

The Road Ahead: Processing the 2020 Election



Created for faculty, staff and students

With so much energy leading up to the November 2020 General Election, we anticipate that the time after the election will be filled with various thoughts, feelings and reactions among everyone invested in its outcome. We have created this resource to assist faculty, staff and students in supporting students' processes during this important time. Below are examples of prompts, activity ideas and resources organized along a timeline after the election.

Disclaimer: Though it is valuable, impactful and important to leave room for students to process what is happening, you should not overstretch your capacities in holding their processes. Hearing them out and giving them space is something that you can do, but providing more intense emotional assistance and mental health support is something best left to other campus professionals. Please reach out to your counseling services center for more information provided that your campus has one.

Post-Election Timeline: One Day After

What We Know So Far

We may not have the results of the election at this point. Help students understand what is known by reviewing a few trusted resources that we list below (see Resources for Conversation below, including this resource on [2020 General Election Early Voting Statistics](#)). Explore questions such as:

- How many votes were cast in person?
 - How many absentee ballots were requested? How many have been counted so far?
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- Which states have finalized their ballots? Which states are still counting ballots?
- Check out exit polls from Election Day.
 - This includes any news agency within the National Election Pool ([CNN](#), [ABC](#), [NBC](#), [CBS](#)), or [Associated Press](#).

Debriefing

Anticipation, tensions and other emotions may be running high. It is important to help students work through some of these emotions. Here are a few discussion points to get started:

- Did you expect to have complete election results by now?
- Aside from the presidency, were there any other races or ballot initiatives that you were watching closely? How do the results look so far?
- Did you stay up to watch the election results? Did you watch with anyone else?
- How important was it to you that everyone voted this election?
- If you watched other election results (at any level), in what ways was last night similar to what you have experienced? In what ways was last night different from what you have experienced?
- What is the news coverage like today (the day after the election)? What aspects of the election and its results have they highlighted so far? What has not been covered?

State and Local Races

Election Day coverage has been largely dominated by the presidential race, but the president was not the only race on the ballot this fall. Help to educate students about state and local races that were on the ballot (see the Resources for Conversation section for websites) and what impact these races may have on them and their communities.

- Review the candidates that were on your state's ballot and how they were polling before and after the election.
 - Examine local news resources for coverage of state/local candidates.
 - Explore state/local candidate websites.
- Break down what those elected officials' positions are responsible for.
 - Check out our CEEP guide on [local elections](#).



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Post-Election Timeline: One Week After

Debunking Myths

Leading up to the election, there were concerted efforts to help alert voters about misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Unfortunately, these issues did not go away with the passing of the election. Help students navigate through the myths that have come up since the election.

- CEEP's resource on [Detecting Disinformation](#) helps students learn how to spot false content.
- [Media Bias Resource](#) helps students sort through political bias of media outlets.
- [Interactive Media Bias Chart](#) is a data visualization that displays measures of news articles and sources.
- [PolitiFact](#) is a fact-checking website that rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials.
- Mail-In Ballot Misinformation:
 - A [Brookings Institute article](#) offers very broad points about mail-in balloting reliability as well as a deeper discussion with evidence to back it.
 - [FEC Facts About Voting By Mail](#) is a thread of tweets written by FEC Commissioner Ellen Weintraub about the safety and integrity of voting by mail.
 - CEEP [Voting by Mail: Myth vs. Fact](#) video debunks common myths about voting by mail.

Combating Cynicism

Election Day was a week ago and the results may still not be finalized. This could mean that cynicism is creeping in. Help cut that cynicism short.

- Check out our CEEP resource on [Combating Cynicism](#).
- What might someone who did not follow the election think of this period and of people's reactions to it?
- If the results have not come in, how can you keep energized and engaged as the process carries on?



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Checking In On the Race

Help students understand where we are at in the process by reviewing some of the resources we have provided below in the Resources for Conversation section. You can discuss topics such as:

- How many votes were cast in-person in our state and nationwide?
- How many absentee ballots were requested and how many of those have been counted so far?
- How many states have complete vote counts?

Post-Election Timeline: One Month After

Looking Back

With how quickly news cycles move these days, it is easy to lose perspective about what has happened. Help students look back on what has happened in the past month and work through any emotions or issues that have come up in that time.

