**Project Topic:**
Voter Rights and Accessibility

**Project Overview:**

As students who are members of the Committee for Political Engagement at the University of Rochester, we chose to focus on the crucial issue of voter rights and accessibility of voting. Among other initiatives, CPE is tasked with voter registration, and encouraging Rochester students to be active participants in government. This has proven somewhat difficult in past years, as many students don’t feel a particular connection to issues facing the United States, don’t believe that government is effective, or do not think their individual vote will make a difference. These seem to be the main issues that are decreasing the young voter demographic across the country, not just in Rochester.

**Events/Initiatives:**

1. We plan to conduct voter registration drives that will be implemented during the first weeks of school, so that freshman can and students returning to school can receive voter information right away. This makes voting more accessible to the student population. This event will contribute to our overall goal of making the student body more active participants in politics.

2. We will update the Rochester Center for Community Leadership website to include more comprehensive information on voting. We will also include information on how to get an absentee ballot from students' home state. In addition, links to registration can be sent out in the weekly email blasts that extend to the entire student body. We hope that this will allow us to connect students to ballots that we were unable to speak in person, further making the vote more accessible.

3. We can reach out to Resident advisors and create hall programs for freshmen to encourage them to register, and convince them that their vote matters. We can hand out information sheets at these sessions, and direct students to the revamped website. With this last initiative, we hope to capture the vote of the students as soon as they arrive on campus.

4. In the spring if 2015 we will host an event that brings people that have been heavily involved in campaigns to speak about the different ways that students can volunteer. We will emphasize the importance of voting in addition to alternate ways they can support local campaigns.

**(Major) Measurable Goals:**

1. We will put a blurb in the Weekly Buzz, which is a weekly announcement blast that goes to the entire campus community. Our description will include a survey that will ask whether people are registered to vote and whether they utilized our registration services.
2. We will monitor the traffic to the voter registration page on the Rochester Center for Community Leadership website. This will allow us to gage whether our strategy is effective, and whether we should edit the page in any way.

3. We will create a Facebook page dedicated to our registration efforts and will monitor the number of “likes.” We hope to engage a large percentage of the student body by posting on class-year group pages and individual statuses.

4. We will reflect on turnout to our spring event and the quality of discussion to determine its success.

How will you collaborate with consortium schools?

The consortium could help us to improve the strategies listed above and include tactics that have worked on their college campuses. Creating a politically engaged student body is complicated, though testing different strategies and sharing information with other universities is the most effective way to engage students. Different states have different voting laws. Those that require voters to show a form of ID can often deter young voters from the polls. This unintended consequence is only an issue in select states, but dialogue with other universities could help us create strategies to overcome this challenge, and understand this might be an issue for students outside the state of New York.