



# CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

## Helping Students Become Voters: CEEP's 2021–2022 Plan

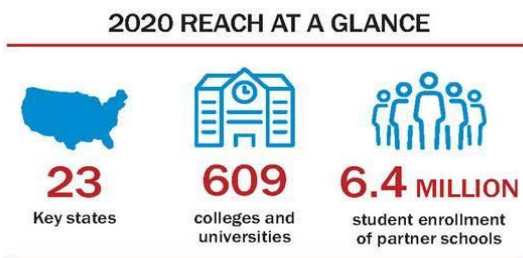
In the 2020 election America's 20 million college students played a major role in races from the President on down. Youth turnout rose a projected [8–10 points from 2016](#). But will students continue to vote?

The [Campus Election Engagement Project](#) (CEEP) believes they will, but only if actively and continually engaged. Otherwise we risk what happened in [2010](#) and [2014](#), when four out of five young voters stayed home, due to barriers from daunting laws to their sense that “my vote doesn't matter.”

CEEP addresses these barriers by helping campus administrators, faculty, and student leaders **leverage their extensive resources and networks to get their students to vote**. Our stipended student Fellows complement this **with critical face-to-face reach, directly engaging their peers**. In powerful and cost-effective ways, we help students register to vote, navigate the maze of confusing laws, learn key candidate stands, volunteer in campaigns, and show up at the polls. We work not only in peak election years, but also in between them, so they can continue developing key institutional commitments and keeping students engaged with public issues—the most effective path to ensuring they vote.

In 2020, CEEP engaged students in every close state, helping them vote despite all the new barriers, like schools going virtual because of the Covid pandemic. CEEP found creative ways to adapt, engaging a record 609 colleges with a total enrollment of 6.4 million students. Just as when we helped student turnout double from [2014 to 2018](#), with our schools bringing a million more voters to the polls, we were proud to play an important role.

Here's what we did in 2020 and how we'll work in 2021 to lay the groundwork for the critical 2022 mid-terms.

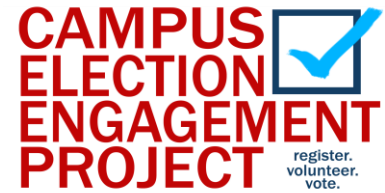


## 2020 CEEP Impact

### In 2020, CEEP...

- **Worked intensively with college and universities in 23 key states** involving students in the Presidential race, all major U.S. Senate and governor's races, and Congressional and legislative races. And our At-Large Director works in states where we don't have dedicated staff.

- **Partnered with 609 colleges and universities with student enrollment of 6,366,837.** From the surveys we send out every cycle, 99% of our campus partners said we made a significant difference in helping their students to vote and 98% called us a leader in the campus engagement space.
- **Supported 476 student Fellowships.** CEEP started this spring with 124 student Fellows at 104 campuses. This fall, CEEP provided \$1,000 stipends to a record 352 Fellows to mobilize their peers on 239 campuses enrolling almost 3.5 million students. Our fall Fellows recruited 8,000 student volunteers, and engaged 300,000 students directly, and far more through institutional initiatives they spearheaded.
- Helped **97%** of the 206 campuses that have reported so far **send key election information via all-campus email**, which would **project to 6.2 million students, with most receiving multiple election resources.** Our fellows reached 2,363,000 directly, while administrators reached the rest, including at our campuses that didn't have Fellows.
- **Created nonpartisan candidate guides** to 38 key races, plus Spanish versions in relevant states. These meticulously researched and sourced guides, the favorite resource of the schools, offer an accessible look at candidate stands, and were also distributed widely by major non-campus partners like Vote.org, Turbovote and When We All Vote.

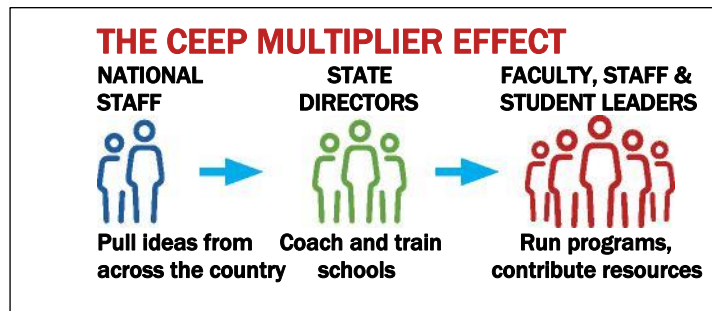


*“This fellowship has shown me that politics is what you make it. The more you get involved, the better chance to have your voice heard. I learned how much my voice matters and how to use it.”*

—Dana Freeman, CEEP Student Fellow, Temple University, PA

## Our Core Approach: Engage Schools' Resources

While our student Fellows engage peers on the ground, CEEP's state directors help college administrators, faculty and student leaders increase institutional electoral engagement efforts. They help schools continually expand their coalition of participating campus stakeholders and implement [our most effective approaches](#). Addressing both structural barriers to student voting and student cynicism, they help schools:



- Register student voters at [first-year orientation](#) and class registration.
- Navigate students through [daunting voter laws](#).
- Send all-campus emails and social media reminders with key election information.
- Distribute our [nonpartisan candidate guides](#). CEEP researches key votes and what candidates tell different audiences, and not just campaign statements. Schools and students trust our guides, saying they let them “see where candidates actually stand,” cutting past “all the lies and spin.”
- Build campus engagement coalitions like Ohio State's [OSU Votes](#), which CEEP helped launch, and which now gets continuing support from leadership programs and student government.
- Help campus newspapers [make elections more salient](#).
- Engage unlikely campus stakeholders, from [athletic teams](#) to [libraries](#).

## Engaging Students to Vote Despite Covid Disruptions

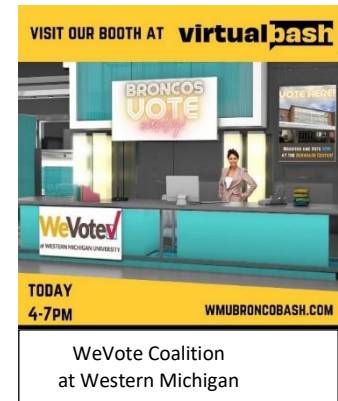
Covid created major challenges in 2020, with most of our campuses entirely virtual or with significant physical closures. CEEP reacted swiftly to adapt and create additional approaches, resources and models to support electoral engagement in this new environment.

Here are some ways CEEP increased student voting in 2020:

### Institutional Projects

Institutional projects create systemic change in campus election and voting environments. Our goal is to develop promising practices and build sustainable engagement systems that reach *every student* with election engagement information and opportunities *every year*. Our 2020 Institutional successes include:

- Statewide Student Voter Summits and Partnership with Elected Officials.** Collaborating with other nonprofits, CEEP hosted statewide summits in nearly all of our states, bringing together administrators, students and faculty. These summits provided valuable training, strengthened coordination within and between campuses and with key elected officials, and promoted promising state-specific practices. We also helped the Colorado and Michigan's Secretaries of State to create youth advisory committees and major Michigan schools secured on-campus satellite clerk's offices—with 5,400 students registering and 8,500 voting at the University of Michigan satellite alone.
- New Campus Engagement Coalitions.** Despite Covid, 30% of CEEP Fellows created new nonpartisan election clubs or coalitions at their schools, from Duke and Marquette to Penn State and University of West Georgia. Central Michigan University secured a permanent school-funded voter engagement position. University of Iowa recruited 100 student volunteer Ambassadors who engaged 5,000 students and got 30 student organizations to register 90% or more of their members.
- Integrated Voter Registration.** As in previous cycles, CEEP staff and Fellows continued to integrate voter registration into New Student Orientation and First-Year Programs, including at Penn State, Florida Atlantic University, University of Louisville, and major campuses in the 165,000-student Miami-Dade College system. Other campuses trained Residence Hall and Academic Advising staff to register students.
- Election Day Class Holiday.** CEEP Fellows helped get **38 schools enrolling 535,000 students to cancel Election Day classes**, reduce class hours or allow no-excuse absences. These included major Pennsylvania campuses like Penn State, Drexel, West Chester, and [Community College of Philadelphia](#), Michigan schools like Wayne State, Central Michigan University and Grand Valley State, and others like Georgia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth University, Northern Virginia Community College, and University of Montana.
- Email and Social Media.** With so many schools closed, email and social media became even more essential components of activating student voters. As mentioned, our Fellows and state directors got 97% of schools reporting so far to distribute key information through all-campus email. **CEEP reached 2.3 million people on social media directly, and provided messaging for the far greater social media outreach by schools to students and alumni.** A Penn State Fellow created a [voting TikTok](#) picked up by the U.S. Women's Soccer Team.



- **Enhanced Election Communication.** CEEP produced media resources for schools to distribute through campus communication channels and for faculty to use in courses. We got great responses to our animated videos on early and mail voting, like [4 Ways to Vote Early](#), [Covid No, Voting Yes](#), and [How to Vote by Mail](#) (also in Spanish). We updated and translated our [Close Elections Video](#).

We helped our campus partners ramp up their election websites and create videos on how to vote, (watch [University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Badgers Vote](#)) and why to vote (watch [Michigan State’s president](#)). Our Fellows were frequently interviewed and wrote articles, from [USA Today](#) to the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), a Trevor Noah livestream, and [C-SPAN](#) broadcast CEEP founder Paul Loeb’s conversation with Thurgood Marshall, Jr. Maine College of Art held a voting poster competition, with the winning posters displayed in the downtown Portland public library’s windows and distributed statewide.

