



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
LANSING

## **Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force Report and Recommendations**

*Delivered to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson  
December 17, 2019*

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*The recommendations included in this report are signed by all members listed above and delivered to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson on December 17, 2019.*

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## I. Executive Summary

In this report, we, the Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force members, catalog numerous barriers impacting youth and student voters at state, local, university and individual levels. For each barrier, we recommend solutions. Suggested best practices and recommendations are included at the end of the report.

In our deliberations, the task force identified educational barriers as one of the most important to overcome. Everyone interested in engaging young people in our democracy should consider their potential role in educating students about both the mechanics of voting *and* the importance of their vote and voice in every election. Key areas for improvement in youth voter education include informing students about their rights, registration and voting options, and where to find additional resources.

While peer-to-peer education is the most effective method of voter education and motivation, young people need substantial support from election administrators, educators and educational institutions to disseminate accurate and consistent information on voting and its importance. Furthermore, these influential stakeholders are encouraged to take additional steps to provide voting access on campuses, like offering conveniently located satellite clerk offices and polling locations.

Beyond the essential, overarching importance of youth voter education, the most critical recommendations of the task force, in rank order, are listed as follows:

1. ***On-campus resources:*** Reaching students where they are, through the establishment of on-campus resources and voting access, is paramount to increasing student and youth voter turnout. On-campus resources may include satellite clerk offices, on-campus polling locations, and increased use of mobile Secretary of State branch offices.
2. ***Online absentee voter ballot application:*** Currently in Michigan, there is no online interface allowing voters to request an absentee voter ballot electronically. The convenience and flexibility of an online application with electronic submission directly to the voter's local clerk would facilitate a greater number of young voters applying to vote by mail.
3. ***Plain language ballot summaries:*** Confusing ballot language and election jargon can cause intimidation, misinformation and confusion for young voters. Easily understood ballot summary language and definitions will ensure student and young voters fully comprehend the issues on the ballot.
4. ***Innovations for easier return of absentee voter ballots:*** Pre-paid return postage and on-campus ballot drop-box locations would alleviate barriers students face in paying for and locating stamps or arranging for transportation leading up to and on Election Day.
5. ***Requiring permanent absentee voter list provision:*** Clerks' offices should be required to keep and maintain a permanent absentee voter application list allowing students to receive an absentee voter ballot application sent to them prior to each election, increasing the ease and convenience of voting.

## II. Introduction

In September 2019, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson formed a first-of-its-kind nonpartisan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force to improve youth voter engagement. Through a selection process involving local election administrators and Department of State staff, we were chosen to serve as liaisons between our campuses and the Department of State. Historically, students in Michigan faced significant barriers to voting and participated in elections at lower rates than other age groups. The task force was established to combat this historic participation gap.

Members of the task force include 32 students from 23 colleges, community colleges and universities throughout Michigan with hometowns across the state. We each come to the work of voter engagement from different backgrounds, campuses, personal experiences and political beliefs. We advise the Department of State on the unique challenges encountered by our peers, voters age 18-24, and have prepared recommendations that encompass administrative, programmatic and legislative changes or initiatives to encourage young people to vote.

Task force members met three times in person and several times via conference call between September and November 2019, with our final recommendations submitted to Secretary Benson in December 2019. In 2020, we will continue to work with the Secretary of State's Office as student engagement liaisons on our respective campuses. In this capacity, we will serve as educators, organizers and trusted sources of information for our peers, and the Secretary of State's Office will continue to contact us with updated voting information and tools.

Enclosed you will find our recommendations and solutions to the barriers identified in our discussions and our experiences on campuses and in communities throughout the state.

## III. Barriers and Solutions

### A. VOTER REGISTRATION

With the adoption of Proposal 18-3 just over a year ago, Michigan voters now have the right to register to vote up to and including Election Day. As of November 2019, Michigan voters can also now register to vote online.

To register in the 14 days immediately before and on Election Day, Michigan voters must provide address verification documents, like a driver's license or utility bill with their name and current address on it, to verify their residency. This address verification requirement in the 0-14 day window may pose a barrier to young people broadly and college students specifically. Students may have multiple addresses including a temporary school address and a permanent home address. There may be confusion surrounding which address (school or home) should be used when registering, and what documents are acceptable to provide address verification. While at school, students often change addresses frequently, and may encounter difficulty obtaining address verification documents. Further issues may stem from students who live "off-campus" in a residence where they aren't listed on the lease and don't have bills in their name. This type of living arrangement is common among students and can create barriers.

### Recommended Solutions

- **State Administrative and Legislative Efforts**

*Student accommodations for address verification documents:* The task force recommends that the 0-14 day window residency requirement allow maximum flexibility and

accommodation of young voters. Online sign-in portals at colleges and universities often contain profile pages where a student's school address is listed. An electronic version of such a profile, or any other official university document displaying a student's address (presented on a smart device like a phone or tablet) should serve as an acceptable form of documentation for address verification. We recommend the Department of State and Michigan Bureau of Elections set standards and guidelines for acceptable paper and electronic documentation for students specifically and communicate those standards to both clerks and schools alike, and that clerks should be trained on acceptable forms of electronic documentation for students.

