University of Texas at Austin National Campaign Project Proposal

Project Topic:

Voting Rights/Accessibility

Project Overview:

Although the University of Texas at Austin offers an accessible polling station, it lacks readily available educational materials about ballot candidates and issues. While doing research last spring for the IOP Campus Voting Accessibility Project (CVAP), ambassadors from UT Austin found that this absence of information disincentivized registered voters from participating in elections. In order to address this issue, the current national campaign ambassadors from UT Austin will engage the public through an interactive and cross-party event followed by a series of open panels throughout the remainder of the academic year.

Events/Initiatives:

1) Preceding the 2014 midterm election, the National Campaign ambassadors from the University of Texas at Austin will host an interactive and cross-party event aimed at education on ballot candidates and issues. Outside of the university polling station, a series of tables, each with information about candidates on the ballot, will be set up and represented by members from existing partisan organizations on campus. Passersby will be given a mock-ballot upon which they will check-off the candidates for whom they want to vote as they progress from table to table. Before the mock ballots are distributed, a preliminary polling question will be inquired in order to measure the success of the event. (“Have you ever chosen not to vote in a biennial election?”

2) A series of open panels will be conducted throughout the academic year. Each of the major partisan organizations on campus will volunteer one representative to answer questions submitted by the audience. By limiting each representative to one-two responses, we hope to moderate the tone of the discussion and engage, but not enrage the voting public. Attendance of the panels will be counted and charted throughout the academic year.

3) In an attempt to expose local government to students, the ambassadors from UT Austin will invite members of the Austin City Council to speak about current issues. Students will be given a much greater opportunity to ask questions than during similar events hosted by individual partisan organizations. After the event, we will help students sign up for TurboVote so that they will be informed about future local elections. The success of this event will be measured by how many students take the necessary steps to register for this informative service.
(Major) Measurable Goals:

1) Engage at least fifty irregular voters, defined as any person who has possessed the ability, but neglected to vote in a biennial election. In exchange for receiving their mock ballot, students will answer the following question about their voting habits, “Have you ever chosen not to vote in a biennial election?”

2) Consistently increase audience attendance at these panels. Head counts will be conducted as attendees enter the seating area.

3) Register at least fifty students for TurboVote. The number of students who register for this service will indicate an increase in student exposure to all levels of government.

How will you collaborate with consortium schools?

The National Campaign Ambassadors from the University of Texas at Austin would like to invite other consortium schools to participate in our panel discussions. In order to enhance the national perspective of these panels, ambassadors will be able to submit questions via twitter. Besides the panels, consortium schools will be able to use our event as a template for future programs aimed at cross-party voter education.