reports/StudentVotingSurveyReport2004.pdf>). The university provided leadership and support to encourage representatives from the campus offices that have the greatest impact on students to commit time and resources to the overall voter-outreach plan. The combined efforts of that committed group led to the most successful voter-registration and voter-turnout drives in the university's history.

Poll-Worker Programs

Two campuses, **Missouri State University** and **Northern Kentucky University**, sought to engage students on Election Day in 2004 not only as voters, but also as poll workers. Their two programs were supported by grants from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, which was created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). As Americans have become busier and disengaged from political activity, the challenge of finding enough poll workers on Election Day has

increased. Thus, the Missouri State and Northern Kentucky poll-worker programs simultaneously addressed a national need and engaged students in ways that educated them about the democratic process and laid the foundation for longer-term involvement in the electoral process.

The duties assigned to students as poll workers differed at the two universities. At Missouri State, each student was given a Palm Pilot loaded with voter-registration data that allowed them to direct voters who came to an incorrect precinct to their proper polling stations. At Northern Kentucky, students staffed polling places and did other necessary tasks. As a by-product of their efforts, students received modest stipends for their service as poll workers normally do. The two campuses succeeded in recruiting 354 poll workers, exceeding their original goals by more than 100 students.

Removing Barriers to Voting

The **University of Minnesota Duluth** (UMD) focused on eliminating bureaucratic obstacles that discouraged student voting. Minnesota law allowing for college students' same-day registration appeared to be quite simple; colleges were to provide the County Registrar with a certified list of students who were eligible to vote, along with acceptable photo identification. In reality, the county delegated responsibility to the City Clerk, who said that colleges need not worry about providing the list because he could obtain it. Poll watchers assigned to student-heavy precincts, however, sometimes were not told that such a list was available. After efforts by the university, student-voting issues were solved by the time of the 2004 elections, when there were no reports of student voters being turned away from the polls. Approximately 80 percent of the eligible on-campus students voted, and turnout of eligible voters in the off-campus student precincts was above 75 percent. Overall, voter turnout in Duluth was approximately 80 percent.

Get-Out-The-Vote Competitions

Kennesaw State University's (Ga.) project involved students "adopting" potential voters (family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates) and encouraging them to register by Georgia's registration deadline and to vote in the 2004 election. Faculty informed their classes of the project and encouraged them to take part in the process. Classes that registered and got the most people to the polls celebrated at an end-of-the-year party.





Political Rallies

Students at **California University of Pennsylvania** staged a political rally to energize the campus community and area voters. The College Democrats arranged for Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), a surrogate speaker for the Kerry-Edwards campaign, to visit campus the week prior to the presidential election. Between 300 and 350 people attended the outdoor rally, far exceeding expectations. An unintended consequence was that many students voiced disappointment that the College Republicans did not stage a Bush-Cheney rally. ★

ASSESSING ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT

Elizabeth Bennion

Institutions of higher education are facing increasing pressure to measure the impact of curricular and cocurricular activities. External accrediting agencies include “engagement” as a core component of reaccreditation procedures.

As institutions and accrediting agencies make community involvement and citizenship development a core part of the mission of public higher education, it is important for colleges and universities to assess the impact of their efforts to foster the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for lifelong active citizenship.

Academics often view assessment as a burdensome external requirement, a time-consuming drain on resources, or an administrative or legislative excuse for enhanced control. Despite these risks and the negative attitudes they generate, there are, in fact, many positive reasons why colleges and universities should actively encourage assessment of civic-education programs and activities. Positive reasons also exist for individual faculty members and departments to pursue opportunities for assessment. Assessment of the impact of programs and other activities provides enhanced opportunities for evidence-based curricular and cocurricular programming. In addition, these assessments can attract grant money and donations and in turn can also lead to increased cooperation from university, community, and legislative partners.

Assessment also provides a way to blend teaching and service with scholarship by providing an opportunity for scholarly presentations and publications. It has been 16 years since the publication of Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Too few schools actively encourage faculty to engage in the scholarship of teaching and the scholarship of application. Such scholarship provides an opportunity for faculty and staff members to use their scholarship to inform their teaching and service, while also using teaching and service activities as fieldwork for innovative research projects that benefit them, as well as their students, universities and communities. Most importantly, assessment allows campuses to determine whether or not they are meeting their civic-education goals.



This guide highlights a series of innovative civic-engagement initiatives by colleges and universities throughout the United States. The activities are diverse in their specific intent, scope, audience, and complexity, but they share a common goal of increasing students' civic knowledge and engagement. This chapter is a guide to assessing campus activities designed to educate, register, and mobilize voters. It briefly describes qualitative and quantitative measurement techniques and provides specific suggestions for assessing student learning and behavioral outcomes. This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to research methods. It is, instead, designed to help readers think about ways to assess campuses' civic-engagement activities.

STEP 1: SELECT A PROJECT

Voter education, registration, and participation can be promoted in a wide variety of ways. As individuals select programs and activities to implement on their campuses, they should consider not only the interests of students, staff, and faculty, but also the resources available. What kinds of events have been the most popular in the past? What campus units are already engaged in civic-education and engagement activities? Which of the activities described in this guide might work well on a particular campus? Are enough students available to sponsor a Rock the Vote concert? (See College of Staten Island and Cal Poly Pomona in Appendix I) Would local bands be willing to participate in a Vote Jam or Vote Slam party free of charge? (See Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania's and Fort Hays State University in Appendix I) Is classroom-based voter registration feasible? See Appendix I for a discussion of Kennesaw State University's classroom-based voter registration strategy, including a class versus class competition to register voters outside the classroom. See also the discussion of Castleton State College of Vermont's First-Year Seminar Program that used learning communities to enhance students' commitment to civic engagement. Are there enough student clubs to support voter-registration tables across campus? Is there someone on campus who can design and edit a political Weblog? (See Appendix I for a discussion of Indiana University South Bend's American Democracy Project interactive Weblog). Does the campus have strong enough relationships with local radio stations or newspapers to allow creation and implementation of a regular voter-education series? Appendix I also includes a discussion of the public radio series of Indiana University South Bend's American Democracy Project. Consideration should be given to the full range of resources available, including partnerships among academic departments, student services, student clubs, and community organizations.

What is the goal to be achieved by sponsoring a certain activity? How will the activity (or series of activities) selected help to attain this goal or its corresponding learning objectives? How can the effectiveness of the program or activity in meeting these objectives ultimately be measured? *A series of research/assessment questions should be chosen when a project is selected.* Assessment questions may occur to organizers after they plan a particularly exciting event. Most of the projects included as case studies in this guide were organized based on a strong belief that the activity would promote informed engagement in the electoral process. As the authors of the case studies point out, it was only later that they realized that they should have built assessment into their planning. Every campus project reported in this guide could benefit from systematic assessment. In future years, campuses may add assessment goals and plans before repeating their events.

In order to make the transition from event to assessment opportunity, organizers must ask themselves the following questions: Why did this event appear to be successful? How is success being defined? How could success be measured or documented? Alternatively, *new* projects and activities can be designed to advance specific objectives or to answer specific research questions. To provide more systematic evidence of what works, for example, AASCU set up an 80-campus randomized field experiment to test the relative effectiveness of different voter registration methods.²⁴

A variety of methods can be used to assess both short-term and long-term learning, attitudinal changes, and behavioral outcomes. Pre- and post-event surveys, interviews, and focus groups are valuable tools for such assessments. Because the American Democracy Project is designed to promote lifelong civic engagement and active citizenship, its effects may not be immediate. Longitudinal studies of alumni who participated in ADP courses and projects would be useful for assessing long-term impact. Another long-term assessment mechanism involves a college-wide entrance and exit survey that can be compared with national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or the Higher Education Research Institute's Coordinated Institutional Research Program (CIRP).

²⁴This project is described at the end of this chapter.



STEP 2: SELECT A TIMEFRAME FOR THE PROJECT

Repeated exposure to civic-engagement messages and activities over a sustained period of time is the best way to produce long-term changes in students' attitudes and behaviors. Institutions can create a variety of one-time classroom or extracurricular activities designed to fit into a larger calendar of civic-oriented activities. Students' reactions to each event or assignment can be assessed through quantitative or qualitative instruments, using post-event data collection or a pre-test and post-test design. Similarly, student attitudes and learning outcomes in a single community-based learning course can be measured using a simple pre-test and post-test design, employing surveys, interviews, student reflective essays, or focus groups at the beginning and the end of the course. Alternatively, and perhaps most productively, institutions can create multi-session or multi-year programs designed to immerse students in civic-oriented curricular and extra-curricular events.

A common first-year experience, a learning community, a lecture series, a civic-engagement certificate, a leadership program, or a campus theme are some of the ways that colleges and universities have tried to increase connections among learners while building a coherent program focused on a common set of civic-oriented learning objectives. In such cases, longitudinal analysis is possible. A common first-experience may be best assessed through a pre-test and post-test of students before and after their freshman year. (See Appendix I for a discussion of Castleton State College of Vermont's First-Year Seminar Program, including a comprehensive assessment strategy). A follow-up study of these students later in their college careers would help to determine whether or not any changes observed were temporary or more enduring. A study of coordinated, multi-year curricular infusion of civic content through general education requirements could be evaluated best through a panel study of specific students at the beginning of their academic careers and again as seniors, or through a series of analyses of a larger cohort of students.

The nature of civic-education efforts, as well as the nature of assessment questions, should determine the timeframe for an assessment project. To learn about reactions to a single activity or event, a short-term project is ideal. To study changes in students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors over time, a longitudinal design is most appropriate. The same data-collection techniques used in short-term assessment projects can be used in long-term projects, although controlling for intervening (extraneous confounding) factors may be more difficult in long-term studies of attitudinal and behavioral change.

STEP 3: SELECT A RESEARCH METHOD

Choosing a research method is central to developing a good assessment project. Before selecting an assessment method, the question to be answered, the participants or phenomena to be studied, and the resources and data available all must be considered. Also important is the ability to gather and analyze new data. Faculty should consider forming a learning community to review relevant literature and design a methodologically sound study that can be published as part of the growing body of research on civic education and student learning. The typical methodological choices are to use a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods design.

A qualitative design, such as a case study, uses qualitative data to create a narrative analysis. A quantitative design, such as a closed-ended survey, uses quantitative data to produce a statistical or numerical analysis. Alternatively, data may be collected in one form and converted to another form for analysis.²⁵ For example, open-ended reflective papers describing what students learned from a particular experience can be used to generate categories of responses. The papers can then be re-read and coded to develop an analysis of the most frequent responses.²⁶ In addition, both types of data or analysis may be used to supplement one another. A quantitative analysis can provide actual numerical measurements of the effectiveness of voter-education, registration, and mobilization efforts. Qualitative analysis can provide rich descriptions and interpretations of the activities from the perspective of the participants.

The purpose of the research, the type of data available, and the type of analysis desired should shape the research method. Specific quantitative objectives should be measured quantitatively. Broad research questions should be studied qualitatively. For example, the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at Northern Kentucky University created a detailed list of specific quantitative objectives for its Step Up to the Plate: Be an Election Day Poll Worker program. Those objectives were to submit 150 student names to election officials, to produce a 90-percent satisfaction rate among election administrators dealing with NKU students, and to stimulate 70 percent of the student poll workers to indicate a willingness to be poll workers again in the future (see Appendix I). Each of these objectives is detailed, specific, and easily measured through simple participant counts and surveys.

²⁵See Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, for a taxonomy of mixed methods models.

²⁶See Bennion 2006 for an example of this type of coding of student reflections on a required voter mobilization field experiment.



In contrast, Indiana University Kokomo sought to create a “safe space” to discuss election-related political controversies. This objective is not quantifiable, but the achievement of this goal can be assessed by observing the flow of conversation at campus events or through focus groups with participants that encourage people to talk about their own feelings about the event. Even in such qualitative assessments, numbers can sometimes be helpful in assessing the activity. The percentage of attendees who actually spoke in group discussions or the percentage of people answering Yes in an anonymous survey asking if they felt the event created a safe space to air diverse personal opinions, could help determine whether most or all participants felt comfortable voicing comments and asking questions.

It is important to supplement overarching goals with specific learning objectives or research questions. Emporia State University sought to “develop a solid foundation” for participation in the democratic process and to “change the culture on campus” to more actively engage students in the democratic process (see Appendix I). Such a broad set of goals and objectives is difficult to quantify, but a variety of qualitative and quantitative indicators could be determined to help document achievement of those broad goals. For example, faculty, staff, and students could work together to determine what would constitute a “solid foundation” for electoral participation, arriving at a list of knowledge, skills, and values required to pursue such activism. Instruments—such as surveys, interview questions, focus group themes, etc.—could then be designed for administration to students before and after the yearlong series of civic-engagement events and activities. The changing campus culture could be measured using similar instruments, as well as through content analysis of a campus Weblog and/or official campus documents such as the institution’s mission statement, bulletins, and promotional materials. Speeches by top administrators could also be examined to see how (and how often) they highlight civic and political engagement.

Each campus, each course, and each project has its own set of learning objectives. Good teaching requires instructors to set forth a variety of learning objectives. Colleges and universities must first decide what types of knowledge, skills, and dispositions engaged citizenship requires before they can attempt to provide them to students so that they become active members of the electorate. Once institutions know what they are seeking to teach, they can find both quantitative and qualitative ways to assess the effectiveness of their curricular and extra-curricular civic-education activities.

Quantitative models

Three quantitative models are particularly appropriate for assessing the impact of campus-wide efforts to register, educate, and mobilize voters. These methods include: participant counts, surveys, and experiments.

Participant Counts. The American Democracy Project (ADP) seeks to equip students with the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to lead civically engaged lives. Campus events and activities are only effective if students actually participate in them; participation itself is the first, but not the only, step needed for transformation. As a first step toward measuring the effectiveness of campus activities, it is important to count and record the number of students participating in each event. Even a simple event count can provide the institution with data about the number of students participating in civic-engagement activities. While most of the projects described in this guide did not include a sophisticated or systematic assessment component, most included a basic event count. Such a count can be useful in generating resources from departments, administrators, student government associations, and external funding agencies.

A participant count can be particularly effective when assessing the impact of an on-campus voter-registration drive. By counting completed registration forms, a campus can estimate the total number of students who registered to vote as a result of a campus campaign. In order to test the effectiveness of different times and locations for voter-registration tables, registration forms can be counted and recorded at each location per hour or per day. As Middle Tennessee State University discovered, it is important to coordinate efforts across campus (see Appendix I). The effectiveness of Rock the Vote, Vote Jam, and Vote Slam parties can be calculated quickly, following the example of Western Kentucky University, by counting the total number of people attending each event and the total number of new and updated registration cards completed at each event (see Appendix I). This percentage yield can be compared to the registration rate (or numbers) at other events to help universities with long-term event planning.

This very basic form of assessment can be expanded to other types of civic-engagement projects. For example, the extent of participation in IUPUI's Democracy Plaza could be quickly assessed by counting the number of messages (in unique handwriting) posted on the permanent blackboards each week or each day. (Of course, a content analysis of the entries themselves would be required to assess the *quality* of the dialogue and nature of the ideas expressed in this open venue for free expression). Participation in an American Democracy



Project Weblog or interactive Web site can be assessed by counting the number of contributors to the site each week. This number can even be disaggregated to compare rates of postings by students, faculty, and community members. With proper software, readership levels also can be tracked by accessing the number of hits on the site and on particular parts of it. This basic form of assessment is already taking place, for example, at Indiana University South Bend and at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (see Appendix I), and is easy to do.

While participant counts can provide information about the number of people attending events or contributing to a campus dialogue, they tell us little about who these people are, how they are responding to various events, or what they are learning. For many voter-education events, supplementing a participant count with brief, self-administered participant surveys can help a campus better understand who is attending each event, how satisfied participants are with the quality of the events, how much “repeat business” the ADP is generating on campus, and how participants are learning about ADP opportunities. Surveys also can help campuses understand what participants hoped to gain from their participation in ADP activities, and whether or not they believe they have learned anything useful. Through data collected in brief surveys, a campus can assess the effectiveness of its efforts to expose students to new information about civic engagement and voting. Survey data also can be useful in developing a comprehensive plan for student education and engagement.

Closed-Ended Surveys. Surveys can be used to gather data on students’ knowledge, attitudes, opinions, and behavior. In closed-ended questions, respondents are asked to select their answer from among a list provided. The list of response categories provided should be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive.²⁷ In other words, the list should include all the possible responses expected and respondents should not feel compelled to select more than one response—unless the evaluator specifically wants the respondent to check all that apply. Closed-ended questions provide uniformity of responses and are easily processed. (In contrast, open-ended responses must be coded prior to data entry, and some respondents may give answers that are difficult to code or irrelevant to the assessment question).

Survey questionnaire items must be clear, precise and unambiguous.²⁸ When designing your questionnaire, take care to:

²⁷Babbie, 1990.

²⁸Ibid.

- ★ make items clear;
- ★ avoid double-barreled questions;
- ★ ensure respondents' competence to answer the questions asked;
- ★ ask relevant questions;
- ★ avoid biased terms;
- ★ avoid negative terms; and
- ★ think carefully about the order of questions.

Double-barreled questions ask for a single answer to a combination of questions. For example, you might ask respondents to agree or disagree with the statement: The United States should abolish the Electoral College and use proportional representation system. Though some people might agree with this statement, others might wish to abolish the Electoral College, yet reject proportional representation as the best alternative. Moreover, some respondents may not understand the proportional representation system well enough to answer the question.

Similarly, asking about something respondents have never thought about before may generate “doorstep opinions”—opinions made up for the sake of the survey, but which do not reflect any genuine underlying attitude. Providing a “don’t know” or “haven’t thought much about this” option helps to limit the number of doorstep opinions a survey will generate. Specific words (for example, welfare) carry negative connotations that skew results to questions about the public’s support for specific policies (in this case, aid to the poor). Likewise, stating that a particular public figure or political party supports or opposes a particular program will bias results by causing respondents to register their like or dislike for the politician or party rather than for the policy or campaign proposal respondents are being asked to evaluate. Including negation in a “Yes” or “No” question (for example, “a candidate should *not* run negative ads” or “candidates should be *prohibited* from running negative ads”) can also create misunderstanding among respondents.

Finally, the order of questions should be carefully scrutinized for possible framing or “cueing” effects within the questionnaire. Asking respondents how important it is for citizens to vote in a democracy, before asking them if they voted in the last election, will almost certainly increase the number of people who claim to have voted who, in fact, did not. In the same way, asking about a particular problem before asking respondents about the most important problems facing the city, state, or nation may produce an unusually high number of respondents’ demonstrating concern about the problem identified in earlier survey questions. Similarly, asking questions about the economy, and then asking respondents





whether or not they approve of the job the president is doing in office will bias results in ways that reflect citizens' attitudes toward the economy. It is a good idea to test different versions of a questionnaire before using it to assess student-learning outcomes.

A good closed-ended survey item may take the form of a statement rather than a question. After summarizing a particular attitude or behavior in a brief statement, respondents can be asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement, using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" or from "very often" to "never." If a single survey is administered after a workshop, lecture, internship, field experience, or forum, students can be asked to report their own beliefs about whether or not these activities shaped their attitudes toward politics and their propensity to vote. They also can be asked specific factual questions about the voting process and/or local, state, and national government and politics. Ideally, students will be given surveys both before and after a specific event, course, semester, or series of activities.

Before and after surveys are especially effective at measuring students' achievement of specific learning objectives in a particular course. Indeed, survey methodology can even be incorporated into a quasi-experiment to test the effectiveness of a new civic-engagement module within an existing class. The surveys completed by Castleton State College of Vermont students provide an excellent example of this assessment design. The surveys of 120 first-year students before and after they participated in the ADP Learning Community were compared with surveys administered to 94 non-ADP first-year students before and after the first semester. By administering pre-semester surveys to both groups, evaluators could account for pre-existing differences between the groups. The results suggest that learning communities can be a highly effective way of enhancing students' civic outlook and engagement (see Appendix I).

Longer-term studies measuring the cumulative effect of the college experience could use a pre-test upon admission and the post-test upon graduation. Follow-up studies could be conducted with alumni five or ten years after graduation. Longitudinal and panel studies are particularly appropriate to assess the lasting effects of students' college experiences. The pre-event survey establishes baseline data, while the post-event survey detects changes in students' attitudes toward politics, including levels of knowledge, efficacy, and eagerness to participate in the democratic process. Data for a specific institution can be obtained through an institution-designed survey or a national survey, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Campus results can be compared to previous

surveys at the same institution or to similar institutions regionally and nationally (see the Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania case study in Appendix I).

Field experiments. While surveys are often a very good source of data, they rely upon students' own reports about their attitudes and behavior. A senior exit survey or interview might be plagued by problems caused by improper recollection or inaccurate reporting. This is particularly true when voting behavior is concerned. In the 1990s, the gap between the official voter turnout in presidential elections and the reported turnout in the American National Election Studies was more than 20 points. While only half of all respondents actually voted, almost three-quarters reported voting. Students who over-report voting may also over-report participation in election-oriented campus activities (i.e., voter-registration drives, candidate forums, etc.), thus leading to overestimates of the effectiveness of campus efforts to register and mobilize voters. In addition, the relationship between the independent variable (voting) and the dependent variables (participation in a variety of campus-based activities) could be spurious. Both campus engagement and voting behavior could be caused by other variables that are not accounted for by the statistical model.