***Student-specific clerk training:*** The task force recommends that the Department of State provide local clerks with training and standards on which documents are acceptable for college students to provide for address verification and identification. Clerks and universities alike should make the list of acceptable forms of identification easily available for students (i.e. on school websites, posted in locations around campus). The Department of State should provide support to individual clerks and higher education institutions around the state to troubleshoot campus-specific address verification solutions.

***Mobile Secretary of State branch:*** The Secretary of State's Office should deploy mobile branch offices to college and university campuses. These mobile branches offer the full range of services available at a standard office. Students can register to vote and change their address, among other Secretary of State driver and vehicle services. In addition to the deployment of the mobile branch office, the Secretary of State should send Bureau of Elections staff in support of the unit to distribute absentee voter applications and voter outreach guidance. The office should also increase the number of mobile offices and their frequency of use.

***Out-of-state online voter registration:*** Many students in Michigan possess out-of-state licenses. Currently, these students are not able to register to vote online. The Bureau of Elections should consider solutions that would allow individuals with non-Michigan licenses to register online. For example, perhaps those who do not hold a Michigan license could upload separate address verification and signature documentation to their online voter registration submission.

***Clerk office additional hours:*** The task force recommends that legislation and funding be allocated to allow clerk's offices to increase office hours in the weekday evenings and on weekends, in advance of each Election Day. Increasing the hours for clerk offices will allow students seeking to register to vote greater access to resources, specifically during the 0-14 day window, which requires in-person registration.

- **University Efforts**

***Encourage early (online) registration:*** In November 2018, the Michigan Legislature passed a law allowing online voter registration<sup>1</sup> and the Department of State launched an online voter registration portal in November 2019. Colleges and universities across Michigan should be heavily promoting the use of online voter registration months before Election Day. Students who register to vote prior to the 0-14 day window before elections will not be required to provide additional residency verification documentation.

***Provide voter registration applications:*** While colleges and universities should predominantly refer students to online voter registration, physical forms should also be supplied for students without Michigan photo ID. Ideally, schools should incorporate voter registration into orientation, as this is one of the proven methods to increase voter registration and participation on campuses<sup>2</sup>.

**Provide residency verification documents:** As mentioned in the state administrative efforts section above, colleges and universities should provide residency documentation for registration and voting purposes to both on-campus and off-campus students. Many universities and colleges already facilitate online portals specific to each student user. Schools should ensure that online student profiles list student school or home addresses so students may use this information as address verification. A print-off of a university document displaying a student's address may also be provided to students for this purpose. Universities should provide links to these printable documents on their websites.

**Provide photo identification:** Temporary student photo identification, which lists a student's address, may be issued by schools as a form of address verification for voter registration during the 0-14 day window prior to an election. Additionally, while photo identification is not required at the polls on Election Day in order to vote, without a photo ID to show at the polls, students must sign an affidavit swearing they are not in possession of a photo ID. Providing temporary IDs for use as photo identification may avoid potential confusion surrounding the signing of an affidavit, address verification and proof of identity when voting or registering in-person on Election Day.

## CASE STUDY

### UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

An example of the use of temporary photo identification comes from The University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. During the 2018 mid-term elections, the university issued temporary student photo identification to students for the sole purpose of voting<sup>3</sup>.



## B. ABSENTEE VOTING

Absentee voting in Michigan dramatically changed with the passage of Proposal 18-3. Now, Michigan is a no-reason absentee voting state, which means voters may request an absentee voter (AV) ballot without justification. Consequently, Michigan's "must vote in person" requirement – which posed a barrier for students who wanted vote absentee in their first election – is no longer enforceable.

Because students often encounter difficulties getting to polling locations on Election Day, many voting barriers students face could be resolved through absentee voter ballots. However, there are still barriers to obtaining and submitting an AV ballot, including the cost of return postage. Students need access to information on absentee voting procedure, deadlines and easy AV ballot return options.

### Recommended Solutions

- **State Administrative and Legislative Efforts**

**Online absentee voter ballot application:** Voters should be able to request an AV ballot online. Currently, those wishing to receive an absentee ballot must submit the request in writing to their local clerk's office, in person or via mail, fax, or e-mail. Creating an online request submission for an absentee ballot would increase access for students.

**Online redirect to absentee voting:** Once an online AV ballot request form is created, the online voter registration page should automatically re-direct to the ballot request form. If an online ballot request form is not created, the online voter registration page should redirect to the Department of State webpage on [Absentee Voting](#), which allows visitors to download a copy of the absent voter ballot application. This automatic redirect could increase the use of

absentee ballot voting, creating a more convenient voting experience for students and young people.

***Permanent absentee voter list:*** All clerks should be required to maintain a permanent absentee ballot application list. Requiring all clerks to keep and maintain a permanent absentee ballot application list would increase the ease with which all voters, including students, are able to vote. Many states already require the keeping of a permanent absentee ballot list, including Kansas, Connecticut and Tennessee<sup>4</sup>.

