

Campus-Community Partnerships



Created for administrators, faculty, staff and students

Engaging in the electoral process is an act of community building. When they vote, people who live together make a common statement of their values and priorities by electing leaders and representatives, and by deciding ballot questions. However, negative past experiences can sour the relationship between students and their non-student neighbors. Part of the work of campus civic engagement is to restore that relationship where it's broken, and to maintain it where it's strong. Below, you'll find a few ways you can partner with other groups to do just that.

Local County Parties

Some groups in your community may already be actively engaged in politics. Try to build nonpartisan relationships with local Republican, Democratic and third-party organizations. You can offer to speak about voter education and engagement at their meetings and invite their members to your own events. Stay nonpartisan by reaching out to each group equally. Remember that you cannot support or oppose any particular candidate or political party.

Local Elected Leaders

While top-of-the-ballot races (such as for president, governor or US Senate) can take the limelight, local elected officials often have a bigger impact on students' day-to-day life. Local officials decide who the police chief is, what forms of public transit or recycling are available and where to turn to deal with a bad landlord. Attend a meeting of the city council or county commission. See if the mayor will come speak at an event. Because they have to address college and non-college issues and are responsible to both students and non-students, these officials are often the most interested in strengthening those relationships.



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Local Election Officials

Whether it takes the form of a county board of elections, a local clerk or another office, there is potential in partnering with the people who run elections. The relationship between students and non-students in local communities often extends to this entity. If that relationship is negative, these officials can also present potential pitfalls. No matter what the starting point in the relationship, there are always ways to improve it and make voting easier for students.

League of Women Voters and Other Nonpartisan Organizations

Many nonpartisan organizations look to promote electoral engagement to students. CEEP works with many [partners](#) across the country, but sometimes it makes more sense to work with local groups. The [League of Women Voters](#) (LWV) is a well-respected nonpartisan group whose members are often well connected in the community. Reach out to the LWV or similar groups to see if they can help with events on campus. They can be a great source of volunteers, knowledge and sometimes even money.

Common Community Spaces

Spaces where the campus and local communities come together are a great place to start increasing awareness and recognition of your work. Meet community members and foster discussions by setting up voter registration and education tables. Consider hosting events at a local fair or festival. Or table at your local farmers market: it's a great opportunity for conversation and continued visibility, since most markets happen several times a month. Encourage interested community members to volunteer and join campus coalitions. The local library is also a great place to table, host meetings or launch canvassing efforts. Reach out to librarians to see if they're interested in working together.

Registering High School Voters

In some states, US citizens as young as 16 can [pre-register](#) to vote. And thanks to the 26th Amendment, all 18-year-olds can register and vote. Therefore it's important to reach out to high school students, so they start with voter registration and education as soon as possible.



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Before you begin, connect with the local League of Women Voters to find out if they have any programs running at local high schools. If they do, partner with them and bring along your resources and experience. If not, reach out to the principal(s) over the phone or by email. Be sure to explain what CEEP is, who you are and what resources you can offer. If they're interested in having you coordinate voting projects, set up events like [tabling](#) or mock elections. Try to establish meaningful, long-term relationships with high schools.

Community Canvassing

Canvassing is a traditional form of voter registration. It involves going door to door and asking residents if they are registered to vote. Canvassers provide voter registration forms, nonpartisan candidate guides and other resources as they go. This is a great way to get involved in the community and reach out to individuals who don't normally participate in voter engagement events.

When canvassing, it's important to be prepared with clipboards, voter registration forms, pens and other resources. Train volunteers thoroughly prior to canvassing and to send them out in groups of two or three. Make sure each group knows what ground they have to cover and is able to contact organizers at any point during the event. While canvassing is a great way to connect with voters, safety is the top priority. Be sure to take a buddy, don't approach houses that make you uncomfortable and keep local health and safety regulations in mind.

Mosby Court Case Study

Since 2012, students from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) have worked with residents of the nearby Mosby Court public housing project to help them vote. Mosby Court Tenants Association members and representatives from a local leadership program worked with students in ASPIRE, VCU's residential community engagement program. Together, they designed a nonpartisan get-out-the-vote effort at Mosby Court, first in the presidential election and then in state elections, when both students and Mosby residents tended to stay home.

The [VCU-Mosby Court partnership](#) offers excellent lessons for students wanting to partner with an external community organization. The partnership has inspired both students and Mosby residents, and helped Mosby's voter turnout nearly double during the course of the initiative.



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

About Us

Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) is a national nonpartisan project that helps administrators, faculty, staff and student leaders at America's institutions of higher education engage students in federal, state and local elections. CEEP views voting as a means to promote a more equitable and inclusive democracy and to address past and present disenfranchisement. To learn more, visit campuselect.org or contact us at info@campuselect.org.