

Registering Students to Vote at Orientation



Orientation is a key transition experience for incoming students, introducing them to their campus community. It's also a point where they're all gathered together. As such, it is an ideal context to help your students register to vote and educate them on the electoral process. Here's how you can use orientation and the accompanying introductions to campus to do this.

Why Register Students at Orientation

- 1** It sets an expectation of engaged citizenship from day one, sending a message that voting is an important part of the college experience, and by extension, of being an adult.
- 2** It offers a unique opportunity to reach virtually all new students at once, maximizing the effectiveness of your reach.
- 3** It can readily be integrated with existing orientation programs.
- 4** It encourages new students to learn about issues affecting their campus, the surrounding community, and the country as a whole, and gives them a way to take action

High-Impact Practices for Registering Students to Vote at Orientation



Talk about it.

Orientation is the first major glimpse students get of your campus culture. Be clear that your campus makes engaged citizenship a priority.

- Learn the registration and voting rules for your state. Our partner Fair Elections Legal Network offers [state-specific guides](#) focused on rules that affect students.
- Have a high-level administrator or key student leader talk about the importance of registering and voting and give students an opportunity to register at school, or absentee if they prefer.
- Train peer advisors to help students register to vote and provide information about electoral engagement opportunities.



Provide a time in the orientation process to register and specific ways to do this.

- Make voter registration an official part of the process.
- Make clear that students have a legal right to register on campus, and tell them how to do so, or, if they prefer, how to register and vote absentee.
- Set up a bank of laptops and have someone guide students through the process of registration or updating of registrations using the online tools of [Rock the Vote](#) or [TurboVote](#). Students can also download these same online tools onto their cell phones.

High-Impact Practices for Registering Students to Vote at Orientation

- If your state does not allow online registration, have printers available so students can print out their registrations on-site, and not have to rely on printing and mailing them later. Or subscribe to TurboVote, so they can fill out the applications and receive printed versions by mail along with self-addressed stamped envelopes that they can then sign and mail in.
- Distribute paper registration cards as an alternative along with information on registration and voting rules.
- Bring in a local election official to host the session and answer questions.
- Include written information and forms in orientation packets. Your Secretary of State, Board of Elections, County Auditor, or League of Women Voters chapter may have printouts available online, or you may be able to get templates from your state CEEP staffer.
- Offer a civic engagement or Voting 101 session that discusses where to find information on candidates and issues, and opportunities to volunteer with your school's nonpartisan engagement team, or with political campaigns of their choice.



Take advantage of naturally occurring bottlenecks.

With hundreds, if not thousands, of students on campus the same day, there are bound to be lines with significant wait times. Capitalize on these situations to register students while they're waiting--approaches you can extend to non-first year students as well.

Examples include:

- While they're lined up to get their student ID cards, residence hall keys, or bus passes.
- While waiting in line to meet with financial aid advisors
- In all cases, have volunteers or staff available to walk people through the process and collect registrations.



Follow up to increase the impact of your efforts.

Use varied approaches that complement each other.

- Have residence hall staff hand out and collect registration forms during move-in. They can also discuss registration during floor meetings during the initial weeks.
- Send out mass emails to the incoming class (and all students, for that matter) reminding them of registration deadlines and including links to the TurboVote or Rock the Vote tools, or your state voter registration site.
- If you have freshman experience or first-year seminars during the fall semester, have leaders work registration into the curriculum, along with discussions of ways to volunteer.
- If your campus has active student media outlets, talk to them about including voter information in the welcome week edition.



Consider the UVote model.

Northwestern University's [UVote model](#) uses peer-to-peer outreach to help all first-year students register to vote when they receive their initial student ID. Peer volunteers help students register in any of the 50 states by providing the necessary mail-in forms, while campus staff and volunteers process and mail the completed forms to the appropriate Boards of Elections. *This approach has allowed the school to register between 90 and 95% of incoming freshmen by the end of orientation week.*



Connect with CEEP

Email info@campuselect.org to connect with a CEEP staffer in your region who can plan and execute these ideas, supply training and resources for your staff, or put together a long-term voter engagement plan for your campus.