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How Colleges Can (and Can't) Support 2020 Campaign-Related Activities on Campus and Help Students Vote

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The COVID-19 pandemic has upended almost everything related to higher education over the past six months. With the 2020 election on the horizon, student voting and political campaign activities on campus will be different this year—perhaps significantly.

ACE has released an **issue brief** that addresses institutions' obligations and other matters related to encouraging and enabling student voting, and updates the 2018 issue brief for administrators, faculty, and staff about community members' involvement in political campaign-related activities. This issue brief again offers examples of what is and is not likely to be viewed as acceptable.

Recognition of students' desire to participate in the democratic process as voters and the practical impediments they face to do so has grown since the previous update. Always somewhat fraught and confusing due to shifts in where students live and are registered to vote and differing state laws, the pandemic has ratcheted up and increased these challenges. The issue brief suggests steps colleges and universities can take to enable students to cast their ballots, as well as fulfill institutional obligations under the Higher Education Act.

Institutions also should be aware of state requirements, pre-existing and new, that could undermine students' access to the polls. For example, a number of states do not accept student IDs at polling places, or have **restrictions** such as requiring that the student ID cards be signed or issued within the past two years.

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As the issue brief points out, colleges and universities have long supported student voter participation efforts such as the **Your Vote, Your Voice** initiative, a national campus voter registration project coordinated by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Various other nonpartisan initiatives encourage institutions and their constituencies to help make student voting easier. For instance, the **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge** is a national awards program recognizing colleges and universities for their commitment to increasing student voting rates.

Campus efforts can be as varied as the schools themselves. Stanford University's campus-wide campaign **StanfordVotes** registered more students to vote via the digital platform TurboVote in the beginning of 2020 **than any other campus initiative in the country**. Mesa Community College's **voter education website** has helped the school to be tapped as a "Voter Friendly Campus" by the Campus Vote Project. The University of Richmond's athletics department created the **Spiders Vote Initiative** to encourage voter registration, education, and participation among the school's student-athletes, coaches, and staff.

As the brief emphasizes, colleges and universities should take care to ensure that the voting resources offered to their students are nonpartisan and that their communications with students are offered and received that way.

Click [here](#) to download a copy of Student Voting and College Political Campaign-Related Activities in 2020.

Student Voting and College Political Campaign-Related Activities in 2020

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Voter Education Resources for Students

All IN to Vote, developed by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, helps students navigate the voting process.

The National Association of Secretaries of State offers valuable information about registration, voter ID requirements, and polling places in all 50 states.

Your Vote, Your Voice

USA.gov, the official web portal of the federal government, maintains a site regarding "Absentee and Early Voting" with specific information about "Coronavirus and Voting by Mail-In Absentee Ballot."

Democracy Works How to Vote provides guides to help voters understand what options states offer for casting a ballot.

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Vote.org aspires to use technology to simplify political engagement and increase voter turnout.

Vote411, an initiative of the League of Women Voters Education Fund, offers a polling place locator and provides a broad range of additional registration and voting information.

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