ALL IN Challenge Student Voting Group Report 2021

Developed by Carolina Hidalgo-McCabe and Ryan Drysdale
of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

ALL IN

CAMPUS
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE

/ introduction

This report highlights student-led nonpartisan voting efforts on college and university campuses following the 2020 elections at institutions participating in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (ALL IN Challenge). It includes key findings, data, and suggestions. At the end of this report, the ALL IN Challenge offers key suggestions that campus leaders and voting coalitions, in collaboration with students, can use to strengthen and institutionalize nonpartisan democratic engagement on campus.

The ALL IN Challenge believes that working with students is key to institutionalizing nonpartisan democratic engagement. This report is based on one-on-one interviews conducted virtually and a survey that was widely disseminated to campuses and student groups following the 2020 general election. In total, 16 campuses were represented in the one-on-one interviews and student leaders from 59 campuses responded to the survey.

We would like to emphasize that this report is based on self-reported data from student leaders and we acknowledge that voter engagement work took on new forms this election cycle due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we hope this report can highlight what we've heard from student leaders and act as a starting point for future conversations and action. The purpose of this report is to encourage greater communication, collaboration, and support between administrators, staff, faculty, and nonpartisan student-led voting groups.

A special thank you to the individuals who participated in the interviews and survey and to Campbell Streator of Every Vote Counts and Katya Ehresman from the Student Voting Network for their support in creating this report and uplifting student voices in the democratic process.

Students from 63 campuses contributed to this report:

16 one-on-one interviews
1   Two-year institution
15   Four-year institutions
5   Public institutions
11   Private institutions
2   Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)

59 survey responses
5   Two-year institutions
54   Four-year institutions
25   Public institutions
34   Private institutions
8   MSIs
56   have a nonpartisan student-led voting group on campus


Photo Credit: University of Mary Washington

The ALL IN Challenge recognizes that community colleges and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are underrepresented in this report. The ALL IN Challenge is actively working to connect with and deepen engagement with more community colleges and MSIs.

/ 2020 student group highlights

Student nonpartisan voting groups are on-campus organizations or informal groups led by students in efforts to increase student democratic engagement. Many of the student groups we spoke with reported starting in the past 5 years, and most have only begun to receive support and recognition in the past few years. Despite the challenges that come with starting an on-campus organization, adapting voter engagement strategies to the COVID-19 pandemic, and facing a tense election season, student groups across the country stepped up to the moment. Here are some of the accomplishments and activities that student voting groups reported engaging in during the 2020 election season.
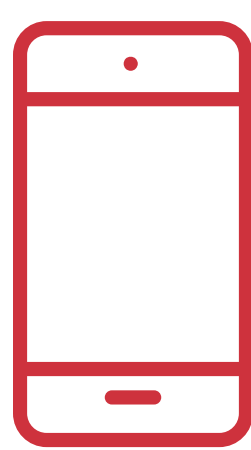
Eckerd College (FL) students conducted phone banking and peer-to-peer outreach reaching over 2,000 students.

Many student groups worked with their athletic departments to register all student athletes on campus.

Over 25 campuses gave Election Day off as a holiday according to <u>Day On Democracy</u>.

Kenyon College (OH) students collaborated with faculty to publicize voting information by adding important dates to syllabi and speaking with students about the importance of voting.

Atlanta University Center (GA) hosted a conversation on voter suppression for National Voter Registration Day 2020 and a conversation with candidates and elected officials in Georgia, focusing on the importance of voting, ahead of the January 5th runoff elections.

Kent State University (OH) used OutVote (<u>Impactive</u>) to do virtual student outreach with a focus on early voting.
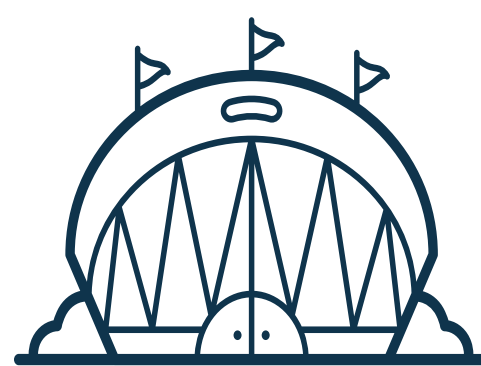
Rice University (TX) had an early voting location on campus at Rice Stadium. Their Election Day polling location was all student-led.

