

Campus Election Engagement Plan

Cornell College

Office of Civic Engagement

November 2018

Institutional Context

Cornell College is a small, private liberal arts institution located in Mount Vernon, Iowa. Cornell's enrollment is approximately 1,000 students and is a residential campus. A majority of Cornell College students are out-of-state residents with many choosing to vote in their home communities.

Our 2014 NSLVE reported a 19.3% voting rate with 65.8% of Cornell students having registered. Of those who voted, 42.7% students voted absentee, 12.5% voted by mail, and 31.3% voted in-person on Election Day. In 2016, Cornell's voting rate was 40.5% with a 74.1% registration rate. For the 2016 election, 40.9% of students voted absentee, 3.0% voted early on campus, 15.6% voted by mail, and 22.6% voted in person on Election Day.

Current Methods of Engagement

Currently, our voter engagement methods have been pretty standard across campuses. Cornell has done voter registration drives, hosted political candidates (including at the Presidential level), shared educational information, and provided shuttles to the polls on Election Day to vote. For midterm and Presidential elections beginning in 2012, Cornell has offered Satellite (early) voting on campus for students and the community.

For the 2018 election, Cornell introduced some new opportunities to try to engage and educate students. Voter registration and education was included as part of New Student Orientation for all first-year students. The Civic Engagement Office (CEO) also created a database of voter registration and absentee ballot request forms and information for all states so any student would have access to paperwork needed to vote in their home community or on campus. The CEO covered the cost of postage for voter related materials in order to increase access for students to be able to vote.

Future Goals and Direction

Cornell's goal is always to increase not only voter registration but also voter turnout and education. Our main goal is to add additional opportunities and resources for students to educate themselves on candidates and issues such as educational tabling and events as well as physical materials distributed to all students. In order to increase capacity for educating our students, the Civic Engagement Office would like to create a voter engagement committee that would include the head of civic engagement, a faculty representative, an official from Linn County Elections, the Cornell College Democrats President, the Cornell College Republicans President, and a representative from Student Senate. This committee would meet regularly to develop strategies for engaging and educating Cornell students about voting as well as to consolidate efforts rather than cross-programming across one another.

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