



CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

VOTER EDUCATION, REGISTRATION & MOBILIZATION:
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THE CAL U WAY



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INTRODUCTION

California University of Pennsylvania's core values are integrity, civility, and responsibility. Its commitment to imbuing students with a sense of civic obligation and developing tomorrow's leaders is reflected in Objective 5.2 of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan: ***Enhance and integrate programs in leadership, career preparedness, civic engagement and other critical life skills.*** It is only natural that Cal U was among the initial group of colleges and universities to pilot the American Democracy Project, a collaborative effort of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and *The New York Times*, as a means to engage students in issue awareness, electoral politics, and community matters.

American Democracy Project: Overview

California University of Pennsylvania is one of the first institutions of higher education to pilot the American Democracy Project. With the passage of the Byrd Amendment, in 2004, Cal U honors Constitution Day by holding university-wide events featuring talks on issues ranging from civil liberties at time of war to ethics in government. Voter registration tables are a staple at the events. Early programming consisted of panel discussion on topics, such as protest movements and health care reform. During election years, there were and still are CampaignWatch roundtable discussions where students, faculty, and staff discuss issues, candidates, and parties.

In 2008, Cal U was selected to participate in the Deliberative Polling® Initiative. George Mehaffy, vice president of Academic Leadership and Change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and James Fishkin, director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, were on campus for the day-long event that included more than 200 Cal U students. The next day, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. spoke on regional environmental issues.

The same year, students across campus were involved in election activities. College Democrats and College Republicans debated presidential candidates' issue positions in a standing room only auditorium. Cal U was the first campus to host four DebateWatch events, where the university community viewed the three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate. Students and faculty facilitated post-debate discussions, all from a strictly nonpartisan perspective. Most impressive, Cal U made national news (*Roll Call*) because more than 2,000 students registered to vote and turnout in the four borough precincts quadrupled.

The university held its first Election Analysis Forum just one week after the election, which has since become a biennial event that features nationally acclaimed political scientists and a leading journalist. Inauguration Day capped the election-year activities, where the campus community watched President Barack Obama take the Oath of Office.

Since then, Cal U continues to provide extensive programming to the university community and area residents. Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day are mainstays. Highlights include “Kids Talk Democracy,” where fourth-grade students from an area elementary school shared their views on several constitutional topics, and “Leadership and Public Service,” where a nationally recognized juvenile court judge discussed the “right” reason for seeking public office. “Passion or Pension” drew a capacity crowd as did a former Ohio secretary of state and Kennedy Profile in Courage awardee who discussed voting rights. “Help for Haiti” raised funds for the earthquake-ravaged country (<http://www.calu.edu/academics/american-democracy-project/index.htm>).

Spring 2016, the American Democracy Project partnered with the League of Women Voters of Washington County to host the Pennsylvania 49th Legislative District debate. Cal U students hosted Penn State-New Kensington students who were interested to learn of the university’s programming. A nationally recognized elections forecaster spoke at the annual spring event, which again drew a capacity crowd.

This summer, Cal U is sending two students to the national conventions as part of The Washington Center Seminar Series. Another student is one of three in the Commonwealth to be selected to participate in CollegeDebate16 (<http://collegedebate16.org/>). Of particular note, Cal Campaign Consultants, a nonpartisan student organization, will be providing volunteers for statewide and national races. Students in Campaign Management, an upper division course, are required to register voters and work on campaigns of their choosing.

Cal U seeks to instill students with a sense of community that will last a lifetime. Voting is an important part of the equation as are being educated on candidates and issues, volunteering on campaigns, performing community service, and more. Cal U is proud of its students and faculty who hold elective office and work in the public sector.

BY THE NUMBERS

Voter mobilization is a challenge for political parties for several reasons, ranging from feelings of political alienation or political inefficacy to restrictive voting times or inconvenient polling locations. Mobilizing the youth vote is particularly difficult, as many young adults fail to perceive themselves as stakeholders or they get more gratification from volunteering than they do from voting.

Registering students to vote is the first part of the equation. Educating them about the issues, convincing them their vote matters, and getting them to vote take an almost herculean effort.

In 2012, 41.9 percent of Cal U students voted as compared to 46.9 percent nationally. Its registration rate was 66.6 percent. The voting method numbers are telling: 85 percent voted in-person on Election Day with the remainder voting absentee (9.1 percent), voting early (1.4 percent), voting by mail (0.6 percent), and other (3.9 percent). In the 2014 midterm election, when turnout is precipitously lower than it is in presidential election years, Cal U's numbers lagged 3.1 percent behind the national college vote (15.7 percent to 18.8 percent). Similar to 2012, 88.5 percent voted in-person on Election Day (NSLVE 2012, 2014).

It is clear that we have to encourage students to register to vote in California Borough and mobilize them on Election Day. There also should be a concerted effort to lobby for a campus polling location for the 2018 midterm election and beyond.

VOTER EDUCATION

- On September 8, 2016, the **2016 College Convention Town Hall Meeting** is being live-streamed to college and university campuses across the country (<http://collegedebate16.org/>). Ellen Mariko Boyle, a Cal U junior, is one of three Pennsylvania students who will be taking part in a focused discussion on national issues. Cal U students will watch in real time and, following the broadcast, facilitators will lead small group discussions on the topics. When Mari returns to campus she will facilitate talks with Cal U students, encouraging them to share their views. Note: Dominican University of California will confirm the exact date within the coming weeks.