Randomized field experiments can overcome both problems by moving away from self-reports concerning participation in campus election-oriented campaigns or voting.²⁹ Students are assigned to particular "treatments," and their voting behavior is tracked through official voter files. Random assignment ensures that students in the control group will be similar to students in the treatment group(s) in terms of gender, age, race, ideology, partisan and other politically relevant characteristics. All external factors will affect both groups, allowing researchers to isolate the effects of the treatment. By randomly assigning students to a control group or a contact group, assessment teams can actually measure the effectiveness of specific efforts to educate, register, and mobilize voters.

New York State requires colleges and universities to mail every student a voter- registration form. However, in other states, universities could mail voter-registration forms to a randomly selected group of students and then check actual voter-registration records to determine which students actually registered to vote. Similarly, student volunteers could make get-out-the-vote calls to a randomly selected group of students. Researchers on campus could then match

²⁹See Gerber and Green 2000 for an excellent discussion of the power of randomized field experiments.





phone contact to actual voter turnout.³⁰ Any number of experiments could be designed on a college campus. Randomly selected students could be invited to attend particular events. Those activities could be followed by surveys (of both the contact and control groups) or matched to actual voting records to determine the effect of such activities on voter turnout.

Field experiments are superior to surveys for determining cause-and-effect relationships. Students may canvass local neighborhoods in community-based field experiments, allowing them to learn the impact of their own mobilization efforts, while also allowing for follow-up surveys that test changes in students' knowledge about, and attitudes toward, campaigns and elections.³¹ Despite the significant advantages, field experiments are limited in the number of variables they can examine simultaneously and are not always practical to administer. Researchers must consider the feasibility of randomizing the treatment and the availability of voter records when designing such experiments.

Qualitative models

Qualitative research is a method of data collection and analysis that is non-quantitative or not quantifiable.³² The data are usually gathered using less structured research instruments employing *open-ended questions*. Although the *reliability* of qualitative research results is much lower than the results calculated in quantitative research, qualitative research can take a more comprehensive look at the behaviors, attitudes, and motivations behind responses.

In a qualitative study, research questions are stated, rather than specific quantifiable objectives or hypotheses.³³ A central assessment question (or questions) and several associated questions are developed. Those questions will become topics explored in open-ended surveys, interviews, and observations. Three qualitative techniques are particularly appropriate for assessing the impact of campus-wide efforts to register, educate, and mobilize voters: open-ended survey questions, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

Open-ended survey questions. Qualitative data provide detailed information about students' reactions to events. While closed-ended questions reduce the

³⁰See Green and Gerber 2004 for practical advice on designing a field experiment and helpful hints and online tools for analyzing experimental data.

³¹See Bennion, 2005, for an example of a successful student-led voter mobilization campaign. See Bennion, 2006, for an evaluation of the effects of the experiment on the student canvassers.

³²Lofland & Lofland, 1984.

³³Creswell, 2003.

number of irrelevant responses, they also may overlook some important responses that the evaluator did not anticipate. Open-ended questions allow respondents to interpret them in their own ways and to decide what facts and observations they deem most relevant. When designing an open-ended survey, the researcher must be very strategic, thinking carefully about how each question relates to the overall assessment questions and goals. The number of questions should be limited to avoid losing the respondents' attention and willingness to respond.

When constructing qualitative survey questions, the questions must solicit useful information. In other words, take care not to compose questions that invite the respondent to answer simply "Yes" or "No" or just provide a brief three- or four-word answer. By the same token, if questions are too broad, the responses may not provide the specific information needed to properly assess the effects of an event. For example, rather than asking if a student enjoyed attending a Debate Watch, the student could be asked what she or he learned about the candidates through watching the debate. Instead of asking whether or not a student learned anything from a particular speaker, the student could be asked to list three specific things he or she learned while listening to the speaker's presentation. The rules regarding wording and placement of questions discussed earlier for closed-ended surveys also apply to open-ended questions.

Open-ended surveys can be self-administered or conducted as phone interviews. For example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designed an open-ended phone interview for its Political Engagement Project (PEP). The project is examining courses and programs that use various forms of experiential civic education at the college level, including service-learning, internships, semesters in Washington, visiting speakers, simulations, collaborative social research projects, and living/learning communities.³⁴ The interview consists of 24 open-ended survey questions that measure several factors: students' goals for the political engagement course, program or experience; reactions to the course or program; perspectives on the pedagogies and experiences in the course or program; perspectives on the goals of the course or program; assessment of the impact of the course or program; and responses to dealing with conflict. Because the survey is quite long, it makes more sense to administer it as a phone interview than to rely on students to write or type answers to all 24 questions. (In fact, many of the questions have several parts, resulting in a total of 35 potential questions).

³⁴See Higher Education: Civic Mission & Civic Effects.



The PEP questionnaire is designed to allow students themselves to assess the impact of the experience. For example, students are asked:

- ★ Did the experience change the way you think about what counts as politics or what it means to be politically involved?
 - ▶ If so, how—what did you think before, and what do you think now?
 - ▶ If not, what do these ideas mean to you?
- ★ Is there anything important you learned in terms of your political knowledge or understanding of politics?
 - ▶ If so, what and how did you learn it?
- ★ Did your experiences in the course/program change your attitude toward politics—making you feel more or less connected with it, more optimistic or pessimistic that there is a way for you to connect, more confident of yourself and your ability to contribute?

Such open-ended questions can be included in a written survey or administered via telephone or face-to-face interview. Open-ended surveys or interviews also can be supplemented by closed-ended surveys (as is the case with the Carnegie study).

In-depth interviews. With in-depth interviewing, questioners typically interview one respondent at a time. It is expected that the interview will be structured so that all respondents have a similar experience from the beginning to the end.³⁵ The questions do not have to be so strictly regimented that the general flow of conversation is interrupted, but a common theme or a common set of basic questions should exist for all participants. While some interviews are tightly structured (as in the example of the Political Engagement Project's Student Phone Interview Protocol), others may be loosely structured, with a list of general questions or themes to be discussed. A small number of loosely structured interviews can be used to generate research or assessment questions for future investigation. While loosely structured interviews allow the most freedom for respondents to develop their own thoughts, they also run the risk of creating a very long transcript that contains very little information relevant to the assessment questions. The following are some basic guidelines for interviews:

- ★ listen more, talk less;
- ★ follow up on what participants say and ask questions if you do not understand the response;
- ★ avoid leading questions by asking open-ended questions instead;

³⁵Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996.

- ★ do not interrupt the respondent;
- ★ keep participants focused and ask for concrete details;
- ★ tolerate silence in order to give the participant time to think;
- ★ do not be judgmental about participants' views or beliefs; and
- ★ do not debate with participants; simply record responses.³⁶

Data can be recorded in one of three ways: taking notes during the interview, writing up notes after the interview, and audio- or videotaping the interview for later transcription. The latter option is usually the best and most accurate choice for interviews, although notes can still be taken to highlight key points made during the interview.

Focus groups. Focus groups are interviews with five to 10 people at the same time. The group interview is semi-structured around a small set of themes of interest to the evaluator. The advice for single-person interviews applies to focus groups, but facilitators of focus groups must be particularly vigilant to strike a careful balance between keeping participants on track and allowing group dynamics to determine the flow of comments. This can be difficult as facilitators try to allow a natural rhythm and exchange of ideas while also encouraging all participants to share their views.

Focus groups have the advantage of efficiency in getting information from a number of people. The interactive group setting may stimulate new ideas and observations, while allowing evaluators to observe group dynamics. Notes can be taken during or (immediately) after the focus group, or the session can be videotaped for later review and transcription. The facilitator should keep the main research questions in mind and guide the discussion, making sure to touch on relevant themes and questions. The discussion itself can be informative for the participants as well as the evaluator. Events such as Indiana Kokomo's post-film discussions lend themselves well to this approach, because the group discussion is both part of the learning experience and part of the assessment process. Focus groups could be used to gather detailed information about a particular experience in a freshman learning community or to ask students to consider both past and present reactions to similar events. In addition, focus groups can be useful in a mixed-methods study. The group can identify important themes and research questions for further (often quantitative) research.

³⁶Gay & Airasian, 1992.



MIXED METHODS APPROACHES

The ideal form of assessment for voter registration, education, and participation is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, called a mixed-method approach. This approach offers a range of perspectives on a program's processes and outcomes. The benefits of a mixed-method approach include the following:

- ★ it increases the validity of findings by allowing examination of the same event or learning experience in different ways;
- ★ it can result in better data-collection instruments;
- ★ it promotes greater understanding of the findings; and
- ★ it offers something for everyone.³⁷

The process of looking at different data sources, called *triangulation*, is the main advantage of the mixed-method approach. For example, it is helpful to conduct focus groups to aid in the construction a questionnaire that will be distributed among a larger group of participants at a later date. Quantitative data can initially indicate the amount of change that occurred in voter participation during the 2006 election, for instance, while qualitative data can help the researcher understand why. Both types of data can be equally important. A focus group can lead to the construction of a closed-ended survey, which can be followed by in-depth interviewing to increase the validity and reliability of the research. In addition, different offices on campus (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs) may have different interests in the assessment. Chief academic officers may be interested in hard facts and figures on the number of young voters reached by an initiative, for inclusion in university reports. Chief student affairs officers, in contrast, may be more interested in hearing what students have to say about the particular program, in order to plan future activities. A mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to continually build on the strengths of each type of data collection and minimize the weaknesses of any single approach.

Data also may be collected in one form and converted to another form for analysis. As explained earlier, open-ended reflective papers describing what students learned from a particular experience can be used to generate categories of responses for follow-up, closed-ended surveys. Alternatively, content analysis of student reflection in papers, speeches, comments, or interview transcripts can be quantified, for example, to list the number of times students mentioned particular skills, values, behaviors, or beliefs. Content analysis of coverage of activities in campus or local newspapers, radio stations, or television stations can include

³⁷See the National Training and Technical Assistance Center, 2006.

a quantitative analysis of the times specific words are mentioned or subjects are covered. Or it can include the number of media hits a specific program or activity generates, as well as a qualitative analysis of the nature and quality of the news coverage. Indeed, some of this data can be quantified to reflect the balance of positive versus negative news stories or the number of times faculty or administrators were interviewed as opposed to students.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Individual campuses should create assessment plans that reflect their own unique goals and objectives. The following section offers some preliminary assessment ideas for a few of the most common voter-education, registration, and participation activities on college campuses. Drawing upon the strengths and weaknesses of current assessment efforts, this section is designed to provide an easy way for campuses to begin (or improve) their assessment plans. This list can be expanded and adapted to include a wide variety of other voter-education programs and activities.

Classroom-based voter registration

Classroom-based registration campaigns can be assessed in a number of ways. At the most basic level, instructors or campuses can set a quantitative goal for the number of classes involved and the number of students registered. A simple count of participating instructors and classrooms, and a simple count of students registered in the classroom, can quickly determine whether or not an institution met its self-defined instructional goals.

To gauge the relative effectiveness of classroom-based registration versus event-based registration or voter-registration tables, volunteers can be instructed to use batch sheets and to submit each batch of completed voter-registration forms with a batch sheet identifying who registered the voters, the method and location of registration, and the time period of the registration effort. This allows for a quick comparison of the *per hour* or *per session* rate of registrations. Instructors also can conduct quasi-experiments by giving a presentation to one class and simply making a stack of forms available to another class. They can then compare the number of people who register in each class. There could, however, be pre-existing differences among the classes that explain the differential rates of registration. Ideally, classrooms can be randomly assigned to different voter-registration presentations or to a control group getting no presentation or a presentation on a topic unrelated to voting. This is most realistic if units across campus, or several



campuses, participate in the experiment. To control for the different effectiveness of different teachers, it makes sense to randomly select different sections of the same teacher's course or courses. Students also can be surveyed or interviewed to gain a better understanding of the reasons why they did or did not register to vote in class. Finally, an evaluator can access voter files to determine if students who registered after a formal class presentation were more likely to vote than (registered) students in classes that received no such presentation.

Voter-registration tables

As with classroom-based registration campaigns, a campus can set a quantitative goal related to use of registration tables. A student government association might set a goal for the number of student organizations hosting registration tables or the number of buildings staffed with registration tables. Student leaders or college administrators might also set a numerical goal for the number of students registered at the tables. A simple count of participating student organizations, table locations, and completed voter-registration cards could quickly determine whether or not an institution met its goals. To gauge the relative effectiveness of different locations or times, volunteers can be instructed to use batch sheets and to submit each batch of completed voter-registration forms with a batch sheet identifying who registered the voters, the method and location of registration, and the time period of the registration effort. If registration tables are part of a larger coordinated registration strategy, locations can be expanded to include classroom presentations (see California State Polytechnic University in Appendix I). This allows for a quick comparison of the per hour rate of registrations for different locations and times of day. Creating a randomized field experiment of registration tables is very difficult because one cannot control who walks by the table, but a multi-campus design may be possible in which a large number of campuses are stratified and then assigned to heavy, light, or no registration-table categories.

Voter-registration mailings

Universities in New York State are required by law to mail a voter-registration form annually to every student (see SUNY-Cortland in Appendix I). Because students return these forms directly to the voter-registration offices, universities have generally dismissed the possibility of assessing the effectiveness of this mail-based campaign. In fact, there are several ways this campaign could be assessed. First, universities could use *planet coding*. By including a barcode on pre-addressed return envelopes for the voter-registration offices, it is possible to know almost precisely when the registration card is sent to the appropriate officials. The university will also be able to know that it was, in fact, the form they sent to the student that was used to register. Alternatively, universities can access the voter

files after the election (or after the registration deadline) to see how many of the students registered to vote. Usually, a registration date is included in this file. This would provide a good indication about the effectiveness of the registration campaign, though the student could, of course, have registered in response to some other stimuli. The voter file has the advantage of allowing evaluators to match students' registration with their actual voting behavior to see if registered students actually voted on Election Day.

Finally, in states where state law does not require colleges to mail every student a voter-registration form, colleges can conduct a randomized field experiment by assigning students to a contact group (receiving the form) and a control group. Registration and voting behavior could then be accessed after the election to compare registration and turnout rates of the contact and control groups. Mail is more expensive than class presentations or registration tables. Such an experiment would allow the university to measure the return it gets on its investment. The university also could conduct focus groups with students randomly selected from two groups: those who registered and those who did not.

Rock the Vote/Vote Slam/Vote Jam Parties

If the intent of a voter-registration party is to get the message out to a specific number of students or to register a certain number of students to vote, the effectiveness of Rock the Vote, Vote Jam, and Vote Slam parties can be quickly calculated by following the example of Western Kentucky University and counting the total number of people attending each event and the total number of new and updated registration cards completed at each event. While Western Kentucky University established primarily qualitative goals for its Rock the Vote event, it also established a numerical goal for the number of students organizers hoped to attract to the concert and to register at the event (see Appendix I). The fact that the university fell short of its goal of registering 1,000 students led organizers to think about ways to attract more students who were not already registered to vote. It also may help the school to set more realistic, incremental goals in the future. If similar registration counts are kept for alternative registration methods (e.g., tables in classroom buildings and classroom-based registration efforts), the university also could conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine the impact of the event relative to other (less expensive) registration techniques.

Of course, goals may also be more qualitative, including building a sense of community among students or changing students' attitudes about politics, politicians, or voting. While increasing a student's political efficacy through a single concert is unlikely, there may be some short-term gains that could be



measured through a focus group of participants talking about how their sense of civic duty or efficacy was affected by the event. Such concerts and parties also could be part of a larger field experiment on non-residential campuses in which some students were invited to a weekend series of concerts, forums, and other activities, while a control group did not receive invitations for these events. Surveys could be administered to both the control group and the contact group before and after the events. This does, however, require some students to be excluded and requires attendance records at each event.

Volunteer/poll worker recruitment

Campuses have found many ways to assess the impact of volunteer-recruitment strategies. First, numeric goals can be set to specify the number of volunteers desired for a get-out-the-vote-campaign, voter-registration drive, or poll-worker program. For example, Missouri State University set a goal of recruiting 100 students to serve as poll workers and actually recruited 106 (see Appendix I). A campus goal might include attracting a specific mix of men and women, freshmen and seniors, or students from different majors and programs. These data are quite simple to track through a quick volunteer-information form when people sign up to work at the polls. The Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at Northern Kentucky University developed an elaborate set of quantitative goals for recruiting quality student poll workers. It specified the number of student names to be submitted to election officials, the percentage of election administrators and supervisors who would express satisfaction with the student poll workers, and the percentage of student participants who would be willing to serve as poll workers again in the future (see Appendix I). Brief phone interviews are a simple way to gather information on the quality of volunteers' service, from the perspectives of the volunteers and those they were assigned to help. Similarly, brief surveys, interviews, and focus groups can be used to assess the experiences of volunteers in voter education, mobilization, and registration, and those of their supervisors.

Voter mobilization (get-out-the-vote) drives

The targets and goals of student-oriented voter-mobilization drives vary from campus to campus and from instructor to instructor. In some cases, campuses actively mobilize student voters through speakers, panel discussions, parties, or group walks or rides to the polls. The success of these efforts can be assessed in several ways. To assess the effectiveness of their 2004 voter-mobilization efforts, SUNY Cortland and University of Wisconsin-River Falls compared turnout rates for the 2000 versus 2004 elections at student-dominated precincts (see Appendix I). While this provides some evidence of a successful voter-mobilization campaign,

other factors may have led to the increased turnout. Indeed, the number of young people casting votes rose throughout the nation in 2004. While UW River Falls' exact doubling of the 2000 vote tally for the campus precinct is certainly suggestive, this result must be compared to increases in turnout in other precincts to bolster confidence in the conclusion that the voter-mobilization campaign caused the increase in turnout. From a research standpoint, the ideal design is a randomized field experiment in which specific students are targeted for voter mobilization while others are placed in a control group.

If students are volunteering as part of a get-out-the-vote campaign, the overall objective may be to help them understand how a political campaign operates or to feel as if they are making a difference. In this case, before and after interviews or surveys may assess these qualitative goals. Alternatively, the goal may be to contact a certain number of registered voters. This is simple to track by asking volunteers to keep a list of people they have contacted. This allows volunteers to call back or re-visit the homes of those who were not previously reached.

If the goal is to actually measure the effectiveness of the student-led mobilization campaign in turning out voters on Election Day, the best technique is a fully randomized field experiment. While this means that some voters will be set aside in a control group, it allows researchers to actually measure the impact of the mobilization campaign on voter turnout, and even to test the relative effectiveness of different messages or forms of contact.³⁸ Of course, depending upon campus goals and resources, a randomized field experiment may or may not be feasible or desirable.

Candidate debates/Debate Watch

One goal of a campus debate may be to establish interaction between citizens and political leaders (as was the case for Rhode Island University's statewide DebateWatch in 2004, see Appendix I). The fulfillment of this goal can be assessed by having people sign in or asking people to wear a particular colored name tag or ribbon identifying them as a political official, student, faculty/staff member, or community member. Audience members' experiences at the debate can be assessed through a brief self-administered questionnaire, or through follow-up calls or e-mail surveys of participants. Perhaps the ideal form of assessment combines assessment with further learning opportunities by facilitating post-debate focus groups. To further the educational value to students, students themselves can

³⁸Bennion, 2005.





be trained to serve as focus-group facilitators (see Rhode Island University in Appendix I).

Another goal of hosting campus debates can be to generate media coverage to promote the good work of the university while allowing the information from the debate to reach students and community members who were unable to attend. Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania and Rhode Island College certainly had this goal as part of their debate series and DebateWatch programs (see Appendix I). Such a goal can be easily quantified in terms of counting “media hits,” which can be tracked by simply counting the number of times a story about the debates appears in a campus or local newspaper or news program. The attainment of specific content goals can also be assessed through content analysis of relevant stories. Similar assessment techniques can be used for issue-based table talks, lectures, and public forums.

THINKING AND ACTING EXPERIMENTALLY: A MODEL ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The kind of project that AASCU itself embarked on following the earlier stages of the Electoral Voices Project is the type of model assessment project that other campuses might emulate on a smaller scale. The association received a grant from the Young Voter Strategies Task Force, a project of the George Washington University’s School of Political Management, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, to conduct a randomized field experiment involving voter-registration efforts at 80 campuses. Campuses with an average enrollment of 10,000 students were selected, in order to compile a database of at least 800,000 college students at similarly sized campuses. The goal was to register between 40,000 and 50,000 college students during the fall 2006 campaign season and also to learn about the most effective ways to register students to vote. The design included randomly assigning students to different means of encouraging voter registration, including mail to home addresses, mail to campus addresses, e-mail, class presentations, and on-campus registration tables.

The overarching objective of the project was to test the effectiveness of various registration approaches in order to *institutionalize* affordable and sustainable campus registration programs. The random assignment of campuses to various methods of encouraging registration was designed to ensure that, on average, the schools assigned to each strategy possessed similar baseline levels of campus activity and student engagement. Across the 80 campuses, the only systematic difference was the randomly determined presence of voter-registration tables.

Registration and subsequent voter turnout were to be established by checking the official voting records for students at the campus addresses and at the home addresses, whenever possible. Using the actual records was intended to avoid the problem of over-reporting. The campus environment itself presented the opportunity to conduct an inexpensive opinion survey to determine whether the registration effort changed how students thought about the voting process, the school, or themselves.