Stanford University (CA) implemented a "civic engagement" enrollment hold. The portal allows students to register to vote and requires students to check a box saying that they "acknowledge the recommendation of civic engagement" before they can enroll in classes.
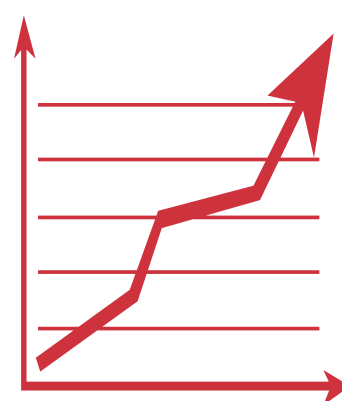
Cornell University's (NY) student voting group didn't exist in July of 2020, but grew into campus team of over 50 students before the November elections.
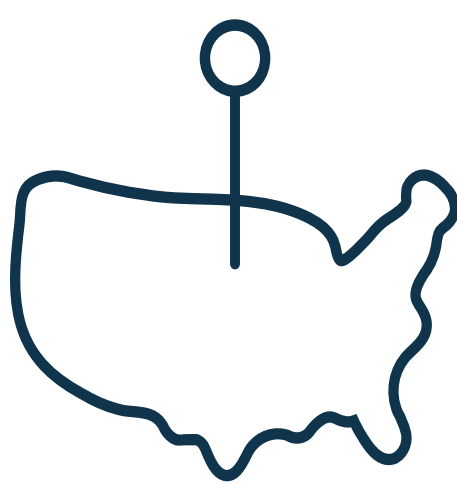
Yale Votes (CT) created a captains program to coordinate students from each state. They also worked with orientation counselors to promote democratic engagement.

/ campus voting coalitions

Of survey respondents, **80%** of public institutions and **79%** of private institutions reported having a campus-wide voting coalition. We asked 59 respondents to outline the members of their voting coalitions:
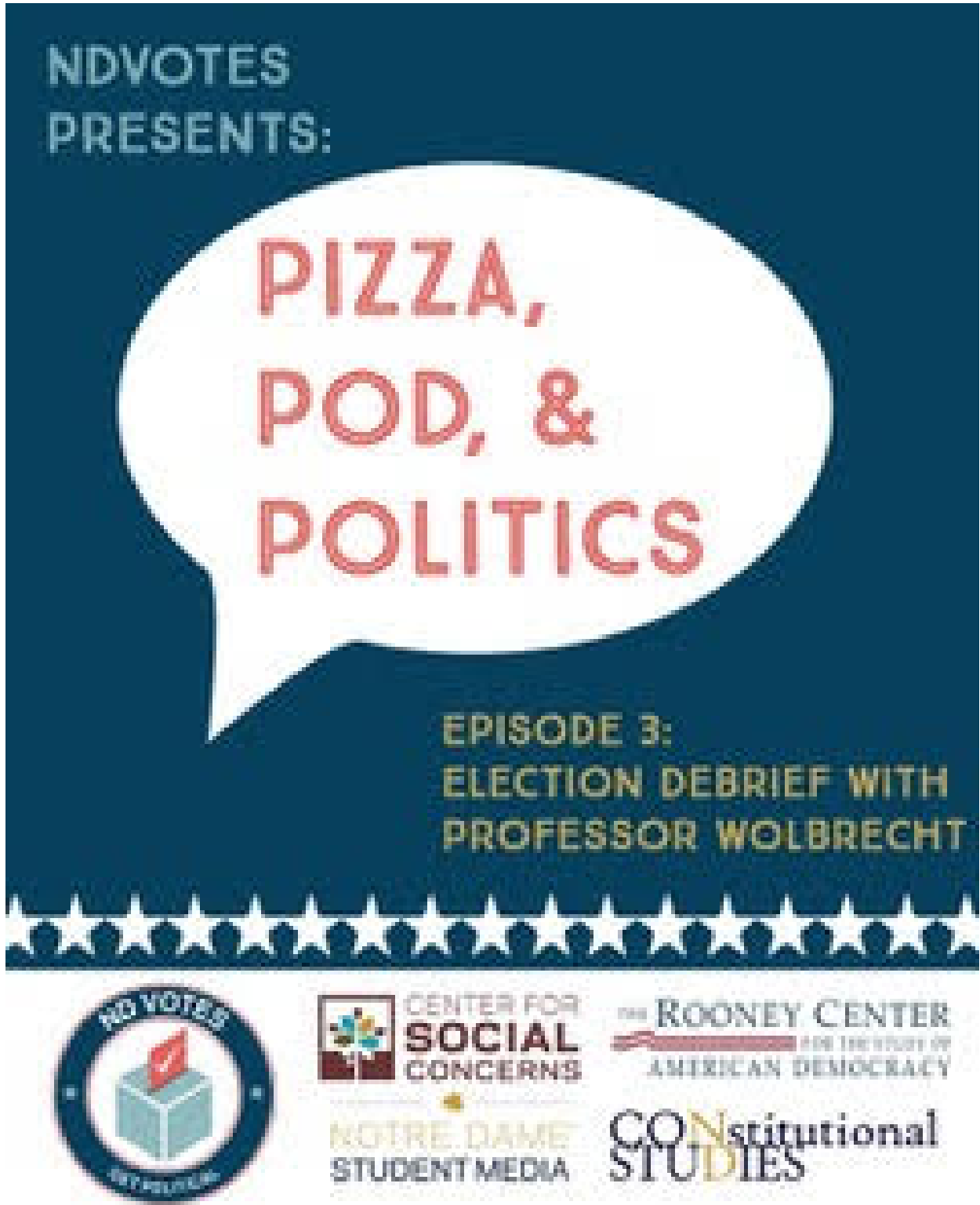
MEMBERSHIP IN CAMPUS VOTING COALITION	% YES, PRIVATE n=34	% YES, PUBLIC n=25
Student Government	53%	58%
Greek Life	13%	29%
President's Office	13%	4%
Deans	25%	17%
Faculty	72%	46%
Campus Staff	63%	42%
Undergraduate Students	81%	71%
Graduate Students	81%	71%
Student Affairs	56%	46%
Diverse Student Groups	50%	42%
Civic Engagement Center	3%	4%

KEY FINDINGS

- **Only 4%** of students at public institutions reported having the **President's office** involved in their coalition compared to 13% at private institutions.

