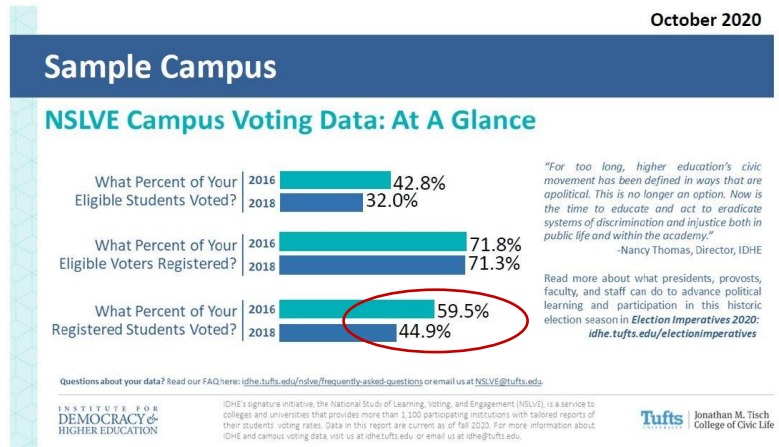


Only Days Left until the 2020 Election Ends. There's Still Time to Act. Here's How.

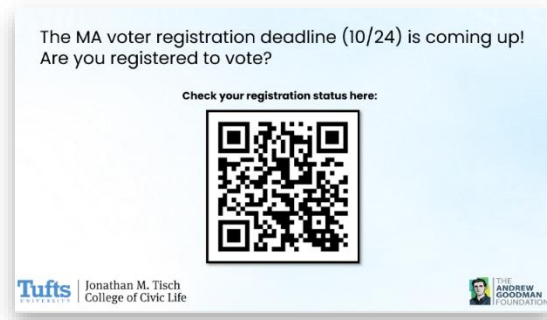
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This election is historic and high stakes. Your students should be voting for their future. There's still time to ensure your students vote, to use this election to educate for a stronger democracy, and for you prepare for the days and weeks after. It's not too late! Here's a checklist.

- **Do your students vote?** Check your [NSLVE¹](#) one-pagers (sent October 1) and look at your yield rate (circled in red) from 2016 and 2018. Too many students register to vote but do not or cannot follow through. If your yield rate is under 80% for either election year, get to work! Share this one-pager widely. Alert your voter coalition on campus, faculty and staff, disciplinary societies (e.g., the Chemistry Club), student government, athletic teams, cultural houses, the arts...etc.



- **Educate students about voting mechanics.** This is a critical role for faculty this year. Via your provost or faculty senate, mobilize departments and faculty across all disciplines to “nudge” by using those pre-class minutes while students enter the (virtual or in-person) classroom by posting a slide (see example) with information on voter mechanics



(see example) with information on voter mechanics ([adaptable samples here](#)). Nearly [half of the states offer same day registration and voting](#), but [registration deadlines](#) for many other states are soon or past. Ask students to [confirm their registration status](#). They can register [here](#). There are many one-stop shops for information. Try [Tufts](#), [Rutgers](#), [AACU's compilation](#), or [When We All Vote](#).

- **Demystify where, when, and how to vote.** [Americans are already voting at record numbers](#), but we can't get complacent given the barriers students face to voting (see below). Advise your students to develop a plan to vote (two good planning checklists [here](#) and [here](#)) and vote ASAP. If campuses close or quarantine students due to increasing COVID cases, students might be prevented from

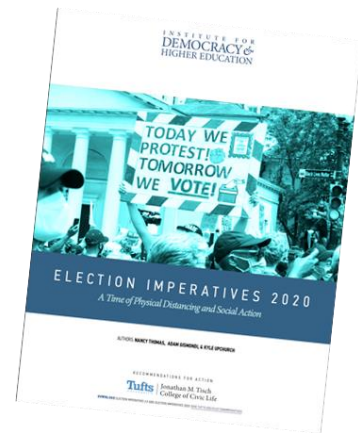
¹ Not sure whether you are in the National Study of Learning, Voting & Engagement? [Check here](#). Who has this report on your campus? The president, the office of institutional research, and a third person designated whomever authorized participation, often a student affairs or civic engagement office. Not one of the 1,100+ participating campuses? [Join here](#) (it's free). Can't find your one-pager? [Email us here](#).

