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College Campus – Get Out The Vote

Now that you have registered all these new voters, it's important to get them to the polls on Election Day, or make sure they submit absentee ballots. Elected officials will be far more responsive to your campus's concerns if a high percentage of voters from your campus turn out and vote.

An effective campaign requires a significant amount of preparation and volunteers to be successful, so start planning your get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts as you conduct your voter registration campaign.

Before Election Day

- **Open 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. The involvement of the college administration will enhance the success of this project. Contact the local elections official 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 to the handicapped. Opening a polling place will make it easier for people to vote between classes and will likely increase voter participation.
- **Absentee ballots** will increase voter participation. If someone chooses to register to vote at their home address be sure to provide the address of the local election official so they can contact them to obtain an absentee ballot. You may want to create a form letter for people to use when requesting an application. Each jurisdiction has different laws and regulations for absentee voting, so each person should contact their elections office to get further information on when the applications and 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 absentee ballot, and again about one week before the election to be sure they have mailed the ballot back to the appropriate elections office.

- 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 you can purchase it for a nominal fee to use in your GOTV efforts. If you copy all the voter registration forms before you send them in to the elections office, you may not need to invest in the list.
- **Phone banking** is the easiest and fastest ways to contact people and urge them to vote. You will need a list of names, phone numbers, and a bank of phones and clear directions to nearby polling places.

*“Shout out, do
not hold back!
Lift up your
voice like a
trumpet!”*

– Isaiah 58:1



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In general, you will want to call people the night before the election and remind them that tomorrow is Election Day. Typically, one person can contact twenty to twenty-five people per hour.

- **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 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 material with them – including directions to the polling places and the voting hours.

REMEMBER: Do not endorse a particular candidate or political party. You are not advising people how to vote, simply encouraging them to cast their 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 as a last-minute voter education tool.

- 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 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 flyers reminding people to vote before the polls close. Be creative!
- Get voters to the polls – if you decide to offer rides to polling places, plan in advance. Find vans, make sure you have insurance to cover your activities, find volunteers to drive.
- Be a poll watcher. 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.

[Some of this information is excerpted from National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities' handbook.

For more information, log on to:

www.naicu.edu/VoteVoice2002/02yourVoteYourVoice.pdf