

COLLEGE RESOURCES

College campuses are the ideal place for election work. Colleges are natural places to discuss ideas and they bring together a wide variety of people to one central location. Campuses are home to people from a range of backgrounds and faiths.

To be most effective, we suggest that you try working with the college presidents, dean of students, student leaders, chaplains, registrars, and employee groups to develop creative and effective ways to both encourage voter registration and increase voter participation. They too will have ideas to share, and if your energy inspires them to get involved, they will be able to help strengthen and broaden your efforts.

There may be other organizations on campus registering voters, holding rallies and making phone calls to get out the student vote. If you have a group of UCC students or students of faith, it might be helpful to work as a group within a larger effort - unless of course your group is the only one doing election work or is large enough to run a campus program of your own!

VOTER REGISTRATION

Many college students are newly eligible to vote. Others might be registered at home but not in the state where they attend school. Students must live in the area a minimum of nine months out of the year to vote in that area so some may want to register locally. Here are some ideas for voter registration:

Attach a voter registration form to each course registration form or set up a registration table by the registrar. If your school does online or phone course registration, ask to add a message encouraging all students to register to vote and informing them of how to do so.

Include voter registration information in paychecks, with student loan disbursements, and course catalogs.

Work with the Dean of Students or head of student life to present to students on the importance of voting. There you can distribute voter registration materials and help students complete their forms.

Mass mail registration forms to all students or send an email blast with a link to register to vote. Consider including faculty and staff!

Encourage faculty to discuss and distribute voter registration materials in class. Having the support of the Dean or some Department Chairs will be useful.

Have a party! Invite a local band to play, sponsor an ultimate Frisbee tournament or get student life or campus ministry to sponsor a cookout. While everyone is gathered, get them to register!

Set up a table outside of the cafeteria, sporting events, concerts, plays, activities, fairs, etc. Provide physical registration forms and a laptop or tablet for online registration. Ask students to complete their form in front of you so you do not have to chase down forms later.

Go door-to-door in the dorms, or better yet, get Residence Assistants to help you get people registered! R.A.'s are typically required to host periodic social events with their residents. Ask them to do an election themed event and register everyone on their floor!

Things to Remember

Encourage people to register locally - most students live in or around campus for nine months of the year for four years. They can establish residency and often stay close to school after graduation. They can vote where they live!

Include absentee ballot, mail-in, and early voting information with all voter registration materials. It's important that you have both federal and state voter registration forms on hand. Some people may register to vote locally, others may prefer to use their home address. Even if you make registration forms available to everyone on campus, your work isn't done! You need to establish a system to collect all the completed forms. Set up secure drop boxes in high traffic areas or establish a campus mailbox the forms can be sent to.

The most important step of all is to mail in the completed forms within 7-10 days of collecting them. To save time and postage, just bundle up all the forms, put them in an envelope or box, and mail them to the elections office in your state or local jurisdiction.

OPENING A POLLING PLACE ON YOUR CAMPUS

If you are interested in opening a polling place on campus, you will have to begin planning well in advance of election day. Here's where having the involvement and the buy in of your college administration will enhance the success of the project.

Contact the local elections officers and see what is required to operate a polling place on your campus. College campuses are ideal polling places because they offer ample space, usually have plenty of parking, and are accessible. Plus, opening a polling place will make it easier for people to vote between classes and will increase voter participation.

MAIL IN BALLOTS

Providing mail-in ballots will increase your voter participation enormously. Many students and even some professors may be registered to vote at their home address, or may be unable to make it to the polls on election day. You can help make it easy for them to vote by providing the website of their local election office so they can request an absentee ballot. Each jurisdiction has different laws and regulations for mail-in voting, so each person should look at their local election office website to get further information on when they can apply and when the ballots are due.

Keep a list of people who have registered to vote at their home address. Then you can contact them about three weeks before the election to be sure they have requested their mail-in ballot, and again about one week before the election to be sure they have mailed the ballot back to the appropriate elections office. It might be useful to send out campus wide email reminders or put up signs so people are reminded to vote by mail.

ORGANIZE A CANDIDATE FORUM ON CAMPUS

Invite the Candidates

Candidates for office at all levels love to visit college campuses. It gives them a chance to connect with young voters and be seen in an academic setting. Holding candidate forums helps open up the communication between candidates and their constituents and gets people interested in an election. Here's some ideas to help you get started.

Send an invitation email to the candidates well before the planned event and follow up with a phone call. It may take some time to find a date that will work for the schedules of the candidates in the race. Be flexible.

