



Helping Students Become Voters: CEEP Report & 2020 Plan

How do we get students to vote in 2020, given COVID-19 related disruptions and young voters' ambivalence about both Donald Trump and Joe Biden?

CEEP proudly played a part in helping national student voter turnout double in 2018, reaching [40% turnout versus 2014's 19%](#). Given the 4.7 million students enrolled by the campuses we engaged, this means CEEP helped turn out 1 million more student voters than four years before. While we aren't the only group working on these campuses, we create a powerful impact through our relationships with campus administrators, faculty and student government leaders, through the student-to-student outreach of our [CEEP Fellows](#), and through distributing resources like our [nonpartisan candidate guides](#). Since [less than half of students voted](#) in the 2016 Presidential election, there was already major room for improvement, even before the COVID-19 challenges.

America's 20 million college students could determine our next president and important races at every other level, with the crises like COVID, the economy, racial justice, and climate change underscoring the stakes. We know CEEP can help significantly. This report explains how we've laid the groundwork for 2020 and our plans to ensure students vote, whether campuses function in-person, online only, or—as most seem to be planning—a combination of the two.

“There's no doubt CEEP's activities are having an impact. Patiently and deliberately you have built a unique and valuable ally of democracy, engaging this generation of young people. I continue to admire and salute you, in no small part because you were ahead of your time.”

—PBS journalist Bill Moyers

2018 Impact

CEEP's [2018 Report](#) describes the powerful impact we made and the successes on which we're now building. The question is how we can deepen and broaden this impact, particularly given the changes and uncertainties we're now facing. Since COVID hit, we've been adapting our approaches for both virtual and face-to-face campus settings, and the relationships we've built over eight years are proving key, precisely because campuses have so much more to deal with than ever before. **They may not have time to plan electoral engagement strategies on their own, but they trust our approaches and will implement them with our guidance and support.**



Youngstown State students use QR codes to help students register

To recap briefly, in 2018 CEEP:

- Worked in 22 states with 439 schools, involving students in key Senate, Governor’s, Congressional and legislative races. In 2020, CEEP will partner with approximately 500 colleges in states with the most competitive races, which are the races most likely to engage students.
- Supported 259 student fellows. In 2020, CEEP is looking to support 300 fellows.
- Created and distributed nonpartisan candidate guides for 48 major races, which were also promoted by organizations like Rock the Vote, Nonprofit Vote and Youth Service America.

CEEP fellows play a critical role in implementing the peer-to-peer strategies most effective in influencing students to vote and spearheading major institutional initiatives. Between 2016 and 2018, we put significant resources into improving the training and coaching of our fellows, reflected in glowing evaluations of their contributions from the administrators and faculty who helped engage them. Serving as a CEEP fellow is also a powerful leadership training experience, with fellows consistently calling their experience “life-changing.”

In 2018 our fellows:

- Conducted 1,860 election engagement activities on 136 campuses, generating personal contact with 150,000 student peers. These included voter registration activities, voter-education activities from classroom visits and candidate forums to distributing guides, and activities to get out the vote.
- Filled over 6,000 student volunteer slots.
- Reached 320,000 student peers through email and 174,000 through social media. University of Wisconsin La Crosse’s Chancellor even played the fool in a [humorous voting video](#) emailed schoolwide—an approach that we’re getting other campuses to replicate.
- Registered 28,153 voters, plus 40,152 from institutional campus efforts that our fellows helped facilitate.
- Organized and supported campus registration campaigns, debates, canvasses, parades and shuttles to the polls and Election Day rallies.



University of Wisconsin Badgers use social media to get out the vote

In 2016, schools loved our fellows, with only 15% identifying any issues in our post-fellowship survey. CEEP continued improving the program, using the feedback to expand and strengthen training and support. We saw the results in 2018 when, despite our more than doubling to 259 fellows, only two campuses had mildly critical comments. In our 2018 post-election surveys, an overwhelming **97% of respondents praised our state directors’** resourcefulness and responsiveness and the value of CEEP resources.

CEEP State Directors play a complementary role, recruiting and supervising fellows while engaging the colleges and universities in systemic institutional change.