***Pre-paid postage:*** The cost and inconvenience of return postage for AV ballots can create significant barriers to students and young people more broadly. We recommend appropriating funding to provide prepaid postage on AV ballot return envelopes to mitigate this barrier.

***Absentee voter education materials:*** AV ballots should include plain language instructions on how to fill out an AV ballot and return it correctly.

***Absentee voter ballot counting deadline extension:*** The task force recommends that all AV ballots received are counted, so long as (a) the ballot is received within 14 days of an election and (b) the ballot is postmarked on or before Election Day. Allowing clerks to count late-arriving AV ballots will help students ensure their votes are counted even if not received by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

***Early tabulation of absentee voter ballots:*** It is likely that the state of Michigan will have a higher rate of absentee voting in the 2020 Election, based on recent changes in absentee voter requirements that reduced barriers to absentee voting, as well as the recommendation of the task force for increased student absentee voting. To ease the burden on clerk's offices processing a higher volume of AV ballots, we recommend that clerks and/or election committees be permitted to start tabulating AV ballots prior to Election Day.

***Notice of absentee voter ballot receipt:*** Currently, absentee voters in Michigan may visit [Michigan.gov/vote](https://michigan.gov/vote) to check the status of their absentee ballot. The state should go one step further and incorporate an automated feature to notify absentee voters, via text or email, about their AV ballot status. Many student voters are concerned that their AV ballots may not be counted. By providing notice of receipt, students and young people may be more encouraged, and feel more secure, about voting absentee.

***Absentee voter ballot and application modification:*** We recommend the following updates and changes to AV ballots and AV ballot application forms.

- ***Additional address line for AV ballot application:*** All AV ballot applications should include a third "address" line to accommodate school mailing addresses. A third line allows for the insertion of an institution mail center address for students with on-campus addresses.
- ***Include multiple elections on AV ballot application:*** To increase the ease with which students may request absentee voter ballots, AV ballot applications should include multiple elections in a given calendar year. Applicants may fill in a bubble to request AV ballots for each corresponding election date.
- ***Permanent list for AV ballot application:*** The check box to join the permanent absentee ballot application list is currently buried on the right side of Section 3 of the Michigan Absent Voter Ballot Application. The form should be amended to feature the request more prominently at the top of the application.



- **Clerk's Office Efforts**

**Absentee voting ballot drop boxes:** The cost of postage, locating stamps and arranging transportation can create barriers for students who must mail in their AV ballots. To combat these issues, schools and local clerks should designate secure absentee ballot drop boxes in central location(s) on campuses. Drop box locations and deadlines should be publicized by universities and colleges. Recognizing the logistical concerns of placing drop boxes on campuses – such as security concerns, ultimate cost of postage, timing – drop boxes could also be placed at on-campus satellite clerk offices.

**Forwarding of absent voter ballots:** All AV ballots inadvertently mailed to the incorrect clerk office should be forwarded to the correct clerk office. If additional funding is required for this purpose, we recommend the Legislature appropriate funds for AV ballot forwarding.

- **University Efforts**

**Promote absent voter ballots:** Because no-reason absentee voting is a new right in Michigan, universities and colleges should heavily promote AV ballots. Whether students vote in their campus community or vote using their home address, an AV ballot allows students to vote with significantly less travel and time constraints. Students who have difficulties arranging transport to polling locations on Election Day may find absentee voting more convenient. Additionally, increased use of absentee voting may reduce lines at polling locations on Election Day.

## **C. VOTING LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORTATION**

Students on college campuses may encounter barriers accessing transportation to clerk offices or polling locations. Convenience of registration and voting is often an issue for students. While the solutions to barriers listed in previous sections (absentee voting, online voter registration, etc.) will likely alleviate some of these barriers, many students will remain inconvenienced or in need of transportation on or before Election Day. Students should have convenient access to polling locations and clerk offices, and a schedule that accommodates voting.

### **Recommended Solutions**

- **State Administrative Efforts**

**Poll worker recruiting:** The task force recommends the Secretary of State's Office, in partnership with local clerks, take action to improve poll worker recruitment, specifically recruitment targeted at college and university students for polling locations on college campuses. Direct advertisements catered to specific campuses should be created and circulated.

**Public bus transport:** Local transit services (with encouragement from the Secretary of State's Office and MDOT) should provide free public transportation to students to and from polling locations and clerk offices on Election Day.

**Vote center study:** Vote centers, already utilized in states like Colorado<sup>5</sup>, are polling places that allow voters to cast a ballot on Election Day, regardless of their residential address and assigned precinct. Recognizing the uniquely decentralized nature of Michigan's election system, we recommend authorizing a study to examine the feasibility of allowing municipalities/counties to establish vote centers.

**LGBTQ+ voter ID:** The Michigan Bureau of Elections should provide training for clerks and poll workers on how to handle situations where photo identification does not correspond to a

voter's gender identity. Clerks and poll workers should be trained on how to handle this situation with consideration and resolve correctly.

