Engaging Students in the Midterm Elections: 10 Things NC Schools Can Do This Spring

November's elections may seem far away, but the sooner you begin planning effective nonpartisan ways to help your students register, volunteer, learn about the issues and turn out at the polls, the better prepared you'll be as deadlines approach, and the more interest and momentum you'll build on your campus. Plus every student registered in spring is one less to register in fall. Here are 10 areas where you can begin acting now.

#1 BUILD A TEAM

✓ Create a core group of administrators, faculty, and staff to coordinate campus election-engagement efforts and ensure key people are talking with each other across different departments and disciplines.
✓ Approach key campus leaders now to get commitments to help engage your campus. Include Deans, Provost, President, Student Affairs, Service Learning Coordinator, Registrar, IT department, Residence Life, Campus Newspaper Advisor, Faculty Development, Coaches, and academic departments.
✓ Review what your campus has done previously during election cycles and brainstorm ways to build on it.
✓ Brainstorm funding sources for ideas not already built into campus budgets. For instance, printing of voter engagement materials, food for get-out-the-vote volunteer parties, and transportation for students who want to register voters off campus. If you have a non-federally funded student philanthropy program they might be interested in providing mini-grants to help engage other schools in the election.
✓ Approach student leadership. Student government and student programming boards can be important allies, as can the student newspaper.
✓ Begin planning together for fall.
#2  
CHECK THE CALENDAR

Develop a preliminary calendar including:

✔ Key campus dates:
  o Deadline for the site students use when they register for fall classes, so you can post the Rock the Vote registration tool http://www.rockthefight.org/partner
  o Deadline for submission of materials to campus registration packets.
  o Deadline for student orientations to include election-engagement activities and voter registration.
  o Fall book order deadlines for election-related course themes.
  o First and last days of classes.

✔ Election related dates and voter registration deadlines:
  o Deadlines to get an on-campus polling station.
  o Dates of state primaries or caucuses and local elections.
  o Fall early voting timelines.

For info on North Carolina deadlines and rules visit the NC Board of Elections: http://www.ncsbe.gov/ncsbe/Voting/VoterGuide2/key-election-dates

#3  
IDENTIFY KEY POTENTIAL AREAS FOR CAMPUS EFFORTS

✔ Voter Registration:
  Schools can play a key role in helping get students registered. Add registration components to activities like graduation, orientation, course registration, sporting events and concerts. Encourage student and relevant off-campus groups (like the PIRGS) to register voters in public spaces, like campus quads and the student union. If you have a residential campus, work with student organizations to do a "dorm storm," where they go door to door to register students where they live. Encourage the campus Republicans and Democrats to conduct joint registration drives.

✔ New Voter Registration and Identification Rules:
  Schools can play a critical role in ensuring that every eligible student knows what they need to bring to register and vote, and how and when to do it. Visit the North Carolina Board of Elections site for a summary of recent changes to the election law. If your school runs into consistent hurdles trying to help your students register and vote, you can call 1-866-OurVote hotline or visit www.866ourvote.org to connect with lawyers who can advise you.
✓ Student electoral volunteering:
  o Register non-students in your local communities - Work with your service learning center to encourage students doing off-campus service projects to register the communities they work with, and to connect the non-profits through which they volunteer with key resources like those offered by Nonprofit Vote. Encourage students to work with nearby schools to help register eligible high school seniors. Encourage them to volunteer with candidates and political campaigns, according to their individual beliefs. Encourage faculty to offer credit for any of these activities if students include reflective components like journals and reports.
  o Become a Poll Worker - Students are also eligible to serve as Poll Workers in their local district. They must complete an application, attend several trainings, and serve on Election Day. There is a significant need for younger Poll Workers in North Carolina and they get paid for participating! Visit the Election Board website for your local county to obtain an application.

✓ Candidate and Issue Education:
  You want your campus to be a hub where students reflect on key issues and critically evaluate local, state, and national candidates. Steer students to resources like Project Vote Smart where they can vet candidates' stands. Schedule debates and forums. Think of creative ways, like those provided by the Annenberg School's FlackCheck to help students question misleading campaign ads and actively challenge their airing. Plan for election and civic engagement-related speakers, and plan ways to distribute nonpartisan voting guides, like those that the League of Women Voters and Rock the Vote will be preparing.

✓ Voter Turnout:
  It's never too early to collect pledges to vote (see Rock the Vote pledge format) or plan parades to the polls, debates and forums, mock voting days, and absentee ballot mailing parties. LongDistanceVoter is a great resource for absentee ballot information.
#4
PLAN TECH SUPPORT FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND VOTER EDUCATION

Campus webpages, listservs, and social media sites can play a key role in getting students registered and involved. Work with your IT department to create a prominent campus voter education website and to distribute relevant information. Below are some resources with which to connect your IT folks:

- **Rock the Vote registration tool**
- **The Voting Information Project (VIP)** offers cutting edge technology tools to provide voters with access to customized election information to help them navigate the voting process and cast an informed vote.
- **Overseas Vote Foundation** helps students who are studying abroad with Automated Overseas Voter Registration Assistance.
- Start a Facebook group or Twitter tag for later use. People can sign up easily and you can then efficiently remind them come fall.

#5
Check out existing web resources

- Campus Election Engagement Project (national)
  [http://www.campuselect.org/](http://www.campuselect.org/)
- Campus Election Engagement Project (North Carolina)
  [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/org/nccc/Init-ElectionProject.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/org/nccc/Init-ElectionProject.xhtml)
- Campus Vote Project (Fair Elections Legal Network)
  [http://campusvoteproject.org/](http://campusvoteproject.org/)

#6
INCLUDE REGISTRATION OPTIONS AT KEY SPRING EVENTS AND IN KEY MATERIALS

- Display the **Rock the Vote** registration tool prominently on key campus webpages, particularly those where students sign up for Fall classes.
- Include mail-in registration forms in any materials given to students (e.g., class descriptions, graduation packets, summer residential life forms).
- Try to incorporate voter registration drives into as many end-of-year activities as possible, like graduation. One person with 100 voter registration forms can register lots of people in just an hour.
ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO VOTE IN NON-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Primaries, midterms and local elections are great places to learn about candidates and issues and become more involved. Congressional seats, Senate seats and state and local offices fill out most primary ballots. Talk about ways these matter.

Encourage faculty to add voter education to their curriculums

- Invite candidates to speak on campus, or even host a debate.
- Include voter registration forms in course syllabi.
- Incorporate relevant election-related discussions and readings into classes.
- Combat political cynicism by exploring how electoral and non-electoral participation can complement each other, whether in the civil rights movement, Occupy, or the Tea Party. Assign books that give students a sense of how social change has unfolded in America, and the critical role of elections.
- Add an election volunteering component to classes involving service learning. See NonprofitVote for nonpartisan ways nonprofits can register and educate voters.

BUILD MASTER CONTACT LISTS FOR FALL UPDATES

Get emails (for text message) and phone numbers from all related events and programs. By fall, this could be a great list of students for Get Out the Vote efforts.

WORK WITH THE LOCAL BOARD OF ELECTIONS FOR AN ON-CAMPUS POLLING LOCATION

Making voting easy and convenient will significantly boost campus voter turnout. Visit the CEEP-NC website to download a document created by Democracy NC to assist campuses in pursuing an on-campus polling location.

This information was produced by the Campus Election Engagement Project and modified for use in North Carolina.