In 2018 our directors helped to:

- Encourage discussion of public issues and implement our most effective approaches, detailed in our election road map [7 Key Ways to Engage Your Campus](#), which we're updating to highlight our virtual approaches;
- Distribute CEEP [nonpartisan candidate guides](#), [posters on voting rules](#) and [Your Vote Matters banners](#) to nearly every school they engaged;
- Work with administrators and staff to help distribute 1.3 million wallet cards on voter ID rules, supplied by our partner VoteRiders;
- Increase campus communications and social media outreach that reached over 6.4 million students with election messaging;
- Engage campus stakeholders from [orientation directors](#) to [libraries](#) and [faculty](#).

“We hosted CEEP-supported fellows and distributed CEEP candidate guides, including the large banners they created from their Governor’s guide. We received a CEEP grant that let us provide free rides to the polls for students on Election Day and on two Early Voting days. We registered 740 students, engaged over 6,000 and saw a six-fold increase in voter turnout at our on-campus polling location.”

— Paul Valdez, Associate Director, Bowling Green State University, Center for Community & Civic Engagement.

2019 as the Bridge to 2020

CEEP spent 2019 working to keep momentum building at our colleges and universities. We worked in some important specific races like the elections determining control of [Virginia’s legislature](#) and the Kentucky and Louisiana governor’s races. But mostly we kept building key relationships in all our states—and helping schools make institutional commitments that will make a critical difference in getting students to vote this coming November, whether campuses are operating physically or virtually.



*University of Wisconsin Green Bay
Social Media Outreach Campaign*

In 2019, CEEP:

- Built on our previous work in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin, plus added the Kentucky and Louisiana’s governor’s races.
- Launched our first-ever off-year Fellows program, where our fellows helped schools build institutional capacity for election-related efforts.
- Launched a [CEEP Candidate Guide](#) outreach project to expand distribution of our top-rated resources to non-campus groups.

Our directors and fellows helped schools:

- Create coordinated plans drawing on our Electoral Engagement [Needs Assessment](#) and their [campus voting patterns](#), including targeting lower-participating campus constituencies like [STEM majors](#).
- Bring new stakeholders into their campus nonpartisan coalitions, including academic departments beyond the usual suspects.
- Secure IDs for students to meet changing state voting laws and obtain on-campus voting stations
- Integrate voter registration into [first-year orientation](#), class registration, and classroom syllabi.
- Develop ongoing campus-funded election coalitions, like Ohio State’s OSU Votes, and help schools use their internal resources to sponsor fellows.

CEEP Fellows

In 2019 CEEP supported 106 students who worked on campus institutional initiatives and major state races. We supported fellows at schools in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. We’ also launched a new Fellows Alumni program to help keep our former fellows stay civically engaged and to give them a chance to serve as mentors for their successors.

“My work as a CEEP Fellow made me realize how hard it is to change people's minds and to get them to vote, but it also made me realize how worthwhile it all is.”

—Jessica Holtkamp, 2018-2019 Iowa State University Fellow, current CEEP Assistant Fellowship Director

Examples of impact:

- Over half our fellows reported reviving or strengthening campus voting coalitions.
- Our fellows at Temple University, Iowa State, and University of Cincinnati convinced their schools to incorporate voter registration into new-student orientation. Those at schools like University of Pittsburgh, Florida Atlantic University, and University of South Florida are working on it.
- Our University of Central Florida Fellow created a [social media plan](#) that their student government will implement and that CEEP is using as a model for other Student Government Associations. The plan integrates election and voting information into campus websites and calendars, effectively uses social media, and expands coverage in campus newspapers and media.
- Our Ohio State University fellow convinced their student government to advocate for a comprehensive election engagement plan, integrating voter registration with classroom registration, increasing institutional election-related funding and cancelling classes on Election Day.



CEEP Florida State Director and Miami Dade fellows activate the campus

- Our fellows also said their involvement developed key leadership skills that will carry over into the 2020 election and beyond.

Institutional Progress

Our state directors worked with schools on approaches like using technology to drive and track student voter registration, launching regional Student Voter Summits, supporting academic credit for election engagement, and helping students navigate daunting new voting and ID requirements.