going to their mailboxes to pick up or mail a ballot. Also, [mail-in ballots are more likely to be rejected](#) for small errors or bad judgments about signatures. Voting early might give students an opportunity to [track their ballots](#) and correct problems. Promote and help students plan for Oct. 24, [Vote Early Day](#). Also, don't abandon in-person voting, and encourage them to stay in line, even if lines are long. (Please, no exams and allow flex time.) Our research shows that voting rates are higher for students who vote in person. Campuses can provide physically safe places for voting in person, ballot drop boxes on or near campus (where permitted), assistance getting to the polls, extensive voter education, and reminders. [Lyft is providing free and discounted rides to vote. So is Uber.](#)



- **Recruit poll workers.** Many states face a significant shortage in poll workers, which will lead to fewer voting locations and longer lines. [Young people are stepping up](#), but more are needed. The [Students Learn Students Vote coalition posted a toolkit](#) (complete with social media graphics!) for administrators who want to help recruit. Two other great resources: Volunteers can learn more and sign up through the [Fair Elections Center](#) and [Power at the Polls](#).
- **Seize this stunningly teachable moment about democracy.** Students care about issues and are involved in activism around Black Lives Matter and law enforcement, the environment and energy, gun control and the 2nd Amendment, health care, and more. This election may be a pivot point for racial justice, individual freedoms, and other democratic principles and practices. CEEP offers terrific [nonpartisan issue and candidate guides](#). Or use our handy [Making Sense of ... guides](#). We also published via AACU [examples of big questions](#) about democracy's future and what's at stake in this election.

Talking politics requires skills and practice. Success will depend on the [strength of the campus climate](#) and norms of shared responsibility and social cohesion across ideology and identity. Talking politics also requires [affirmations of academic freedom](#) and [intentionality around free speech and inclusion](#), as well as exemplary facilitation skills. We try to make it easy with our [facilitator training manual](#). Another invaluable resource is conversations. In August, we published [Election Imperatives 2020: A Time of Physical Distancing and Social Action](#). It contains recommendations for advancing political learning and participation in this unique election.



- **Confront misinformation and help students find quality information.** Many great resources exist that help students to [understand the topic of misinformation](#), [navigate websites and other media](#), and [fact-check questionable sources](#). As important as this is to help students develop a sound viewpoint on what constitutes *trustworthy* information and identify their own “go-to” news sources. We suggest that students explore media platforms and prioritize at least several that they know they can turn to when stories become confusing or conflicting information is reported. There are [several strong resources](#) to use as a starting point for this work.

- **Protect your students' right to vote.** While some states make it relatively easy to vote – perhaps they accept student IDs or have no ID requirements – many do not. [Student voting rights are at risk](#), and 2020 is proving to be the [most litigated](#) and [difficult](#) election yet. Indeed, the nation is facing [a choreographed assault on the electoral process](#) that relies on [misinformation](#), a planned [disinformation campaign](#), and [lies about voter fraud](#). With our voting rights partners the [Campus Vote Project](#) and the [Andrew Goodman Foundation](#), [we published a memorandum](#) that identifies the barriers to voting (including for students from out-of-state- who want to vote from campus) and how to remove those barriers. If the barrier is proof of residency, work with election officials to provide evidence of your students' enrollment status ([contact us for more on this](#)).
- **Listen to students who are not sure whether they will vote; discuss what's at stake.** Students are often [mobile, working, strapped for time, or they lack transportation](#) to the polls, problems addressed above. We have also heard from students who are exhausted, disillusioned, feel that the candidates do not represent their viewpoints, and/or feel that the system does not, and never has, worked for them. [Some do not trust the voting process itself](#).

These perspectives are valid, so start from a place of understanding and empathy. That said, there's too much at stake for them to sit this one out. Here are some arguments to encourage students:

- Numbering more than 50 million, 18 to 29-year-olds are a formidable voting bloc. Like the famed Baby Boomers of the past, young people are now positioned to shape policies for the next 50 years. This power should not be relinquished to older generations.
- Nonvoters are invisible to policy makers. Elected officials cater to their voters. Pollsters do not usually ask for opinions from nonvoters, only voters. Not voting has implications for representation and voice long after the election.
- Abstaining is a vote for the status quo. And “protesting” by abstaining or writing in a candidate will have no impact. There's no such thing as neutrality, so warn students that nonvoting is a vote for keeping things as is.
- The Electoral College deserves some intense scrutiny, which will be based on a misalignment between the popular vote and the electoral college result. It's important that students are counted toward the popular vote.