Plan the Format

There are many ways to set up a candidate forum. Here are some of the common formats you can choose from: 1) Allow the candidates to give prepared remarks and have people ask follow-up questions; 2) Have prepared questions to ask the candidates on themes important to your church and community; 3) Pass out index cards to the audience to write questions on and pass them in to be read on the day of the event or solicit questions from members via email or question box after services prior to the event. Leave enough time at the beginning for the candidates to give opening statements. Give candidates the same amount of time to make their closing remarks.

Make sure to have your moderator thank the candidates for their attendance and to remind people of voting day and encourage them to get out and vote.

Publicize the Events

Post on social media. Include brief notices in the newsletters of churches, campus groups, community-based organizations, and other groups. Ask your campus radio station and other media sources to run public service announcements. Ask to be listed in calendars of events in the local newspapers. Display posters in high-traffic areas.

Inform the Press

Invite the local newspaper, campus media outlets, and TV stations to cover your candidate forum or debate. This is a great way to get coverage of the issues to a broader audience. It also gives us a chance to show that your campus and UCC churches are engaged in the political process.

Debate Screenings

Screening a debate is a simple way to get people interested in elections. Arrange a place to view the debate (maybe a large gathering in the theater or a small group in your dorm or student center). Promote the event with posters, campus-wide emails, or a Facebook invitation. Provide food! Once everyone is gathered, watch the debate and leave time at the end for discussion. It may be helpful to invite a moderator to keep things ordered and respectful.

Screenings are great ideas for residence life staff who need to plan social events. They are also a terrific opportunity to get people to sign up to vote.

Voter Transportation

One of the most useful things you can do is provide voters a ride to the polls. Try to enlist the help of your campus transportation. Does your school have a shuttle? Does your University own buses or vans for transporting sports teams? See if you can get the college to pledge some time, vehicles, and drivers. If not, maybe you can get together a crew of students who are willing to carpool. Arrange a meeting place and head to the polls. Make sure to publicize your transportation options.

Voter Files

A voter file is a list of names, addresses, phone numbers, and party registration that is maintained by your local elections office. This is public information and can be purchased for a nominal fee to use in your Get Out the Vote efforts.

Most partner nonpartisan organizations will already have this information, so teaming up with another group, such as the [Poor People's Campaign](#) or the [Center for Common Ground](#) will save a lot of time and effort.

Phone Banking GOTV

Phone banking is the easiest and fastest way to contact people and urge them to vote. You will need a list of names and phone numbers. You can begin calling now, and remind people to vote, remind them of any ID requirements, and give them clear directions to their polling place as well as its hours. Also provide them with the Election Protection Hotline, the deadlines to request and submit a mail-in ballot, and the timeline for early voting.

In general, if you call people the night before the election and remind them that tomorrow is Election Day, this will help ensure less likely voters get out to vote. Typically, one person can contact 20-25 people per hour.

Canvassing

Canvassing is walking through the dorms or the neighboring precincts and knocking on doors reminding people to vote in the election. Canvassing provides a cheap and effective way to distribute voter education materials. Using your voting list, start walking through the neighborhoods and dorms knocking on the doors of registered voters. When you approach the door, identify yourself and tell them why you are there (to make sure they remember to vote). Leave materials with them - including directions to their polling place and the voting hours. Also provide them with the Election Protection Hotline, the deadlines to request and submit a mail-in ballot, and the timeline for early voting.

Remember: Do not endorse a particular candidate or political party. You are not advising people how to vote. If you want to promote a particular candidate, sign up with one of the campaigns to engage in this activity.

In general, canvassing should not be done on Election Day, since you can reach more people faster with a phone call than knocking on doors. Canvassing is a good activity for the weekend before the election or earlier as a voter education tool.

Public Announcements

Ask your campus radio and TV stations to broadcast public service announcements in the days before the registration deadline and the election, reminding people to register and vote. Put up table tents in the cafeteria, the library, and the student union urging people to vote. Make sure to list the date of the election, polling locations, and what time the polls open and close.

On Election Day

Make yourself visible. This could range from standing on the side of the street with signs saying “VOTE,” to leafleting the parking lots with fliers reminding people to vote before the polls close. Emails and table drops in the cafeteria can be helpful. Be creative!

Be a poll watcher or faith observer. Some states permit representatives of nonpartisan citizen organizations to observe polling places. Contact your local elections officer to find out requirements your organization must meet to serve as poll watchers/faith observers.