2019 Highlights include:

- Creating dynamic QR codes to link students directly to online voter registration.
- Promoting academic credit and school-supported internships for students conducting nonpartisan election engagement activities, most recently at Virginia Tech, Norfolk State and University of Arizona, and (in early 2020) Central Michigan University funding a full-time election engagement staffer.
- Becoming a key force in creating and hosting statewide Student Voter Summits. Together with key allies we got the Colorado, Iowa and Michigan Secretaries of State to sponsor student summits in 2019 and held additional summits in North Carolina and Missouri. We've held 2020 Summits so far in Michigan, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, have virtual summits upcoming in Arizona, Maine, and again in Colorado, and are joining multi-stakeholder summits in Florida and Ohio. These summits have been a great opportunity to propel change across multiple campuses, customize best practices, and create engagement competitions between schools.
- Colorado's first statewide College Voter Summit led to a new statewide challenge and award program based on student voter registration and turnout and to our director speaking at state-wide meetings of college presidents and registrars.
- Convincing Michigan's Secretary of State to adopt our idea of including voter registration information in course syllabi—she's promoting it statewide and taking it to the National Association of Secretaries of State. Colorado's Secretary of State is promoting our idea to integrate voter registration with course registration. We also teamed with the City of Milwaukee's Election Commission to train hundreds of students as Election Day poll workers—an approach we're rolling out in all the other major cities where we're engaging schools.
- Surveying faculty to better support their electoral engagement.



John Carroll University Fellow mobilizes students for a Day of Service.

Taking It to the Next Level: Montgomery County Community College, Pennsylvania

CEEP’s Pennsylvania State Director worked with MCCC to launch a campus-wide student election engagement plan, including forming an Electoral Engagement Coalition, approving participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting & Engagement, contracting online student voter services from TurboVote, developing an Electoral Engagement Marketing Plan, integrating voter education in Student Orientation and including voting dates on the calendar.

Educating on New Voting Laws: Michigan

CEEP is helping Michigan students understand expanded options to register and vote with new state resources on online voter registration, extended voter registration through Election Day, automatic driver’s license registration and more flexible rules regarding absentee ballots.

CEEP Nonpartisan Guides—Overcoming Cynical Withdrawal

CEEP’s nonpartisan [candidate and issue](#) guides are our top-rated resource and critical to helping students overcome the cynical notion that candidates are “all the same, all just lying and spinning.” They’ll be more important than ever in 2020, when students will be deluged with dark money negative ads trying to convince them to stay home.

Schools say the guides have made a huge difference in helping students get past the argument that they can’t vote because they don’t know where candidates stand or don’t trust them to tell the truth about their positions. Campuses are understandably wary of distributing election resources produced by outside groups. However, they are eager to distribute CEEP’s guides because of their accuracy, fairness and meticulous sourcing, plus CEEP’s sterling reputation for nonpartisanship. CEEP has built a up a history of trust.

CEEP’s guides not only convey official stances, but also highlight what candidates say to different audiences and their voting records and other actions as elected officials. They hold candidates accountable through shifting positions and stands. Each guide goes through multiple rounds of vetting, with CEEP’s research team including former senior editors and reporters from the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Time*, *Business Week*, *AP*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and other major newspapers.



Middle Tennessee State displays CEEP’s nonpartisan guides as giant posters in front of the Student Union

- For 2019, CEEP released guides to [Virginia’s legislative races](#) and the [Kentucky](#) and [Louisiana](#) governor’s races, and created a resource [for students to discuss election reform issues](#). We also did a guide to help students weigh in when the Florida legislature debated [requiring former felons to pay fees before regaining their right to vote](#).

Leveraging Relationships to Create Tailored Guides: Virginia

When CEEP was strategizing how to support candidate education for the hotly contested 2019 Virginia legislative races, our on-the-ground relationships paid off. A November 2017 tie in a key state House district resulted in legislative control being determined by drawing names from a bowl. With no statewide races to drive turnout and scandals affecting the incumbent Governor, Lt Governor and Attorney General, we worried that students would stay home in 2019. Since CEEP couldn't produce guides for every legislative race, we were stymied until a Virginia Commonwealth University journalism professor suggested his students work with us to create a guide based on key party-line legislative votes from the last two years. We distributed [the resulting guide](#) at every school in the state and it inspired a Congressional guide we'll prepare for 2020 based on similar party-line votes and distribute nationwide.

CEEP Organizational Development

2019 was an important opportunity to ensure CEEP has adequate capacity, staffing and expertise to meet expanding opportunities and partnerships.