- Faculty were more involved in voting coalitions at private institutions by **26 points**.

- Overall, private institutions have greater participation of campus stakeholders in their voting coalitions.

- Very few campuses have centers for civic engagement as reported by student leaders.

Student Spotlight: Notre Dame's ND Votes

In the wake of COVID-19, NDVotes pivoted their signature event, Pizza, Pop, & Politics to the virtual format of a podcast entitled, "Pizza, Pod, & Politics," found at anchor.fm/ndvotes. The group partnered with ND Student Media and recorded episodes at the WVFI studio on campus, inviting professors to spotlight different public policy topics to continue educating the student electorate following the surge of civic engagement in the 2020 election. The group has produced 9 episodes to date on an array of topics, such as the intersection of politics and sports with Hall of Fame Coach Muffet McGraw to education policy, gerrymandering and the freedom of speech in the age of social media. They believe their podcast has taught their peers more about what goes on in Washington, D.C. in between Novembers.
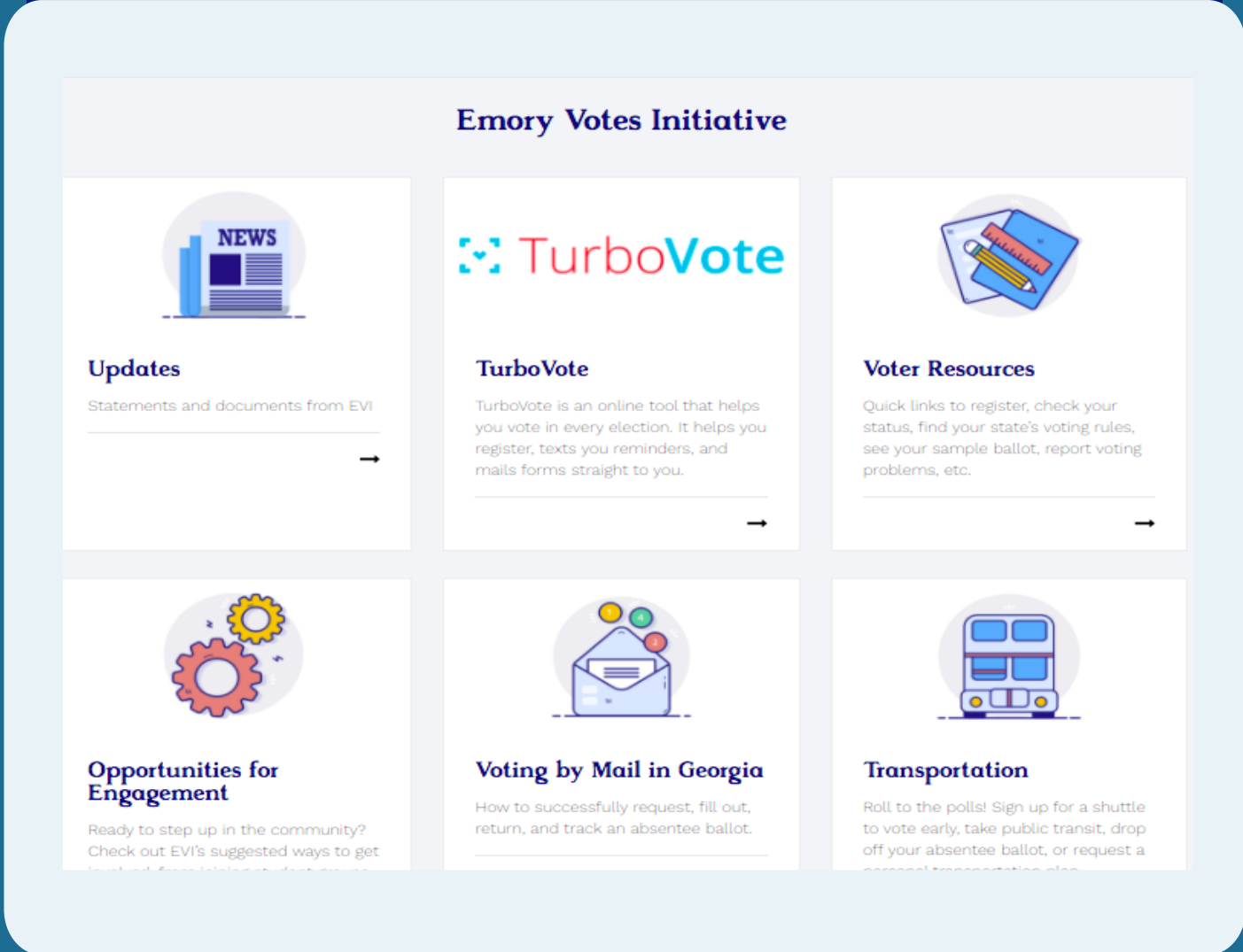
NDVOTES PRESENTS:

PIZZA, POD, & POLITICS

EPISODE 3: ELECTION DEBRIEF WITH PROFESSOR WOLBRECHT

ND VOTES

CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERNS

THE ROONEY CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

NOTRE DAME STUDENT MEDIA

CONstitutional STUDIES

/ collaboration & communication

Institutions where president, chancellor, or provost sent a campus-wide email or text message during the 2020 election season.

27%

12%

61%
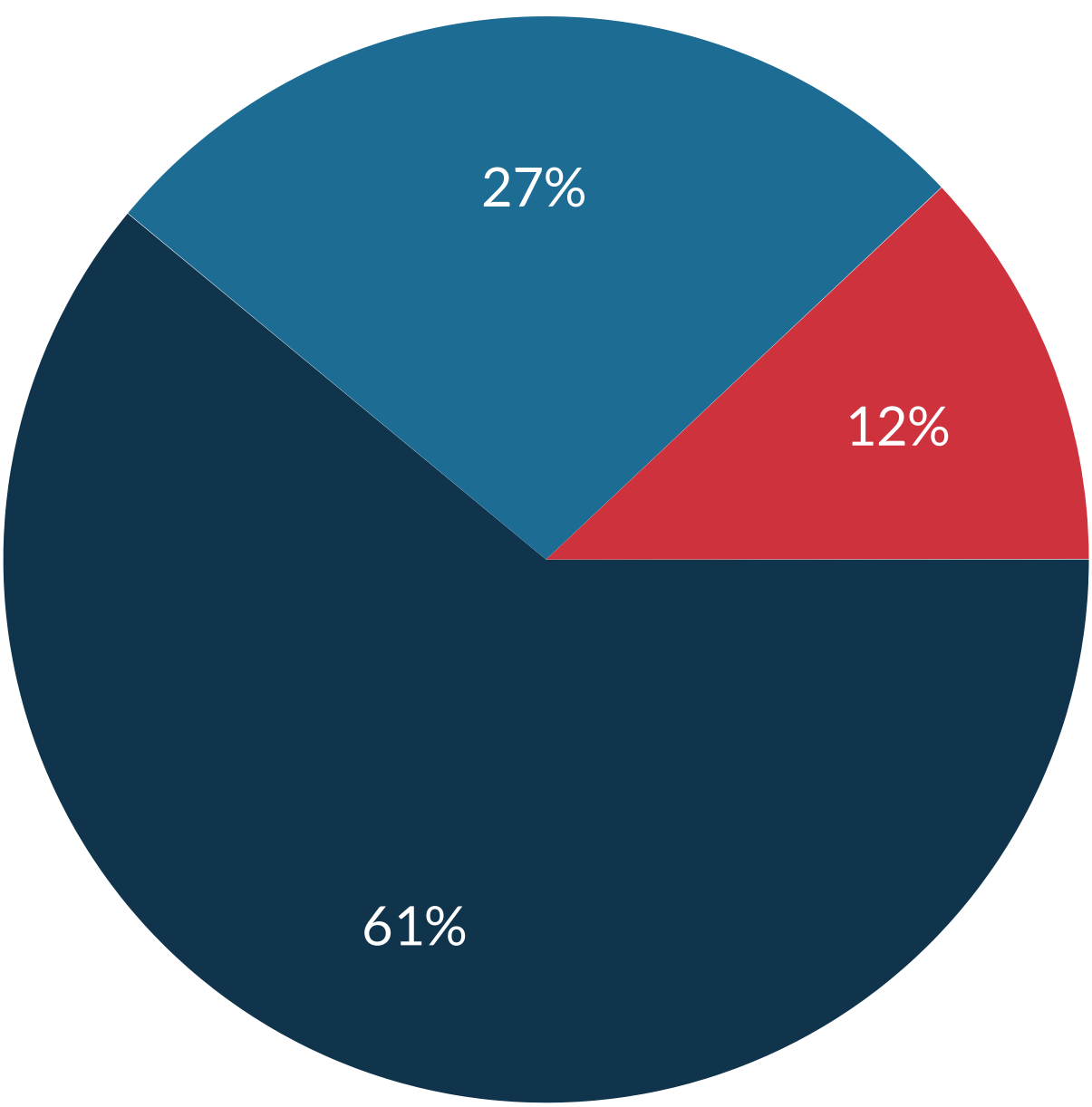
- **Yes, administrators included student input (n=36)**
- **Yes, but student input wasn't included (n=16)**
- **No, respondent did not see a message sent (n=7)**

Reported collaboration with student-led voting groups:

Faculty

27%   63%   10%

Administration

39%   54%   7%

- **Very collaborative**
- **Somewhat sollaborative**
- **Not collaborative at all**

Check out the website of Emory Votes here.

