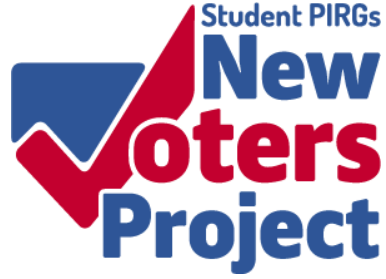


**Student  
PIRGs**



# **Digital Civic Engagement Toolkit 2020**

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## Student PIRG's New Voters Project

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The New Voters Project is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization with 4945(f) status, has run peer-to-peer young voter registration and mobilization drives to turn out the youth vote on college campuses for almost 50 years. Over the last 30 years we have helped to register over 2 million young voters. We believe that the full participation of young people in the political process is essential to a truly representative, vibrant democracy. Our goal is to engage as many students as possible in each and every election cycle in order that our generation be represented in the political process, regardless of ideology or political affiliation. The New Voter's Project does not endorse, either explicitly or implicitly, a political candidate or political party for elected office.

**For any questions about StudentVote.org you can contact Manny Rin, New Voters Project Director ([manny@studentspirgs.org](mailto:manny@studentspirgs.org))**

## Letter to our Campuses - What is this toolkit?

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Dear Campus Partners,

I hope you are all doing well and staying safe during the ongoing crisis. Right now, we live in an unprecedented time of online organizing, teaching, engagement and more in the midst of a crisis.

For over 30 years, the Student PIRGs New Voters Project has non-partisan run peer-to-peer young voter registration and mobilization drives to turn out the youth vote on college campuses. We believe that the full participation of young people in the political process is essential to a truly representative, vibrant democracy. Our goal is to engage as many students as possible in each and every election cycle in order that our generation be represented in the political process, regardless of ideology or political affiliation and this year, in which everything is virtual, is no exception. We believe that campuses are a great place to inspire civic engagement and that many students and communities are already thinking about what they can do in the wake of the current state of the world.

While at first we were unsure how faculty, campus leaders, and more would be dealing with everything going on, we found that right away we were receiving new students looking to get engaged in change making, more faculty thanking us for keeping these issues in our sights and thinking long term about campus plans, student activities, and more. Despite the unique challenges we face, students are still excited to make sure that our generation, the largest and most diverse in America's history is still able to get registered, get informed, and get out to vote this fall.

Colleges and universities have long played a key part in this engagement for students, but as we move virtual we know campuses are learning how to shift our usual practices, events, and more online. So, as we continue through these unprecedented times, we hope to keep working closely with you and providing what resources we can.

This toolkit is meant to be an updated guide on what we know are the best practices to keep students engaged and involved in voter registration and mobilization virtually. I hope this will be of help to you and your campus community and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions, concerns, or success stories.

Best of Luck,

Manny Rin  
National Director  
New Voters Project

## Laying the Groundwork

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1. **Build a campus student vote coalition** Having a great group of student organizations, faculty, and administrators all working together to register students to vote means more people helping, access to more students, bigger buzz around voting and more fun. Many groups are also taking a step back in the wake of abruptly moving online so it's a good opportunity to build the overall movement on campus and keep these groups active.

Some examples of great groups to work with:

- Student government
  - Student programming board
  - Residence Hall Councils
  - Fraternities and Sororities
  - Other political student groups
  - Student Activities Office
2. **Create a campus-wide democratic engagement plan.** Working with the campus student vote coalition draft and submit a written action plan for increasing your campus-wide democratic engagement that will be evaluated post-election. Your plan should include measurable goals for improvement based on any available data you have such as:
    - **Your campus NSLVE Report.** National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement let's you know what percent of your campus' voter registration and voter turnout rates in 2018, 2016 and 2014. The report will be helpful when setting your 2020 goals. For more info on the report and to see if your campus is signed up visit: <https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>
    - **Complete a Campus Assessment Survey.** The first step to creating a campus vote plan is to get an accurate assessment of what is happening on your campus. This evaluates how your campus is currently doing voter registration and helps design a way to institutionalize voter registration. Find the sample template for this here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/12uUgPx1x4Y5ZjPNTTRkm9g\\_RUA3sihEc7zQ1lgG0lsw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12uUgPx1x4Y5ZjPNTTRkm9g_RUA3sihEc7zQ1lgG0lsw/edit?usp=sharing)
    - See the appendix for a sample all-in campus action plan.