Organizational development in 2019 included:

- Filing for CEEP to become an independent 501(c)(3), replacing our long-time fiscal agent, Ohio Campus Compact—status we've just now received. OCC Executive Director Dick Kinsley joined the new board along with telecommunications entrepreneur Andy Jacobs and CEEP founder Paul Loeb, with the board being chaired by former Procter & Gamble finance director and long-time CEEP supporter Elizabeth Ricci.
- Expanded investment in faculty outreach and resources to better support the integration of nonpartisan election engagement and civic discussions into coursework.
- Prioritized community colleges, whose students tend to be more diverse and vote at lower rates. These schools may see increased enrollment if students prefer to attend college closer to home.

2020 Plans—Engaging Students in the New COVID Landscape

In 2020 CEEP is working to engage more deeply and intensively with existing college and university partners, involve all possible stakeholders, expand our impact to new campuses and states, and increase the effectiveness and scope of our communications and social media impact.

We began the year with a wealth of initiatives that included:

- Mock caucuses where students learned to be effective participants by voting for favorite superheroes or pizza toppings.
- Valentine's Day efforts where students wrote the issues that mattered to them on paper hearts that our fellows hung on clothes lines in the campus quads.



- Voter registration drives (including competitions between dorms), debate watch parties, and distribution of [information on primary rules](#).
- Marches to the polls and to early voting stations.

Missouri campuses competed to get out the vote.

COVID-19 has, of course, changed how we engage our schools, closing campuses and upending student lives. We’re responding with initiatives that speak directly to the crisis, including a student campaign to [protect the fall vote](#) through approaches like mail-in voting and support to help students weigh in on related issues like the need for governmental support for their precarious economic situations. We also created a resource on ways classes could [address the crisis as a teachable moment](#), got great participation in virtual state-wide summits in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Maine and (with partners) in Michigan, and are creating an animated video on mail-in voting. We’re working with the schools to plan dual approaches depending on whether fall classes will be online or on campus—like training our Fellows for virtual classroom visits. **Whatever the fall landscape of the virus and mix of schools that are physically opened or closed, the crisis highlights the importance of the leaders that the students have the chance to elect, at every level.** CEEP will continue to build on all the relationships we’ve forged and all the momentum we’ve created, to help students play their critical role in electing them.

Here are CEEP’s 2020 priorities:

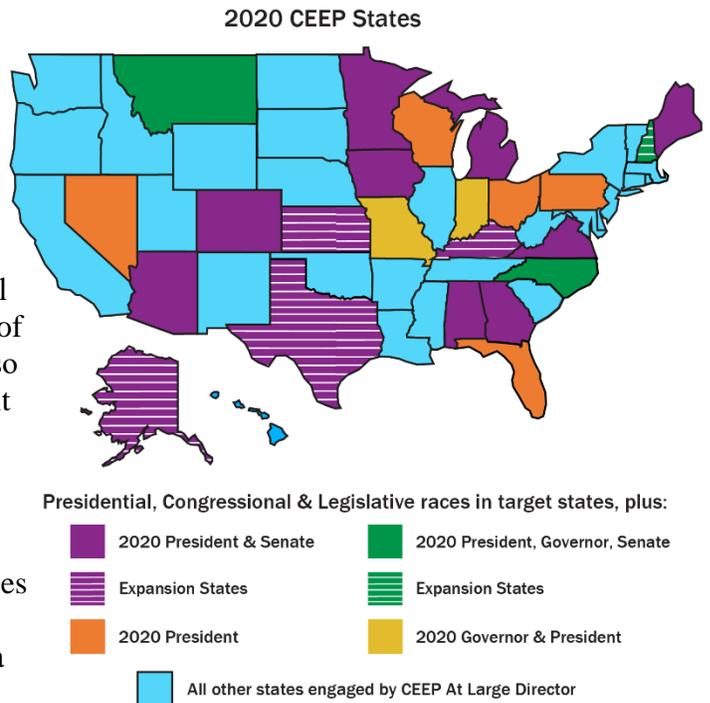
1. Increase Our Impact in Current States

To increase our impact in current key states, we’re raising the resources to:

Add Additional Staffers in Key States

Although making a major impact, our state Directors have been consistently stretched thin, directly coaching up to 40 partner campuses while managing up to 25 fellows apiece. Even when focusing on the most strategic schools, like major urban community colleges and the largest four-years, our directors haven’t always had the time to enlist all potential stakeholders, much less fully engage the wealth of smaller but still important campuses. They’re also limited in the numbers of fellows they can recruit and supervise if we want the same stellar results as in 2018.

2020 funding will support expanded state staff, adding Assistant Directors to share responsibilities in the largest and most consequential states like Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.



