



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Campus Sample Communications Manual

Welcome to CEEP's Communications Manual Template! This should serve as a guide for communications on your campus. CEEP campus cohorts often have a lot of people involved i.e. fellows, volunteers, student leaders, campus staff, professors, and the like. At some point, everyone involved with your school's voter engagement platform will write, speak, or post about it. The more synthesized the messages, the larger the impact. Students will always associate strong branding with your campus cohort!

Below is a blend of written guidelines for your team, and open sections for you to fill out. Once finished, please share this guide with your whole team. Send appropriate sections to anyone on campus involved with your cohort who sometimes sends communications on your behalf.

Be sure to use this guide when creating flyers, event descriptions, emails, social media posts, and writing op-eds. Have fun filling it out - let your creativity shine through!

-CEEP Comms Team



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INSERT GROUP NAME HERE

"Tagline here" [for local group]

Part One: Identity

[fill out this section to gain a stronger understanding of your campus cohort's identity, and how you can use that in your writing! It will also allow volunteers to learn more about how to best represent your mission]

Who We Are:

- *[Fill this in yourselves! - here are some examples]*
- Compassionate
- Nonpartisan
- Grassroots
- Solution Oriented
- Sharp
- Strategic
- Community Focused
- Unapologetic

- Peer to Peer, Gen to Gen

Who We Aren't

- Combative
- Partisan
- Exclusive
- Biased
- Passive
- To Be Underestimated
- A lobby
- Speaking down to our communities

Our Audience:

- Students
- People who are here to learn
- People who may be somewhat new to the political process
- *[what else?]*

Nonpartisanship: Not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular political group such as a political party or campaign. Opposite of partisan."

We Do:

- Work with other nonpartisan organizations
- Represent CEEP and *insert campus platform name* whenever we are writing for them, holding calls, facilitating meetings, speaking with community members, etc.
- Hold ourselves and our volunteers to the highest standard of nonpartisanship.
- Allow community members to express themselves during meetings, while reminding them we cannot respond or allow for a sidetracked conversation.

We Do Not:

- Comment on, denounce, or endorse elected officials or candidates
- Collaborate with partisan organizations



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- Insert our own personal stances into our messaging and communication with the community
- Have to be on the clock 24/7. We can be ourselves and share our own beliefs with friends and peers outside of a *insert name of campus platform here* setting.
- Have any exceptions to this standard of nonpartisanship and professionalism.
- Have to feel stifled. Nonpartisanship is an art, not a cage. We will develop tools and language which makes us comfortable to operate towards our purpose within our means.
- *[what else?]*



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Part Two: Messaging Alignment

Take the time to outline the mission of your campus cohort - these pieces of messaging are sections that will go directly into emails, flyers, and more.

Who We Are: *[introduce your campus cohort]*

What We Do: *[explain your role in engaging students on campus]*

How We Do It: *[focus on the three main phases, voter registration, voter information, and GOTV]*

Why We Do It: *[why does this work matter?]*

How to Write About CEEP

Campus Election Engagement Project is a national nonpartisan project that helps administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders at America's colleges and universities engage students in federal, state, and local elections.

CEEP provides resources for us at *insert name of campus platform here* to engage students in democracy. Learn more about their work at campuselect.org

Guide to Writing an Op-Ed

Ready to write an op-ed about voter engagement? Check out a few guidelines here to make sure your piece captures the mission of CEEP and your campus cohort. Please remember that you can only send your Op-Ed to one paper at a time, and you should research the guidelines of that paper before you submit your Op-Ed.

- Your topic should address about a theme in the affirmative. For example, rather than writing about partisan gerrymandering, spin the story to focus on your team's ability to make voting more accessible for students. Having a solution-oriented writing style is the road less traveled, which will help your piece stand out. Beyond that, it better reflects the positive values of CEEP and your campus cohort. [Here](#) is an example of an article about the value of establishing voter identity.
- Make sure to describe who your campus cohort is, and who CEEP is in every article.