## A Conversation with Trevor Noah



*Voting posters at downtown Portland Public Library*

## Voter Registration

- **Using Athletes as Influencers.** North Carolina State athletes served as Voter Ambassadors to register students. Penn State engaged all Big Ten Conference member schools and sent out a video message from [a star football player](#). HBCUs Tennessee State and Alabama A&M held a marching band voter registration competition and we reached 250,000 people through an Instagram livestream voting challenge with bands from nine different HBCUs—here’s the [Morehouse version with a link to our guides.vote page](#).
- **From Tabling to Online Portals.** Our Fellows continued to conduct tabling where schools were open. The team led by our Texas State Fellow registered 700 people in a single day. But campus closures shifted our focus to encouraging [online voter tools](#) and linked QR codes to help students register, check and update registrations, request absentee ballots and receive election reminders.

## Voter Education

Colleges and universities face a dual education challenge: educating students about elections and helping them make informed voting decisions. CEEP implemented these approaches:

- **Distributed CEEP’s nonpartisan [candidate guides](#).** Administrators, faculty, and CEEP Fellows shared them through all-campus email and social media, distributing in classrooms (including to teach media literacy), and displaying them as giant banners. CEEP guides were also promoted by major non-campus



groups, from Nonprofit Vote, Vote.org and When We All Vote, to Youth Service America, the major rock group partner Head Count, and the national African American fraternity and sorority networks. Black Voters Matter handed out 40,000 copies of [our Georgia runoff guides](#) on their GOTV bus tour and the US Vote foundation mailed copies to every high school principal in the state.

- **Faculty and Course Integration.** Given Covid, faculty became even more important conduits to student engagement. CEEP persuaded them to include election information on their course syllabi and email signatures—approaches which Michigan's Secretary of State took to the National Secretaries of State. We created resources for faculty in diverse disciplines to use Covid as [a teachable moment](#) and to [conduct classroom civic dialogues](#). Temple University shared our training on how to address election issues and remain nonpartisan with faculty campus-wide. Arizona and Wisconsin schools created voter engagement resources targeted at STEM-field faculty.
- **Class Visits.** Our Fellows made in-person and virtual classroom visits, educating students about election dates and processes, and sharing nonpartisan information on candidates and ballot measures. Our University of North Carolina Asheville Fellows recruited Political Science Club members to make 66 class visits and Bowling Green State Fellows reached 1,000 students with their team of volunteers.

*“Before I was a CEEP fellow I had no idea of how many components go into voting. I didn't know what voting district I was in or my state legislators. I can now say that I am an educated citizen and will continue my studies centered around voting.”*

—Vicente Ortiz, Mesa Community College, Phoenix, AZ

## Get Out the Vote

- **Voting Visibility.** Where schools were open, CEEP Fellows used rallies and parades to increase voting awareness. At North Carolina HBCU Winston Salem State, 2,500 people [marched with NBA star Chris Paul](#) to an on-campus early voting site. Florida A&M's marching band [led their parade](#), combined with Florida State and Tallahassee Community College. University of Wisconsin–La Crosse held a combined [early voting march](#) with community members. CEEP printed Get Out the Vote signs that students could hang in windows, with a QR code to our voter tools and the back designed for social media selfies on why their vote mattered. We also made a focused GOTV effort in the Georgia Senate runoff. Here are Georgia director Daniel Coley's interviews with [Atlanta](#) and [Savannah](#) TV stations.
- **Addressing Covid challenges.** CEEP coordinated throughout our states with Secretaries of State and County Clerks to improve safe student voter access. At University of Michigan, we secured an emergency ballot drop box in the dorm where 800 students were quarantined and Secretary of State Benson issued guidelines for similar accommodations for other students in quarantine. We got Ohio State to put drop boxes in every residence hall, other schools distributed free stamps to return mail ballots, and at Milwaukee's Alverno College, our student Fellow took the lead in recruiting [178 student poll workers](#).



Chris Paul leads Winston Salem State early voting march

## 2021 Plan

In 2021, CEEP will build on the momentum we've created. Our 2020 successes were directly related to the groundwork we laid in 2019. This allowed us to build the strong relationships and institutional commitments that became critical given Covid-related disruptions. Whether CEEP can keep momentum building and take students to a new level in 2022 will depend largely on how well we engage students in this coming year.

For 2021, CEEP has four priorities:

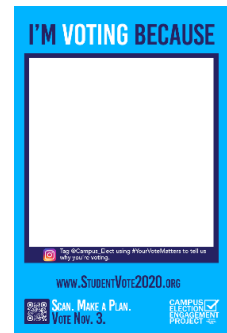
1. Sustain campus relationships and keep driving institutional progress.
2. Expand faculty and course integration efforts.
3. Increase student electoral participation and voting in local 2021 elections.
4. Build momentum toward the 2022 midterms.