Increase Student Election Engagement Fellows

Our campus partners overwhelmingly praised our Fellows for their hard work, creativity, passion and effectiveness, saying they've significantly increased student electoral participation. CEEP has engaged 124 Spring 2020 fellows, who began with face-to-face activities and are now involving their schools and peers virtually. We're aiming for 300 fellows in Fall, who will do everything from in-person or virtual class presentations, to getting schools to use online tools to create virtually engaged communities, and sending out all-campus emails and social media alerts using CEEP resources. Supporting these Fellows is a key reason we've added our new state Assistant Directors and a national Assistant Fellowship Director, herself a former Fellow.

Supply Additional Material Resources and Adapt them to the New Reality

CEEP will supplement our staff outreach with mini-grants to support everything from promotion of candidate guides, hosting debates, and—if campuses are physically back—shuttles to the polls and snacks for students standing in voting lines. We'll distribute our guides through every available channel, including placing them as discounted inserts or digital ads in student newspapers and blowing them up as banners to create mini-billboards in high-traffic locations, like outside the student union or major residence halls. For schools that hold on-campus classes, CEEP will print more pledge cards, posters and fliers to supply campus nonpartisan coalitions with all the resources they need, and since most returning schools are doing widespread COVID testing, we're pushing for them to register students to vote as part of the process.

We'll also distribute resources from core partners. For instance, VoteRiders has committed to supply up to 1.5 million wallet cards with voter ID rules for CEEP campuses to distribute (they supplied 1.3 million last year) and we'll be promoting the peer-to-peer election texting tools offered by Vote.org, Democracy Labs, and When We All Vote. Given the importance of mail-in voting, we're also exploring ways to help fund return postage and have a partnership with Vote.org to make getting absentee ballots as easy as possible.

In 2018 we provided \$500 to \$1,000 campus mini-grants to help schools support election-related student stipends, facility rentals, refreshments at election events, printing and program expenses and transportation to the polls. Schools cited the value of all these approaches, so CEEP would love to expand our mini-grants for 2020, whether for physical or virtual outreach.

2. Target Additional States

Even with an expanded number of staff members and fellows, CEEP lacks the capacity to work with campuses in every state. CEEP recently hired an At-Large Director to work with the largest campuses in states where CEEP doesn't have dedicated staff, and will hire a second At-Large Director if we secure additional funding. These states have important Congressional and legislative races that determine everything from redistricting to state higher education budgets. Our At-Large Director is working through partners like the state Campus Compact affiliates to engage schools in their extensive networks and work with the many individual schools interested in implementing our approaches.

We're also connecting with schools in some new states with important Senate races, like Alaska, Kansas and Texas, and have just added a dedicated Georgia director, himself a former fellow, to engage students in the presidential race and two close Senate races in that state.

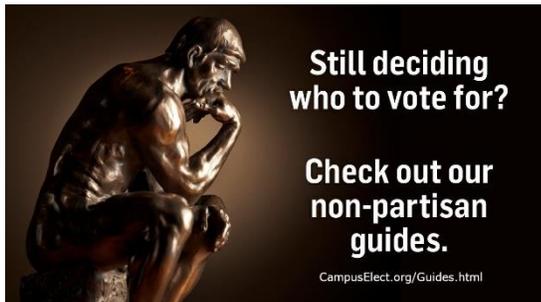
3. Expand Communications and Social Media Impact

CEEP recognizes the potential to exponentially increase student voting through improved and expanded communications. This will be all the more important if classes remain primarily online. With sufficient resources, CEEP will expand the time of our Communications Director and a new Assistant Digital Director to create more social media resources and plans for the campuses, conduct media outreach and help with editing and designing our resources. CEEP would also like to hire a public relations or media firm to advance our social media and influencer outreach and create social media resources to help the schools with strong election messaging.



Candidate Guides Outreach Plan—Beyond the Campus Gates

Schools consistently cite our [Candidate and Issue guides](#) as key to getting students to vote, so we'll create an even greater number with our all-star research team. CEEP is also excited to expand promotion of our guides with off-campus nonprofits, corporations and influencers. Our 2018 guides were promoted off-campus, with enthusiastic responses, by organizations like Rock the Vote, Nonprofit Vote (sponsor of National Voter Registration Day), and Youth Service America. Building on this momentum, we launched the *CEEP Guide Outreach Project* in 2019 to increase off-campus distribution of our guides. We're in discussion with more than 60 nonpartisan organizations and influencers to post the guides on their websites, send them out to members, highlight them via social media and build on them with educational programs.