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- If covering a Fellow organized event ex. NVRD, Election Day, highlight the positive theme your event represents. This contributes to establishing voter identity in students. Everyone will know what you did, and you want them to know *why* you did it.
- Standard writing rules apply: check your grammar, be aware of your word count, send to a peer for edits, make sure style is consistent.
- Make sure to send the published article to your State Director! We love to see our Fellows' work in the news, and we like to keep track of our media impact.



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Part Three: Social Media Presence

Best Practices:

- Create a consistent social media calendar - consistency is key to keeping your followers engaged and gaining traction.
- Less is more: rather than have semi-active accounts on five separate platforms, choose to be highly active on two. If you can keep max engagement on a lot of platforms - more power to you.
- Use strategic hashtags.

Sample Hashtags: #Studentsvote #Election2019 #Election2020 #VAPolitics (use whatever state you're in) #PAVotes (same) #Vote2019

For Fellows: Remember to use #CEEPFellow in your content so we can track / repost / signal boost.

- Keep posts to the point, engaging, and in line with your brand.
- Aesthetics are important on Instagram - set standards for the photos you post.
- For photos of events, remember:
 - Get the CEEP logo or t-shirts in the shot if at all possible.
 - Action shots are always better than static images: Pictures of students registering or participating in the event are good, pictures of people sitting behind a table or typing on a computer are less useful.
 - Send names with your photos if you can. We love you, but we don't always recognize you!
- Nonpartisanship is crucial - remain mindful in the posts you like or what you retweet.



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Part Four: Talking to Reporters Tips and Tricks

- **Always tell the truth.** You don't have to get into every last detail in an interview, but never, ever lie to an interviewer, or give information you're not sure is true.
- **Don't fake it!** If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to get back to the interviewer, or simply say "I don't know." Don't speculate on subjects you're not familiar with.
- **Decide what you want to say *before* you do the interview.** It may be helpful to write down a few key points you want to get across (usually, no more than three). We recommend having a 30 second elevator pitch about your work with CEEP and why you are doing this work. Remember that if you don't define the content of the interview, the reporter will.
- **Repeat yourself.** Try to get your points across three or four different ways in the interview. Sometimes it helps to rephrase the question before giving your answer; this gives you more time to process the question. You can also pause before answering to think about your answer before you start talking.
- **Don't be afraid to stop talking.** Say only what you've planned to say, or feel comfortable saying. You are not obligated to fill silences in the interview. Be clear and concise in your answers. Don't ramble or get off track from the question.
- **Always ask the interviewer's deadline.** If you've promised to follow up with the reporter, do so as soon as possible, and at least half an hour before deadline.
- **Use "Campus Election Engagement Project," not "CEEP," throughout the interview.** It's a mouthful, and it can feel repetitious, but references can get cut from the final interview, confusing listeners/readers. We also recommend that you wear your CEEP shirt anytime you are talking to a reporter.
- **Know who you're talking with.** If you have time before an interview, do a quick search of a reporter's bylines to look for signs of their approaches, interests, and possible biases. Be sure to thank the reporter, give them your contact information, and get the reporter's email to follow up and see if you can get a copy of the interview to send to your state director.
- **Don't be afraid to fix your answers.** If you need to (and you're not live), stop and say "Let me try that again," or later, "I'd like to come back to..." and start over. If you got something wrong in the interview, follow up and correct the record. It may not make it into the final piece, but it will maintain the reporter's confidence in you.
- **Don't say anything you wouldn't want to see in the media.** You are always "on the record" with a reporter unless specifically agreed otherwise.



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- **Be animated, but not *too* animated!** Show alertness and positive passion in your interview, but try not to fidget or play with your hands while on camera.
- **Make eye contact with your interviewer.** The common advice for television interviews is to face the interviewer, not the camera. Pretend you are having a conversation with a friend.
- **Get proper permissions beforehand.** If you are going to refer to another organization or another student you worked with, make sure you have their permission to talk about them in the interview.

*****Adapted from: Strategic Communications for Nonprofits, Bonk, Tynes, Griggs, and Sparks. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.*****