- **Clerk's Office Efforts**

**Satellite clerk's office:** For many campuses, campus satellite clerk offices should be prioritized in the days leading up to Election Day (specifically the 0-14 day window). Universities should work to support the local election official in this effort. Placing a satellite office on campus would reduce transportation concerns for students on Election Day, or the days immediately prior, when students will need register to vote in-person at clerk offices.

**On-campus polling locations:** For many campuses, local clerks should work with universities to create on-campus polling locations. This would create convenient access to voting for students on Election Day. This recommended approach would eliminate transport concerns for many student voters, and ease confusion about polling locations for first-time voters.

On-campus polls may also be open to neighboring non-student residents as well as students. In that case, on-campus parking lots should be reserved for non-campus voters like neighboring residents and off-campus students. Student volunteers may be utilized to assist in directing traffic.

**Satellite clerk office or polling place student workers:** An anticipated issue with satellite offices or on-campus polling location(s) may be the increased strain on clerks to provide sufficient staff. A suggested approach to alleviate this burden is to allow student workers, interns, fellows or volunteers to receive training from clerks to assist in the running of satellite offices. This would increase processing power at satellite offices while creating on-campus student experts in voting procedure.

- **University Efforts**

**University transport:** Many universities have bus lines that provide transportation to-and-from campus for off-campus or near-campus students. Adding a stop to these routes at local clerk offices and polling locations on Election Day would provide students easier access to voting and registration services. Students should be made aware of added stops to campus bus-routes, and the route changes should be highly publicized by the university. This service should be free.

**Ride share transport:** Ride-share companies like Lyft<sup>6</sup> and Uber<sup>7</sup> have offered free or discounted transport to polling locations on Election Day. Universities and colleges should advertise these services to students. Furthermore, colleges and universities should coordinate with local taxi-services to offer similarly discounted transportation to students.

**Campus scheduling:** Exams and large assignments scheduled during the week of an election may be a voting deterrent for students. Discouraging these scheduling conflicts will ensure that students have ample time to visit the polls and/or register to vote. If possible, the academic calendar should be modified to not hold classes on Election Day, or faculty should be instructed to make attendance optional.

For an example of a successful campus resolution supporting the establishment of this policy, see Appendix Exhibit C.

## **D. VOTER EDUCATION AND COMPREHENSION**

In our deliberations, time and again we identified voter education as the most important issue and overarching barrier to address for students and young people across Michigan. We recommend a significant amount of time and resources focus on campus voter education, as well as education

efforts at the high school level. Misinformation, lack of information and confusion surrounding voting procedure is a huge barrier for young voters. Many students in the 2020 election will be first-time voters, and simply demystifying the voting process could increase voter turnout among this population segment. Additionally, recent changes in voting rights from Proposal 18-3 make it crucial that even students who were previously familiar with voting laws are informed about their rights.

## **Recommended Solutions**

### **• State Administrative Efforts**

***Provide consistent messaging:*** We strongly recommend that the Department of State and Bureau of Elections take a proactive role in disseminating standardized language and materials about voting rights. Messaging should be student-centric and distributed to universities and colleges and clerks, allowing higher education institutions across the state to provide students with verified and standardized information. This messaging can be circulated for display in clerk offices, universities and colleges, and additional public locations (e.g. libraries, community centers, town halls).

***Online webpage:*** The Department of State should create a website specific to youth voting. This would be an effective way to circulate standardized information and clarify common misconceptions about voting as a student or first-time voter more broadly. Information may include frequently asked questions on registration (i.e. voter registration addresses and car insurance, school scholarships/aid, or health insurance), the voting process, absentee voting and other pertinent topics for students.

***Text information service:*** The Department of State, in coordination with universities and colleges, should set up a text reminder and information service for student voters. This texting service may send text messages to students who subscribe, reminding them of approaching important dates, such as the 15-day deadline for voter registration without additional residency verification, the last day to submit AV ballot applications, and reminders up to and on Election Day to visit the polls. This service would also include a “text for further information” feature on voting procedures, like how to obtain an absentee voter ballot. Subscription methods for this service should include email sign-up and text-for-a-text options. Universities and colleges should promote this texting service on campus, online and in the community.

***Returning citizen outreach:*** Returning citizens are members of youth and student populations and are eligible to fully participate in the democratic process. This population is negatively impacted by misinformation and confusion about their voting rights. The Secretary of State’s Office should coordinate with correctional facilities to ensure that returning citizens are equipped with proper identification, voter registration and absentee voting information upon release. The office should also promote public awareness surrounding the ability of returning citizens to check registration status, register and vote.

***Language accessibility:*** Currently, in Michigan, ballots and Election Day materials are only provided in three languages, designated as protected languages by the Federal Government: English, Spanish and Bengali<sup>8</sup>. The population of Michigan is very diverse and many Michiganders do not speak or read English as a primary language. For example, Michigan is home to the second largest Arabic speaking population in the United States<sup>9</sup>, yet ballots are not currently made available to voters in Arabic. Available languages should be expanded, and non-English ballots and education materials should be provided upon request, regardless of geographic location. We recommend that the Legislature and Department of State work together to allocate sufficient resources and capacity to facilitate this service.