76% of respondents have a voting website directed towards students.

53% of respondents have their voting site as part of their university's website.

KEY FINDINGS

- Private institutions are more likely to send out voting messages from the president or chancellor's office.

- **Over a quarter** of campuses sent out voting emails without student input.

- **53%** of campuses have a website as part of their university's website.

- **90%** of respondents reported collaboration with faculty and **93%** reported collaboration with administration.

- **12%** of public campus respondents reported no collaboration with their administration, while only **3%** of private institution respondents reported no collaboration with their administration.

/ financial support

How supported financially is your student-led voting group by your institution?

17%
21%
62%
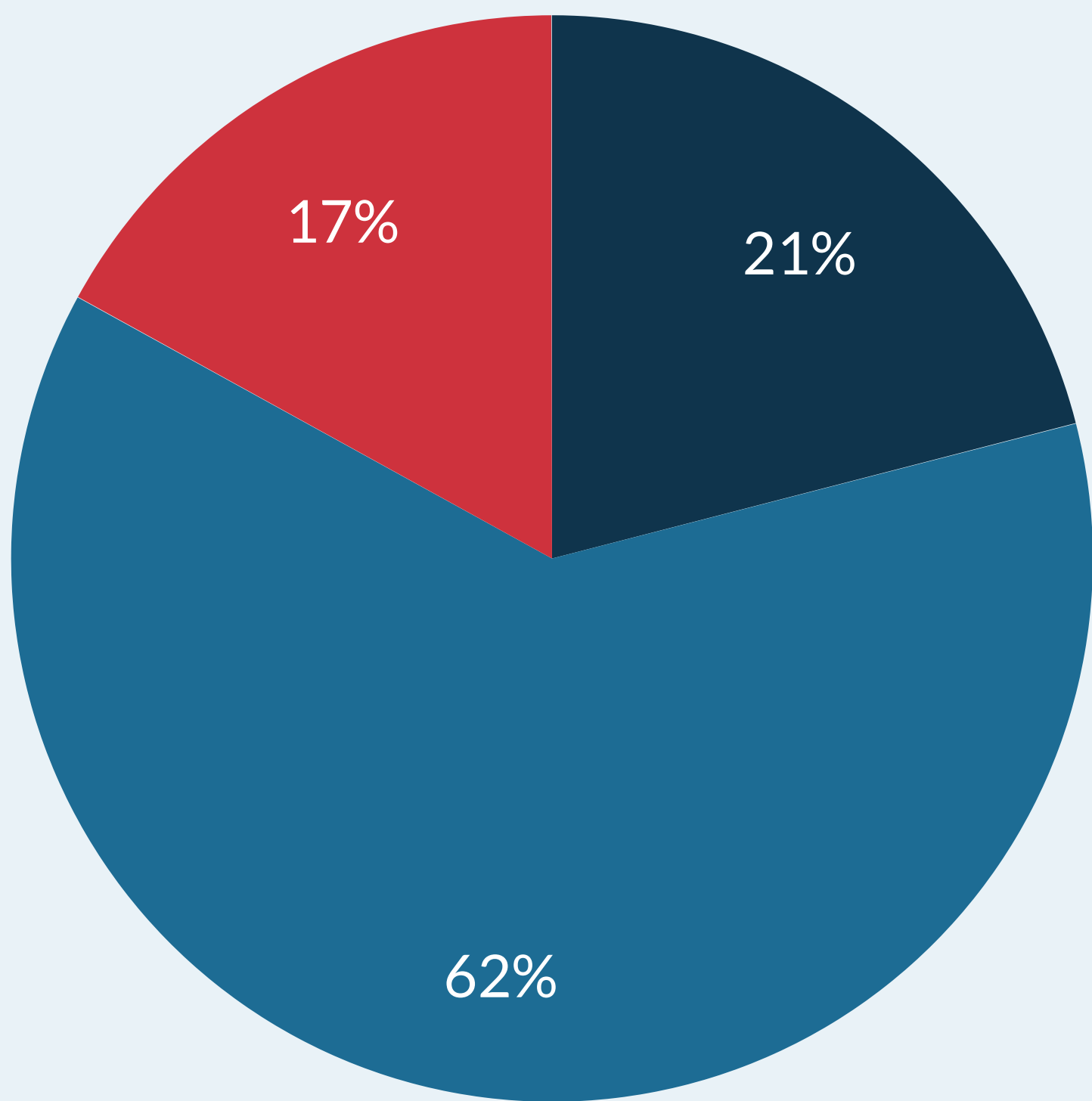
■ Very supported (n=12)
■ Somewhat supported (n=36)
■ Not supported at all (n=10)

Approximate budget for student-led voting groups:

- **83%** of institutions reported being **very or somewhat financially supported.**

