Orientation is a key transition for incoming students and introduces them to their campus community. As such, it’s an ideal time to help them register to vote and to educate them on the electoral process. Every college and university that conducts orientation should include opportunities for students to register to vote at their new campus addresses or by absentee if they prefer.

**Why Register Students at Orientation**

1. It sets an expectation of engaged citizenship from day one, sending a message that voting is an important part of the college experience, and by extension, of being an adult.
2. It can readily be integrated with existing orientation programs.
3. It offers a unique opportunity to reach virtually all incoming students at once, maximizing the effectiveness of your outreach.
4. It encourages new students to learn about issues affecting their campus, the surrounding community, and the country as a whole, and gives them a way to take action.

### High-Impact Practices

**Talk about it.** Orientation is the first major glimpse students get of your campus culture. Be clear that your campus makes engaged citizenship a priority.

- Have a high-level administrator or key student leader talk about the importance of registering and voting.
- Invite students to volunteer with the school’s nonpartisan engagement team, or with political campaigns of their choice.
- Train peer advisors to help students register to vote and provide information about electoral engagement opportunities.
- Learn the registration and voting rules for your state. Our partner Fair Elections Legal Network offers state-specific guides focused on rules that affect students.

**Provide multiple ways to register.** The more information and opportunities, the better.

- Set up a bank of laptops and have someone guide students through the process of registration or updating of registrations using the online tools of Rock the Vote or TurboVote. These same online tools are also available for mobile devices, so you can have students download them and use their cell phones instead.
- If your state doesn’t allow online registration, you’ll want to have printers available so students can print out their registrations on-site, and not have to rely on printing and mailing them later. Or subscribe to TurboVote, so they can fill out the applications and receive printed versions by mail along with self-addressed stamped envelopes that they can then sign and mail in.

**Emphasize visibility.** If you received a “Your Vote Matters” banner from CEEP, display it in the student union or at registration tables. If you don’t have one but would like one, contact info@campuselect.org. (We will have new banners available in 2016)

- Provide paper registration cards at a table with information on registration and voting rules.
- Offer a civic engagement or Voting 101 session that discusses how to register (and the benefits of registering locally), where to find information on candidates and issues, and opportunities to get involved in nonpartisan or partisan efforts of students’ choosing.
- You can even bring in a local election official to host the session and answer questions.
- Include written information and handouts in orientation
packets. Your Secretary of State, Board of Elections, County Auditor, or League of Women Voters chapter may have printouts available online, or your state CEEP outreach staffer may have templates.

**Take advantage of naturally occurring bottlenecks.** With hundreds, if not thousands, of students on campus the same day, there are bound to be lines with significant wait times. Capitalize on these situations to register students while they’re waiting.

- Register students while they’re lined up to get their student ID cards, residence hall keys, or bus passes.
- Encourage students to register while waiting in line to meet with financial aid advisors, and have staff available to collect registration forms.

**Consider adopting Northwestern University’s UVote model.** UVote uses peer-to-peer outreach to help all first-year students register to vote when they receive their initial student ID. Peer volunteers help students register in any of the 50 states by providing the necessary mail-in forms, while campus staff and volunteers process and mail the completed forms to the appropriate Boards of Elections. This approach has allowed the school to register between 90 and 95% of incoming freshmen by the end of orientation week. For more information, fill out their online form.

**Follow up to increase the impact of your efforts.**

- Use varied approaches that complement each other.
- Have residence hall staff hand out and collect registration forms during move-in. They can also discuss registration during floor meetings during the initial weeks.

- Send out mass emails to the incoming class (and all students, for that matter) reminding them of registration deadlines and including links to the TurboVote or Rock the Vote tools.

- If your campus has active student media outlets, talk to them about including voter information in the welcome week edition.

- If you have freshman experience or first-year seminars during the fall semester, have leaders work registration into the curriculum, along with discussions of ways to volunteer.

Email info@campuselect.org to connect with a CEEP staffer in your region who can help plan and execute these ideas, supply training and resources for your staff, or put together a long-term election engagement plan for your campus.

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**Keep your momentum going**

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

2. **Register students to vote.** Take the lead in getting your campus community registered. Announce campus-wide goals, which measures progress and motivates.

3. **Educate on issues and candidates.** Students often say they don’t vote because “they’re all lying and spinning. You can’t tell what they believe.” Offering clear information on where candidates stand plays a critical role.

4. **Encourage students to volunteer with campaigns of their choice or at the polls.** Students can multiply power of their individual vote by volunteering. Also, patterns of early civic involvement tend to stick.

5. **Build election excitement.** In order to turn out student voters, it’s important to build energy and visibility leading up to Election Day.

6. **Get the vote.** Make use of a combination of strategies to get as many people to the polls as possible. Combine face-to-face and online technologies, and make sure your election efforts complement each other.

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