- **Local Level Administrative and Legislative Efforts**



**Landlord obligations:** College students living off-campus and young people more broadly are often renters. Municipalities should require landlords to distribute voter registration forms and voter information materials to tenants. Several municipalities across Michigan, including East Lansing<sup>10</sup>, currently require landlords to provide voter registration applications and information to all tenants<sup>11</sup>.

**Ballot summaries:** Summary language should be included on the ballot to explain questions. Ballot questions can often be confusing and verbose. Information may also be missing, misleading or ambiguous, leaving student voters unsure and intimidated by the voting process. A standardized, plain language summary of ballot questions should be included in each ballot. Clear language on ballots would provide students with a clearer understanding of issues they are expected to decide. While some ballot language is determined by local level election officials, suggested plain language and definitions may be provided by the Secretary of State's Office.

- **University Efforts**

**University "Get out the Vote" campaigns:** The task force highly recommends that universities and colleges create robust efforts and "get out the vote" style promotional campaigns to engage and educate students on the voting process, with links to educational resources. University leadership should be heavily involved in these efforts. [The Michigan Collegiate Voting Challenge](#) presents an ideal opportunity for universities to both help educate students and participate in a friendly competition.

**Online resources:** Universities should create a resource page devoted to educating students on the voting process. It should be featured on the school website or within a student portal and provide information on how to register, how to obtain and return an absentee voter ballot, the locations of clerk offices and polling locations, the times and dates that Secretary of State mobile offices will be on campus, and the locations of drop boxes. Universities should take advantage of Michigan.gov/Vote and other state resources to ensure correct and consistent information. For examples of college and university webpages featuring online resources for students, see Appendix Exhibit D.

**Outreach to uniquely impacted student populations:** Certain segments of the student population and young people more broadly are uniquely impacted by current identification, registration and voting laws or misconceptions. These groups, including LGBTQ+ persons, returning citizens, persons with disabilities and out-of-state students, may experience additional barriers not encountered by the general population. Universities and colleges should reach out to these student populations, on an individual and student organization level, and offer additional support and resources.

- **Student Efforts**

**Civic engagement student groups:** Peer-to-peer education is critical to the success of increasing voter turnout on campuses. Students and student organizations should engage in the creation of and promotion of voting and registration efforts. It is essential for coordination and cooperation to take place between students and their university or college leadership to launch successful civic engagement campaigns to increase student voter turnout. The task force highly recommends the formation of a non-partisan student organization on each campus, if one does not already exist, responsible for encouraging fellow students to engage in the civic process and coordinating with the administration. This student group should work with other student organizations and with faculty and administrators to educate and empower students to vote. Educational events and planning sessions should be hosted and promoted on campus.

For more ideas on student events and on peer-to-peer education efforts, see section IV: Recommended Best Practices.

## E. STATEWIDE LAWS

Certain barriers faced by students are currently created by laws and policies in place across the state. The changing of these laws statewide will increase students' and young voters' ability to engage in the democratic process.

### Recommended Solutions

- **State Administrative and Legislative Efforts**

#### CASE STUDY

##### The Impact of Preregistration

Researchers at Duke University studying the impact of preregistration on youth turnout rates found that preregistration laws may increase voter turnout by as much as 13%<sup>18</sup>.

**Preregistration:** Sixteen and seventeen-year-olds who obtain their driver's license at the Secretary of State should be pre-registered to vote. Their voter registration would then take effect when they turn eighteen. Several states currently allow preregistration for voters, including California,<sup>15</sup> Florida<sup>16</sup> and Louisiana<sup>17</sup>. Preregistration would eliminate some of the barriers previously discussed for students and young people, like same-day voter registration residency verification.

**17-year-old primary voting:** Legislation should be passed to allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections provided they will be 18 years of age by the general election. This is an additional step Michigan could take to engage young voters and encourage them to think that their vote matters.

**Election Day state holiday:** The task force recommends legislation designating Election Day as a state holiday. Election Day is a public holiday in several states, including West Virginia,<sup>19</sup> New Jersey<sup>20</sup>, and Delaware<sup>21</sup>. This action would give students, young people and all

#### CASE STUDY

##### RUTGERS UNIVERSITY



An example of effective use of student peer-to-peer education is from Rutgers University during the 2018 Midterm Election. Efforts at Rutgers, located in New Brunswick, New Jersey, featured a student-led coalition created to coordinate the organization of campus events, including a campus-wide civic engagement summit, a civic action plan, and several voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts. Events included pre-Election Day absentee voter parties and "parties at the polls" on Election Day. These efforts contributed to a 12% increase in student-voter turnout at Rutgers, when compared to the 2014 Midterm Election<sup>15</sup>.



Michiganders more opportunity to visit the polls on Election Day, increasing student and overall voter turnout.