This project was designed to provide a rigorous assessment of voter-registration efforts, increase the number of students registered to vote, fill a critical gap in the research literature, and provide colleges and universities with scientific data they could use to maximize the effectiveness of future voter-registration efforts. In addition, the project was designed to produce a large number of media hits in campus, local, and national news outlets, thereby drawing attention to the good work public colleges and universities do to strengthen our democracy. ★





CHALLENGES, PITFALLS AND LESSONS

Jim Perry

College campuses stepped up in a big way in 2004 to reverse a decades-long decline in youth electoral engagement. The 30 cases discussed earlier in this guide illustrate the diversity, inventiveness, and commitment of campuses across the country. This sample only scratches the surface of the investments that colleges and universities made in 2004 to attract young people back into the electoral process.

Although our review of assessment practices suggests what can be done in the future, we can learn a great deal from the research and a retrospective look at the cases presented in this guide. We now ask: What conclusions can we draw about challenges, pitfalls, and lessons for success to guide our future actions?

CHALLENGES

Anyone who has worked to make a difference on a university campus knows the many challenges that confront any effort at change. The cases studied in Appendix I illustrate that one of the challenges we regularly face is the lack of adequate financial resources. Although we can point to small budgets as a challenge, committed people find ways to overcome resource constraints. Two dimensions of programming that may present more critical challenges are planning and assessment.

Planning can be difficult across academic terms and changing student constituencies, but it pays dividends. Planning in an academic environment is challenging when the goal is to involve many stakeholders. The challenge is magnified because planning often should take place in the prior academic term, and student motivation may be hard to sustain. By the same token, the dividends from meeting the planning challenge can be great. They include increasing the likelihood that co-curricular activities can be integrated into the next term's courses and teaching and that opportunities for participation in, and promotion of, electoral initiatives can be expanded.

Campuses that have succeeded in meeting the planning challenge appear to have several things going for them. First, their top leadership, often the president or provost, gets behind the effort early, creating some impetus for others to join in. Second, they begin with a core group of committed students, faculty, and administrators who develop a vision that helps to guide their overall efforts. Thus, campuses interested in planning ahead need to explore their prospects for top-level support and the availability of a core leadership team. Getting these assets in place is likely to be critical to ultimate success.

Assessing initiatives involving electoral voice is difficult, but essential. In their rush to “make things happen,” many campuses did not formally assess their voter-registration, education, and participation initiatives in 2004. The focus on assessment in this guide reflects the belief that effective assessment is essential to the future of campus-based election initiatives. It is imperative to demonstrate that campus election initiatives do not merely achieve their goals, but also advance the education of students for their roles as informed, thoughtful, and active citizens. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and particularly the efforts of Anne Colby, Tom Ehrlich and their colleagues (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont and Stephens, 2003; Colby, Beaumont and Ehrlich, forthcoming), point the way toward the type of goals and assessments we need.

Campuses’ commitments to the values of student learning and acquiring new knowledge should drive pursuit of rigorous assessments of our interventions to increase students’ electoral voices. We need to think of our interventions as experiments and assess them accordingly. As the preceding chapter on assessment illustrates, campuses can assess their interventions even when resources are limited. If campus leaders frame assessments as opportunities for student and faculty research and learning and as opportunities for advancing the case for external support, participants are more likely to be serious about assessments and reap the rewards.

PITFALLS

Many pitfalls could be discussed here. Certainly a lack of planning and forethought are among the shortcomings and missteps campuses experienced in 2004. We choose instead to highlight only one issue—political neutrality.

Be clearly neutral when it comes to political events. One reason electoral activities have vanished as an important part of campus life is the concern that they will not be neutral, but instead favor one candidate or party over another. If



universities are to return to being forums for political and electoral dialogue, they must provide opportunities for all views to be heard.

In some 2004 election initiatives, campus leaders thought they were being neutral, but failed the acid test in the view of some campus stakeholders. Some groups objected, for instance, to the showing of the movie “Fahrenheit 9/11” even when they were given an opportunity to respond following its screening. Political events must be conducted even-handedly, or they can do more harm than good. Recruit calm, impartial moderators to preside over activities. People of opposing viewpoints should be consulted about the design of events so that neutrality is built into the planning, not imposed after protests. Campuses should become models for bringing people together across differences, an end that is not self-fulfilling, but one to which we can aspire by being careful about the design of electoral initiatives.

LESSONS FOR SUCCESS—WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Many factors contributed to the success of the electoral activities documented in this guide. The four factors we consider were the most critical across the initiatives we studied: student leadership, faculty involvement, collaboration, and integration of voter registration, education, and participation with one another and with the curriculum.

Student-led initiatives have great benefits and increase the chances for institutionalizing change. The cases featured in this guide almost universally targeted students as their primary audience. Thus student involvement is essential since students are the primary audience. But having students lead or be co-equals with faculty, staff, and community members in electoral initiatives is important for many additional reasons. Students are energetic and their peers listen to them. Furthermore, if students are to become tomorrow's leaders after they graduate, it is important that they get exposure to those roles today.

Faculty involvement is important because faculty significantly influence students' judgments about the value of electoral participation. Faculty involvement is all about getting students to “pay attention.” Students make choices about their priorities for life during college, and expressing their electoral voices may not be a priority when students enter. The decline of voting in America means that many students may never have talked with anyone they respect about registering to vote and getting involved. A faculty member could be the first person who raises the issue.

The adage “actions speak louder than words” also comes into play. If faculty take time to remind students about voter-registration deadlines, incorporate discussion of important election issues into their subject matter, or share with students their own commitment to voting as an important act of their citizenship, students are more likely to pay attention and engage politically.

Collaboration across campus is typically necessary for the success of electoral initiatives. Just as with the involvement of students, contributions from stakeholders across a campus are critical for the success of most electoral initiatives. Collaboration can be difficult to initiate but can pay big dividends in creating energy and common purpose across a campus. Commitments from presidents and provosts can trigger such collaboration.

Collaboration creates opportunities for electoral initiatives that might not otherwise exist, including access to resources that might not be available if voter registration, education, or participation operates in a vacuum. If students seeking to register or mobilize their peers are able to combine their energies with one or more academic and support units on campus, more resources can be channeled toward the goals of the electoral initiative. Such collaborations are facilitated when partners are able to identify learning (e.g., acquiring civic skills), student development (e.g., leading an independent initiative), and institutional (e.g., building a stronger identification with the campus) goals.

Collaboration also creates opportunities to expand the base for participation and recruitment and to communicate to larger target audiences. New possibilities arise, for instance, when university public-relations and communications staff become partners with students and other stakeholders.

On the whole, collaboration creates a platform for constructive synergies across campus units and unanticipated benefits for the general goal of enhancing students’ electoral voice.

Initiatives that are integrated with the curriculum and across the domains of registration, education, and participation are more likely to produce significant results. Collaboration is a form of social organization that increases coordination and integration. The case studies of AASCU campuses suggest that increasing integration in substantive ways is also important for the success of electoral initiatives. Two types of substantive integration appeared to produce results. One is integration across different facets of electoral activity—registration, education, and voting. Many people interested in increasing youth electoral involvement





recognize that traditional efforts to register young voters are not enough. Youths need to be registered, but they also want to be familiar with issues and see their concerns being addressed in elections to justify their getting involved. Integrating all facets of electoral initiatives on campuses is one way to produce better results.

Another way to integrate electoral programming is to embed it within curricular initiatives. One case writer summarized this lesson succinctly:

Programs undertaken in a vacuum do little good; they need to be incorporated into classes or other activities.

In 2004, the campuses that moved electoral interventions from merely “extra-curricular” activities to “co-curricular” activities were, other things being equal, more likely to succeed in reaching their goals. Campuses that were able to intervene through their curricula—for example, by incorporating electoral initiatives into first-year seminars—had the greatest success. ★



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APPENDIX I

Campus Case Studies

All AASCU campuses were asked to nominate the campus programs they perceived as most successful during the 2004 election cycle. After reviewing the nominations, the Electoral Voices Task Force asked many of the campuses to prepare a 700-word summary about one of its programs in a format specified by the task force (see *Appendix II for the case study template*). The task force reviewed the case studies and selected 30 for inclusion in this guide. It is important to note that the case studies presented in this guide do not represent the full range of activities taking place at each of these campuses or at all AASCU campuses. These were the activities viewed to be most successful during the 2004 election cycle.

The matrix on page 67 summarizes the case studies that appear in this appendix. As the case studies address different facets of electoral activities, the task force has identified their content with an “x” in the voter-registration, voter-education, and/or voter-participation columns of the matrix. The content of some cases is relevant to only one of these categories; other cases cover two or more.

There are five cases with content that is relevant to all three categories of activities. Of the five, Indiana State University and San Francisco State University (Calif.) were asked to submit longer cases because of the scope of their activities and because both sought to make changes that would contribute to the institutionalization of civic engagement on their campuses. These two cases precede the alphabetized listing of the other 28 cases.

The task force encourages readers to contact the authors of the case studies for additional information about these commendable programs.

Campus	Program Name	Voter Registration	Voter Education	Voter Participation
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	Voting Campus Initiative	x	x	
Brooklyn College, CUNY	Annual Civic Breakfast		x	
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona	Bronco Voter Rush: "Be Heard, Not Herded"	x	x	
California State University, Fresno	Raise Your Voice—Student Civic Engagement Project	x	x	
California University of Pennsylvania	Victory 2004 Rally		x	
Castleton State College of Vermont	A Reason to Vote in '04 Campaign	x	x	x
College of Staten Island/CUNY	Voter Registration Program	x	x	
Emporia State University	Voice Your Vote: A Transformation of Campus Culture			x
Fort Hays State University	Vote Slam / White House Party	x	x	
Indiana State University	4002 in 2004	x	x	x
Indiana University Kokomo	Building Character, Building Community	x	x	
Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis	Democracy Plaza		x	
Indiana University South Bend	Weblog and Public Radio Commentary		x	
Kennesaw State University	Maximizing Registration and Voting	x		
Middle Tennessee State University	MTSU Voter Registration Drive	x		
Missouri State University	College Poll Worker Program			x
Morehead State University	Voter Registration Through the First-Year Experience	x	x	
Northern Kentucky University	Step Up to the Plate: Be an Election Day Poll Worker			x
Rhode Island College	Debate Watch 2004		x	
Salisbury University	Voter Registration in the College Classroom	x		
San Francisco State University	Voting at SFSU: A Case Study for Institutionalization	x	x	x
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	Honors Program Election Debate Series		x	
South Dakota State University	Student Voter Project	x	x	
SUNY Cortland	Voter Registration, Education, and Participation Campaign	x	x	
University of Minnesota Duluth	Election 2004 Voter Turnout Efforts			x
University of Nebraska at Omaha	Who Cares About Politics? Connecting and Mobilizing Young Voters	x		
University of Wisconsin—River Falls	New Voters Project	x	x	x
Western Kentucky University	Rock the Vote	x	x	
Western Michigan University	City Commission Candidate Forum		x	
Winston-Salem State University	Voter Registration and Awareness	x	x	



Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

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“4002 in 2004”

Indiana State University (ISU) designed an “infusion” model of civic engagement that took advantage of the 2004 national election to achieve sustainable curricular changes, co-curricular collaboration, and the immediate goal of increasing the number of students voting in national elections. This university-wide effort involved multiple departments and courses, stretched over more than one semester, and included both curricular and co-curricular activities. Students in several disciplines became involved, including students in communication studies, public relations, radio-TV-film, journalism, political science, economics, ecology, biology, psychology, and several other courses. Extensive efforts were made to link the campaign to existing activities such as the University Speaker Series. Students in introductory courses developed projects and activities focused on civic engagement. Public-relations students developed the communication and promotional materials and assisted the campus American Democracy Project Task Force in conducting the voter-turnout campaign. These students worked with other faculty and students in radio-TV-film and journalism courses to develop the essential media-relations materials. The students wrote, produced, and placed articles and public-service announcements in the school newspaper and on the campus radio station. The network of activities and events was extensive and culminated in a rally early on Election Day and the Party with the Parties on election night. Visit indstate.edu/adp/vote_2004.htm for additional information about the “4002 in 2004” campaign.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The university president, the student-government association president, and the associate dean of the College of Arts & Sciences co-chaired the campaign. Other academic and non-academic units on campus were sponsors throughout the campaign. The primary incentive for sponsors to participate was inclusion on the project's Web site, in programs and fliers, and on T-shirts. The university president, the provost (vice president for academic affairs), and the vice-president of student affairs spoke at a variety of events. People at each level of the institution contributed

through their knowledge by speaking at events and by providing funding or “in-kind” support.

Goals and Objectives

While the primary goal of increasing voter turnout (4,002 new first-time voters) anchored the campaign, other objectives included engaging students in re-learning “civics;” increasing students’ focus on issues critical to participative democracy, creating stronger partnerships among a wide variety of units on campus, and developing a model of civic engagement that the institution could sustain. The campus American Democracy Project Task Force was constructed to include the broadest possible array of units and departments across campus.

Audiences

The target audiences included students, staff, faculty, and community (especially local government). The incentives for students included food, beverages, T-shirts, and course credit for the communication students most significantly involved in conducting research, developing strategic-planning materials, and developing communication and promotional materials such as public-service announcements, fliers, brochures, and advertisements.

Project Planning and Timeline

The campaign planning began in late 2003. We tried to include student participation in all important planning and decisions for the campaign. We coordinated “4002 in 2004” campaign activities with the traditional events of the semester so that the “4002 in 2004” campaign had a significant presence as a sponsor, collaborator, or source of speakers. In spring 2004 a research project was developed and coordinated in several communications classes; the public-relations program served as a curricular “anchor” for the campaign. Graduate students in a research methods course designed and completed archival research; in-depth interviews and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff; and a survey to measure voting knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of students.

Students in the Introduction to Public Relations course applied contemporary communications theory to literature on student-voting behavior and identified effective communications strategies to encourage students to vote. Students in the Public Relations Case Analysis course developed a strategic communications plan to reach the campaign goal, and students in the Writing for the Broadcast Media course developed specific tactics to enact the plan. Work in the courses was coordinated and sequenced so that students relied on, and benefited from, the research accomplished by the others. The comprehensive research report completed in the





spring served as text in several fall courses. Students in Advanced Public Relations Case Analysis and Public Relations Strategic Planning utilized the prior research, and two first-year learning communities studied the research in units designed to focus on aspects of college students' political participation.

In the fall of 2004, student voter-registration drives were coordinated by First Year Programs, numerous student organizations, student life staff, the League of Women Voters, and others. Judy O'Bannon, former First Lady of Indiana, was a featured speaker.

Communication and promotion of the voting campaign were strong due to the collaboration with ISU's communications and marketing department, the student newspaper, and the campus radio station. Staff members from the communications and marketing department attended every event and created press releases that generated stories in the local newspaper. The staff also developed a series of television commercials called "First Vote," in which individuals shared their experience of voting for the first time. The student newspaper dedicated a column every week to news about the campaign. The radio station ran public-service announcements about it constantly. In the days just prior to the election, various academic, student, and administrative units paid for advertising in the university paper that encouraged students to vote. The ISU American Democracy Project web site became the focal point and repository for campaign activities, resources, and the calendar. A "volunteer form" link on the site attracted more than 70 volunteers. The university library hosted numerous events, including Debate Watch, and Banned Books Week.

The coordinators of three general-education courses, focused on writing, psychology, and communication, integrated political participation into the courses, which enroll approximately 2,000 new students annually. Residence-hall staff integrated campaign themes into their routine programming.

We created Pizza & Politics, a weekly program intended to provide a place for student-faculty dialogue around current issues. The interview and survey research completed by students identified the issues featured at Pizza and Politics. The effort concluded with an election night Party with the Parties to watch the returns. ISU also registered as a DebateWatch site and participated in two national research projects focused on the debates, the results of which were included in published research and national press release on the research projects.

Election Day began with ISU's president leading a rally and march to the student polling location. Print and broadcast media covered all of the events of the day. Public-relations students developed a brochure telling first-time voters what to expect at the polls and how to cast a vote.

Budget

Most of the campaign was conducted with virtually no budget because leaders could rely on the incredible range of sponsorships and in-kind donations. The most important incentive to participation in this campaign appeared to be commitment to civic engagement and voter participation. The total budget for the project—contributed by the vice president for academic affairs—was \$2,500, of which \$2,000 was spent for T-shirts. The rest of the budget was spent on printing of fliers, brochures, and other promotional materials. The pizza and drinks consumed at Pizza & Politics events were paid for by various academic departments and other university units. The library paid for the food at DebateWatch. The communications and marketing department produced the “First Vote” advertisements.

Assessment

Our primary method of assessment was quantitative: counting participation and “distributed output” (media, brochures, etc.). We collected anecdotal qualitative information, but did not conduct rigorous and scientific assessment. We did monitor the campaign by requesting immediate feedback from students, faculty and staff. We saw significant participation of students in voting, and while identifying exact numbers of students who voted is complex, we know that the polling place designated for campus residents experienced a 400-percent-increase in turnout. Although official data were not collected, we know that the number of eligible voters was increased by at least 500. More than 1,000 students participated in the Pizza & Politics discussions. The barbershop owner across the street from the campus precinct reported that in the 25 years he'd had his shop, he'd never seen such activity on Election Day. Participation by campus media in the campaign was very significant. We strongly believe that the collaboration with the communications and marketing staff, campus media, student government, residential life and other student-affairs units, and active involvement by high-level administrators—including the university's president—were critical to the overall success of “4002 in 2004”.

Lessons Learned

In this successful program, students, faculty and staff learned that the content of textbooks can be applied to real-world problems, opportunities, and solutions. Several students remarked that they appreciated knowing their work would be of “real” use and enjoyed seeing its usefulness in action. We all became more





convinced that courses that might appear to have rigidly defined content can engage students in civic activities and, through active-learning opportunities, still lead students to master the content the courses aim to teach. The call to action embodied in the slogan “4002 in 2004” served to build the collaborative bridge between departments, units, curricular and co-curricular programs, learning communities, faculty and staff, administration, and the surrounding community. We firmly believe that by being flexible, yet goal-oriented, inside and outside the classroom, we have established models that will encourage further experiential learning throughout the campus community.

San Francisco State University

San Francisco, California

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“Voting at SFSU—A Case Study for Institutionalization”

San Francisco State University’s (SFSU) overarching goal is to foster among students a sense of political and social efficacy, linking their concern for social and economic justice to a growing capacity to effect responsible change. This means civic engagement is seen as an agenda spanning the classroom, the campus, and beyond. Seen from this angle, extracurricular activities can promote a wide variety of civic engagements, from community work to voter registration. To expand civic-engagement opportunities, San Francisco State University leaders forged a partnership with the elected student government and made voter registration, education, and voting central elements of the civic-engagement agenda.

SFSU has a long and rich history of student engagement in campus life, communities and politics. The faculty union—the California Faculty Association (CFA)—and the president’s office for years had worked together on campus voter registration, but as various voter-participation activities began to emerge, President Robert A. Corrigan and Provost John Gemello thought a comprehensive approach would have more impact.

In the fall of 2004, the provost created a Voter Registration Steering Committee to implement a far-reaching voter-participation program. The administration provided leadership and encouraged campus representatives who had maximum contact with students to commit time and resources to the voter-outreach plan. That form of

support has been the catalyst for institutionalizing a voter-outreach structure that gives every eligible SFSU student the opportunity to register to vote.

SFSU's voter-registration strategy proved to be a huge success. Since the creation of the committee in 2004, voter registration at SFSU has increased more than 100 percent over previous years. Students also have gone to the polls in unprecedented numbers.

Organizers, Sponsors and Institutional Involvement

In 2004, the provost responded to the high level of commitment to previous voter-registration, education and mobilization efforts and charged a Voter Registration Steering Committee to formalize and institutionalize SFSU's registration and voting activities. The committee includes representatives of the academic senate, Associated Students Inc., the California Faculty Association, the Educational Opportunity Program, financial aid, government and community relations, the Political Science Student Association, the president's cabinet, the provost's council, public affairs, the registrar, and the Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (formerly the San Francisco Urban Institute). The administration's support has been an invaluable component in the ultimate success of all voter-outreach efforts, providing the opportunity for committee representatives to give voter activities high priority in their respective operations and activities.

When the committee hosted a 2004 City Supervisors' Forum, the administration provided crucial help in negotiating the venue. Political-science faculty, politically affiliated student clubs, and government and community relations coordinated the candidates' attendance. Faculty were encouraged to release students from classes to participate, and steering committee members staffed voter-registration tables.

The steering committee made voter-participation efforts highly visible. The CFA and the Associated Students manned registration tables daily, registering voters and providing voter-education materials in high-traffic areas. Student volunteers targeted large classes for voter-registration presentations. The Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (ICCE) arranged with The New York Times to provide 1,000 free newspapers daily for two weeks prior to and following the election, giving students the opportunity to see in depth the larger national context of the issues and dialogue surrounding the election.

The Associated Students, supported by ICCE, organized a recruiting and training program for student registrars who would provide voter-education materials in the classroom. Faculty members from political science and other disciplines worked





with the student groups, training them in the theory and mechanics of community education. Students worked equally effectively with academic senate and leaders of the faculty union. The efforts strengthened relationships among the original voter-outreach participants, student groups, university offices, faculty, and the external community, bringing SFSU a step closer to a comprehensive plan.

Goals and Objectives

The central goal of the Voter Registration Steering Committee during the 2004 election cycle was to register 3,500 new voters. Other goals were to create a voter-registration website with on-line registration capabilities and voter-education information; to have the academic senate pass a resolution urging faculty to support the committee's efforts; to generate personal emails from President Corrigan urging students, staff, and faculty to register and go to the polls; and finally, to host a number of voter-education and get-out-the-vote events. Each committee representative would use the resources he or she had available to make the goals a reality.