- **10%** of respondents reported that they **did not receive any financial support.**

- **22%** of student-led voting groups had a **budget less than $1,000.**

- **24%** of student-led voting groups had a **budget between $1,000-$4,999.**

- **52%** of student-led voting groups at **public** schools had a **budget of more than $5,000.**

- **29%** of student-led voting groups at **private** schools had a **budget of $5,000+.**

- **Private** institutions were more than twice as likely to respond that they **received enough resources.**

Student Spotlight: University of Iowa's Hawk the Vote

Hawk the Vote started the 90% challenge, an initiative to engage and educate student organizations, sports teams, campus groups, and others on campus. In order to complete the challenge, a group had to have 90% of voting eligible members register to vote and 50% of all members attend a workshop put on by Hawk the Vote. Over 46 groups at the University of Iowa pledged to the challenge in 2020 with 19 groups successfully meeting the requirements. Hawk the Vote created the initiative to build a network across campus and to give an opportunity for groups at Iowa to be competitive and work to educate their members.
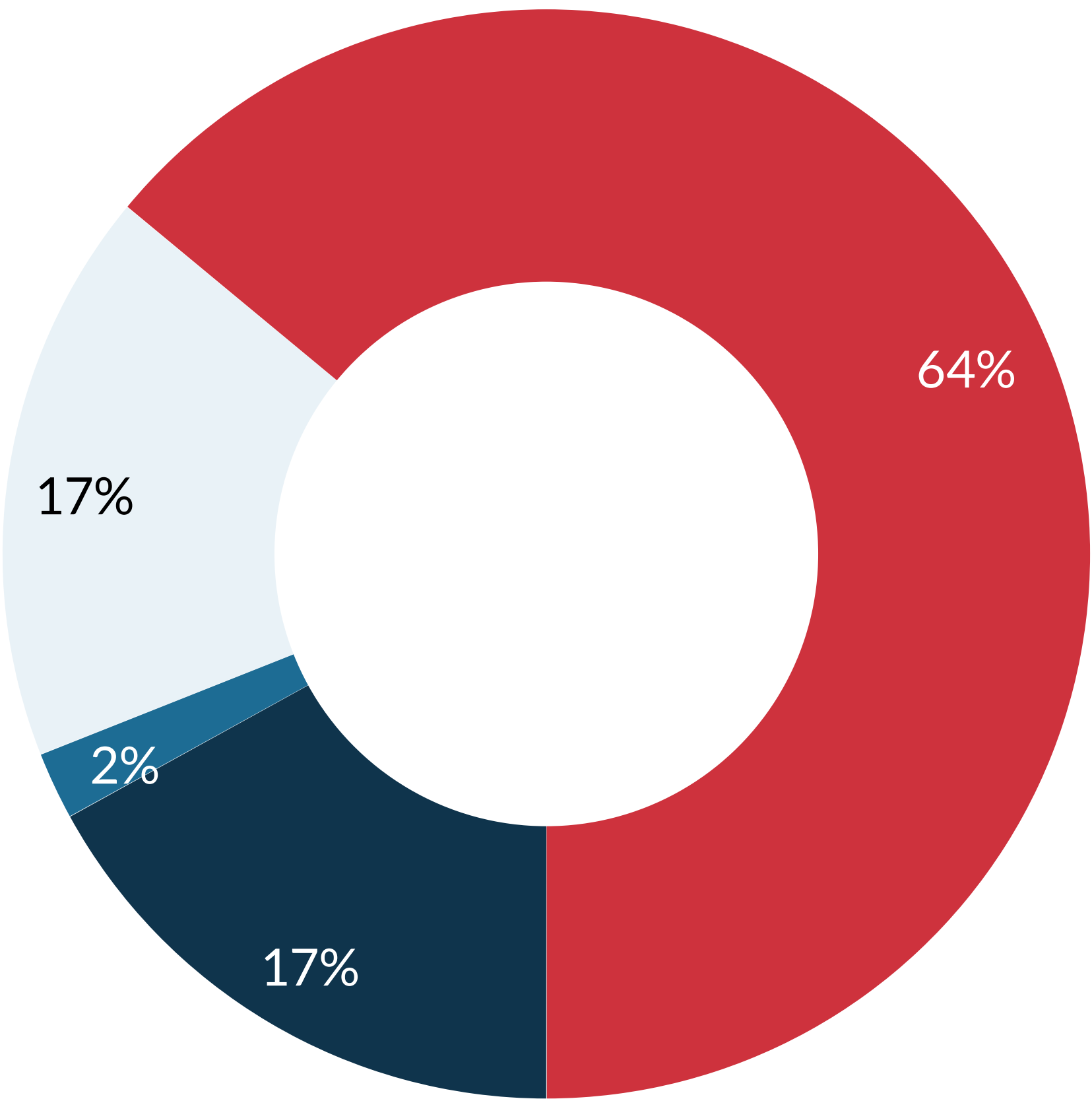
/ institutional support

81% of student groups believe their administration puts **trust** to an average or large extent in their voting group.