## IV. Recommended Best Practices

Beyond eliminating voting barriers for students and young people, there are various steps that stakeholders can take to increase engagement in voting and democracy. This section details proposed best practices for universities, administrators, non-profit organizations, and students themselves, for spreading the word and helping to engage students.

### A. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES

Following task force recommendations, colleges and universities should create a campus-specific, student-centric promotional and educational campaign to promote civic engagement and increase student voter turnout. Below are further actions universities and colleges can take to educate and engage students through policies, outreach and promotions.

- **Policy and Programming**

**Registration during orientation:** Colleges and universities should integrate voter registration into new and transfer student orientation, as well as every semester “sign up” or “check in” facilitated by the university.

**Syllabi:** Class syllabus should include standard information on voter registration, including voting and poll worker recruitment information. See Appendix Exhibit B for example syllabus language.

**Voting Challenge:** Colleges and universities should participate in national and state level voting challenges such as the [Michigan Collegiate Voting Challenge](#)<sup>24</sup> which includes the national [ALL IN Challenge](#)<sup>25</sup>. Framing voting as exciting, important and your chance to make your voice heard – and beat your rival in a competition - will energize and motivate students to engage in our democracy. Additionally, schools will receive recognition for their work in voter registration and turnout on their campus. Administrators and students can learn more at [Michigan.gov/VotingChallenge](https://Michigan.gov/VotingChallenge).


Participation in the Michigan Collegiate Voting Challenge entails authorization of The National Study on Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)<sup>26</sup> to collect data on voter engagement on campus. Campus voter and registration data will be shared with the campuses post-election and can be used to gauge the effectiveness of on-campus civic engagement efforts. There is no cost to universities or colleges to participate in NSLVE.

- **Promotional Campaigns**

**Get Out the Vote media campaigns:** Universities and colleges should engage student organizations to create multimedia campaign pieces, including videos, podcasts and social media posts. Universities and colleges should particularly focus outreach efforts on creative

### CASE STUDY

#### NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



Northwestern University, located in Evanston, Illinois, integrated voter registration into student orientation and onboarding. This process was implemented in 2011 by [NU Votes](#)<sup>22</sup> an initiative aimed at raising student voter awareness, launched by students and faculty at the University's Center for Civic Engagement. Going into orientation, the student class of 2021 had a 39% voter registration rate. After orientation, the same student class had a voter registration rate of over 96%<sup>23</sup>.

messaging and “meeting students where they are.” Suggested actions include engagement in social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook), and advertising at student social/athletic events. Student collaboration would be especially beneficial in generating creative messaging.

For example, videos of the university president or high-profile faculty and staff (professors, athletic coaches, deans), and alumni could be created to encourage participation and raise awareness. See Appendix Exhibit A for examples of student-created multimedia for campus voting campaigns.

**Feature diversity:** Universities, in coordination with students/student organizations, should make a concerted effort to feature a diverse array of students in promotional voting campaigns and materials to ensure outreach to different segments of the student population. Displays of student diversity should reflect the make-up of the student body, including demographic makeup, academic programs, and political beliefs.

- **University and College Outreach**

**Specific outreach:** While universities and colleges should devote resources to educating the entire student body, certain student population segments may require additional attention and resources. While these population segments may vary by campus, several populations and outreach suggestions are listed below:

- **First-time voters** should be given additional resources such as basic voter “How-To” guides. Suggested resources could also include student-made video walk-throughs on voting and registration procedure (e.g. “How to request an absentee ballot” and “How to register to vote”).
- **Out-of-state students** who hold a permanent address in another state, but attend school in Michigan, should be provided with additional information from universities and colleges regarding voter registration beyond online voter registration, including paper forms.
- **Returning citizens** are members of student populations and should be given additional resources from colleges and universities. Resources should specifically target common misconceptions surrounding registration and voting for those recently released from correctional facilities. Additionally, colleges and universities should provide outreach and information on voting rights and resources to students awaiting trial who have not yet been sentenced.
- **LGBTQ+ students**, specifically transgender student populations, may face difficulties or hesitations to vote because of photo ID requirements. Universities and colleges should provide additional resources to LGBTQ+ student populations advising on what may be used as identification at the polls. Information should also be distributed on recently revised [policy in Michigan](#)<sup>27</sup> for changing the sex-indicator on identification, as well as who to contact if they encounter issues at the polls (e.g. [elections@michigan.gov](mailto:elections@michigan.gov)).
- **Students with disabilities** should receive personalized outreach from universities and colleges regarding their rights as voters, ability to vote absentee, accessible registration facilities, as well as who to contact if they encounter issues (e.g. [elections@michigan.gov](mailto:elections@michigan.gov)).

## B. STUDENT AND STUDENT ORGANIZATION BEST PRACTICES

Students should coordinate with universities or colleges to create campus-specific, peer-to-peer educational campaigns to increase campus voter turnout. Below are further actions students can take to educate and engage their peers.