Because so many campus offices were involved in the initiative, it was important to designate a representative to be the hub—one university unit to track progress, answer questions, gather and distribute information, coordinate meetings, and document the committee's activities. ICCE, a nexus of university civic engagement, was a natural hub for this activity. Public affairs and ICCE created an official voter website with a direct link from SFSU's home page, which could not have been done without the support of the administration. The site acted as a resource on voter eligibility, with a direct link to the Secretary of State's website for immediate registration. The site provided information on volunteer opportunities and a calendar of voter-education events. Subsequent to the voter-registration deadline, the website became a non-partisan informational resource for local, state, and national ballot measures.

Audience

The committee's student audience consisted primarily of people from California who averaged 25 years of age. About 70 percent of the audience was made up of people of color; 60 percent were women; and 69 percent were receiving financial aid. A large percentage of SFSU students are the first in their family to attend college or be eligible to vote, and many speak English as a second language. Initially, SFSU faculty also were part of the target audience, as it was vital to the success of the project that faculty support the campus-wide efforts.

In 2004 the steering committee took a multi-pronged approach to reach its audience. To effectively reach students and faculty in a short amount of time, the academic senate passed a resolution, subsequently distributed to all faculty, informing them of SFSU's commitment to lively and widespread voter-outreach efforts and to encouraging voter registration and education. The resolution urged them to publicize voter-campaign information and to educate their students on the importance of making informed choices in the electoral process.

To effectively reach the student population, the registrar e-mailed students voter-eligibility information and a link to an online registration form. The registrar reported receiving confirmations that 98.7 percent of students received the e-mail. Voter rallies were held at SFSU's Malcolm X Plaza, centrally located at the student union building, on days of peak student attendance. Events included speeches by local and national figures who addressed topics of concern to students—access to health care and social services, local politics, and funding for education. Some faculty released students or assigned students to attend events, resulting in consistently high attendance.

Project Planning and Timeline

The provost charged the steering committee with its voter-outreach assignment at the beginning of the fall semester. Thereafter, the committee met every two weeks to move the agenda forward until Election Day. The steering committee agreed to work collaboratively on all voter-registration, education and get-out-the-vote efforts; bring all committee intentions and goals to the table for discussion; co-sponsor all events and ensure that all voter-registration and education efforts would be non-partisan. The overall goal, in short, was to organize an institutionalized voter-registration program at SFSU. So as not to overwhelm first-time voters, the committee initially focused only on voter registration until the state-mandated deadline, when it turned its focus to voter education and getting out the vote.

Budget

Each office represented on the steering committee absorbed the cost of staff time and printing materials. Speakers came to campus at no charge. No food was served at events. Campus-wide voter outreach materials for Election Day were paid for by the president's office.

Assessment

Growing voter registration for previous elections prompted the California Department of Elections to designate the university as an electoral precinct. The precinct provides permanent opportunities for students to work with the Department





of Elections, encourages voting, and gives Election Day a conspicuous role on campus. During the 2004-2005 academic year, SFSU registered 3,635 new voters. According to the Public Research Institute, an Internet-based survey of SFSU students conducted immediately following Election Day found that 95 percent of citizen respondents reported being registered to vote and that 89 percent of all eligible students said they voted. The study also showed that 81 percent of respondents were aware of at least one on-campus voter outreach event, an increase from 57 percent in 2002. (<http://pri.sfsu.edu/reports/StudentVotingSurveyReport2004.pdf>).

Lessons Learned

SFSU's voter-outreach activities and their impact grew exponentially under the leadership of the provost and the Voter Registration Steering Committee. Each university office or group involved has a unique purpose, so each was able to bring an important group of constituents to the voter-participation activities, and importantly, had the freedom and responsibility to do so because of the provost's charge to the panel. As a result, the committee successfully enlisted the vital support of student clubs and recruited a critical mass of students to make classroom presentations, operate registration tables, and attend voter-education events. Involving student leadership in the steering committee was a critical component in the effort's success.

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

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"Bloomsburg University Voting Campus Initiative"

The Voting Campus initiative has been the most visible component of Bloomsburg University's civic-engagement project for the past several years. Its success is attributable to widespread buy-in and participation among campus constituencies.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Efforts by professors David Greenwald and Ann Wilson; Jean Downing, director of Students Organized to Learn through Volunteerism and Employment (SOLVE); and Lynda Michaels, coordinator of new-student orientation, gained formal institutional support when the campus became involved with the American Democracy Project and the student group Democracy Matters in 2003.

Currently, the initiative enjoys the support of a wide array of organizations, including SOLVE, the American Democracy Project, Democracy Matters, residence-life staff, College Republicans, and University Democrats. Faculty from the departments of history, mass communications, political science, and sociology have contributed time to the initiative. The cooperation of staff at the county courthouse has also proven vital.

Institutional support for the American Democracy Project at Bloomsburg University includes an annual budget and an appointed campus coordinator (James S. Brown, assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts).

Goals and Objectives

The qualitative goal of the Voting Campus initiative, as determined by faculty, staff and students participating in the BU American Democracy Project, is to make active and responsible participation in the democratic process a significant and visible part of the culture of Bloomsburg University. With that end in mind, several objectives have been identified, including increased local student voter registration, increased voting rates, and the creation and maintenance of accurate voter-registration lists.

Audience

The target audience of the Voting Campus initiative is the student body, particularly incoming first-year students. Students who attend various events that encourage voter registration and participation (VoteJam in the fall, All Day Dialogue on Democracy in the spring) generally are offered refreshments and freebies such as T-shirts and buttons. Often, faculty elect to bring their classes to hear the speakers and debates, so attendance is part of class participation.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning for fall events usually begins in the spring. Meetings involving faculty, staff, and students are held to plan the strategy for presenting voter registration to incoming first-year students during orientation, and a student speaker is chosen to address incoming students on the importance of registering and voting. Preparations are made in the SOLVE office, where the registration forms will be handled prior to carrying them to the courthouse. Next, a date is chosen for the fall on-campus event (on or near Constitution Day, September 17) and facilities are reserved. The date is announced publicly in the spring, so that faculty can incorporate the activities into their course plans for the next semester. During the summer, speakers are invited. Past speakers have included students, faculty, and area lawmakers, as well as experts in civic engagement and constitutional law. As the event approaches, the university-relations staff notifies the press.





Budget

Since many entities collaborate in the Voting Campus initiative, the budgetary details are hard to calculate. Funding for various components comes from the admissions office, SOLVE, the American Democracy Project, and the office of the president. The major budget items include student labor for handling and processing the voter-registration forms, honoraria for certain off-campus speakers, and refreshments.

Assessment

It is anticipated that information from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be useful in determining the effect of this initiative on the campus mind-set. A planned student-satisfaction survey also will address civic engagement, among other components. In quantitative terms, the success of this initiative is measurable through voter-registration and participation numbers. The numbers suggest that this program has been highly successful compared to previous years at Bloomsburg University, as well as when compared with similar institutions regionally and nationally.

Lessons Learned

The involvement of student leadership is vitally important to this initiative. During orientation, students address incoming students about the issues that matter most to them. While this message is underscored by the president of the university in her convocation address and repeated by staff and faculty in a variety of venues, peer influence is clearly the single most important component of the BU Voting Campus initiative. Upon arriving at Bloomsburg University, students are shown, rather than told, that civic engagement is an important part of campus culture.

Brooklyn College, City University of New York

Brooklyn, New York

Contact

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“Annual Brooklyn College Civic Breakfast”

Students, community leaders, and elected officials meet at this “breakfast of champions” to share ideas on the implementation of voter and civic-engagement projects and to discuss student elections and campus/community student participation.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The annual civic breakfast works best with campus-wide support from student organizations, faculty, community representatives, and administrators. The sponsors of this event include student affairs, student governments, and other campus civic programs and student organizations. The sponsoring individuals and groups become eligible for recognition at the annual awards ceremony and are mentioned in all advertisements. Institutional advancement and government relations assist us in inviting elected officials as speakers and participants, and public relations publicizes the event beforehand. The college president also attends and extends greetings. This event is held annually in the spring, generally prior to our campus student-government elections.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the breakfast is to encourage students to become more civically engaged. The objectives are to help students understand the meaning and importance of being civically engaged; to allow students to meet and share ideas with elected officials, community leaders and faculty; and to give students information on engagement opportunities on and off campus, as well as access to other resources

The goals, both quantitative and qualitative, are established by the organizing committee and are drawn from the Academic Affairs General Education Goals and the Student Affairs Learning Goals, to ensure that the program is in line with the college's mission statement. The number and category (student, faculty, etc.) of people attending is assessed. Each small group also provides a narrative on its table's dialogue at the breakfast, which is based on selected topics. In addition, participants' level of satisfaction is surveyed afterwards.

Audience

The target audience includes the campus community, alumni, elected officials, and community groups. Specifically, we target those students who are involved in the student-governance process or civic-engagement activities; staff who have contacts in government and the community; faculty teaching related courses; alumni who are elected officials; and other relevant organizations such as the university student senate and the Internship in Government and Public Affairs Program. As this is a breakfast, the appropriate refreshments are provided. In addition, buttons and pens are distributed with the Brooklyn College "Tote the Vote" logo.





Project Planning and Timeline

The recommended timeline for planning is a minimum of four months. The civic breakfast is held on a Monday in late April from 8 a.m. to 11a.m., the day before the student-government elections. The assessment starts during the planning phase with the goals and is ongoing after the event. Within the first month of the planning cycle, the speakers and special guests are selected and invited, and a budget proposal is submitted. The refreshments and supplies are ordered during the second month. The advertising of the event starts in the third month (February) or as soon as the speakers are confirmed. Sponsorship from student organizations helps to supplement the budget and government relations is valuable in helping secure the elected officials.

Budget

The proposed budget is approximately \$500, broken down into \$250 for breakfast and \$250 for printing materials, mailing invitations, and ordering supplies. Approximately 70 percent of the funds come from student-government funds and other sources. In addition, through a college-wide initiative, we receive a donation in the form of buttons and pens.

Assessment

The most recent civic breakfast attracted a good mix of faculty, staff, students, and elected officials, including the borough president, state senators, state assemblypersons and city council members. Student participation was as expected. The assessment tools included both qualitative and quantitative measures such as a survey, attendance sheet, and discussion notes. The event has become a highly anticipated annual event.

Lessons Learned

The most important positive lesson is that students want opportunities to recognize and act on their abilities to have lifelong positive impact on the college and on the larger community. The most important negative lesson is the amount of time needed to prepare for this event. The most important advice for others who might try similar projects is to stay focused on the end goal and to maintain contacts with all constituent groups throughout the year.

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"Bronco Voter Rush: 'Be Heard, Not Herded'"

The Associated Students, Inc., of Cal Poly Pomona developed this year-round, student-led effort to increase political awareness on campus by encouraging students to become registered voters. Bronco Voter Rush also seeks to encourage political activism by providing students with opportunities to write legislators and lobby for higher-education issues.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Bronco Voter Rush (BVR) was organized by Associated Students, Inc. (ASI). A recognized auxiliary of the campus, ASI provides opportunities in areas of student government, programming, and employment. The BVR Committee determined all the events, dates, and budgeting. Committee members attended a training seminar about voter registration offered by the California State Student Association. Our student-government structure allows each academic college and special interest council to have a senator. These senators were instrumental in our success by marketing the campaign to their constituencies, making announcements at their meetings encouraging students to vote, running voter-registration tables, and making classroom presentations.

The marketing of this project was handled by the ASI Graphic Arts Studio; students designed fliers, postcards, and T-shirts at no cost. They created a logo, which incorporated the American flag with the campus mascot, Billy Bronco. The postcards were strategically placed at high-traffic areas on campus and fliers were distributed all over campus.

Goals and Objectives

ASI, as a whole, set the major goals. The target for the first week was 300 voter registrations. The yearlong goal was 1,000. An additional goal was to raise political awareness by encouraging inactive voters to begin taking a more assertive approach





with legislators. We provide fact sheets describing higher-education issues and ask students to write to their legislators (we provide sample letters). Our goal is to collect 30 letters for each week that we set up awareness and outreach tables on campus.

Audience

Our target audience is everyone on campus, but we especially reached out to freshmen because they will set the future political environment for our campus. We did not offer incentives to students who registered, but encouraged them to sign up as a part of a list-serve used to send out e-mails about lobbying opportunities. Many professors also offered extra credit to students for volunteering or registering. Volunteers received a free T-shirt.

Project Planning and Timeline

The committee prepared the budget and outlined the event approximately a month before the school year began. We also ordered free “Easy Voter Guides” and went to the county clerk’s office for registration forms. A week before classes, the committee attended a special training seminar. Then we e-mailed professors and requested time to make presentations. The public-relations design process began at the same time. By the second week, we had ordered postcards, fliers, and T-shirts and recruited volunteers for voter-registration tables.

Classroom presentations and voter-registration tables connected to the event took place from October 17-21, 2005 (the fifth week of the quarter) between the hours of noon and 1 p.m. (Later registration drives were much simpler to organize. We simply contacted previous volunteers and reused materials.)

Budget

The total budget was \$900 and was funded entirely by ASI, whose revenue comes from student fees. The money was spent for publicity, T-shirts, and other materials.

Assessment

We reached our target audience, but fell short of our goal, registering 266 students. The effort would have been more successful if we had been able to do presentations in more introductory courses earlier in the quarter and set up registration tables in more locations. We made copies of all the registrations/letters we collected and kept them on file. After each day, we counted how many registrations we were able to collect from each location and organized the data into a spreadsheet.

Lessons Learned

Bronco Voter Rush was very motivating for the organizing committee because we were able to educate fellow students on political issues and show them that by not registering to vote, they are contributing to electoral apathy. We believe voter registration is only half the battle; empowering students to become active voters is true victory. Our only piece of advice: Start early and be thorough.

California State University, Fresno

Fresno, California

Contact

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“Raise Your Voice—Student Civic Engagement Project”

The Raise Your Voice (RYV) project was an extension of California State University, Fresno’s designation as a California Campus Compact Regional Center for civic engagement and student voice. The project was designed to engage various groups and individuals from across the university community to help better inform and involve students, staff, and faculty in the 2004 electoral process.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The RYV project was sponsored by the Office of Civic Engagement and Service-Learning (CESL) at California State University, Fresno. Support was provided by several sources, especially the provost and vice president for academic affairs and California Campus Compact. The RYV project was not centrally controlled or supported by a single entity. It was a patchwork of events and activities sponsored by departments, programs, student clubs, and others across the university and general community. No particular incentives were provided to the individual organizers, outside of the civic-engagement office’s ability to help coordinate unrelated events and provide visibility and minimal staffing support.

Components of the RYV project included: (1) an educational forum on the 15 voter initiatives on the California ballot; (2) a presentation as part of the Fresno State Leadership Program’s weekly series titled, *Leaders Vote!*; (3) a three-day series of speakers and presentations related to the media and the electoral process, sponsored by mass communications and the journalism department, the series concluded with a speech by former UPI White House Correspondent Helen Thomas; (4) rallies, voter-information sessions and programs presented by such student organizations as the



Political Science Club, College Republicans, and College Democrats; (5) a special service-learning course on campaign communication; and (6) voter-registration drives during virtually all events of the Raise Your Voice project.

University President John D. Welty and Provost Jeronima Echeverria provided assistance, such as promoting the project's events in public forums and attending when they could. The provost also provided the resources of the civic-engagement office.

Goals and Objectives

In short, the goal of the project was to inform, involve and motivate students regarding the 2004 election. This included registering students to vote, educating them about various issues, and motivating them to be involved in the overall electoral process. Because of the limited resources available and the complex nature of measuring student interest and involvement in the electoral process, the goals were more qualitative than quantitative.

The general goals were established by two Fresno State students: Melissa Dittmar, the California Campus Compact's Civic Engagement Student Scholar Advocate, and Tal Eslick, a civic-engagement intern. They worked with the director of the Office of Civic Engagement and Student Learning to develop the goals and carry out the various RYV activities.

Audience

The target audience for each event varied slightly, but the majority of the events were specifically focused on students. Many faculty and staff members, as well as members of the general community, participated. No special incentives were provided, with the exception of course credit given by some faculty members for attending events.

Project Planning and Timeline

Because the RYV project was a combination of individual events coordinated by a variety of groups, planning timelines and processes varied greatly. Some were conceived and organized over several months (the Helen Thomas lecture). Some were planned in a matter of weeks (Leaders Vote!) Overall, the project was coordinated over approximately three months, starting in late August 2004.

Budget

Like the planning process, the budget for each activity varied greatly, and no overall tally was kept. Funds came from discretionary funds, grants from the student government, and individual departments and clubs.

Assessment

Unfortunately, assessment of the RYV project was not carried out in any organized manner. Some events attracted audiences in the hundreds while others attracted much smaller turnout. Overall, participation was inconsistent and in most cases could have been substantially higher. From individual reports and discussions with the project's two student leaders, the project was considered a success.

Lessons Learned

One of the primary lessons learned is that developing, coordinating, and promoting a series of events like this takes substantially more resources (time and money) than were available in 2004. Planning should start at least one full year in advance of a major national election. A second lesson was that voter registration is not nearly as important and necessary as is voter education.

California University of Pennsylvania California, Pennsylvania

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"Victory 2004 Rally"

The College Democrats arranged for Connecticut Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman, who was a surrogate speaker for the Kerry/Edwards campaign, to visit the campus for a political rally. A showing of the movie "Fahrenheit 9/11" preceded the event.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The College Democrats arranged for Senator Lieberman to visit campus for a political rally the week prior to the presidential election. This was the first time, to anyone's knowledge, that a presidential candidate or surrogate speaker had been on campus. Two members of College Democrats, a state representative, two county commissioners, and an area activist spoke at the rally, as did the provost and dean of liberal arts. The provost welcomed everyone and said a few words about civic engagement. The dean discussed the importance of voting and urged people to have





tolerance for diverse viewpoints. The students arranged the entire event and only relied on the College Democrats' primary university adviser to get clearance to hold the event in the campus quadrangle and work with campus security. The College Democrats, with assistance from another adviser, arranged for the movie showing.

Goals and Objectives

The College Democrats' main goal was to energize voters. The goal was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, as the students hoped for a large turnout that, in turn, would help mobilize voters on Election Day. They were successful in attracting extensive media coverage from as far as Pittsburgh, 50 miles from campus.

Audience

The target audience included students, faculty, administrators, staff, and community residents. The College Democrats hired a disc jockey to attract and entertain the crowd.

Project Planning and Timeline

The students discussed having a rally many months before the election, but the actual speaker was not confirmed until a week before the event. As most people who plan these events know, flexibility is key: Surrogate speakers are moved around the country at a moment's notice. Senator Lieberman came to campus on October 28, 2004. The rally, itself, lasted approximately two hours; however, the Senator was on campus for no more than 30 minutes before he headed to Pittsburgh for a major fundraiser.

A banner was printed as soon as the senator's appearance was confirmed; students picked up Kerry/Edwards signs at the campaign's regional headquarters; and balloons were purchased. The College Democrats sent out some press releases, as did the Pennsylvania Democratic Coordinated Campaign. The College Democrats sent a university-wide e-mail announcement, posted fliers across campus, and made announcements in some classes. The "buzz" traveled around campus very quickly.

Budget

Student political organizations are not funded by the university because they are considered exclusionary. Outside sources donated \$1,000 to the College Democrats to pay for the film and rally. The film rental cost the most, followed by the disc jockey and the banner. Other costs were minimal. The College Democrats used most of the \$300 remaining after all expenses were paid for a local candidates' forum.

Assessment

Attendance far exceeded everyone's expectations. Between 300 and 350 people attended the outdoor rally, a significant audience for a surrogate speaker. (Attendance at campus lectures is generally high, especially when outside speakers are well known personalities.) The measures of success included the impressive attendance at the rally, media coverage, and campus "chat." Attendance at "Fahrenheit 9/11" was not particularly high, which may have been due to students having seen the film previously.

Lesson Learned

The College Democrats had great energy and were so committed to getting the Kerry/Edwards ticket elected that they energized the campus community. The College Republicans, who were given advance notice of the rally, did not arrange a similar event. Many Bush supporters were disappointed because their side was not represented. Students need to take the initiative and advisers must be available for guidance and support. Campaigns are more willing to send candidates and surrogates to campuses in battleground states and major media markets than to "friendly" territory during the waning days of a campaign. Republicans had all but written off Pennsylvania, and the university is located 50 miles from Pittsburgh. The sheer determination, perseverance, and enthusiasm of the College Democrats made their event a real success.

Castleton State College of Vermont

Castleton, Vermont

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An American Democracy Project Learning Community and "A Reason to Vote in '04 Campaign"

In 2004, An American Democracy Project (ADP) Learning Community and "A Reason to Vote in '04 Campaign" were implemented within the First-Year Seminar Program at Castleton State College of Vermont. Several election-year programs and events took place, including multiple voter-registrations drives; an ADP kickoff and voter-registration celebration during orientation; an ADP-sponsored speaker series, which included Howard Dean, Howard Zinn and Congressman Bernie Sanders; a "Democracy Interrogated" film series; a Democracy Day to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution; a Political Fair; and a Walk the Vote election day parade to the polls led by the president of the college.



Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Central administrators and the academic dean were instrumental in implementing and supporting the American Democracy Project. To advance the initiative of ADP, the college mission was rewritten to give primacy to civic engagement and public citizenship opportunities in educational experiences for students.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goals of this project were to advance political and civic engagement and voter education and participation for Castleton students, especially for first-year students. These goals were achieved by integrating relevant curricular materials within the first-year learning community, as well as through several co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Audience

The target audience was approximately 120 first-year students, about one-third of the incoming class.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning for the project began in early spring 2004 when the ADP Learning Community Committee was formed by the academic dean and ADP Coordinator. The greater part of the planning took place in three ADP Development Workshops over the summer. In addition, students in a community-action seminar organized a large "Voter Registration and Democracy Celebration." Throughout the summer and fall of 2004, an ADP student intern organized voter registrations and a very successful Political Fair.

Budget

The president and central administrators at Castleton College authorized an American Democracy Project budget from discretionary funds. This budget was essential to the viability of the ADP initiative by funding faculty and program development; ADP-sponsored events such as a speaker and film series; voter-registration drives; an ADP student internship; and the Political Fair. Money from the budget also was used to pay a graduate student to create, administer, and analyze assessment instruments.

Assessment

These programs were extensively assessed. The first 120 entering students who participated in the ADP Learning Community and a control group of 94 non-ADP first-year students completed a pre-campaign and post-campaign assessment survey. Two significant results of this quantitative instrument revealed that ADP students

had a stronger focus on quality-of-life issues, such as helping others, and were more likely to continue reading newspapers, as compared to students in the control group. The most significant findings dealt with voter registration and voter participation. While 50 percent of students in both groups entered college as registered voters, by Election Day 87 percent of ADP students had registered, compared with 72 percent in the control group. Sixty-nine percent of ADP students voted in the election, compared with only 46 percent of the control group. The national average for voters under the age of 30 casting ballots was 51 percent. Students who participated in the ADP Learning Community also wrote end-of-semester reflections, in which 75 percent rated ADP positively and claimed that participation in ADP helped them build connections between democracy and education.

Lessons Learned

These programs were very positive learning and community-building experiences. We learned that college students will actively participate in structured, well advertised, and interesting political and civic events, such as voter-registration drives combined with celebrations and political fairs with food and entertainment. The assessment of the programs also suggests that students were more likely to vote when exploration of the democratic process was part of their classroom experience. We did, however, receive some negative feedback that our programs were politically motivated and exclusive. We learned from this to include more faculty and students in the development of similar projects and to make the motivation for the projects as open and transparent as possible.

College of Staten Island, City University of New York Staten Island, New York

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“Voter Registration Initiatives”

The City University of New York (CUNY), in an effort to make sure every campus complies with New York State Election Law, Section 5-211, has appointed a voter-registration coordinator at each campus. At the College of Staten Island, we coordinate an annual campaign to comply with the election law that includes mailing a voter-registration form annually to every registered student (biannually in a presidential election year). We also coordinate a variety of events and voter-registration tables with the campus chapter of New York Public Interest Research



Group (NYPIRG), a student organization that has set a high priority on recruiting voters and getting students to vote.

Organization, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The voter-registration program is a CUNY initiative involving representatives from every campus in the CUNY system. John Kotowski, the Director of City Relations and an administrator at the CUNY central office, serves as coordinator of the CUNY voter-registration program. His office ensures all campuses comply with state election law and serves as our primary contact with the New York City Board of Elections. His office coordinates the distribution of voter-registration forms, promotional materials, and other information valuable to our voter initiatives to every campus in the CUNY system. On our campus, the student-life office works closely with the campus chapter of NYPIRG.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of our voter-registration initiatives is to help students register to vote and express their voices through participation in elections. We achieve our goal by mailing voter-registration forms, hosting voter-registration drives, forums, and classroom discussions. We determine how well we are meeting our goal of getting students to register to vote in two ways. NYPIRG tracks the number of forms its representatives collect through registration tables and other campus initiatives. The board of elections tracks how many forms are turned in overall by CUNY (including by NYPIRG chapters at CUNY campuses), by printing special voter-registration forms for the CUNY system. Unfortunately, these data are not broken down by campus, so we do not know how many vote-registration forms have been submitted by our students across the city.

Audience

Our primary audience is our students. We do not offer any special incentives for registering to vote or for participation in our voter-registration programs.

Project Planning and Timeline

Our project planning begins at the end of every spring semester. Voter-registration forms are mailed after the last day to register for classes. Our campus initiatives start the first day of classes and continue throughout the year. Major pushes for registration are mounted close to the deadlines to register to vote. We use our campus publications to advertise voter-registration initiatives. Our programs to encourage students to vote traditionally are held during the month prior to an election. NYPIRG representatives will conduct classroom discussions during this period and work with our office, student government, and clubs and organizations

to hold concerts, forums, and other discussions about issues and the candidates in the upcoming election.

Budget

Our budget for staff, postage, and promotion is built into our college's budget, through services provided to campus offices. Money for particular programs is requested as each is planned, and programs traditionally are funded through student activity fees.

Assessment

Unfortunately, due to the nature of our projects, we do not have a way of assessing our campus' effectiveness in getting students to return voter-registration forms. Our primary goals are to make sure that voter-registration forms and voter information are available to our students, and we are very successful in doing so.

Lessons Learned

Voting is a very personal individual right. Our campus takes a proactive approach to making sure that students are informed of their rights and given access to the means to vote if they choose. We know that we are doing everything within our means to provide voter-registration information to our student body. However, the board of elections processes all forms, making it difficult for our campus to collect data to assess our efforts. Our advice is to make as much information available to students as possible and to remind them of their civic responsibility to vote.

Emporia State University

Emporia, Kansas

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"Voice Your Vote: A Transformation of Campus Culture"

This project used a series of events including a parade of respected speakers focused on civic engagement to develop a solid foundation for voter registration, education, and active participation in the democratic process.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The university's efforts were coordinated by committed student leaders in various campus organizations. Involved groups off-campus, including M&A Designers, the





AASCU, and the American Democracy Project, were listed as sponsors on T-shirts. No incentives to participants were offered. MTV provided a celebrity for one event.

Goals and Objectives

The primary objective of the project was to change the campus culture to be actively engaged in the American democratic process. Specific goals evolved quantitatively and qualitatively from student consensus. Projects in economics classes were the catalyst for establishing consensus-based goals.

Audience

The target audience was students on the university's main campus. However, the project expanded to encompass the community beyond campus as well. Students exercised considerable entrepreneurial spirit, extending their commitment to their homes, local communities, and high schools.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning for pre-election activities began in August, with intensive planning beginning in September 2004. Registration of voters had to be completed by mid-October for people to be eligible to vote in the November election. Our series of events began in early October and lasted through the election. Some events required more planning than others; arranging speakers was a significant challenge, particularly when so many high-profile speakers were invited and offered several alternative dates. The project gained significant momentum when several speakers committed to come on the same date. As it turned out, MTV came the same week as several speakers. The university's public-affairs and marketing department made especially effective suggestions. Continuous assessment also caused some mid-course corrections.

Budget

Approximately \$250 came from student government through student fees, and the administration quietly assisted in the end with a similar amount.

Assessment

The results were more impressive, quantitatively, than could have been imagined. The series of events were energizing, and students registered their classmates and members of the community in unprecedented fashion, exhausting the supply of 5,000 voter-registration forms. The forms were collected, sorted, and delivered to appropriate election officials. One county election official became distraught when thousands of completed forms were submitted within a week of the registration

deadline, causing concern about whether all could be processed in time for the election.

Lessons Learned

Never underestimate the abilities of committed students. Different strategies can be effective in pursuing the same goal. Dissent and differences of opinion are almost certain to occur as different participants present many entrepreneurial ideas.

Fort Hays State University

Hays, Kansas

Contact

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“Vote Slam/White House Party”

Vote Slam and White House Party made up a campus-wide effort to encourage voter registration and electoral participation through various events and a party for students to watch the returns on election night. By including education as part of voter-registration drives and ending with Vote Slam parties with live music and open student participation in presentations, we sought to make the acts of registering and voting more a celebration of process than an imposition of civic duty.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Vote Slam and the White House Party were developed by a variety of on- and off-campus organizations, including the departments of political science and leadership studies, the Center for Civic Leadership, Pi Sigma Alpha honorary society, the American Democracy Project and *The New York Times*. Publicity for the event included listing the names of all the sponsoring organizations. The provost provided organizational support and key funds for the events.

Goals and Objectives

Members of the planning team operated under the assumption that the process of voting should be encouraged and shown as a celebration of American democratic principles. One of our goals was to instill democratic principles among students as part of the voting process. We also set quantitative goals, including registering 300 students and attracting at least 200 students to attend the Vote Slam on our campus of 4,500. The planning committee established the quantitative goals based on previous voter-registration drives, but the newness of the Vote Slam led us to set more arbitrary goals.





Audience

Students were the primary target on our campus. We provided T-shirts (paid for by the provost's office, student affairs, and *The New York Times*) for the first 200 students to register to vote. We invited community members to attend events, and attendees also included a state senator, two state representatives, and a U.S. Congressman.

Project Planning and Timeline

We began planning Vote Slam three weeks prior to the event. The Vote Slam party took place the night of our main voter-registration drive, October 13, 2004. We collected voter-registration applications, brought in sponsors, printed materials, bought T-shirts, and rented a hall to hold the party. The date coincided with the deadline to register to vote for the 2004 presidential election. We surveyed students after the election in November 2004. The New York Times was a particularly helpful partner, paying for T-shirts and helping with educational materials. Most of the money contributed by *The Times* went for the White House Party, which we began planning the day after Vote Slam.

Budget

We spent \$4,500 on materials and rentals for both events. *The New York Times*, student affairs, and the Center for Civic Leadership each contributed \$1,500. We used no direct student fees. Instead we raised funds from individual parts of the campus that had a vested interest in improving students' political engagement.

Assessment

With a relatively short lead-in time, we only had time to prepare surveys for students about Vote Slam and our other registration efforts. Our survey results indicated that we correctly predicted turnout at Vote Slam and the registration numbers, although unfortunately, problems with our online survey system meant that our voter-turnout data were not usable. Qualitatively, we can say with confidence that students enjoyed the events. We repeated Vote Slam on election night as part of the White House Party to watch election returns, and even more students attended than at the first Vote Slam.

Lessons Learned

We learned one positive lesson and one negative lesson. The positive lesson was that political participation should be celebrated. Tying a party into the act of registering to vote provides positive associations with the democratic process in students' minds. In turn, that should make those students more likely to seek information and vote. On the negative side, we must be prepared to provide some kind of incentive to get

students to continue participating in our multi-phase survey so that we have better data with which to gauge the effectiveness of vote parties.

Indiana University Kokomo
Kokomo, Indiana

Contact

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“Building Character. Building Community”

This was a semester of programs that focused on voter education and registration. Events included three lectures, an art exhibit, three debates or forums, two social-issues workshops, a community-service project, and screenings of two movies with political themes. Voter-registration drives were held at all events.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The Indiana University (IU) Kokomo American Democracy Project (ADP) committee consists of leaders from student affairs and from academic affairs, the latter representing a variety of disciplines. Community organizations that supported our initiative included the city of Kokomo, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Cass County Circuit Court. The student-government association, Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), the History & Political Science Organization, and the student newspaper were our primary student-organization sponsors. They provided members who staffed the registration tables at all of our events. Helpful materials came from: declareyourself.com, vote-smart.org and rockthevote.com. Key campus leaders attended most of our events.

Our series of programs engaged all of our sponsors in one way or another. Some spoke about their political experiences during a lecture entitled “Political Activism.” Others displayed political memorabilia in our art gallery for a month-long exhibit. We also held a forum for county and state candidates and a forum for Congressional candidates, followed by a mock-presidential debate with students representing each party.

Goals and Objectives

The ADP committee identified increasing political engagement and civic and moral responsibility as our primary goal. Raising awareness about internationalization and globalization was the secondary goal for our ADP, voter-education, and voter-registration efforts. We used quantitative and qualitative measures, primarily through



survey instruments and through institutional assessment tools such as the National Survey of Student Engagement. Our objectives included: to actively engage students in political activities; to help students recognize that their involvement is important; to raise awareness of and advocacy for social issues; and to encourage active citizenship in our students.

Audience

The target audience was our students. IU Kokomo is entirely a commuter campus, and about 50 percent of our student body is not of traditional college age. This means that many of the programs we targeted at our students were also used as opportunities to engage with our community. We marketed all of our programs to the community and opened all our events to the public at no charge. Refreshments were available at most events, and occasionally stickers, buttons and T-shirts were available to attendees.

Project Planning and Timeline

During the semester prior to the 2004 elections, the committee brainstormed to gather ideas. We met a couple of times during the summer and finalized details. Logistics were the responsibility of the office of student activities and were organized before the fall 2004 semester began. We met with the staff in communications and marketing for assistance in creating a full-color brochure that presented a complete calendar of events and to create a Web site with resources and materials, both of which were available prior to the fall 2004 semester. Events ran from September 22 to November 19. Events were held at different times of the day to attract students with different schedules. In addition to marketing the “umbrella” of programs, we also targeted select groups for individual programs. Events were promoted through direct mail, e-mail, word-of-mouth, extra credit in courses, fliers, posters, banners, display cases, the website, and more. We also benefited greatly from information broadcast weekly on the local radio station about upcoming events.

Budget

A budget of \$3,000 was established for the semester, and we did not spend the total amount. We spent \$500 on speaker stipends or travel, \$600 on movie licensing, \$1,000 for promotional materials and direct-mail expenses, and approximately \$700 for food. Funding for the project came from central administration funds set aside for increasing civic engagement on campus.

Assessment

Assessments were done at every event, gathering qualitative and quantitative data. Focus-group discussions about the events were completed with classes when entire

classes participated in an event. Each event was deemed a success, despite whatever the attendance numbers or evaluation data showed, because every event established a safe place for dialogue.

Lessons Learned

One lesson we learned is that programs alone will not get us to our ADP goals. Programs must be supplemented by class discussions, service-learning projects, and faculty and staff modeling the desired behavior. However, the primary lesson we learned was that change can be initiated, one student at a time.

Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis Indianapolis, Indiana

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"Democracy Plaza"

The goal of Democracy Plaza is to provide an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and the community to practice dynamic free speech in a safe, autonomous environment. Democracy Plaza, a student-run project, was started in the summer of 2004 when a group of students, faculty, and staff worked together to address the benefits and drawbacks of a physical structure for free speech outside of the traditional walls of academia.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Direct sponsors are the American Democracy Project of Indiana University, Campus and Community Life (CCL), and the undergraduate student government. Units of central administration such as the CCL provided funds for events on the plaza. The project has become more than a physical structure and is now the location for an array of programming that seeks to stimulate civic awareness of current political, economic, and social issues in the city, state, nation, and world.

Goals and Objectives

The goals for this project are to provide a safe space for students and the university community to practice free speech, while educating the audience on current issues of concern. Those goals are met through utilizing the physical structure of the plaza,





a space that helps to engage students and others by obtaining responses from them regarding questions that are posted on chalkboards. The goals are qualitative, not quantitative, and they were formulated by its student founders.

Audience

The project's target audience is Indiana University-Purdue Indianapolis (IUPUI) students. Nevertheless, programming is mindful of university faculty, staff and the community, as well. Through questions on the plaza boards, we educate and promote thought about current issues among passersby, who in turn provide their opinions by writing on the boards or by participating in "Pass the Mic" events. The latter is an important component of this project, facilitated by a faculty member in communication studies. It serves as another forum in which students discuss current political, economic, and social issues that matter to them. Pizza and soda are provided as incentives for attendance at "Pass the Mic" programs, which usually are held during the noon hour.

Project Planning and Timeline

The Democracy Plaza project commenced in the summer of 2004 and became a physical structure in the fall semester. Initial monetary supporters were the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), the American Democracy Project, and Campus and Community Life. Construction took a few weeks, but constant maintenance is needed in order to keep the chalkboards usable. Events such as "Pass the Mic" take time to plan since they are part of a class. Students helping to facilitate events do research in advance on specific topics. Most events are scheduled one semester in advance, but there are some events that are organized more spontaneously in reaction to important events, such as elections. "Pass the Mic" is 45 minutes long and is scheduled when traffic through the plaza is heaviest, to engage as many people as possible. Since the plaza is outside events tend to be scheduled there during the warmer months— August to November and March to May.

Budget:

Financial support for this project was essential. The outdoor Democracy Plaza and the indoor version were financed by the student fee allocation committee of USG and Campus and Community Life office. The total cost of both projects was \$8,000. Financial support for food, soda, and chalk is provided by campus life and the fee-allocation committee of the undergraduate student government. Day-to-day operations of the plaza are carried out by student service-learning assistants who receive service-learning scholarships on a semester-to-semester basis.

Assessment

The project has been successful across a wide array of the university community. In some instances, participation has been greater than expected. However, the current methods for assessment only include attendance counts and the reaction to questions posted on the chalkboards.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the short history of Democracy Plaza, the most important lesson is that audience curiosity leads to education and engagement. The project serves as a learning tool for the audience; it challenges people to think outside their comfort zones and to become more critical thinkers. It provides an opportunity for people to accept or at least consider other ideas and viewpoints, and to become educated about political, economic and social matters arising in city, state, nation, and world.

Indiana University South Bend

South Bend, Indiana

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“Democracy Project Weblog and Public Radio Commentary Series”

Indiana University South Bend (IUSB) presents a Weblog and public-radio commentary series on active citizenship, public policy, elections, and related topics. The Weblog publishes column-length op-ed style pieces most weekdays, and the region’s National Public Radio affiliate, WVPE, broadcasts the best of these in a regularly scheduled series that extends the reach of the project. Writers from the university and the region address issues of local, national, and international concern.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The project is sponsored by the university in collaboration with WVPE. Both organizations have a public-service mission and found this project to be a creative new approach to that mission. The project began with the support of the vice chancellor for academic affairs and the news and program directors of the radio station. The project is expected to continue indefinitely.

Goals and Objectives

We wanted to use frequent, somewhat informal Web publication and radio commentaries to counter the passivity and pessimism of the electorate, to enrich the region’s public discourse about democracy, and to engage the university with its wider community in new ways. The general goals were first established by the





national American Democracy Project, then adapted to our campus, and then further adapted to the special characteristics of Weblogs and public radio.

Audience

This project targets our students, faculty, and staff, as well the people of our region. While a teacher occasionally assigns students to visit the site, most participation is voluntary.

Project Planning and Timeline

We began planning the project in the spring of 2004, aiming to launch it in time for the 2004 election. We purchased the Weblog software (Expression Engine) and loaded it on the server in May. An intern worked with the editor on site design and page templates in June, and the site was launched in July. The radio series was added in the early fall.

Budget

The Weblog requires inexpensive software and runs on the university's servers, so the technical expense is slight (approximately \$100 per year). The editor of the Weblog and radio series is released from teaching one course a semester so a part-time faculty member must be hired to teach in his place (at approximately \$5,000 per year). The radio station provides audio-production facilities and the work of the producer in exchange for the good content. Writers for the Weblog and the radio series are not paid.

Assessment

Weblogs are new tools, especially for university outreach, so it was difficult to predict the expected level of participation. Weblog software tracks the number of times a site or portion of a site has been visited, and various portions of our site have been visited from 125,000 to 300,000 times since late July 2004. Currently, the front page is visited about 1,000 times a week, and the printer-friendly page, where readers can acquire copies of articles for their use away from the computer, has been visited more than 50,000 times. Thanks to available software, we see that many readers come to the site after having entered issue-related keywords in Google and other search engines.

The radio series is broadcast three times each Tuesday. An independent rating service estimates that 15,000 radios are tuned into the station at those times. Other clues about the success of the project include an increase in the number of comments written by visitors to the site who choose to join in discussions. Members of the community often praise the pieces broadcast in the radio series, and increasingly they

suggest topics for the series. Some readers may not revisit the site due to the variety of writers and an occasional loss of issue continuity.

Lessons Learned

Weblogs are a flexible form of Web publishing that a university can use to share its faculty's expertise and engage with its region in pressing issues of the day. Weblog readers learn that a regularly updated site is worth revisiting, and a community of readers slowly grows as the university provides good content on matters of lively concern. Weblogs are often most successful when tied to other events, such as guest speakers, election campaigns, and ongoing discussions in other media about matters of public policy. A university may have to adjust its attitude toward faculty writing in order to embrace this form of public intellectual work and community service.

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Georgia

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"Maximizing Registration and Voting"

This project was designed to encourage student awareness of, and participation in, the political process through voter-registration campaigns and get-out-the-vote contests in the 2004 elections.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Faculty members in political science and international affairs department at Kennesaw State University developed the project and presented the idea to other faculty members at the departmental meeting in August 2004. The project received the full support of the faculty and the administrators, as well as the coordinator of the American Democracy Project.

Goals and Objectives

The immediate objectives of the project were to maximize voter registration by encouraging as many unregistered citizens as possible to register to vote in the November elections and to maximize voter turnout by encouraging KSU students and their families and acquaintances to exercise their right to vote on Election Day. The overall goal was to encourage student political awareness and civic engagement through participation in the electoral process.



**Audience**

Students were the primary audience targeted by the project. The classes whose efforts resulted in the highest registrations and documented votes on a per capita basis were rewarded with pizza and soft drinks.

