

Institutionalizing Voter Registration HEA and You!

What does the HEA require campuses to do?

During 1998, Congress passed an amendment to the Higher Education Act (the document that encompasses all federal laws relating to higher education) that requires all post-secondary institutions to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration forms to each of their students prior to their state's voter registration deadline for all federal and gubernatorial elections.

What does this mean?

Essentially, your administration is required by federal law, to work actively to distribute voter registration forms and materials to all students who are enrolled in a degree or certificate seeking program and are physically on campus. Each campus is required to request the necessary number of registration forms from the state election office at least 120 days before the voter registration deadline. As a result, each administration should be developing ways to institutionalize voter registration on your campus.

How can this benefit you?

- ✓ Development of continuous broad-based campus coalitions
- ✓ Administration has to support your voter registration efforts, especially in housing
- ✓ Builds more time in for your voter education and GOTV efforts
- ✓ Avoids "reinventing the wheel" syndrome
- ✓ Creates a more open forum for voter education
- ✓ Develops the skills of your volunteers and members

How can you institutionalize voter registration on campus?

Continuous Voter Coalitions: All too often we think that our coalition should dissolve immediately following the election. However, effective and efficient electoral action requires year round organizing. Make your coalition a registered student organization. This will also help you gain valuable resources, like access to address lists, meeting space, and funding.

Course Catalogs: You can print a voter registration card in the catalog or just stick a voter registration card into the books. This is easy to coordinate with your Registrar or Publications Office.

On-Campus Mailings: You can work with your administration to get voter registration cards and a letter encouraging students to vote from a chancellor or dean, placed in all on-campus mailboxes each semester.

Tuition bills: Every campus mails out a tuition bill every semester. Work with your Business Office to send registration materials with the bills. You can also do this with other all campus mailings that the campus may do, including those in the residence halls.

Course Registration: If you have phone registration, see if you can add a message to the beginning that encourages students to register to vote and gives them the information to do so. If registration is online, you can have a link to an online voter registration form. If you are still doing paper registration, have the campus attach a voter registration form to the course registration materials.

Curriculum Infusion: By working with your Faculty Senate, you can ask professors and teaching assistants to spend a few minutes at the beginning of each semester on voter registration, by allowing your coalition or organization to come in and register voters, as well as distribute interest cards to recruit new volunteers.

Paychecks: You can work with the Business Office to periodically insert voter registration cards into the paychecks they send out.

Freshman Orientation: Work with your administration so your coalition gives a presentation at freshman orientation to distribute voter registration cards, as well as give them information about your efforts and interest cards to get involved. Be sure to bring the federal registration form for out-of-state who wish to register at home!

All-campus emails: Although many students do not have the ability to do an all-campus email, the administration often can send mass emails. You can get your Chancellor to send out an all-campus email on behalf of the coalition to encourage students to register and follow-up on the day of the election to help out GOTV efforts.

Campus Website link: Many people go on to the campus website to look at the class schedule, find student organizations, etc. Try to get your administration to put a link on your campus site in a prominent location that will take them directly to the UCSA site to have them register to vote. (Or the secretary of state's site) See if you can get them even to have a pop-up when students log into the course registration part of the site for the first few weeks of classes.