- **Student Organization and University Coordination**

***Campus events:*** Campus student civic engagement groups and/or other student organizations should host on-campus events to promote voter awareness. Suggested events include educational workshops, registration drives and voting “parties.” Student organizations sponsoring events could walk attendees through online voter registration, the voting process, provide information on what documentation is required to register and vote, which address to use when registering, and how to apply for an absentee ballot.

***Working group:*** Students should coordinate with faculty and staff to promote student civic engagement and participation in democracy, in either formal or informal working groups. Such efforts could include bringing a satellite office or polling place to campus, participation in the planning of a campaign, creation of social media content, distributing materials to local businesses for display, and volunteering to run polls, clerk’s offices and mobile Secretary of State branches on campus.

- **Student State-Wide Coalition**

A coalition of students from institutions across Michigan should be formed to effectively lobby statewide or university and college leadership to make policy or programmatic changes. This coalition could also share best practices for increasing voter registration and voter turnout among students.

- **Volunteering on Election Day**

Students should contact their local clerk’s office to inquire about becoming a poll worker on Election Day. Student volunteer opportunities include running or participating in a voter registration drive, volunteering to work at a satellite clerk’s office on campus, and volunteering to work at the mobile Secretary of State’s Office on campus.

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many opportunities for improvement of student and youth voting in Michigan. Interested stakeholders and partners should consider their role in alleviating barriers and implementing best practices for youth and student voting in Michigan and take action. We, members of the Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force, are committed to doing our part to advance these policies and programs both at our home campuses and across the state.


While all recommendations contained in this document are important, two areas of improvement are particularly noteworthy for election administrators, educators, and students alike. First, the imperative need for effective and relevant voter education. If young people and students do not know their rights and do not believe that their vote matters, any other reform, innovation, or program will be rendered meaningless. Second, every higher education institution and every clerk who serves a college or university should consider how to increase voting and voter registration through on-campus efforts, including on-campus polling locations, satellite clerk offices, and mobile Secretary of State branch offices for voter registration.



## VI. Appendix


**Exhibit A:** Examples of student created multimedia in collaboration with university voting campaigns<sup>28,29,30,31</sup>

**Students on the Street | Are you Voting?**  
University of Wisconsin – Madison  
[LINK](#)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrVn4Gtf0g4>

**ASU students explain why they vote**  
Arizona State University  
[LINK](#)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsGI6gmR6io>

**National Voter Registration at NC A&T SU**  
North Carolina A&T State University  
[LINK](#)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-005zHLQY0>

**MSU VS. UMich Midterm Voting Challenge - Michigan State University** [LINK](#)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-005zHLQY0>

**Exhibit B:** Example of class syllabus language on voter registration and voting procedure information

**Voting in Michigan**

**Register:** Did you know you can register to vote and check your voter registration status at [www.Michigan.gov/Vote](http://www.Michigan.gov/Vote)?

**Vote:** In Michigan, you can vote absentee – or vote from home – in any election. You can request your absentee ballot at Michigan.gov/Vote (select “Absentee Voting” on the navigation page).

**Make a Difference:** Sign up to work the polls on election day by contacting your local city clerk office (find your clerk at <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/Clerk>).

For more information on registration and voting procedure, visit your campus resource page at **[insert university voting information website]** or [www.Michigan.gov/Vote](http://www.Michigan.gov/Vote)

**Exhibit C:** Campus resolution encouraging the allowance of excused absences for students who are voting and the suspension of exams, presentations and major in-class projects on election day

**A Resolution to Support a Statement Encouraging Excused Absences for Students who are Voting and the Suspension of Exams, Presentations and Major In-Class Projects on Election Day**

Drafted by: Campus Vote Project Coalition (see back of resolution for list of members) and REVCMU

Sponsored by: SGA President, SGA Vice-President, African Student Association, Makeup Geeks, Christ Central Choir, CMU Mindfulness Club, Club Pompon, Art History Club, Wesley@cmu, Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority, Civil Discourse Society, Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law, CMU Student Affiliation of School Psychologists (SASP), Rotaract, Statistics Club, Humane Animal Treatment Society (HATS), Zeta Theta Pi Service Sorority, Student Advocates for the Medical and Responsible Use of Cannabis, Student Advocates for Prison Reform and the Incarcerated, College Republicans, Refugee Outreach Collective, Student Environmental Alliance, Take Back the Tap, The Organization of Women Leaders, United Nations Association at CMU, Voices for Planned Parenthood, Museum Studies Club, On The Rox, A Cappella, American Institute of Professional Geologists Student Chapter, Eta Sigma Gamma Health Education Honorary

**Background:** Central Michigan University encourages students to be active citizens, but many have classes on election day that have attendance policies, exams, presentations or other major in-class assignments that deter them from voting due to time constraints.