Project Planning and Timeline

The project was planned in August 2004, which gave ample time for students to “adopt” potential voters (family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates in other courses, etc.). They were to encourage them to register by Georgia’s registration deadline of October 4, 2004 and to vote on November 2, 2004. Rules of the verification process were developed in detail so as to prevent possible confusion. Faculty informed their classes of the project and encouraged them to take part. At the end of the registration period and after the election, faculty helped collect the “proofs,” count them for each class, and report the results. The winning classes were selected for an end-of-year party funded by the department.

Budget

The project was completed under the original budget of \$200. Funding was provided by the political science and international affairs department.

Assessment

The level of student participation in the registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns was evaluated by the number of voter registrations and voting records submitted. There was no survey instrument given to students before or after the activities to measure any changes in attitude and awareness. It appears that faculty encouragement of student participation was the most effective strategy in promoting the campaigns. Frequent in-class discussion about the project and its importance as emphasized by faculty tended to result in greater participation by students.

Lessons Learned

The important lesson learned was that students will respond positively to faculty encouragement and become more serious about a project if faculty members consistently remind them of the importance of the task. Student interest was significantly enhanced when faculty showed interest in the assignment. However, faculty should be cautious about the incentives provided for a project. The idea of giving bonus points to students turning in the most voting or voter-registration records, even on a voluntary basis, could create a sense of unfairness among students if they perceive that personal contacts and networks provide advantages for some, but not other students. To avoid misperceptions, giving prizes to the whole

class (e.g., the end-of-year party funded by the department) rather than awarding individuals, may be better received.

Middle Tennessee State University
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“MTSU Voter Registration Drive”

During one week during September 2004, we held five major events designed to engage students politically and register new voters. The drive included a range of activities at different times requiring different levels of commitment from participants. Our efforts resulted in considerable political discussion on campus and in hundreds of new registered voters.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The campus American Democracy Project was the advertised sponsor, but our project was a collaborative endeavor of the provost's office, student affairs, other faculty and staff members, the student government association, the Raider Republicans, and the College Democrats. Provost Kaylene Gebert funded the project and provided consistent encouragement. Her assistant, Professor Faye Johnson, helped plan the events. Staff members from student affairs, especially the coordinator of student organizations, helped organize student participation. We plan to conduct a similar project again.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of our project were simple: stimulate interest in the political process and register as many people as we could to vote. Our voter-registration drive subcommittee, composed of volunteers from our campus ADP committee, selected the goals. We wanted a project that would take advantage of the election season to work toward greater civic engagement.

Audience

We targeted students, although faculty, staff, and members of the community also participated. The only tangible incentives were free admission to a movie and free beverages and desserts.





Project Planning and Timeline

We began planning in April 2004. The subcommittee met monthly until August, when we started meeting and e-mailing much more frequently. The project took place from Tuesday, September 14, to Saturday, September 18. On Tuesday, we hosted a Political Fair with more than 20 politically minded organizations distributing information to students. On Wednesday we organized a student debate between the College Democrats and the Raider Republicans and then opened the microphone in a “Political Karaoke” session for any who wanted to make brief political statements. That evening we screened “Fahrenheit 9/11,” followed by a Republican response and general discussion. On Wednesday and Thursday, a mock election took place. The ballot had six questions, including ones concerning the presidential race and other national, state, and campus issues. On Saturday afternoon, we held a voter-registration drive at the MTSU football game.

Budget

We did not formulate a budget ahead of time. Instead, as we went along, the provost granted our relatively modest requests for funding. We spent about \$1,000 on tent and table rentals, sound systems, and tickets to the movie (which we arranged to be shown at the campus movie theater throughout the week of the event). We received in-kind donations of desserts and coffee from Aramark, milk from the MTSU Farm, and voting machines and personnel from the Rutherford County Election Commission. The ADP coordinator received one hour of summer pay for work done over the summer.

Assessment

Overall, our event succeeded. Unfortunately, because so many groups helped register voters, we did not get an accurate count of new registrations; the best guess is around 500. We had good turnouts at all the events, including a nearly full house at the film showing, and about 600 voters took part in the mock election. We received considerable newspaper and television coverage.

Lessons Learned

(1) make it easy for students to participate, we held the student debate, political karaoke, and mock election at convenient times in our heavily used student center; (2) free is good, all of our events were free and open to the public, attendance at the movie was undoubtedly boosted by the free admission and food; (3) work closely with your university’s public relations staff, we received on- and off-campus publicity with their help, the TV stations loved the mock election; three Nashville stations covered it; (4) be clearly neutral when it comes to political events, we

thought we were doing this, but some Republicans objected to the showing of “Fahrenheit 9/11” despite the Republican response that followed it; (5) political events must be conducted even-handedly, or they can do more harm than good; and (6) recruit calm, impartial moderators to preside over the activities; and plan to assess your event. In our scramble to make the project happen, we did not do a formal assessment. That would have helped us plan an even better event for 2006.

Missouri State University

Springfield, Missouri

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“Missouri State University Poll Worker Project”

In coordination with the Greene County Clerk’s office, students from Missouri State University staffed polling stations during the November 2004 presidential election. Each student was given a Palm Pilot loaded with voter-registration data that allowed them to direct voters who came to an incorrect precinct to their proper polling station. This greatly decreased the number of special cases and questions that the county clerk’s office had to deal with on Election Day. The project was funded through a Help America Vote Act (HAVA) grant.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The project was organized through the collaboration of the Greene County Clerk’s office and Missouri State University. The principal organizers were County Clerk Richard Struckhoff, Assistant to the President John Strong, and their respective staffs. The university administration was heavily involved, and the university’s board of governors heard a report on the project from Struckhoff at its December 2004 meeting. Another project is anticipated during the 2006 mid-term elections

Goals and Objectives

The university has a statewide mission in public affairs and actively promotes civic engagement and the development of citizenship skills. This project provided a learning opportunity for more than 100 students concerning the cornerstone of our democratic process. The objective was to provide student support at the polls





and relieve the county clerk's staff from having to handle significant numbers of voters who go to incorrect polling locations. Students also were to assist in providing provisional ballots as needed. The goals were set by the university's mission, which is qualitative, and the needs of the clerk's office, which are quantitative.

Audience

This project targeted college students, with a goal of recruiting 100 students. They were paid for their service as poll workers, and they also received a T-shirt. Some students donated their earnings to an organization (e.g., a sorority, service organization, etc.).

Project Planning and Timeline

Discussions began in April 2004 when the interest of the county clerk's office and the commitment of the university were confirmed. During the summer, the university's president and administrators met to strategize about how to recruit and organize students. Meanwhile, the county clerk wrote a grant for money from the Help America Vote Act program to purchase the Palm Pilots and necessary software. Early in the fall semester, an assistant to the university president presented the project and applications for student poll workers to the student government association. The majority of applications came in within one week of this meeting, although advertising continued for weeks. In mid-October, two training sessions were conducted by the county clerk. At that time, T-shirts were distributed and precincts were assigned. Students worked their assigned precincts from 6 a.m. till 7:00 pm. on Election Day except for short breaks. Students explained to voters whether they were officially registered and where to go if they were at the wrong polling place.

The grant did not require a formal evaluation of the project. The resources necessary to do an evaluation were utilized in recruiting students and carrying out the project. In his report to the university's board of governors, the county clerk remarked that the project significantly reduced the foot traffic in his office on Election Day. Moreover, many other poll workers complemented the college students on their excellent service.

Budget

The total cost of this project was around \$40,000. Most of this was the cost of the Palm Pilots, \$29,250, paid for by the grant money; and the cost of the student labor, \$10,380, a regular cost of holding an election in the county. The costs of the student labor were paid from the county clerk's general operating funds. The cost to the university was \$1,158, with \$898 going for T-shirts, and the rest spent on food and room rentals for the training sessions and celebration meal.

Assessment

This project was not rigorously assessed, but evidence suggests that the project was a major success, and we are planning to collaborate again. We sought to recruit 100 students to serve at the polls, and we recruited 106. Moreover, the students emerged fully energized by the project.

Lessons Learned

This project was successful because of the county clerk's commitment and his confidence in our students. Of course, students were also motivated by the opportunity to earn some quick cash, not by any grander sense of civic altruism. Still, they did find this project to be personally satisfying and the intended civic lessons were not lost on them.

Morehead State University

Morehead, Kentucky

Contact

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"Voter Registration through the First Year Experience Course"

In order to reach all entering freshmen with civic engagement ideals and get them registered to vote, we developed a lesson plan that incorporates civic responsibility and voter registration in our MSU 101 class.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The activity was organized as part of the American Democracy Project. The director of First Year Experience Programs oversees all MSU 101 classes, and she approved the plan and aided in its implementation. The ADP campus coordinator, along with a student peer advisor wrote the lesson plan. The New York Times paid for copies of the United States Constitution that were distributed to some students.

Goals and Objectives

The ADP coordinator, together with the director of First Year Programs, set the goals of the project, which were to discuss the importance of the students' civic roles as members of society; to engage students in discussion of why voting is so important; and to register students to vote. The first two goals were qualitative and the third was quantitative.





Audience

The audience was first-semester freshmen enrolled in our required first-year experience course, MSU 101. The project was part of a class period within the course so there were no incentives to be present, although we did award some pocket-sized U.S. Constitutions as prizes in our Constitution trivia contest.

Project Planning and Timeline

In the spring semester, ADP members decided that MSU 101 would be a good place to reach all students early in their careers at the university. The ADP coordinator met with the director of First Year Experience Programs with the proposal for a lesson plan related to Constitution Day, civic engagement, and voting. The lesson was agreed to, and it was decided that the student peer advisor in each section of MSU 101 would teach this class.

During training of instructors and peer advisors before the fall semester, the ADP coordinator presented a PowerPoint presentation about the need for civic engagement and about the particular lesson created. The student peer advisors experienced the lesson themselves and then discussed it.

Voter-registration forms were ordered from the county clerk's office in August. In early September, all supplies were delivered to peer advisors. All MSU 101 sections were to teach this lesson during the week of September 19th. The students in many sections attended Septemberfest: A Celebration of the American Community as a required outside-of-class experience.

Budget

The only money used for the lesson was the cost of approximately 200 pocket-sized copies of the U.S. Constitution given as prizes for the Constitution trivia contests. The ADP coordinator's office made all necessary copies of lesson plans, voter information, and trivia questions.

Assessment

The only first-year students who missed the opportunity to register to vote were those absent from class the day of the lesson. Therefore participation was high. This lesson was not evaluated by the students; however, we know that we registered a lot of students to vote. Forms came back to the ADP office from First Year Experience Programs classes for delivery to the courthouse.

The lesson was a success because many students and faculty thought about civic engagement and the importance of voting. The lesson was easy to use and was not

difficult for our student peer advisors to teach. All first-year students discussed the Constitution, civic engagement, and voting, which is what we wanted to happen.

Lessons Learned

A few faculty wanted to teach the lesson themselves, which disappointed a few peer advisors. Clear written instructions on completing the voter-registration forms need to be prepared. Also information on where students may vote, along with Web sites where out-of-state students may register in their home state, should be provided. This program works well in conjunction with Constitution Day activities. Students can get their forms into the county clerks in time for the November election.

The easier that you make the activity for others to carry out, the more likely it will be done and done well. If an institution has something like a first-year experience course, it makes an excellent vehicle for reaching lots of students in a very positive way, affording discussion about civic engagement as well as voter registration.

Northern Kentucky University

Highland Heights, Kentucky

Contact

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“Step Up to the Plate: Be an Election Day Poll Worker”

This program was designed to inform Northern Kentucky University (NKU) students about the need for poll workers and to recruit them to assume such positions on Election Day.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement collaborated with First-Year Programs, the honor's program, student life, the art department, and the associate provost for outreach. The center partnered with election administrators and county clerks' offices from seven Ohio and Kentucky counties. All stakeholders were invited to a post-election educational event and given the opportunity to speak. Continued encouragement of this form of civic action will be maintained on an ongoing basis but will only occur on this scale as appropriate funding is available.

Goals and Objectives

Two goals were identified: (1) to provide opportunities for NKU students to engage in a meaningful way in the election process and (2) to serve as a conduit for linking the



needs of the voting precincts with NKU students who have the necessary interest, knowledge, and skills to address those needs. Three objectives were identified: (1) to submit 150 NKU students' names to election officials as potential poll workers; (2) to have 90 percent of election administrators and supervisors of poll workers indicate that they were very satisfied with NKU students on a variety of dimensions; and (3) for 70 percent of the 150 NKU students participating as poll workers to indicate a willingness to be poll workers in the future.

Audience

NKU students were the target audience. Those who signed up to be poll workers received a T-shirt, food packages to take to the polls on Election Day, and compensation for transportation to polls if they did not have a car. Like all poll workers, NKU students were paid a stipend by the county clerk's office. The center paid stipends to five graphic-art students and their art professor to design recruitment banners for student poll workers, which were used as a marketing tool. After Election Day, participating students were invited to submit reflective essays and creative art projects for review. The top three projects in each category received monetary awards of \$300, \$200, and \$100.

Project Planning and Timeline

The Scripps center submitted the grant proposal to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission on September 8, 2004 and received a grant on September 28. Before submitting the grant, the center approached the county clerks' offices to determine their needs for poll workers.

The recruitment campaign began September 28 and ended November 2, 2004. Posters were hung across campus; fliers were passed out between classes; ads were placed in weekly newsletters sent to faculty, staff, and students. Art students were commissioned to create recruitment banners and a Web site. The most effective communication strategy was sending a special e-mail from the student affairs office announcing the opportunity. Names of student volunteers were sent to appropriate election officials, who invited them to a poll-worker training session before the November 4 election.

The assessment section of the project began with a pre-test given the week of September 28 to a random sample of 272 NKU students to assess their level of knowledge about becoming poll workers (before the informational and recruitment campaign began) and ended with a post-Election Day evaluation survey in November.

Budget

The Scripps Howard center received a \$25,000 grant from the Federal Election Assistance Commission's Help America Vote College Program.

Assessment

The original goal of 150 was exceeded by 98. We measured the number of students recruited to be poll workers, the number of students who served as poll workers and standbys, the number of students who received poll-worker training, the number of students planning to be poll workers in future elections, participating students' self-assessment of the experience, election officials' satisfaction with NKU student poll workers, and increased knowledge among the NKU student body regarding the need for poll workers and ways to become poll workers. Before the poll-worker campaign began, almost half of NKU students (133) surveyed had never heard about the need for election-day poll workers and only 12.5 percent of NKU students (34) expressed an interest in becoming an election-day poll worker. Following the campaign, 70 percent of students (201) had heard about the need for election-day poll workers, while almost two-thirds of students (190) indicated that they know they can serve as a poll worker in future elections. We asked participating students if they would make an effort to be a poll worker again in future elections. Almost fifty percent (49.6 percent) are definitely interested in serving in future elections while 20.9 percent are very likely and 10 percent are likely to serve. All county officials returning an evaluation survey were very satisfied with NKU students working in their precincts. Overall, it was a positive experience for both students and election officials.

Lessons Learned

The special e-mail from student affairs recruited 180 of the 248 students. Face-to-face contacts with students who accepted fliers was a good opportunity to explain the poll-worker initiative and answer questions. It is impossible to tell how effective the posters and banners were. However, 2,000 students voted in a contest for the most effective banner, which means that at the very minimum, banners helped increase awareness.

Rhode Island College

Providence, Rhode Island

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“RIC DebateWatch 2004”

On September 30, 2004, Rhode Island College hosted the first-ever statewide DebateWatch as part of a national voter-education program sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). DebateWatch encourages citizens to view the televised presidential debates, discuss them, and provide feedback to the commission. RIC’s DebateWatch broke all participation records nationwide, with more than 800 people attending. The college’s initiative—a DebateWatch with a town hall twist—began with commentary from politicians and experts who were interviewed by political reporters. Following the debate, 60 trained student facilitators led focus-group discussions on the debate’s impact on the election. Organizers forwarded participants’ opinions to the CPD, which later were released to news outlets. The college also conducted independent focus group research and released results to the media.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

DebateWatch was a cooperative effort of the Commission on Presidential Debates, the campus community, and key political leaders. A core team of faculty, students, administrators, and the news and public relations office, planned the event. Various political and community organizations also provided support.

Goals and Objectives

DebateWatch puts people in a situation in which they can learn from each other and assume a larger role in influencing public policy and political agendas through the CPD national survey. By broadening the scope of the event beyond traditional formats—for example, partnering with media organizations and enlisting cooperation from civic organizations—we added more diverse voices to the dialogue and established our campus as a prime gathering place for serious and sustained political discussion.

Audience

The original targets were the college and surrounding communities, but outreach to additional audiences emerged as the effort gained momentum. Alumni, media, and opinion leaders were invited in order to make the discourse more interesting. Students acted as facilitators; politicians as honorary facilitators and guests; and community members as participants. The media were able to cover the debate from a local angle.

Project Planning and Timeline

The core faculty group presented a plan to the administration 12 months prior to the event to secure approval and funding. A student team (consisting of six outstanding students who received course credit for event planning) was assembled four months before the event. Faculty and students promoted the activity through panel discussions and lectures. The on-campus Bureau of Government Research and Services (part of the college's public-policy center), secured participation from key community groups two months prior to the event. Staff in the college's news and public-relations offices generated publicity and secured media support.

Budget

The college absorbed the general operational costs, including room set-up, security, custodial functions, audiovisual set-up of multiple large screens for viewing of the debate, and computer access for reporting results to CPD. The administration provided funding for course-load adjustments so some faculty members could supervise students; refreshments (\$1,400); promotional materials (\$800); and newspaper ads (\$3,000). The Bureau of Government Research and Services donated \$500 for decorations.

Assessment

We were successful in hosting the largest DebateWatch in history, and we achieved our goal of establishing interaction between citizens and political leaders, because a host of political dignitaries—including a former governor, several state legislators, party leaders, mayors, and city councils members—participated in the pre-debate forum. Despite the late hour of the televised debate, 70 percent of the attendees participated in the focus groups. RIC dominated the news with coverage from the campus on all three TV network affiliates airing segments in their 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. broadcasts. Major next-day coverage included two articles in The Providence Journal (the state's leading newspaper), plus a follow-up piece two days later. The event helped to place college in the forefront of public programming activities for civic engagement in the state. We have continued an aggressive schedule of activities involving the community.

Lessons Learned

Anyone attempting to duplicate our efforts should understand the importance of cooperation among various offices on campus. Institutional costs, coordination, strategies for publicity, and citizen recruitment all were intensive. Planning for all contingencies was essential. While we wish to continue to set the pace for citizen participation in future DebateWatch events, we also intend to shift our focus and





expend some resources on encouraging other institutions/groups to set up a variety of communal opportunities for citizen participation and voter education.

Salisbury University

Salisbury, Maryland

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“Voter Registration in the College Classroom”

In this now-annual project, teams of two students visit classes to discuss why voting is important and to assist students in correctly completing voter-registration and absentee-ballot applications. Prior to the classroom visits, which last 15 to 20 minutes, student-teams receive instruction about the application forms and talk about how they can persuade their peers that their votes count. An effective message has been: If more college students vote, they can break the vicious cycle of students saying, “I’m not going to vote because politicians don’t listen to young people,” and politicians saying, “I don’t have to listen to young people because they don’t vote.”

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The sole sponsor was the university’s Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (PACE). This annual project began in the fall 2000 semester.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this project is to encourage more students to register and vote. A secondary goal is to provide an opportunity for the members of the student teams to discuss the role of voting and elections in a democracy and for them to actively share their civic energy in conversations with their peers. PACE established the goals, which are more qualitative than quantitative. We believe, as one of our students said, “Students will overcome barriers [to voting] once someone informs them and points them in the right direction. Peer-to-peer discussion is especially helpful among college students.”



Audience

Students are the target audience. The nature of the project does not require incentives for students to register and vote; however, student-team members receive one hour of academic credit for their participation.

Project Planning and Timeline

The project starts with planning the second week of August. During the second and third weeks of September faculty members are contacted to schedule classroom visits and student-team members are trained. During the fourth week of September and first week of October students visit classrooms and voter-registration forms are collected and distributed to appropriate election boards. In the second week of October, absentee-ballot applications are collected and mailed to the appropriate election boards. Assessment of the project assessment takes place in November.

Budget

The budget includes duplication of instruction sheets and some forms, envelopes, and postage for mailing absentee-ballot applications, a stipend for the faculty mentor, pay for the project manager and student coordinator, for a total of approximately \$5,000. The Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement provides the funds and management services.

Assessment

Assessment includes course evaluations and papers from student-team members that reflect on their experiences and the final count of completed voter-registration and absentee-ballot applications. This project registered 353 students and 679 students completed absentee-ballot applications in 2004. Twelve student-team members participated in the one-credit-hour class. Our impression is that student-team members are energized from the work they do and have a stronger commitment to civic engagement.

Lessons Learned

Capable administrative staff members with good organizational and communication skills are required so that faculty members are informed of the program, classroom visits by students are scheduled, and forms are distributed to the appropriate election boards. Good relations with the local board also are important.



Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

Contact

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“Honors Program Election Debate Series”

To encourage students to actively engage in the dialogue surrounding the 2004 presidential election, the honors program hosted a series of four debates in September and early October 2004. The debates focused on the environment, women and family, foreign policy, and the economy. Students prepared for the debates by working with the faculty member who served as the moderator for their program.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Kim Klein, director of the honors program, and Alison Dagnes, assistant professor of political science, developed the format for the debate series. The honors program supported the event because its mission includes the promotion of civic engagement on campus. Dagnes, Deborah Jacobs, professor of social work, Cynthia Botteron, assistant professor of political science, and David Kalist, assistant professor of economics, served as moderators for the debates. Based upon the success of the program, planning has begun for debates during fall 2006 semester, focusing on Pennsylvania's gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the series was to promote informed decision making by young voters. Klein and Dagnes wanted to raise students' awareness of the 2004 election and to demonstrate to them that political issues affect their lives. Furthermore, Dagnes wanted to emphasize the importance of bipartisanship in arriving at solutions for national concerns. The debate series also gave interested students the opportunity to explore a topic more fully and to work with a faculty member in preparing their arguments for the debate.

Audience

The primary audience for the debates was undergraduate students, but the program was advertised to the campus and community, as well. The honors program sponsored light refreshments for the audience. Faculty members encouraged student attendance by offering extra credit for submission of a short paper reflecting on the event.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning for the programs began during the spring 2004 semester when Dagnes, as a member of the Honors Program Steering Committee, was charged with developing activities to promote civic engagement. Dagnes and Klein developed the format for the debate series—four students, organized into teams, conducting research and preparing arguments in conjunction with a faculty member. During that semester, Dagnes recruited faculty members to work with the four groups of students. Dagnes and Klein also reserved the facilities and selected the dates, to minimize conflicts with previously scheduled events.

At the beginning of fall 2004 semester, Dagnes contacted students in the honors program and encouraged their participation as debaters. The College Democrats and College Republicans also helped her recruit students. Posters advertising the debates were distributed across campus and sent to local media outlets. The debates were held on September 13, 21, 27, and October 4 at 7 p.m. in a venue seating approximately 150. The moderator introduced the debate topic, explained the format for the program, and then two debate teams engaged in a dialogue about three propositions related to their general topic. Audience members engaged in a question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the 90-minute program.

Budget

The total budget was approximately \$400. The funds came from the honors program's budget and were spent for refreshments and the full-color poster advertising the debates.

Assessment

Approximately 400 students attended the debates, a larger turnout than expected. Faculty members, staff, academic administrators, and community members also attended. The campus's weekly newspaper and the local newspaper covered the debates. Students expressed strong interest in engaging in the debates and worked collaboratively with faculty members in preparing their materials. No formal evaluation of the program was conducted; however, faculty members who participated in the debates or attended the programs provided positive comments about the students' preparation and the organization of the debates.

Lessons Learned

The most positive lesson learned was that Shippensburg University students, when presented with controversial issues, will actively engage in discussion and present a diverse array of positions on those issues. For the planned 2006 series of debates,





it is hoped that more students will be engaged in the debates, and students will be recruited earlier, perhaps at the end of the spring 2006 semester. Debates are expected to run from late September through the middle of October.

South Dakota State University

Brookings, South Dakota

Contact

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"SFSU Student Voter Project"

The South Dakota State University (SDSU) Student Voter Project was a cooperative initiative to promote voter education and to assist students in registering and voting in the 2004 presidential election. The initiative included a campus poster-design and distribution effort; creation of an electronic "Students Vote" Web site; campus rallies for U.S. Senate candidates; a student-sponsored debate between representatives of the campus Democrats and Republicans; and a campus-centered initiative for voter registration and absentee voting.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

Robert Burns, coordinator of the campus's American Democracy Project, was the principal organizer of the project. Sponsors included the university president, provost, several campus units—student affairs, the visual arts department, university relations—the student newspaper, student government, and the SDSU College Democrats and Republicans. The university president allocated funds for a voter-registration and voting-information poster contest in the department of visual arts. Visual-arts students who participated in the poster contest did so as a part of a graphic-design class project. The visual arts faculty supervised the student poster-design and campus-distribution effort. The campus newspaper published the winning posters. University relations designed a Students Vote link off the SDSU home page that provided information on voter registration and absentee voting for students from all states.

Student-affairs personnel registered students to vote during final class registration and fee-payment times and arranged for sites for voter-registration and absentee-voting tables at other times. The student association's senate and the SDSU College Democrats and Republicans recruited student volunteers to assist in those efforts. The campus Democrats and Republicans also organized a debate between students on a variety of national issues and arranged campus visits of their party's candidates.

These student political groups were motivated by a desire to have their candidates at the national, state, and local levels prevail.

Goals and Objectives

The campus goal was to provide voter information and to encourage more SDSU students to register to vote and to vote, regardless of the student's party affiliation or legal state of residence. The stated goal was a consensus decision arrived at by all those involved.

Audience

All SDSU students were targeted but first-semester students received more attention because of the likelihood that they would not already be registered to vote.

Project Planning and Timeline

We did not begin to plan our project until August in preparation for the November general election. Implementation did not begin until final course registration and fee payment at the start of the fall semester; it continued up to the final day for voter registration and absentee voting.

Budget

The president's office allocated a few hundred dollars to support the poster-design contest and the subsequent printing of the posters. All other administrative and faculty expenses were assumed under assigned workloads and unit budgets.

Assessment

We assessed our success in the context of a state that enjoys a high level of voter registration. Like the rest of the country, turnout in our state among 18-to-24 year olds is lower than other categories of voters. Our assessment must be regarded as informal and nonscientific. We did not have statistics identifying the percentage of SDSU students who were registered to vote and who had voted in past presidential general elections, so it was not possible to determine the success of our initiative in purely quantitative terms. We know that there was strong encouragement and assistance on campus for students to register and vote. We believe that our coordinated voter-registration and absentee-balloting initiative contributed to registering 400 to 500 new students to vote and to assisting scores of those registered voters to cast absentee ballots.

Lessons Learned:

We believe that visible support for our project from the president and the provost made it possible to recruit other administrative, faculty and student support with



relative ease. We also believe that each of the administrative, academic, and student units included in the cooperative initiative was vital to our modest success. It would be best to begin planning and recruitment of essential units and personnel during the spring semester immediately prior to the fall election so that implementation can begin as early as summer orientation time. Systematic evaluation is a challenge that remains unresolved.

State University of New York College at Cortland
Cortland, New York

Contact

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“2004 Voter Registration, Education, and Participation Campaign”

SUNY Cortland faculty, staff, and students engaged in a campus-wide campaign to register, educate, and get student voters to the polls in fall 2004. Together we registered 1,400 voters and estimate that voter turnout increased by about 40 percent.

Organizers, Sponsors, Institutional Involvement

The Institute for Civic Engagement (which coordinates our American Democracy Project) and NYPIRG (the New York Public Interest Group, a student organization) worked together on a campaign to register and educate voters and get out the vote in the fall of 2004, in order to increase student participation in the November elections. The institute has a faculty director, and it had two student interns for this project. College administrators were aware of our campaign, but our project was largely a grassroots effort. Students ran voter-registration tables at various locations around campus, and we put out a call for faculty to invite students into their classes to register voters. Faculty response was tremendous. Institute interns and NYPIRG volunteers went into just about every class for which a faculty member requested a student volunteer. We plan on repeating this project for November 2006. We will be electing a governor, and Sen. Hillary Clinton will be up for re-election.

Goals and Objectives

The director of the Institute for Civic Engagement (ICE), the NYPIRG coordinator, and the student interns established three goals. They were to: win the statewide SUNY Rock the Vote contest (we placed third statewide); offer students opportunities to learn about the issues on which they would be voting; and increase the participation of students in the election. We did not set specific targets for these goals.

Audience

SUNY Cortland students were the target audience.

Project Planning and Timeline

We began work before the academic year started. One of the ICE interns set up a table at check-in day to register students as they moved into their dorm rooms, and he had a table for voter registration at our fall academic convocation. Student volunteers regularly set up voter-registration tables in high-traffic areas around campus. We used e-mail to solicit faculty members who would allow student volunteers and ICE interns to come into their classes to register students to vote. We published frequent electronic and hard copy newsletters to keep the campus community informed of our progress. These newsletters included information about the logistics of voter registration and student voting and publicity about voter-education events. The voter-registration project continued until October when registration closed. Then we turned our attention to voter-education efforts. MTV's Rock the Vote sent two cast members from their show, "Road Rules," to discuss the importance of participating in the political process. In addition, we offered a number of issue-oriented programs. As Election Day drew near, we turned our attention to getting out the vote, focusing on getting information to students about how and where to cast ballots.

Budget

This was a project done "on the cheap." The MTV event was organized and sponsored by our student activities board. NYPIRG has a full-time coordinator who devoted a significant portion of her time to the project. The faculty ICE director received a one-course release for his efforts coordinating ICE, the ADP, and the voting project. Otherwise, our expenses were generally limited to fairly small items such as balloons and poster board for our voter-registration tables and copying expenses for our newsletter.

Assessment

The voter-registration aspect of our project resulted in approximately 1,400 student voter-registration forms turned in to our county voter-registration office. We did not assess student participation in our voter-education programs. Our campaign to get out the vote is estimated to have increased student voting by around 40 percent. This estimate is based on the increase in voting in the presidential election of 2004 as compared to the presidential election of 2000 at the two polling places used largely by students.





Lessons Learned

We learned you can do a lot with a little, if you can get enough people on board. Faculty participation was a key to our success. In addition, having a cadre of dedicated and aggressive students was critical. Another lesson learned is that we need to have poll watchers in place on Election Day to assist students who are not permitted to vote. We were able to get a number of students to vote who may not have otherwise known where to go or what to do. Finally, having sample ballots and instructions for how to vote outside of the polling place is important so students who may be first-time voters can enter the voting booth knowing what to do.

University of Minnesota Duluth Duluth, Minnesota

Contact

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“Election 2004 Voter Turnout Efforts”

The university's Civic Engagement Steering Committee wanted to break through the bureaucratic obstacles that had prevented students from voting and/or made it extremely confusing.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The university's efforts were coordinated by the Civic Engagement Steering Committee and involved consultations with the director of Student Life/First Year Experience, the housing office and others. On-campus groups working on voter turnout included Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG), the College Democrats and the College Republicans. Off-campus efforts included the Duluth Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, the Duluth Republican Party, the Duluth Central Labor Body and 529 [[correct? Really worked with 529 different affiliates?]] local affiliates of various organizations.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of this project were straightforward: to understand the various offices involved in Minnesota administering pre-registration laws and to investigate the rules that allowed for same-day registration. Previously, students complained about being turned away from polling places. The plan was to study the problems so a program for future elections could be developed.

Audience

The target audience was on-campus and off-campus students. No incentives were given to those who voted.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning for the election began in spring 2004. By the election, George Bush, Dick Cheney, John Kerry and John Edwards had visited the area. These visits, along with the campaign efforts of the various organizations, built student interest in the campaign.

The project's primary effort was modified to focus on eliminating bureaucratic hassles hindering students from voting. The Minnesota law allowing for college students' same-day registration appeared to be quite simple: Colleges provide the county registrar with a certified list of students who are eligible to vote, along with acceptable photo identification. In reality, the county delegated responsibility to the city clerk, who said that colleges need not worry about providing the list because he could obtain it. However, poll watchers assigned to student-heavy precincts sometimes had not been told that such a list was available.

By the time the 2004 elections occurred, the issues were solved, [[would be good to indicate through whose efforts. CF]] and there were no reports of student voters being turned away from the polls. Approximately 80 percent of the eligible on-campus students voted. Voter turnout in the off-campus student precincts was above 75 percent of those eligible. Overall, voter turnout in Duluth was approximately 80 percent.

Budget

Most of a \$5,000 budget was unspent and returned to the vice chancellor. Money was spent on staff time to research the issues involved in same-day registration and to determine the university offices involved in Election Day activities.

Assessment

The assessment was informal. Results of the voter-turnout efforts were presented to several groups, including a luncheon presentation to students in the graduate-level advocacy and political leadership program. One theme that played a large role in students' decisions to vote was the perception of ease of voting. The smallest bureaucratic confusion could discourage student voters from casting ballots. Students were selective about what events generated interest in the election. Visits from major candidates were the most important. Finally, repeated reminders were critical to getting students to vote on Election Day.





Lessons Learned

First, ease of voting was crucial. Second, the professionalism and training of numerous university and department faculty and staff who were in some way involved in the process was critical, as they found appropriate academic ways to talk about the importance of the election.

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Omaha, Nebraska

Contact

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"Who Cares About Politics? Connecting and Mobilizing Young Voters"

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The project was a collaboration among the university offices of academic and student affairs and several academic departments, several student organizations, student government, the American Democracy Project, the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW), the Douglas County election commissioner, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA), College Democrats, the National Council of Negro Women, and KQCH. The only incentive for participants was a desire to mobilize young people to participate in elections.

Goals and Objectives

Our goals were to inform as many young people as possible and get them engaged in civic action. We focused on all aspects of the impending election.

Audience

The main target audience was university students, but always included community members. The community was invited to speeches, presidential DebateWatch events, and student-led efforts to expand voting rights.

Project Planning and Timeline

Many of the activities began in spring 2004. Other events were planned in summer 2004 and finalized in early fall 2004. Events included 13 different voter-registration events coordinated by the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women, primarily in September and October. In October a panel of professionals from print

and broadcast media, public relations, and advertising examined the need to make a better appeal to young voters and how to do so.

Student journalists promoted coverage of the impending election online, speaking to young people through their language of Weblogs and streaming video, staking out nontraditional sites on election night to capture the voices of voters. During September and October a DebateWatch project brought students and community members together to watch the presidential debates and discuss them afterward in small groups. Three such events were held on the campus. A series of presentations from September to early November titled “Road to the Whitehouse Roadshow” discussed the presidential election process. They were designed and delivered by members of the department of political science to audiences from the elementary grades through the college level, with material appropriate for each level of students.

Budget

The American Democracy Project provided faculty members with mini-grants through academic and student affairs for projects promoting civic engagement. These grants were used to fund some of the events, but not voter registration. A total of about \$6,500 was paid out to faculty before the election in the form of mini-grants; another \$5,000 has been spent or earmarked for related post-2004 or pre-2006 election projects.

Assessment

The project has exceeded most expectations, especially in the number of new voters registered. More than 1,000 voter-registration cards were distributed. The DebateWatch drew more than 500 participants.

Lessons Learned

Our most important lesson was that interest in politics is not just seasonal or cyclical, and thus we intend to keep up our efforts to engage the community on political issues. Several additional activities are being developed, including creation of iPod audio and video content promoting student activism in the 2006 Nebraska elections and the 2008 national elections. Other planned events include a Pizza and Politics series (monthly discussions by faculty and students of political issues of concern in an informal environment) and a competition designed to train teams of high-school students in the metropolitan area in the fundamentals of ethnical campaigning and new styles of political campaigns. Right to Vote, a student-led initiative works to remove barriers to voting for people with felony convictions





University of Wisconsin-River Falls

River Falls, Wisconsin

Contact

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“UW-River Falls New Voters Project”

The project sought to ensure that students were engaged in the 2004 general election by becoming informed on the issues, familiar with the voter-registration process, and then actually voting. The project now is incorporated permanently into our American Democracy Project for general elections.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The project drew assistance widely from the administration, faculty, staff and students. The project was initiated by Chancellor Ann Lydecker, who delegated project coordination to the public-affairs staff. A project committee was formed with representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups, including the political-science department to help frame election topics and coordinate speakers; the student senate, to generate student excitement, conduct voter-registration events, and remind students to vote on election day; student-affairs staff to coordinate logistics, obtain voting booths for demonstration purposes, and produce fliers, buttons, and other promotional items; and the university Web master, to build and maintain an informational Web site (uwrf.edu/newvoter). Public-affairs staff provided central coordination and invited state and national office candidates to campus. Interim Chancellor Virgil Nylander described the project and the importance of voting to all incoming freshmen during university orientation.

Goals and Objectives

The New Voters Project Committee established several goals, the most important of which was to ensure that the number of students voting in 2004 exceeded that of the 2000 presidential election at the campus polling station. Second, the committee sought widespread participation in the committee and registration process. Representatives from all student political party organizations were encouraged to assist in the registration drive and were required to register all students, regardless of political affiliation. Third, the project would address students’ knowledge of issues through a dynamic Web site, discussions, and visits to campus by candidates.

Audience

The single audience for all of these activities was UW-River Falls students. Those who participated in the election process were recognized in two ways. First, those who

participated in an orientation concerning how the voting booths worked were given stickers that read, "I Learned to Vote." On Election Day, all students, faculty and staff voters were given prominent "I Voted . . . New Voters Project" buttons. Students who worked to register voters wore red "New Voters Project" T-shirts.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning began with formation of the planning committee in spring 2004. This early start enabled the committee to meet throughout the summer and resulted in an ambitious schedule of activities. The project launched with the start of the academic year and included information provided during orientation for new students; a dozen voter-registration sessions in September and October in the student center and food service building; four presentations on voting trends, including a major address by Thomas Patterson, author of *The Vanishing Voter*; and visits to campus by numerous candidates.

Budget

UW-River Falls was to receive assistance from the national New Voters Project, both in staff assistance and resources, but when this did not materialize the project was run in its entirety by volunteer help from students, faculty and staff. The budget was just \$1,500, provided by the central administration through discretionary funding for promotional materials. The campus enrichment program, the Wyman Series, used student funds for the appearance of Thomas Patterson. The project literally was a labor of love by everyone involved.

Assessment

Several techniques were employed to monitor attention to the project. The Web site generated 2,650 visits during October, the main period during which the voter-registration drive and speaking events occurred. The panels, speeches and candidate appearances all drew strong turnouts with lively crowd interaction. Most importantly, a total of 837 students were registered by the NVP project, accounting for all but 17 first-time voters. On Election Day, 1,704 votes were cast in the campus precinct, exactly doubling the 2000 tally of 852.

Lessons Learned

The NVP project was an overwhelming success. The most important lesson was to plan ahead, and it is one we hope we do not neglect in future years. This is particularly important when trying to schedule debates and visits by candidates. Candidates' appearances to share their views on issues provide the most compelling reasons for students to turn out on Election Day.





Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

Contact

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"Rock the Vote"

Rock the Vote (sponsored by MTV) is designed to engage and mobilize young people in the political process by incorporating the entertainment community and youth culture into pre-election activities. The university's event attracted approximately 1,500 students in fall 2004.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

WKU's first ever Rock the Vote event was organized by the gay and lesbian student association (the Outlet Alliance) and the women's studies program. In addition, local officials and candidates attended the event. Most importantly, 567 students registered to vote at the event, which featured four local bands, free food and beverages, and information booths set up by groups including College Republicans, College Democrats, and Amnesty International. Other booths were run by international programs, both mayoral candidates, and special-interest groups from campus as well as the community. Rock the Vote will become a permanent part of our annual Constitution Week in fall 2006 as a kick-off event.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the university's event was to generate positive changes in our students' social and political lives and create a connection between our university and the community. Other objectives were to increase voting by students and other young people, improve voter education, and ensure that young people take advantage of their right to vote. Those qualitative goals and objectives were established by the Outlet Alliance in accordance with MTV's agenda for the national Rock the Vote campaign.

Audience

The target audience for Rock the Vote primarily was students. Approximately 25 student organizations set up information booths geared toward political and social issues. Booths offered brochures, bumper stickers, fact sheets, and other items. Attendance tickets were given to students seeking extra credit in courses. Faculty and staff were also invited, and many attended the event.

Project Planning and Timeline

The planning for this event began at the end of the spring semester of 2004. The Outlet Alliance asked for volunteers for the planning committee during the summer of 2004. The committee met twice during the summer to pick a date for the event and plan other activities. At the beginning of the fall 2004 semester, the committee met with the director of the women's studies program to finalize plans and request help with promotion. The event was set for September 16 (three weeks after classes began), from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., in order to accommodate the Kentucky deadline for registering to vote. The event was staged outdoors on a grassy lawn area in front of the campus health and fitness center. All advertising for the event was done through e-mails and fliers posted around campus.

Budget

Although highly unusual, this project did not have an established budget. All bands, organizations, and people who registered voters volunteered their time for the event. Most participants were students, but a few faculty and staff helped with different activities. Food (hot dogs and sodas) was provided by our campus food-service company, Aramark.

Assessment

Primarily qualitative methods, such as speaking with students at the event, were used for evaluation and assessment. Quantitative methods in terms of a "head count" were also used for evaluating the project. Approximately 1,500 students attended Rock the Vote, and more than 550 students registered to vote. The attendance was about what the organizers expected, but the planning committee had set a goal of registering 1,000 students at the event. Many students attending, however, were already registered voters, so finding creative ways to attract those not involved in the voting process should be addressed.

Lessons Learned

In the case of the 2004 election, timing was crucial in order to get students registered before the Kentucky deadline for voter registration. However, waiting until a few weeks before an election is not always necessary. Voter registration, education, and participation should be ongoing concerns on college campuses. Including an annual Rock the Vote is an entertaining way to encourage students to become involved in the political process. It is also important to include as many departments, student organizations, and local officials as possible in the planning. Identifying campus and community resources can allow you to operate on a small budget. In addition it is imperative to direct event advertising at students who are not registered to vote and/or have not participated in the political process before.





Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Contact

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“WMU City Commission Candidate Forum”

The university's political-science department co-sponsors an on-campus forum for candidates for the city commission in association with the university's major student organization, the Western Student Association (WSA). Student leaders and a faculty members work together to plan the format: seating and sound arrangements, categories of questions for the candidates, and time limits for responses. The student association writes questions, recruits timers and ushers, and plans and disseminates advertising aimed at the general student body. The faculty advisor coordinates planning meetings, finds a moderator (from the local public-radio affiliate), arranges a venue, and invites candidates. During the event, audience members are invited to write additional questions, which ushers bring to the moderator. Participating students—event planners and attendees—are exposed to prominent local issues and to the politics of our council-manager form of city government. This event encourages students to learn about and become engaged with local politics and to vote in city elections.