For students who do not believe that their ballot will be counted, this bipartisan group of political leaders, [Count Every Vote](#), is pressuring secretaries of state nationally to call the state vote only after all ballots have been processed. [Institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students can promote and even join this effort](#) as part of messaging ensure students that their vote will be counted.

- **Voter intimidation is real. Prepare your students for it.** According to [a recent memorandum from Georgetown University's Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection](#), illegal voter intimidation includes: confronting voters while wearing military-style or official-looking uniforms, displaying firearms, and questioning voters about their qualifications to vote. [Ballotpedia has published links to articles with real examples of suppression efforts](#), such as flyers saying that law enforcement officers will be at the polling places to catch people with outstanding traffic tickets or social media targeting students with threats that parents cannot claim students as dependents if they vote from campus. [President Trump is calling for volunteers, calling them “Trump's Army” to “flag issues for lawyers” who are “prepared to escalate.”](#) (See also NPR article about [calls for self-appointed poll watchers to observe the voting process](#).) And voter intimidation is [disproportionately aimed at majority Black and other communities of color](#) and around minority serving colleges and universities, particularly those that can be easily isolated.

Educate students about what voter intimidation looks like. Remind them that no one can be within 100 feet of the polling location unless they are casting their own ballot. The Brennan Center wrote about [strict limits on what law enforcement, military, and vigilantes can legally do](#). Students should have handy the [Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE](#).

- **Plan for the morning and weeks after.** Before the 2016 election, [we published a blog on preparing for the day after the election](#). We advised campuses to consider student feelings, well-being, and campus climate. We suggested that campuses [discuss the role of free speech and inclusion](#), and what constitutes “civility.” (Is civility a good guideline, or is it just a way to silence viewpoints?) We also suggested that campuses prepare for a backlash, even violence, against the election results.

Start by tempering expectations. Given the newness of voting-by-mail in some states, it is likely that [counting ballots will continue after Election Day](#). It is also possible that the outcome will be contested, particularly for states with [small margins of victory](#) or that [might shape the election outcome](#). Prepare for post-election days and possibly weeks.

Focus on student well-being. Student stress after the 2016 election on many campuses was palpable. Tufts’ mental health counselling center published [this guide for managing stress during and after the election season](#).

Students will want to talk about the results. [Living Room Conversations offers tips and a conversation guide for post-election discussions](#). For links to other organizations on election discussions across divides, visit the [National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation](#).

[Racial justice is a top priority for voters in this election](#). Some students will justifiably interpret the election results as predictive for how they will be treated based on their social identity. Be prepared to talk about the implications of a Trump or Biden win, or the outcomes of significant local and state races, on justice and equality in the U.S. [Anti-racism work will continue long after this election](#).

As noted above, voter intimidation is illegal. Obviously, so is violence. The [Southern Poverty Law Center published a report on intimidation and harassment](#) following the 2016 election. Time magazine advises [law enforcement agencies to “plan for the worst and hope for the best” around post-election violence](#). [Newsweek is tracking Homeland Security concerns about domestic terrorists and electoral backlash](#).

We have talked with institutional leaders who are deeply concerned about violence on or near campus. They are working with their university counsel, campus security, local law enforcement, and even governors’ offices to prepare for anger on behalf of candidates or a party. Most campuses will see little conflict, much less violence, but for those that are worried, planning should also involve faculty, staff, students, and specifically the office of diversity and inclusion, the mental health counselling center, and voter mobilization groups.

- **Hang in there and contact IDHE if you have questions!** We can help you sort through the noise, mobilize your faculty, talk politics, and raise the profile of your senior leaders. Write to: idhe@tufts.edu.

About the [Institute for Democracy & Higher Education \(IDHE\)](#) Located at Tufts University’s [Tisch College of Civic Life](#), IDHE is an applied research center and leading venue for nonpartisan resources and advocacy on college and university student political learning, discourse, equity, and engagement in democracy.