### 1. Sustain Relationships and Institutional Progress

Off-year periods offer a key opportunity to institutionalize student engagement, with the lead time to develop and implement innovative policies and programs. CEEP's goal is to ensure election engagement is part of every student's ongoing educational experience and to sustain that through institutional commitments. Much of our 2021 work will build on current institutional efforts. For example, Florida State and the Orlando community college system have been advocating for improved student ID cards that will meet state voter ID requirements—and just need their president's approval to be issued. University of Florida's Faculty Senate, Georgia's Kennesaw State's Student Senate and Ohio State are currently considering Election Day holidays or absences. Prairie View A&M is awaiting final approval for an elections-related course that includes a class project to register peers. Ohio State's student government is considering requiring all student members to complete a voter engagement project.

In 2021, CEEP will:

- Help students process the 2020 election and use it as a learning opportunity.
- Create coordinated campus plans drawing on our Electoral Engagement [Needs Assessment](#) and their [campus voting patterns](#), including targeting lower-participating campus constituencies like [STEM majors](#).
- Develop ongoing campus-funded election coalitions, like Ohio State's OSU Votes, that expand the use of institutional resources to sponsor Fellows and engagement programming.
- Bring new stakeholders into campus student engagement coalitions, from [athletic teams](#) and [libraries](#) to academic departments beyond the usual suspects.
- Secure student IDs that meet state voter identification requirements and create systems for needed residency documents such as zero-balance utility bills and campus proof-of-residence letters.
- Integrate voter registration into [student orientation](#), First Year courses and class registration.
- Provide opportunities for students to have productive civic conversations across differences.
- Make the connection between voting and larger social and policy change efforts, including racial equity and police reform.
- Engage students and encourage them to make their voices heard on redistricting, gerrymandering, and use of the new census data.



### 2. Expand faculty and course integration

Faculty have the greatest interaction with students and have become the critical conduit during the Covid pandemic. 2021 will be a key year to advance course planning. CEEP will work with faculty to:

- Ensure active engagement by faculty in departments with lower student voter turnout, such as engineering, math, recreation and agriculture.
- Expand the use of election-related readings, assignments, research, and experiences in diverse disciplines and courses.
- Increase student civic learning and skills, such as civil discourse, media literacy, public speaking and advocacy, community organizing, and leadership.

- Leverage faculty communications, from signature lines to course syllabi, to make it routine for faculty to share election and voting information.
- Make virtual or in-person class visits a consistent component of student electoral engagement.

### 3. Increase student electoral participation and voting in 2021

CEEP will solidify habits of student voting in 2021 local and statewide elections, and promote student engagement beyond voting. Local elections continue to have the lowest voting turnout and the greatest generational gaps: Voters over 65 are *seven times* more likely to vote in local mayoral elections than are those aged 18–34. Next year will lock in voting behavior and help students understand how local elections affect daily life, from policing, schools, and housing, to healthcare and transportation. CEEP will continue to use our student Fellows program to help involve student peers, with up to 100 student Fellows working on local elections (and a few statewide elections like Virginia), plus year-long institutional projects.



### 4. Building participation for 2022 and beyond

Election participation and voting can become habitual, especially if students start early and are encouraged to continue. Sustaining student voting from one election cycle to the next requires continual “care and feeding” of our campus partners, particularly given how stretched they’ve been by Covid, and will continue to be as we emerge from the pandemic. It’s critical for them to know they can count on CEEP to be there after each election, building and planning for the next one.

A concerted effort helped 2018 midterm student voting climb to the near-record high of 40%. The presidential election gave students clear and compelling reasons to vote despite Covid-related barriers. But these gains could easily be eroded without sustained effort. The difference between the dismal student participation rates of 2010 and 2014 and the hopeful trends of 2018 and 2020 could depend on what groups like CEEP do to engage students in the coming year. By helping schools continue building their election engagement programs and conducting valuable peer-to-peer election outreach, CEEP helps develop the campus culture and institutional commitment to repeat or surpass recent higher turnout trends. What we do in 2021 will play a critical role in 2022 student turnout.

#### MAKE A GIFT

Gifts can be made to Campus Election Engagement Project [online](#) (after nine years of fiscal sponsorship, we’re now our own independent 501(c)(3)) or by sending a check or wire transfer to: Campus Election Engagement Project, c/o Ohio Campus Compact, 615 N. Pearl St., Granville, OH 43023. Your gift will be tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

For more information, contact CEEP founder Paul Loeb at [Paul@CampusElect.org](mailto:Paul@CampusElect.org), Director of Special Projects Nausheen Hussain at [Nausheen@CampusElect.org](mailto:Nausheen@CampusElect.org), or visit our website [www.CampusElect.org](http://www.CampusElect.org).