- Write a letter to yourself on November 3, 2020 from your current perspective:
 - What questions or concerns about the voting process were there at that time? How did they play out?
 - What else would you tell yourself about the election that you know now?
 - How did you feel about the election then compared to now?

Moving Forward

It feels like everything has been leading up to 2020, but now it is time to help students transition toward the future of their electoral and civic engagement. Guide students toward methods of remaining engaged, or becoming engaged if they are not already! See our Resources for Conversation section for volunteer opportunities.

- How did you stay civically engaged over the course of the 2020 election? How will you carry that engagement into future elections?
- What can you do in your local community to make an impact?
- Are there any opportunities for you to volunteer in your community to make a difference?
- Are there any organizations or clubs on your campus that you can get involved with to continue to be civically engaged?



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- What leadership roles, if any, do you want to take on this year?

Analysis of Outcomes

Looking back on the past month, talk with students through what they have learned. This does not have to be limited to election results, which still may be coming in, but rather the process as a whole.

- What did you learn from this election process? Are there new resources? New organizations? New policies?
- What are you taking away from this post-election period for future elections?
- How would you describe the election and the results process to someone unfamiliar with them?
- What inspired you about this election?

Post-Election Timeline: Going Forward

Staying Focused

During big elections, it is easy to get lost in the drama of the election, which includes scandals and controversy. This makes it difficult for people to learn about how the presidential election impacts their daily lives. At this point, help students understand the role the president has in our lives.

- Describe the responsibilities of the president to your students, which should include information about checks and balances and executive orders.
- Look at how the Senate can shift and shape executive policies depending on which party holds the majority.
- Look at how the Supreme Court can decide important cases about executive power.

Staying Active

Election Day, though significant and influential, is not where this conversation stops. Students will continue to be impacted by elections to come and they should remain engaged with them.

- What other elections are coming up? Locally? Statewide?



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- What issues are important to you? How do you think you can continue to advocate for those in between now and 2024?
- How can you use what you have learned from your specific major/minor/concentration to stay civically engaged?
- What did you respond to best when it came to engaging in this election? Why?

Future of Elections

There has been a big buildup to this Election Day and it will undoubtedly be discussed for years to come. For some students, this may have been their first or second election. You should talk through their experiences to see how this election has impacted their understanding of the U.S. electoral system.

- How do you think the election process could have been made more functional (in terms of number of people able to participate, speed with which ballots were processed, in-person options, mail-in options, etc.)?
- Do you feel more motivated to participate in politics or less motivated? Why? What could be done to help those who feel less motivated?
- Do you think this election cycle changed peoples' perceptions of the importance of voting?
- What do you think energized voters of all ages? How might future elections energize them?

Resources for Conversation

- Tracking Races:
 - [Gubernatorial Races](#):
 - [Mayoral Races](#)
 - [State House Races](#)
 - [Congressional Races by State](#)
 - [2020 General Election Early Voting Statistics](#)
- Exit Poll Resources:
 - [CNN](#)
 - [ABC](#)
 - [NBC](#)
 - [CBS](#)
 - [Associated Press](#)
- Media Bias Explainers:



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- [All Sides](#)
- [Ad Fontes Interactive Chart](#)
- [PolitiFact](#)
- Student Volunteer Opportunities:
 - [Idealist](#)
 - Within this search engine you can also narrow your search to areas that interest you by using the “Search by keyword, skill, or interest” bar.
 - [VolunteerMatch](#)
 - You can “Search by Keyword” or by “Cause Areas” for opportunities more tailored to your interests.
 - Check your institution’s Student Affairs page for local/school-specific volunteering opportunities.
 - Check out [CEEP’s Partners and Allies](#) for potential nonpartisan civic engagement volunteer opportunities.
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- CEEP Resources
 - Presidential Guide ([English/Spanish](#)) and [Third Party Guide](#)
 - [Other Issue and Candidate Guides](#)
 - [Supreme Court Guide](#)
 - [Local Elections Guide](#)
 - [Combating Cynicism](#)
 - [Difficult Classroom Conversations About Political Issues](#)
 - [Detecting Disinformation](#)
 - [Talking About Elections in Your Classrooms](#)
 - [Student Volunteers for Campaigns](#)

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.