The plan should also include best practices like those described in detail below, such as:

- Sending all campus emails and/or text alerts around registration, education, and mobilization.
- Planning to continue hosting campus events like orientation and include voting efforts as a part of those events.
- Use the Studentvote.org registration tool anywhere possible.

## Voter Registration

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Studies of our work show that 70% of students who register to vote with our program turnout. That shows just how powerful voter registration is. We know peer to peer is the best way to register someone so it's important in a virtual setting to make it as peer to peer as possible. That's why campus spokespeople (faculty, student leaders, athletes, student government, res life etc) are key to helping to register students. Here are some steps we recommend:

1. **Add the Studentvote.org registration tool to university websites.** We think there are a lot of students that will register to vote if the opportunity to register is put in front of them. So, you will

want to get our online registration tool link on as many high traffic university websites as possible. Some examples of great sites to have our link on:

- Email login
  - University homepage
  - Blackboard or similar
  - Athletics page
  - Libraries main page
  - Campus calendar or student activities webpage
3. **Send out studentvote.org to students.** Another powerful way to get registration in front of students is sending it directly to them. There are a variety of ways that campuses can do this, such as:
- Sending an all campus email
  - Sending an email to department listservs
  - Sending all campus text alerts
  - Sharing to school social media platforms
  - Publishing voting information in school papers
4. **Include registration in existing campus structures and events.** Make live announcements or use pre-recorded videos to encourage students to register to vote.
- Hold a Virtual Orientation and have voter registration
  - Have virtual class announcements in all live and pre-recorded classes. Here is a [sample class announcement video](#)

## Voter Education

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One barrier to lack of student registration and voting is a lack of familiarity with the process, rules, and deadlines. Where to register? How to get an absentee ballot? Knowing the specific state rules. Etc. With students at home taking online classes we need to provide as much education and access to easy to use resources as possible to make sure their ballots are cast.

1. **Send all campus email reminders about key registration dates.** Sending an all campus email helps to make first time voters aware of these processes and is yet another opportunity to get voter registration tools in front of students. Here are some key dates and information to send reminders around:
  - Move-in day: if you moved you must re-register
  - Last Day to Register
  - Absentee Info request deadlines
  - Early Voting Schedule
  - Last Day to Early Vote
  - Election Day
  - Non-partisan voter guides and/or sample ballots
  - Attached in the Appendix is a sample all campus email.
  - **\*\*Note:** These deadlines and information vary by state- find your state's info at the secretary of state or state board of elections websites.
2. **Get Election information in the Media.** Media is another good way to spread mass information. You can publish the same educational information above to local or school newspapers, social media platforms that students follow, talk to the local news about your work, and more to spread the word about election day information that students need to know. It is also a great chance to get credit for all the exciting things you are doing as well!
3. **Other Educational information Reminders.** Similarly to voter registration, there are several other ways to get out educational materials to students. Here are some tactics to consider:

- All campus text alerts
  - Send out mailers to all students with key dates
  - Department listservs
  - Class Announcements around key dates and information
  - Website pop ups with vote reminder and information
- 4. Hold virtual campus educational events.**
- Election panel
  - Debate Watch parties
  - Virtual Parties to the polls

## Voter mobilization

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The last step to making sure students are engaged is getting all the registered students to the polls on election day or during early voting. To do this students not online need the basic educational info but also a sense of voting being in the campus culture. Here are some ways to get students excited and voting even if we are online:

