Allegheny College - Harvard Institute of Politics Proposal

Project Topic:

Allegheny College Local Election Initiative for Election Day 2015

Project Overview:

Among Allegheny College students, it is known that many students, although possibly registered to vote, are largely uninformed about the candidates in the local elections in Crawford County, PA. It is our goal to develop a process during this calendar year to inform students about the candidates they could potentially be voting for on Election Day. The program will be implemented for the 2015 November election. The initiative will utilize multiple forms of social media and electronic mediums to reach as many students as possible.

Events/Initiatives:

1) Produce and release a video that includes short biographies and policy platforms for local candidates to all Allegheny College students. Video will be edited and compiled by program organizers using basic video editing software and released to the entire student body. Video will be released in mid-October 2015 to all students and will be continuously promoted until Election Day and at all campus events sponsored by the Center for Political Participation.

2) Follow video release with an information packet that compiles candidate information and sent out to the student body to provide an additional format for students to learn about the candidates and their views. Document could be hosted on a basic blog site so views could be tracked. This portion of the project would help maintain hype about the candidate video and can keep the conversation going in a different way.

3) Host a local candidate/student mixer event on the same day that the video is released to students, utilizing a partnership with the Center for Political Participation. Once contact is established with local candidates and their staffs, we hope to draw as many candidates as possible to campus to meet with students and share their policy ideas. If candidates are unable to attend, we will reach out to members of their staffs to attend on the candidate’s behalf. Local candidate video could be screened at this event.

(Major) Measurable Goals:

1) Inform as many students as possible about the local candidates and their major policy positions. The metric of success for this goal is to have at least 300 views on the local candidate video. We also plan to release an instant survey to students who watch the video to gauge their interest in the video and seek out suggestions for future iterations of this program.
2) Provide multiple options for students to attain the information about the local candidates and maintain hype around video release following the initial release. The metric of success for this goal is to attain additional views on the written candidate information packet following the initial video release.

3) Facilitate dialogue between local candidates and students. The metric of success for this goal is to have at least 100 students attend the mixer event.

4) Implement a program/initiative process that could be applied to other consortium schools and in future years at Allegheny College.

How will you collaborate with consortium schools?

Although the specific information that will be collected and distributed as part of this initiative is specific to Allegheny College, it is our hope that the process and timeline used to carry out this project can be applied to any of the other consortium schools. Also, Allegheny hopes to create and facilitate a Facebook group or similar tool to answer and questions or provide any feedback that the consortium schools have about this program and how to implement it on their own campuses. We also hope to develop a sort of tutorial for basic video editing to share with other interested consortium schools, so that representatives will learn the skills necessary to produce and release local candidate videos on their own campuses, without technological roadblocks. The year 2014 is a building year for this program at Allegheny College and once the initiative is fully implemented at Allegheny in 2015, more information can be shared with consortium schools about best practices, potential downfalls and other suggestions.