**WHEREAS**, students can be registered to vote in their hometown rather than in Mt. Pleasant because the State of Michigan only allows one principal address,<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the Secretary of State's website states, "a person who registers to vote by mail must vote in person in the first election in which he or she participates"<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, many Central Michigan University students may have never voted before and will have their first opportunity to vote as citizens of legal voting age during their time at Central Michigan University,

**WHEREAS**, students may not be able to travel to the location where they are registered to vote on Election Day; and some students may have class schedules on Election Day that make it difficult to find time to vote,

**WHEREAS**, long lines at the polls can require a longer period of time for voting,<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS**, nationwide students have stated that classes on Election Day can prevent them from voting,<sup>4</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Central Michigan University's Mission Statement includes, "fostering personal and intellectual growth to prepare students for productive careers, meaningful lives, and responsible citizenship in a global society,"<sup>5</sup>

**WHEREAS**, students should be encouraged at Central Michigan University to exercise their right of citizenship without being penalized academically,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**; that the Campus Vote Project Coalition supports the establishment of a statement that encourages the suspension of student exams, presentations and major in-class projects

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1633\\_8716\\_8726\\_47669-175879--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1633_8716_8726_47669-175879--,00.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.mi.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633\\_8716\\_8728-21037--,00.html](http://www.mi.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633_8716_8728-21037--,00.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2013/02/12/171513524/fixing-long-lines-at-the-polls-may-be-harder-than-you-think>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/lsu-students-classes-limit-voting-on-election-day/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cmich.edu/about/Pages/university\\_goals.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/about/Pages/university_goals.aspx)

## Exhibit C continued


on Election Day (limited to the Michigan Primary and the National Election Day, held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November) and excused absences for students who miss class to vote.

### Campus Vote Project Coalition Members:

Kathleen Gardner	Director of Residence Life
Cherie Strachan	Assistant Dean CHSBS
Dan Gaken	Director of Leadership Institute
Phame Camarena	Director of Honors Program
Candice Sobczak	Student- FR
Alysa Lucas	Communication and Dramatic Arts Faculty
Ulana Klymyshyn	Director of Diversity Education
Shaun Holtgreive	Executive Director of Student Affairs
Jake Henricks	SGA President
Lyndi Rose	SGA Vice President
Theresa Turner	League of Women Voters
Lara Raisanan	League of Women Voters
Jennifer Drevon	Assistant Director of Volunteer Center
Anna Whitman	Student- FR
Ian Callison	Grad Assistant; REV CMU Advisor
Anna Dean	Democracy Fellow
Winni Walsh	Democracy Fellow
Norma Bailey	CVP Coalition Co-chair, Professor Emeritus
Jodi Brookins-Fisher	CVP Coalition Co-chair, Professor, HSC

**Exhibit D:** Examples of college and university online voting and registration resource webpages<sup>32,33,34,35</sup>


## Northwestern University: NUVotes




- ✓ check your registration status
- ✓ register or update your registration
- ✓ request an absentee ballot

**VOTING IS A CORNERSTONE**  
of civic engagement.

That's why NU Votes exists to help students get registered, get educated, and get to the polls. We're cultivating a commitment to active citizenship, one student at a time.



Register In Person  
*(recommended)*



Use Online Tools

**Find out if you are registered.**

Can't remember if or where you are registered to vote? Start here:

CHECK STATUS

**Register or update your registration.**

Use this form to update your registration or to register to vote for the first time.

REGISTER NOW


**Request an absentee ballot.**

If you will not be able to vote in person at your designated polling place, you may want to request an absentee ballot.

REQUEST BALLOT

[www.nuvotes.org/](http://www.nuvotes.org/)

## University of Wisconsin - Madison: Voter Information



# VOTER INFORMATION

In collaboration with the Associated Students of Madison

**ELECTIONS IN 2020**

There are no remaining elections in 2019. The next elections are:

Spring Primary Election: Feb 18, 2020  
 Spring Election & Presidential Primary: April 7, 2020  
 Fall Primary: Aug. 11, 2020  
 Presidential Election: Nov. 3, 2020

In election days, polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. You can register at the polls on election day. To find out where you vote, click [here](#)

**BE PREPARED TO VOTE.**  
HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

- + Eligibility
- + What IDs are acceptable to vote?
- + Obtaining a voter-compliant ID card
- + Registration
- + Where do I vote?
- + Voting early
- + When are elections?


<https://vote.wisc.edu/>





Exhibit D Continued


## Duke University – Duke Votes


# Duke Votes


  
Voting in  
North Carolina

  
Request NC  
Voter ID Card

  
Voting in Your  
Home State

  
Explore Your  
Ballot

  
Verify Your  
Registration

  
Important  
Dates

- + What is my campus residential address?
- + What is my on campus mailing address?
- + What are the requirements for registering?
- + What do I need to vote?
- + Where do I cast my ballot on Election Day?
- + How can I contact the North Carolina Board of Elections?

<https://sites.duke.edu/dukevotes/ambassadors>

## Richland College – Ready, Set, Vote!

(Dallas County Community College District)

# Ready, Set, Vote!



**Richland College**  
DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT



### Helpful Voting Links

Like Options? Vote Early  
Head to the Polls

<https://www.richlandcollege.edu/services/onli>

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## Notes

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