1. **Hold virtual campus get-out-the-vote events.** Holding these events builds excitement, reminds students to vote, and creates a sense that everyone is doing it. Here are some sample election events to hold virtually:
  - Mail-in Party- everyone fills out and mails in their absentee or mail in ballots together on a virtual call.
  - *Zoom* to the polls- people join a zoom “party to the polls” with music, games, etc to get excited about voting.
2. **Include GOTV reminders in classes or other virtual campus events.** Make live announcements or use pre-recorded videos to encourage students to go vote.
  - Sample class [announcement video](#)
  - Invite a Student PIRG organizer to teach a lecture on civic education, the importance of voting and power of youth voting in relevant classes
3. **Share necessary voter information to help students get out to vote.** The above tactics such as emails, texts, fliers, etc are all also a vital part of reminding students to get out to vote and making sure they know how to do so. Consider using the following tactics:
  - Send all campus email or text reminders about key voting dates (Absentee deadlines, Early Voting, Election Day) and information (polling site look up, absentee how tos, etc.)
  - Use the media to share get out the vote information through classic media and social media platforms.
  - Hold campus events on key dates (last day to register, first day of early voting, election day, etc) to increase opportunities for vote reminders.

## Volunteer Opportunities

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All of this work is also a great opportunity to engage students in volunteer or intern level roles. Peer-to-Peer registration, education, and mobilization works best, therefore having students drive these goals, form event ideas, and more is a key part of successfully engaging campus as well.

Interns often are the leaders on the campaign taking on tasks like leading campaign tactics such as media coordinator, social media director, events coordinators, phone/textbank coordinator, and more. Internship roles require longer hours, more skills, and more responsibility but allow students to have more ownership and drive their personal goals to make the campaign successful. Another way to organize interns is by having a series of “vote captains” each responsible for a piece of all the overall campaign goals, such as getting one media hit, 50 voter registrations, 10 social media posts, etc. This allows students to have a wider range of tactics they experience and spreads out the larger campaign goals, such as voter registration and GOTV more evenly.

In addition to interns and vote captains, volunteers are crucial to support their work and the campaign, especially for larger events. Volunteers are able to help out on the campaign and are not expected to have a specific level of commitment, but can still make a huge impact on the campaign by attending meetings and events as they are able.

The Student PIRGs can help coordinate internship and volunteer programs on your campus. Students can fill out an interest card directly at our website: <https://studentpirgs.org/volunteer-on-campus/>. Faculty or student groups can also email our New Voters Project Director Manny Rin ([manny@studentpirgs.org](mailto:manny@studentpirgs.org)) to coordinate a larger New Voters Project program. You can also check out a sample vote captain internship description in the appendix of the toolkit.

## Resources

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Here is a compilation of resources listed throughout the toolkit and contact information to get in touch with us for questions!

Websites:

- Student PIRGs Website: <https://studentpirgs.org/>
- Voter Registration Tool Website: <https://studentvote.org/>
- Action Plan Development - ALL IN Democracy Challenge: <https://www.allinchallenge.org/resource-hub/action-plans/>
- Strengthening American Democracy Guide: <https://apps.naspa.org/files/StrengtheningAmericanDemocracyGuide.pdf>

Points of Contact:

- New Voters Project National Campaign Director: Manny Rin, [manny@studentpirgs.org](mailto:manny@studentpirgs.org)

## Appendix

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### A. [Sample Campus Action Plan](#)

This is a sample Action Plan from the University of Massachusetts Boston. This document outlines clear tactics and goals for voter registration, education, and turn out for in person and online outreach. For access to documents, please click on the link to request access.

## B. Sample All Campus Email

This is a sample All Campus Email sent by our campus partners at MASSPIRG Students. To use this as a sample, please update the links and the highlighted yellow sections

Hello (First Name),

Today is National Voter Registration Day and it's a great opportunity to make sure that your voter registration status is up-to-date so you are ready to vote in upcoming elections.

[You can register for the first time or update your registration status right here.](#)

The percentage of eligible voters ages 18-25 who voted in the 2018 midterm elections doubled from the turnout in the 2016 presidential election. As the largest and most diverse generation alive right now, young people have a chance to make a real impact in our country if every eligible voter participates in elections. In order to make sure that you can raise your voice and cast your vote in the upcoming local, state, and federal elections, you need to be registered to vote at your current address.