53% of student-led voting groups at **private** schools reported trust to a large extent compared to **36%** at **public** institutions.

28% of student-led voting groups at **public** schools reported trust to a small extent or not at all compared to **12%** of **private** schools.

Did your campus have a polling location on campus during the 2020 election year?

64%

17%

2%

17%

- Yes, for early voting and election day (n=10)
- Yes, for early voting (n=1)
- Yes, for Election Day only (n=10)
- No (n=38)

80% of institutions reported being very or somewhat institutionalized.

24% of student-led voting groups at **public** schools reported they were not very institutionalized compared to **18%** of **private** institutions.

KEY FINDINGS

- Students at **private** institutions felt more trusted by their administrations than students at **public** institutions.

- Only **17%** of institutions had voting locations for early voting and Election Day. **Public** institutions were three times more likely to report having voting locations on campus compared to **private** institutions.

- Most campuses did not have a polling location site on campus during the 2020 election year.

/ action items

Below are some promising practices and feedback that came from interviews with nonpartisan student-led voting group leaders from over 16 campuses nationwide.

✓ Institutionalize a vote coalition:

☐ **House the vote coalition in a center or department on campus.**

☐ **Ensure there is a dedicated staff member on the team.**
- The responsibilities to support nonpartisan student voter engagement should be in a person's job description.

☐ **Include students.**
- The institution's campus-wide voting coalition should include students.
- Students should have agency and meaningful opportunities to contribute to an institution's nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement and student voter participation efforts.
- A campus' nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan should be developed with student involvement and input.

☐ **Create paid positions for students** to help develop and implement your campus' action plan. Use work-study positions for this work, when possible.

✓ Prioritize communication:

☐ **Create a direct line of communication with student leaders.**
- Hold regularly scheduled meetings to keep lines of communication open with agendas developed and shared ahead of time..
- Some campuses created a Slack channel with the voting coalition.
- Encourage the institution's President to meet directly with students.

☐ **Communicate with other campuses.**
- This can be through forming partnerships with other campuses in your region, like between community colleges and 4-year institutions, or with other members of an athletic conference.
- Cosponsor and cross promote the events of other campuses.
- Join the Higher Education Student Voter Engagement Google Group.

/ action items

✓ Support the collaboration of student groups with:

The Student Voting Network
- The SVN connects students across the country to learn from each other and share best practice. Direct students to join here!

Faculty
- Facilitate and support faculty as they include voting information in class raps (short presentations), syllabi, and other forms of information dissemination.
- Help get STEM faculty on board.
- Provide instructors with a civil discourse training and encourage them to connect what's happening in class to current events.

Athletic department
- Encourage your coaches to use ALL IN's coaches resources developed by the ALL IN Challenge and the National Association of Basketball Coaches.
- Work with coaches to register and educate players and encourage the athletic department to promote democratic engagement across campus.

Library
- Collaborate with librarians to create voter guides and disseminate voter education resources.

Diversity centers
- Co-host events with diversity groups such as the Women's Center, the Black Student Union, or any other identity-based center.

Local organizations
- The local League of Women Voters and SLSV partners can provide additional resources and capacity.

Local election officials
- Officials can provide valuable information, resources, and support for voter engagement activities and can help campuses get polling sites on campus.

/ action items

✓ Strive to institutionalize civic engagement:

☐ **Include voter registration and education during orientation and class registration.**
- Find more resources and toolkits from Ask Every Student.

☐ **Make Election Day a holiday.**
- Check out the work of Day on Democracy.

☐ **Make voter registration a campus tradition.**
- Include voter registration in other established campus traditions, such as during orientation and homecoming week.

☐ **Support voter education efforts, especially around local elections.**
- Encourage volunteering and community engagement, and widely share voter registration deadlines and election dates for local elections.

☐ **Work to set up a polling site on campus.**
- It should be open on both Election Day and for early voting, where applicable.
- If this is not possible, use other campus resources to get students to polls like vans.
-In vote-by-mail states, organize promotion and activities for vote-by-mail events well before ballots need to be returned.

✓ Trust students:

☐ **Believe groups are nonpartisan if they say they are.**
- Numerous student-led nonpartisan voter engagement groups on campuses across the country have modeled successful nonpartisanship.

☐ **Attempt to be as transparent as possible.**
- Inform students of the processes, opportunities, limitations, and stakeholders with respect to voter education and democratic engagement.

☐ **Listen to students' needs and follow up with actions to build trust and a good working relationship.**

/ action items

✓ Collaborate with your campus' student led voting group to:

Create a voting website.
- Host it under the university website domain and provide technical support.

Send out campus wide emails and text messages.
- Messages sent by campus leaders (e.g., presidents, provosts, chancellors, dean of students, vice presidents) are impactful. When possible, make sure there is student input before the message is sent out and include links to your student-led voting group's and campus voting coalitions resources.

Boost social media presence.
- Repost student-led voting group social media posts and amplify the work of student-led voting groups and the institution's voting coalition by way of the institution's main social media accounts and other institutional publications.