- **Constitution Day**, which is being celebrated on September 16, 2016, features Kirra Lent and Claudia Pehowic who interned at the Democratic National Convention and Republican National Convention, respectively; Mari Boyle who is a CollegeDebate16 delegate; and, Courtney Cochran, a Cal U graduate and regional organizer for the Campus Election Engagement Project. There will be two panel discussions, where the women will discuss “Conventional Wisdom” and the importance of voting.
- Cal U, similar to previous presidential years, will host four **DebateWatch** events: September 26, 2016 (first presidential debate), October 4, 2016 (vice presidential debate), October 9, 2016 (second presidential debate), and October 19, 2016 (third presidential debate). Student and faculty facilitators will lead small group discussions on the presidential candidates and their issue positions.
- Two **CampaignWatch** events are planned, where students discuss the candidates, issues, polling, and the election outlook. Faculty will act as facilitators, and will guide the dialog so it remains on point and respectful.
- There will be, at minimum, two **Issue Expos** on topics drawn from the news. Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., is Common Hour in which no classes are scheduled. It is an optimal time to attract a large student audience.
- The American Democracy Project Department, in conjunction with the Department of History, Politics & Society will hold impromptu teach-ins.
- Copies of the League of Women Voters of Washington County Voter Guide will be available at the Library Circulation Desk and Natalie Student Center Information Desk.
- On November 8, 2016, **ElectionWatch** starts at 8:00 p.m. The campus community and local residents will gather to watch the election returns.
- The **2016 Election Analysis Forum** follows on November 15, 2016. Jon Delano, KDKA-TV “Money & Politics” host, will moderate a panel of nationally acclaimed parties and elections experts: Alan Abramowitz, Emory University, William Binning, Youngstown State University, Lou Jacobson, *Governing* and *PoliticsPA*, and Costas Panagopoulos, Fordham

University. They make sense of the election results for the campus community and local residents.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Cal U is partnering with the Washington County League of Women Voters and Campus Election Engagement Project to mount an aggressive voter registration drive.

- On **National Voter Registration Day**, multiple voter registration tables will be staffed by students and faculty in high-traffic locations. Students may register either online or by completing the paper form.
- Registration materials will be available at Constitution Day, the Manderino Library Circulation Desk, and Natali Student Center Information Desk.
- A link to the “Information for Student Voters” webpage will be available both via a link on the Cal U homepage carousel and by visiting the American Democracy Project website. The homepage will be updated with reminders about approaching deadlines.
- University-wide announcements will remind the campus community about the registration deadline and where people can register to vote.
- Faculty will be encouraged to remind students about registering to vote. One suggestion is to allow students to register on their mobile devices either at the beginning or end of class.
- There will be a voter registration table at the Move-in Day picnic.
- Voter registration materials will be available at the New Student Convocation.

BALLOT ACCESS

- Information on in-person and absentee voting will be available on the homepage carousel and American Democracy Project website.
- Sign-up announcements for rides to the polls will be distributed one week prior to the election. Although there have been a limited number of

requests in the past, it remains an important service for those who lack transportation.

- Student Government will organize a walk to the polling place where resident students vote.
- First-time voters, in Pennsylvania, must show identification at the polls. Students will be reminded to take their university identification card, which now includes an expiration date, with them.

VOTER MOBILIZATION

- Campus-wide announcements with information about in-person and absentee voting will be posted.
- Election Day reminders will be distributed via university-wide announcements, social media, and flyers.
- Faculty will be encouraged to remind their classes to vote. Election FAQs and talking points will be provided to all faculty.
- The American Democracy Project intern will create social media accounts, such as Twitter and Instagram, as a means to keep students informed about election-year activities and mobilize them on Election Day.

CALENDAR OF ELECTION EVENTS

August 2016						
◀ July						September ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 MOVE-IN DAY PICNIC VOTER REGISTRATION 11:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M. CONVOCATION CENTER	27
28 NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION VOTER REGISTRATION 7:00 P.M. CONVOCATION CENTER	29	30	31	Notes:		

September 2016						
◀ August						October ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 2016 COLLEGE CONVENTION LIVE-STREAMED PERFORMANCE CENTER TENTATIVE DATE	9 2016 COLLEGE CONVENTION LIVE-STREAMED PERFORMANCE CENTER TENTATIVE DATE	10
11	12	13	14	15	16 CONSTITUTION DAY OBSERVANCE 1:00 P.M. & 2:00 P.M. NATALI 206/207	17
18	19	20 CAMPAIGN WATCH 11:00 A.M. MANDERINO 408	21	22	23	24
25	26 DEBATE WATCH FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 9:00 P.M. VENUE: TBA	27 NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY 9:30 A.M.-4:00 P.M. MANDERINO/ EBERLY/NATALI	28	29 ISSUE EXPO NATALI 206/207 11:00 A.M.	30	Notes:

October 2016						
◀ September						November ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4 DEBATE WATCH VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 9:00 P.M. VENUE: TBA	5	6	7	8
9 DEBATE WATCH SECOND PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 9:00 P.M. VENUE: TBA	10	11 VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 DEBATE WATCH THIRD PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE 9:00 P.M. VENUE: TBA	20	21	22
23	24	25 ISSUE EXPO NATALI 206/207 11:00 A.M.	26	27	28	29
30	31	Notes:				

November 2016						
◀ October						December ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 CAMPAIGN WATCH 11:00 A.M. MANDERINO 408	4 PA ABSENTEE BALLOTS DUE BY 5:00 P.M. AT CORRECT COUNTY ELECTION OFFICE	5
6	7	8 ELECTION DAY 7:00 A.M. TO 8:00 P.M. RIDES TO POLLS/WALK TO POLLS ELECTION WATCH 8:00 P.M. PERFORMANCE CENTER	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 2016 ELECTION ANALYSIS FORUM 7:00 P.M. EBERLY 110	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Notes:		