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The city of Kalamazoo elects a seven-member city commission every two years. The university's political-science department and the Western Student Association (WSA), the university's major student organization, co-sponsored a forum for the candidates in fall 2005. We planned and hosted a similar event in 2003 at the initiative of the student association. At that time, student leaders approached the Kalamazoo League of Women Voters requesting guidance in how to organize and host such a forum. The league referred the students' request to the political-science department. Collaboration in 2003 was rewarding for the department and the student organization and the event was well-received, so the department took the initiative to invite the student organization, now with new leadership, to co-host another forum in 2005. We plan to repeat this event for the foreseeable future. No special incentives were provided for event organizers, although key WSA leaders were introduced at the event and WSA members acted as ushers. Members of the university's central administration were not involved.

Goals and Objectives

Student leaders' objectives were to get candidates for the city commission to focus on student concerns and to allow students to have an opportunity to question candidates on these and other local matters. As the political science department became involved, faculty hoped to expose the campus community to prominent local issues and the politics of our council-manager form of city government.

Audience

The primary intended audience was the campus community—undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty, but the general population was also invited. One large class, in urban politics, was required to attend. No other incentives were offered.

Project Planning and Timeline

The City Commission Candidate forum was held on October 26, 2005, between 7 p.m. and 9 pm—about two weeks before the election. Event planning began seven weeks before the forum. A designated faculty member contacts the student association to determine interest and identify association leadership, invites the moderator (from the local public-radio affiliate), confirms funding availability, works out a date for event (coordinating with the League of Women Voters to avoid scheduling conflicts with other forums), arranges a first meeting of event-planning team, and schedules a venue.

The faculty coordinator contacts the city clerk for candidate-contact information, invites announced candidates via e-mail and letter. A first meeting between student-association leaders, the event's moderator, and the faculty coordinator is held to plan the format for event is planned, including question format and timing, seating for candidates, and manner of taking audience questions. Promotion of event also is planned at this time.

The student association writes questions, recruits and trains timers and ushers. The faculty handles other logistical details, notifies the candidates of the format, and prepares audience handouts, including biographies of the candidates.

To promote the event, the student association posts announcements throughout campus buildings and contacts the student newspaper. The faculty coordinator writes an announcement for the local public-radio station and contacts the local newspaper. An institute within the department also distributes announcements to its mailing list.





Budget

The political science department's Institute of Government and Politics, an outreach arm that brings academics and public-service practitioners to campus, funded the 2005 project. The total cost was \$300 for the venue fee, plus small amounts for cards for audience members to use to write questions and bottles of water for the candidates.

Assessment

The event attracted participation by all active candidates for the city commission and about 150 to 200 members of the campus and greater Kalamazoo communities, a gratifying level of participation. There was no formal evaluation mechanism, but there were several informal indicators of success: good audience turnout and participation by all active candidates; insightful questions prepared ahead of time by the student association; vigorous questioning from the audience; positive feedback after the forum from candidates and attendees.

Lessons Learned

Students are insightful in identifying the important issues and reliable in doing their part. Candidates appreciate a good format and an opportunity to talk with students; a professional moderator is an asset. This event is a lot of work and a lot of fun, but planners need enough time to do things well.

Winston-Salem State University

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Contact

- ★ Larry Little, Associate Professor of Political Science, (336) 750-2528, littlel@wssu.edu
- ★ Donald Mac-Thompson, Associate Professor of Political Science, (336) 750-2619, macthompsond@wssu.edu
- ★ Michael Sutton, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Programs, (336) 750-3070, suttonem@wssu.edu

"Voter Registration and Awareness"

Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

The department of social sciences and student organizations such as Black Men for Change, the Political Science Club, and the Model United Nations were the sponsors for the Voter Awareness and Registration project at Winston-Salem State University.

The local NAACP was also a valuable partner. The academic-affairs division paid for refreshments for a party to watch election returns in the student center following the election. The project directors plan to conduct this activity every four years.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal and objective of the project was to increase student voter registration and turnout by 50 percent. This goal was established by Professors Larry Little and Donald Mac-Thompson because they wanted to increase students' awareness that their votes do make a difference and can have positive implications for them as citizens, such as being chosen to serve as a juror.

Audience

The university's students were the target audience for the voter-registration drive. Faculty members in political science offered extra credit to students enrolled in the American Government and Constitutional Law courses as an incentive to encourage students' involvement.

Project Planning and Timeline

Planning of the project took place the semester before the mid-term North Carolina and general elections. The project's goals were executed on the day of the election. The assessment of the project began two days after the election when students were able to compare their voter-registration efforts in the targeted precincts with actual voter-turnout data from the local elections board. Prior to the election, local political candidates were invited to visit political-science classes to raise students' awareness of local, state, and regional issues. The local chapter of the NAACP was a significant partner in the voter-registration drive on and off-campus.

Budget

There was no budget for the project. The majority of financial resources were donated by campus administrators.

Assessment

This project did attract the target audience by registering a large percentage of students who actually voted in the mid-term and general elections. The student turnout was higher than expected. This was especially true in 2004 when Winston-Salem State University won a voter-registration competition among other historically black colleges in the region. The project was evaluated using quantitative methods by recording and analyzing percentages and raw numbers of voter-registration applications and comparing them with the results from the targeted precincts.





Overall, the event was successful in raising the consciousness of students concerning their civic responsibility.

Lessons Learned

The most important lesson is that students responded to their peers' message of civic responsibility. In addition, the project facilitators were able to address the reality of the political process by inviting local candidates (some were alumni of the institution) to speak to their classes to stress the significance of students' participation in the electoral process. It appears, though, that the processing of voters at the polls could be done more efficiently. Some voters expressed frustration over the time spent waiting to receive their ballots. Still, organizers remain committed to raising students' political awareness and involvement in the voting process.



APPENDIX II

Case Study Template

The ADP Electoral Voices Task Force was impressed by the project you submitted to the Best Practices Inventory. Your institution's project, along with others, has been selected for inclusion in a best practices guide to be published by AASCU. Case studies of the best voter-registration, voter-education and voter-participation activities on AASCU campuses in 2004 will be included in the guide.

Completing the Case Study Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be used to prepare your project's case study. The questionnaire has seven sections, each with a specific question about your project. Use the template's headings and write complete narratives for each question. You have a total of 700 words for the entire questionnaire (all seven questions). How you distribute the words is up to you. The word count does not include the title of the project and the one to three sentences describing the project.

Return the completed questionnaires via e-mail to Mary-Kathryn McKenna at mckennam@aascu.org no later than March 1, 2006.

Case Study Template

Case Author(s) and Contact Information: _____

Project Name and a Description (limit description to three sentences):

Question I. Organizers, Sponsors, and Institutional Involvement

This section is intended to give readers ideas about who they might involve if they want to do a project like yours. It also is intended to give readers some idea about how much institutional involvement there was in your project. Be sure that your narrative includes: (1) The names of the sponsors. If the sponsors were organizations, please include what type of organization it was, such as student organization, academic organization, community-based organization, or political organization. (2) Whether or not organizers or sponsors received any incentives, such as inclusion in a



program, plaques, or time to speak at an event. (3) Whether or not members of the central administration were involved and to what level they were involved. Examples of central administration involvement include knowledge of the project, speaking at the event, providing funds, or serving on the planning committee. (4) How often you plan on doing this project in the future, if ever.

Question II. Goals and Objectives

In this section we would like you to identify the goals and/or objectives of your project. Your narrative should include: (1) What the goals and objectives were. (2) Whether the goals were quantitative, qualitative, or both. (3) Who established the goals. (4) Why these goals were selected.

Question III. Audience

Some projects targeted a specific audience. Others targeted multiple audiences. In this narrative section, you should describe: (1) Who your target audience(s) was, such as students, staff, faculty, alumni, or the community. (2) Whether or not there were any incentives offered to the participants, such as food, beverages, t-shirts, CDs, or course credit.

Question IV. Project Planning and Timeline

Other campuses will find it very helpful to have an idea about what steps you took to plan, promote, and execute this project. While it may not be possible to include a detailed timeline or all of the tactics in this narrative, please be sure to include: (1) When you began planning the project (days, weeks or months before the project was executed). (2) When the project took place (month, day, time of day) and how long it lasted. (3) When assessment of the project began and how long it took. (3) Any important milestones in the planning, executing, and evaluating of the project, such as when you began to accumulate the necessary supplies, started to advertise the project, or scheduled speakers. (4) Any strategies that were especially helpful, such as involving university relations/communication, involving local media, partnerships with established organizations, or in-kind donations.

Question V. Budget

Rarely are there unlimited funds for projects. This may be one of the most valuable pieces of information you can share with other campuses. In your narrative, please be sure to include: (1) The total budget for your project and whether or not your project came in under, at, or over the original budget. (2) The sources of the project funds, such as student service fees, discretionary funds from the central administration, and grants from local foundations, national programs, or donations

from individuals. (3) Any institutional support, such as course release, stipends, recognition, or administrative support.

Question VI. Assessment

One of the most important contributions that colleges and universities can make to the body of information about voter-registration, voter-education, and voter-participation programs may be bringing a rigorous assessment methodology to our projects. In this section please write a narrative that includes: (1) Whether or not your project attracted the target audience. (2) Whether or not participation in your project was lower, equal to, or higher than expected. (3) Whether or not there were quantitative or qualitative methods for evaluating the project. (4) What evaluation method(s) were used. (5) An appraisal of the success of the event (regardless of whether or not there was a formal evaluation component).

Question VII. Lessons Learned

Finally, please write a narrative about lessons learned. What were the most important positive and negative lessons you learned from this project? What advice would you give to anyone trying to do this project





APPENDIX III

AASCU Survey of Member Institutions

Melanie J. Blumberg

ADP Civic Engagement Survey

Executive Summary

The results of a survey conducted by the American Democracy Project (a joint effort under the auspices of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and *The New York Times*) indicate that campuses across the country are working to mobilize students by making voter registration accessible and by promoting civic engagement.

Ninety-four percent of the campuses that participated in the survey indicated they provide students with opportunities to register to vote. Forty-nine percent had pre-primary voter-registration drives and 56 percent made a push before the general election. Slightly more than 50 percent of the campuses made voter-registration materials available to students on a year-round basis. The methods for doing so varied, with 30 percent sending students institution-wide e-mail notices; 24 percent providing Web links on the campus Web site; and 78 percent joining forces with outside groups such as the League of Women Voters.

Only five percent of the campuses reported having difficulty either obtaining adequate voter-registration forms or getting accurate information from state or county boards of elections. Problems ranged from receiving “conflicting information from state and county” officials to dealing with uninformed people in the registrar’s office, some of whom were “partisan in [their] application of deadlines.” Six campuses reported having trouble obtaining adequate forms, although one was told to tell students to register online. The most serious problem related to the alleged dumping of Democratic Party registrations: An outside group, which was on a campus to help register voters, was accused of discarding the forms. The problem surfaced when students were not permitted to vote on Election Day. As the campus respondent noted, it was “[a] teachable moment about ‘dirty tricks,’ at best.”

Although outside groups helped with voter-registration drives, their ongoing presence on campuses was minimal: Twenty-three percent reported partnering with the League of Women of Voters, but fewer than half that number worked with Democracy Matters (11 percent) and Project Vote Smart (10 percent). Chapters of the College Democrats and College Republicans, located at 85 and 89 percent respectively of the responding campuses, have a higher profile than do the outside nonpartisan groups. Twenty-two percent of the institutions have Green Party chapters.

Most colleges and universities indicated that they held a wide array of election activities designed to pique student interest in the presidential election. In addition to voter-registration drives, 103 AASCU member institutions had political speakers on their campuses and 87 held political debates. Political rallies were held on 52 campuses, and 23 reported having political protests.

In preparation for the 2006 midterm election, 90 percent of the campuses planned Constitution Day events; 64 percent planned voter-registration drives, up eight percent over the last general election; and 68 percent were sponsoring political speakers, a decrease of 14 percent from the presidential election year.

Sixty-six percent of the colleges and universities that responded to the survey, rated themselves as being “somewhat engaged” (holding intermittent political events) and rated 78 percent of their students at the same level (irregular participation). Twenty-nine percent of institutions said they were “very engaged” (holding regular political events), with only 11 percent evaluating students similarly.

Campus coordinators pinpointed what they believed to be the greatest challenges in mobilizing college students. In response to an open-ended question, 25 percent said that students do not see themselves as stakeholders and, more specifically, how information and voting impact their lives. Students need to understand the issues and how they can influence public policy. Twenty-one percent of coordinators said that neither commuters nor students who work (these are not always mutually exclusive) have the inclination or time to participate in campus events. Eighteen percent cited political apathy as an obstacle to civic engagement. Four percent saw the problem as student cynicism about politics. Other challenges included interesting students in off-year elections and getting them to attend political events.



Summary

The survey results suggest that most colleges and universities understand that they play a critical role in promoting civic engagement and thereby developing responsible citizens. The charge is not easy given the large number of students who are apathetic and cynical about government or who say they simply do not have time for political activities. Just as disturbing, many students do not understand the connection between public policy and its effects on their lives. The challenge for institutions is to convince such students that politics matter and that they have the ability to influence policy outcomes.³⁹

Survey Question	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Does your institution offer students opportunities to register to vote on campus?		
• Yes	118	94%
• No	7	6%
• DK/NA	1	1%
Did your institution have difficulty obtaining adequate voter registration forms from the state or county board of elections during the last general election in November 2004?		
• Yes	6	5%
• No	118	94%
• DK/NA	2	2%
What political activities took place on your campus during the the 2004 presidential election year? (Please mark all that apply.)		
• Voter registration drive	122	97%
• Political speaker(s)	103	82%
• Political debate	87	69%
• Political rally	52	41%
• Political protest	23	18%
• DK/NA	2	2%
• Other, Please Specify	23	19%
What political activities are planned for this year? (Please mark all that apply.)		
• Constitution Day event	113	90%
• Voter registration drive	80	64%
• Political speaker(s)	85	68%
• Political debate	41	33%
• Other, Please Specify	24	19%

³⁹We are grateful to Harvard University's Institute of Politics and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for pioneering efforts in surveying institutions about their voter registration and mobilization work. Several items on this survey were adapted from a survey conducted by the Institute of Politics and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in August 2004.

Survey Question	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Which of the following groups have a presence at your institution? (Please mark all that apply.)		
• Democracy Matters	13	11%
• Project Vote Smart	12	10%
• League of Women Voters	27	23%
• College Democrats	100	85%
• College Republicans	105	89%
• Green Party	26	22%
• Other, Please Specify	38	32%
How do you rate your institution's level of support for student political engagement?		
• Very engaged (e.g., regular voter registration and mobilization drives, regularly schedule political speakers and events, and encourage political discussion through debates, forums, and teach-ins)	36	29%
• Somewhat engaged (e.g., generally have voter registration drives, sometimes have political speakers, normally encourage political discussion through debates, forums, and teach-ins)	83	66%
• Not politically engaged	6	5%
• DK/NA	2	2%
How do you rate the students' level of political engagement?		
• Very engaged (e.g., active student political groups that participate in voter registration drives, host political speakers, and sponsor debates)	14	11%
• Somewhat engaged (e.g., semi-active political groups that sometimes participate in voter registration drives and host political speaker(s))	98	78%
• Not politically engaged	98	78%
• DK/NA	2	2%
How do you rate the students' level of political engagement?		
• Very engaged (e.g., active student political groups that participate in voter registration drives, host political speakers, and sponsor debates)	14	11%
• Somewhat engaged (e.g., semi-active political groups that sometimes participate in voter registration drives and host political speakers)	98	78%
• Not politically engaged	13	10%
• DK/NA	2	2%



APPENDIX IV

Organizations Increasing Youths' Electoral Voice

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Political Engagement Project: carnegiefoundation.org/programs/index.asp?key=25

The foundation's Web site notes: "The Political Engagement Project (PEP) addresses the serious problem of political disengagement in young people and advocates a dramatic increase in college and university efforts to strengthen student interest in politics. The project documents the goals and pedagogies of 21 participating courses and programs, student perspectives on their experiences in them, and the impact of these experiences on key dimensions of political development, such as knowledge and understanding, active involvement, sense of political efficacy and identity, and skills of democratic participation. PEP is currently preparing a handbook, now in draft form, for faculty and administrators wishing to promote undergraduate political engagement."

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE): civicyouth.org

CIRCLE promotes and funds research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Major research areas include political participation and voting, civic knowledge, political attitudes and beliefs, and concepts of citizenship. It publishes fact sheets, working papers, a civic-engagement index, newsletters, and literature reviews.

Center for Civics Education: civiced.org

The Center for Civics Education is a source of curricular materials for civics education. Its Web site describes the group as "a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational corporation dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy."

Eagleton Institute of Politics: eagleton.rutgers.edu

Eagleton's Civic Engagement and Political Participation Program oversees several projects aimed at increasing voter turnout, political participation, and Americans' involvement in civic life. A 2005 national survey examined the voting habits of

college students. Other recent research focuses on the kinds of news available for young people and what young people say they really want in news.

Get Out the Vote (GOTV): yale.edu/vote

GOTV reports on strategies to increase voter turnout that are based on voter-mobilization experiments. This site is sponsored by the Institute for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) and CIRCLE.

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies: jointcenter.org

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies conducts research on a broad range of public policy issues of concern to African Americans and other communities of color. Principal areas of work include political participation, economic advancement, and health policy.

Institute of Politics: iop.harvard.edu

The institute conducts research and frequent surveys into the political views of America's young voters. Through the National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement, the institute works collaboratively with other schools and organizations across the country to engage young people in politics.

Higher Education Research Institute (HERI): gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html

The institute is responsible for national surveys of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). The Freshman Survey, an annual questionnaire, gathers demographic and attitudinal information on college freshmen, with some questions pertaining to interest in politics.

Leon and Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy: panettainstitute.org

The Web site for the Panetta Institute includes reports from a number of surveys that examine youth participation in, and attitudes toward, politics, as well as surveys on issues of concern to young people.

**The National Campus Voter Registration Project:
naicu.edu/VoteVoice2006/index.html**

This Web site is designed to support colleges and universities in their efforts to get students involved in the electoral process. It contains some helpful information pertaining to voting regulations and resources. Free copies of the publication "Your Vote, Your Voice" are available, along with information about grants. It also contains links to other Web sites with information pertinent to getting college students registered, educated, and voting.



National Conference of State Legislatures: ncsl.org

NCSL is noted for producing a wide array of policy reports for state policymakers. It also sponsors the Trust for Representative Democracy, which focuses on civic education to strengthen understanding and support for American democratic institutions. NCSL maintains a Civic Education-State Legislation Data Base.

Overseas Vote Foundation: overseasvotefoundation.org

The foundation describes itself as a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides information about how U.S. citizens, including students, can vote while studying or living abroad. It aims to educate people about their rights and the necessary procedures before they leave the country, to try to ensure ongoing civic participation regardless of geographic location.

Supporting Civic Life: pewtrusts.org/ideas/index.cfm?issue=7

Supporting Civic Life, a program of The Pew Charitable Trusts, sponsors nonpartisan projects intended to understand the causes of young people's increasing political disengagement and the most effective ways to reverse these trends.

United States Census Bureau: census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html

The bureau's Web site provides detailed statistical tables and analyses of the registration and participation patterns of American residents in biannual election cycles. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004" can be found here.

Vanishing Voter Project: vanishingvoter.org

The Vanishing Voter Project of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy is based in the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Its Web site says, "The Vanishing Voter Project seeks to promote awareness of and participation in the electoral process." A number of reports are available that assess youth participation in the electoral process and youth interest in politics.

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Jim Perry

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ABOUT AASCU

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) members work to extend higher education to all citizens. Access is a hallmark of AASCU institutions, colleges and universities that embrace students who traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education as well as those who are first generation college students.

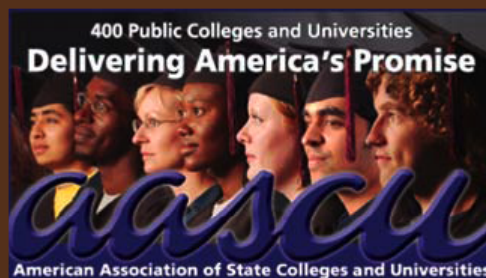
By Delivering America's Promise, these institutions fulfill the expectations of a public university by working for the public good through education and engagement, thereby improving the lives of people in their community, their region and their state. AASCU represents more than 400 public colleges, universities and systems of higher education throughout the United States and its territories. AASCU schools enroll more than three million students or 55 percent of the enrollment at all public four-year institutions.



ABOUT ADP

The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus initiative that seeks to create an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement for undergraduates enrolled at institutions that are members of AASCU. The goal of the project is to produce graduates who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful actions as citizens in a democracy.

The project grows out of a concern about decreasing rates of participation in the civic life of America in voting, in advocacy, in local grassroots associations, and in other forms of civic engagement that are necessary for the vitality of our democracy. The goals of the project are: (1) to increase the number of undergraduate students who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful civic actions by asking participating institutions to review and restructure academic programs and processes, extracurricular programs and activities, and the institutional culture and (2) to focus the attention of policy makers and opinion leaders on the civic value of the college experience.



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