If you need to register for the first time or you moved since you last registered, you can [update your registration right here.](#)

Here are some additional tools and helpful information to make sure you're ready to vote:

Checking your registration status: If you're registered somewhere in **Massachusetts** you can [look up your voter registration status here.](#)

You can google "voter registration status **YOUR STATE**" to find a similar site for a different state if you're registered somewhere other than **Massachusetts**.

Updating your registration status: If you moved since you last registered to vote, you need to update your registration to reflect your new address. Whether you're from **MA** or a different state, [Studentvote.org](#) will help you navigate to the right page!

Finding your polling location: Your polling location is tied to wherever you are registered to vote so it's recommended that you register at your current address. You can update your registration status using your campus address (if it's different than your permanent address) in order to get more involved in your current community and avoid having to travel home for elections. Once you know where you're registered you can [find your polling location here.](#)

Getting an absentee ballot: If you're registered somewhere other than your campus/current address and prefer not to update your voter registration status to your campus address, you need to make sure you have a plan to travel home on Election Day or receive an absentee ballot in order to vote! [Learn more about absentee ballots in MA here](#) or google "absentee ballots **YOUR STATE**" to find out the process in other states.

Voting in the upcoming elections: The 2020 presidential elections are well underway, but that's not the only election to think about. To be an engaged and informed voter, you should also learn more about your local and state elections. The decisions made by local governments are often just as, if not more, important when it comes to how your community operates. To learn more about what elections are



happening in your community and who is running for which positions, we recommend using [ballotpedia.org](http://ballotpedia.org)

\*Be sure to use the address where you are registered to vote when looking up your ballot information!\*

Want to get involved in the elections?

You can contact [Meg Neff, the Campus Organizer with our MASSPIRG Chapter here at Fitchburg State](mailto:mneff@masspirgstudents.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities on this initiative. Her email is [mneff@masspirgstudents.org](mailto:mneff@masspirgstudents.org) [MASSPIRG Students](http://masspirgstudents.org), along with Student PIRG chapters across the country, runs the largest nonpartisan, youth-run voter mobilization effort in the country through our New Voters Project campaign. In the last 5 years alone, we've helped over 35,000 students get registered to vote here in Massachusetts- and this work is helping to increase the youth vote! Stay updated on important election information and other issues that affect us and our community by [following us on twitter](#) or [liking our facebook page](#). Questions? Contact [action@masspirgstudents.org](mailto:action@masspirgstudents.org)

## C. Intern Role Description

### **About**

*Our generation is the largest and most diverse group in the history of our country. When we register to vote, and show up on election day, we have the power to be the most influential voice in American politics, and therefore the most influential voice when it comes to those decisions. These are decisions about our environment, our cities, our government, healthcare, jobs, taxes, transportation, and so much more. And in order to make sure our generation is truly part of that conversation, we need to work on campus to ensure that every student is registered to vote, and has a plan for election day. That is why we are running a campaign this year to register students here at (CAMPUS) and get out the vote for the upcoming presidential elections.*

### **Internship Role**

*As students, the best way to make sure our campus is engaged in the elections is by running a grassroots campaign to register voters and help them make a plan to get the polls. As a NVP intern you'll be in charge of making sure we hit our goal for students registered to vote, and turned out for the election, by organizing events on campus to register students before the February 7th deadline, and organizing events to collect pledges to vote, and reach out to students in person, by phone, and online to make sure they have a plan to get to the polls.*

### **Goals**

*Recruit # vote coalition partner  
Complete Campus Assessment and Propose campus plan  
Register ### students to vote  
Gather ### pledges to vote  
Make #### get out the vote contacts  
Manage ## volunteers  
Generate # Media Hits*

### **Requirements**

*Attend weekly internship meetings*  
*Complete a minimum of 8-10 hours of work per week*  
*Develop and execute a semester plan for you internship*  
*Recruit, train, and manage coordinators and volunteers with the campaign*

**Key Dates**

**February 7th** - Voter Registration Deadline

**March 3rd** - Election Day

**D. Sample social media posts and images**

Example social media banner:



Sample event images:

We  Primary Voting!



We are America's Largest Generation.. and WE VOTE

Register to Vote for the Primary Elections on campus on 2/11