Resources include social media memes

Nonprofit VOTE, Youth Service America, the Student PIRGs and Rock the Vote have agreed to continue or expand their use and promotion of the guides. We have new commitments from groups like HeadCount, DoSomething (with 3.2 million voting-age U.S. members), YouthBuild, TurboVote, Vote.org, Vote Riders and When We All Vote, plus interest from organizations like MTV and Voto Latino. We're talking further with other major nonprofits nationwide and asking media organizations to cover or promote our guides.

We'd also like to approach key influencers and hire a public relations firm to assist us in our guides outreach. In 2018, Arianna Huffington promoted our guides to her 1.3 million Facebook followers and 3 million Twitter followers, so that's a precedent for other big-megaphone individuals or groups. Our new Partnerships Director Abina Billups, who's been running the commemorations of the 1965 Selma March, will be reaching out to some of the key influencers she's met in the process.

In 2020 CEEP created guides to the [primaries and caucuses](#), is working on English and selected Spanish guides to [the Presidential race](#), to the impact of [Supreme Court appointments](#) and to major state races, as well as a guide based on party-line votes in the past two Congresses that we'll distribute in Congressional districts nationwide. We'll distribute these guides extensively both on and off-campus, along with our [Close Elections Video](#), which, like the guides, is also in Spanish & English.

Create Other Key Resources for Schools to Use

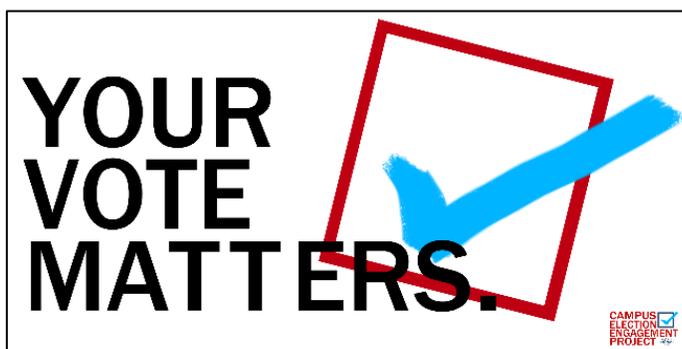
CEEP is creating top-level social media resources for schools to reach their students and recent grads in their alum networks. We'll be working to share our new campus [Social Media Plan](#) with colleges and improve the regularity and effectiveness of messaging. We're working on graphics to promote televoting, [civic engagement quizzes that professors can drop into their classes](#), and Get Out the Vote graphics and videos, all of which will be useful whether schools are physically open or virtual. Creating powerful resources for schools to distribute via social media could make a major impact, so we'd love to get additional help to do it right.

We'll also help schools use our guides to promote media literacy, and recently created a guide to [detecting disinformation](#). Given all the forces working to feed cynicism and deter voter turnout, it becomes all the more important for potential voters to understand clear differences between candidates—and our guides play a critical role.

Taking CEEP to a New Level

CEEP is reaching more campuses and students than ever before and involved them more deeply and sustainably. We're engaging more fellows, administrators, faculty and student leaders, with more effective approaches. For 2020's critical election, we'll build on all the relationships we've nurtured for the past years, and all the resources and approaches we've developed. With their plates overflowing with other COVID-related changes, schools are relying on us to create their plans to get their students engaged. With your support, we believe CEEP will make a major difference in getting students to vote.

To make our work and impact possible, CEEP raised just over \$1 million for 2019 and is raising between \$2-\$2.7 million for 2020. We currently have a \$90,000 matching grant for new and increased donations and will adjust our investments in staff, fellows and other resources as support comes in and as the campus landscape evolves. We hope you'll join us in making our work possible.



CEEP banners, posters and guides create election visibility.

MAKE A GIFT

While we're setting up our new independent 501 (c) (3), gifts can continue to be made through CEEP's longtime (c)(3) fiscal sponsor, Ohio Campus Compact. Campus Election Engagement Project, c/o Ohio Campus Compact, 615 N. Pearl St., Granville, OH 43023. Donations can also be made [online](#). Your gift will be tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

For more information, contact CEEP founder Paul Loeb at paul@paulloeb.org, Director of Special Projects Nausheen Husain at nausheen@campuselect.org or visit our website at www.campuselect.org.