✓ Provide Resources:

Provide funding for student voting groups.
- Student government is one form of funding, but should not be the only source.
- Communicate with the student group about what kind of funding they need.

Help provide resources to facilitate voting.
- Include signatures and other data helpful for voter registration on student IDs. Check out this example.

Support Vote-by-Mail.
- Ensure the mail center is properly staffed and ready to handle election mail.
- Provide stamps and envelopes to students.

/ 13 things student-led voting groups can do today

1. Build inclusive and comprehensive coalitions on campus - Try to get people from all ends of the political spectrum and with diverse identities and experiences.

2. Join the Student Voting Network and collaborate with students from other campuses. Sign up <u>here</u>.

3. Delegate tasks and keep organized - make every member of the leadership team has a role.

4. Be passionate about the work you do.

5. Be ambitious - Reach out to key department heads and groups and set "moonshot" goals.

6. Show you're in it for the long haul - Focus on the local elections too, continuity is key.

7. Build a website and social media presence - Build a brand and share resources on these pages. Work to have this page on your campus' website.

8. Take the time to structure your group - create a constitution and work with campus leaders to create your action plan.

9. Don't wait for someone else to do it, just start and be persistent.

10. Make voter education resources that students can understand.

11. Find people in the administration who can support you and ally with you when you're trying to make institutional change.

12. Find an institutional home and tie your group to other groups.

13. Check to see if your president has signed the ALL IN Challenge Presidents' Commitment. If they haven't signed it yet, they can sign it <u>here</u>.

/ feedback from student leaders

The following quotes were selected from individual interviews with nonpartisan student voting group leaders.

"The biggest thing they did honestly was to just listen."
-Student leader at private institution in the Northeast

"I want to change the campus culture. We don't talk about voting and civic engagement enough."
-Student leader at private HBCU

"Institutional support was the main driver behind success of [our efforts]."
-Student leader at private institution in the West

"Having students being the force behind voting conversations was most effective."
-Student leader at private institution in the Northeast

"There's a lot more education that needs to go behind voting."
-Student leader at large, public 4-year institution

"Voting and civic engagement shouldn't be a fad that is around election time. To make sustainable change administrations have to invest time, energy, and money into sustained efforts to promote civic engagement."
-Student leader at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest

/ special thanks to these student voting groups for their feedback and for their efforts to support college student voting:

Atlanta University Center's AUC Votes
Bates College's Bates Votes
Boston College's BC Votes
Bowdoin College's Bowdoin Votes
Brown University's Brown Votes
Bucknell University's Student Group
Chapman University's Voter Engagement Team
Clarion University of Pennsylvania's CU Engaged Coaition
Clark Atlanta University's CAU Votes
Cleveland State University's Democracy Fellowship
Colorado College's CC Votes
Community College of Philadelphia's CCP Votes
Cornell University's Cornell Votes
Duke University's Duke Votes
Eckerd College's New Voters Project
Emmanuel College's Emmanuel Votes
Emory University's Emory Votes Initiative
Florida State University's Florida PIRGS
Fordham University's Every Vote Counts
Georgetown University's GU Votes
Hobart and William Smith Colleges' HWS Votes
Harvard University's Harvard Votes Challenge
Kent State University's Student Voting Group
Kenyon College's Every Vote Counts
Lorain County Community College's Democracy Fellowship
Loyola University Maryland's Loyola Votes
Middlebury College's Midd Votes
Middlesex County College's Student Group
North Shore Community College's MASSPIRG Students
Northern Arizona University's NAU Votes Coalition
Oakland University's Student Group
Otterbein University's Raise Your Voice
Pace University's Pace Votes
Raritan Valley Community College's RVotes Matter
Rice University's Civic Duty Rice
Santa Clara University's Every Vote Counts
Santa Fe College's Santa Fe Votes!
Southern Oregon University's OSPIRG Students
Spelman College's AUC Votes
St Olaf College's CEEP Student Group
Stanford University's Stanford Votes
Suffolk University's Suffolk Votes
Texas Lutheran University's TLU Voter Coalition
The University of Mary Washington's UMW Votes
The University of Oklahoma's Oklahoma Votes
University of California Santa Barbara's CALPIRG
University of California, Riverside's Civic Engagement Coalition
University of Detroit Mercy's Student Group
University of Iowa's Hawk the Vote
University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Student Group
University of Notre Dame's ND Votes
University of Of South Florida's Florida PIRG Students
University of Oregon's OSPIRG
University of Pennsylvania's Penn Leads the Vote
University of Puget Sound's Politics in Action Committee
University of Texas at Austin's TX Votes
University of Wisconsin-Madison's Badgers Vote
Vassar College's Vassar Votes
Wagner College's Wagner Votes
Washington University in St. Louis's WashU Votes
Webster University's Webster Votes
Whitman College's Whitman Votes
Wright State University's Wright State Votes

Use this Twitter list to follow the work of and connect with student voting groups across the country.

allinchallenge.org
allintovote.org