



**Students, College Administrators, Faculty, and Election Officials
Working Together to Overcome Barriers to Student Voting**

Campus Vote Project California Community College Opportunities

Campus Vote Project's Community College Program aims to improve registration and voting rates of community college students and the members of their communities by partnering with administrators and faculty to provide essential registration and voting information, and engaging students in the democratic process.

Who We Are

The Fair Elections Legal Network, a national nonpartisan election reform organization working to promote access to the ballot, launched Campus Vote Project (CVP) in 2012 after five years of supporting student voter registration and ballot access. CVP works with administrators, faculty, students and election officials to reduce barriers to student registration and voting.

The Los Angeles Community College District is one of the largest community college systems in the country and includes nine schools that serve 135,000 students from 40 cities and communities. LACCD educates almost three times as many Latino students and nearly four times as many African-American students as all of the University of California campuses combined. Eighty percent of LACCD students are from underserved populations.

Why Community Colleges Are So Vital

Community college students represent a crucial component of the new American majority and are often overlooked by political campaigns, and nonpartisan registration and GOTV efforts. Involving these students empowers them to be bridges back to their families and peers, taking information and empowerment to their own communities.

The information gap about registration and voting and about candidates and issues affecting their communities has led to record low participation for California 18- to 24-year-olds. In the 2014 general election, this age group's voting rate was 8.2%, a little more than one-quarter of the overall turnout rate of 30.9%.

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to provide students with a nonpartisan entry into the registration and ballot access process, as well as the civic knowledge regarding the functions of different government offices and civil discourse around important community issues that are motivators behind increased democratic engagement.

Many voters fail to participate in local and state elections and are less aware of issues decided by those office holders. CVP and community college partners will collaborate to *develop nonpartisan voter education information that explains what decisions these state and local elected officials make that directly impact students and their communities such as, education funding, housing policy, economic development and job training, health care, and clean energy investments.*

Greater Engagement Benefits Students

AAC&U's *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* called for the higher education community to recommit itself to prioritizing the teaching of skills like critical thinking and civil debate of controversial issues necessary for a healthy democracy. The report collected research findings that suggest "that students who participate in civic learning opportunities are more likely to persist in college and complete their degrees; obtain skills prized by employers; and develop habits of social responsibility and civic participation."

Voter registration and voting should be a building block for students to stand on as they become active citizens, not a hurdle to participation. Institutions of higher education further a key element of their educational mission when they assist students to become registered voters and start down a path of civic learning and democratic engagement.

Statutory Requirements Involving Student Voter Registration

- **Higher Education Act:** requires good faith effort to widely distribute voter registration forms as well as individual distribution to all students physically in attendance.
- **California Student Voter Registration Act** requires the Secretary of State to distribute voter registration forms to high schools and higher education institutions. *Community colleges campuses also must provide a process for voter registration in any automated class registration systems.*

What The Program Would Involve:

CVP has identified programs that can help your institutions educate your students in civic activities, particularly voting, and can work with your team to develop a comprehensive campus-based plan. We can:

- Provide Voter Education Materials
 - o CVP will produce voter information palm cards, posters and other materials to help demystify the voting process for students.
 - California - specific materials on voting issues [and the voting process](#)
 - o CVP will help administrators and faculty connect issues students care about to the democratic process through materials like our [Debate Watch Guide](#) and customizable [6 Reasons Students Should Get Out and Vote](#).
- Provide support for faculty initiatives and curriculum
 - o Faculty is a trusted source of information and CVP will work with faculty to distribute nonpartisan election information during class or through email or an assignment system.
 - o Faculty can incorporate democratic engagement into their syllabi and help their students understand the responsibilities of different offices, how they affect issues students care about, and how a student can effectively exercise their right to vote
- Promoting Civic Discussions on Campus
 - o CVP will work with partner campuses to host issue and candidate forums that engage students and the community
 - o Incorporating registration and ballot access information into these forums directly connects the how of the electoral process with the why.
- Pilot: Student Poll Worker Programs:
 - o Recruiting students to be poll workers has an important educational benefit by allowing students to see democracy in action while serving their community. These job experiences will add to experiential learning and give an added work credential to students. Students will also help alleviate a severe shortage of younger and bilingual poll workers in LA County.