

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

# A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers

July 2007



|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction: The Special Qualities of Student Poll Workers.....                                     | 1  |
| What To Expect From the Guidebook .....  | 1  |
| Student Poll Worker Strengths .....  | 2  |
| Student Poll Worker Challenges.....  | 3  |
| <br>   |    |
| Legal Guidelines for College Poll Worker Programs .....  | 5  |
| Residency and Registration .....   | 5  |
| Political Party Affiliation.....   | 7  |
| Term Requirements .....  | 7  |
| <br>   |    |
| Creating a School Partnership.....   | 9  |
| Factors To Consider When Establishing a School Partnership.....                                      | 9  |
| Aim for the Top: Enlisting Local College or University Participation .....                           | 10 |
| <br>   |    |
| Creating a Team: The Campus Champion and the Team.....   | 11 |
| The Importance of a Campus Champion .....  | 11 |
| The Role of the Campus Champion .....  | 12 |
| How To Select a Campus Champion .....  | 12 |
| How To Build a Well-Functioning Team.....  | 13 |
| The Election Office Liaison.....   | 14 |
| <br>   |    |
| Timing.....  | 15 |
| Start Early.....   | 15 |
| Timelines Help .....   | 16 |
| Sample Student Poll Worker Calendar.....   | 16 |
| <br>   |    |
| Developing the Program.....  | 17 |
| Establish a Clear Relationship and Easy Communication as Early as Possible .....                     | 17 |
| Sample Memorandum of Understanding .....   | 18 |
| Issues To Discuss.....   | 19 |
| <br>   |    |
| The Recruitment Process.....   | 21 |
| Developing Policies and Procedures To Facilitate the Student Poll Worker Application<br>Process..... | 21 |
| Sample College Poll Worker Application.....  | 23 |
| Anticipating Student Concerns .....  | 24 |
| Recruitment Methods.....   | 25 |
| Sample Excused Absence Policy.....   | 27 |
| Recruitment Tools.....   | 28 |
| Sample Recruitment Posters.....  | 29 |
| Sample Press Release.....  | 33 |
| <br>   |    |
| Recruiting Minority and Bilingual Students.....  | 35 |
| Outreach Techniques.....   | 35 |
| Tips for Schools: Public Recognition .....   | 37 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Integrating Poll Work Into the Classroom.....      | 39 |
| Announcements in Class.....                        | 39 |
| Sample Letter to Faculty .....                     | 40 |
| Excused Absences.....                              | 41 |
| Extra Credit.....                                  | 41 |
| Service Learning Requirement .....                 | 42 |
| Create a New Class.....                            | 43 |
| Suggestions for a Course Reading List.....         | 44 |
| Sample Curriculum.....                             | 46 |
| Student Commitment.....                            | 47 |
| The Problem of Attrition .....                     | 47 |
| Effective Strategies.....                          | 48 |
| Sample Forms To Track Student Participation .....  | 49 |
| Training Student Poll Workers.....                 | 51 |
| Training Content .....                             | 51 |
| Augmenting Poll Worker Training .....              | 52 |
| Training for Intergenerational Communication ..... | 53 |
| Evaluating Your Program.....                       | 55 |
| Sample Student Survey.....                         | 55 |
| Program Sustainability .....                       | 57 |
| Designing a Sustainable Program .....              | 57 |
| Steps To Building a Sustainable Program .....      | 57 |
| Top 10 Keys to Success for Election Officials..... | 59 |
| Top 10 Keys to Success for Schools.....            | 60 |
| Background and Methodology .....                   | 63 |
| The Guidebook.....                                 | 63 |

## 2nd Edition

*This guidebook contains sample documents used by various State and local election jurisdictions. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has published these documents with the express permission of its owner. These documents are intended to be representative of relevant election administration practice throughout the nation and to illustrate the concepts being described in the text. The inclusion of these samples in this guidebook does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. Additionally, as State law varies and is subject to change, readers are cautioned to obtain legal advice prior to adopting any new policy, procedure or document.*

## The Special Qualities of Student Poll Workers

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### In This Chapter

- What To Expect From the Guidebook
  - Student Poll Worker Strengths
  - Student Poll Worker Challenges
- 

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 to serve as a clearinghouse and resource of information on election administration. Congress directed EAC to develop the HAVA College Program and to develop materials, sponsor seminars and workshops, and engage in advertising targeted at students.

### What To Expect From the Guidebook

This guidebook was developed to help address this congressional directive and is the result of a 17-month applied research study commissioned by the EAC. It was implemented by Cleveland State University with input from a project working group and three pilot project sites that were partnerships between local colleges and universities and local election offices.

This guidebook offers a collection of practical and successful methods of recruiting, training, and retaining college students—an important category of poll workers. This guidebook describes the particular strengths these energetic and enthusiastic young voters bring to the task and the field-tested strategies for designing and running a college poll worker program; it also lists the challenges inherent in working with college students.

Two groups will benefit from using this guidebook: colleges and universities interested in motivating their students to become involved in the electoral process and election jurisdictions interested in recruiting college students to serve as poll workers.

Every practice recommended in this guidebook has been tested in the field by election professionals and college/university staff and faculty. The strategies and practices described in this guidebook are based on three criteria: they must be practical, replicable, and sustainable. The guidebook is organized in an easy-to-follow format that enables readers to develop programs to fit their specific needs and provides

### Note on Terminology

*The immense variety of election terms can be confusing. Across the country, poll workers are called judges, booth workers, precinct officials, board workers, and poll workers. For simplicity, this guidebook refers to all people who serve in a polling place as poll workers. Similarly, elections are run by many different local government entities, from a county board of elections or city elections department to a city or county clerk's office. This guidebook refers to all government units running elections as election jurisdictions.*

a timeline of activities for planning and implementing student poll worker programs. Some sections are more pertinent to a college administrator than to an election jurisdiction official (or vice versa); these sections are clearly labeled. Members of either group, however, may find it useful to read the entire manual to form a better understanding of their counterpart's role in a college poll worker recruitment program.

Not all college poll worker programs will be identical. The sample materials provided are meant to spark ideas and serve as templates, not necessarily to be copied verbatim. A given program's design will depend to varying degrees on the needs of the election jurisdiction, the composition of the student body available for recruitment, and the role the college or university is able and willing to play. The following examples from different programs suggest possible approaches:

- A professor made poll work a class requirement by building it into the curriculum as a service-learning assignment. Of 30 students in the class, 25 participated.
- A community college, with active support from the college president, ran a recruitment campaign with posters, information tables, mass e-mails, media coverage, and peer recruiters. The school recruited approximately 150 students.
- The political science department of a large university decided to award five extra credit points for any student in an introductory course who served as a poll worker. The school recruited about 250 students.
- A university's sorority and soccer team each "adopted" a single polling place. The school recruited 10 students.
- A university's career services office sent an e-mail to all students announcing an Election Day job opportunity as a poll worker. The school recruited about 50 students.

### Student Poll Worker Strengths

College students bring important strengths to the polling process, including the following:

- College students are highly intelligent and accustomed to learning new things.
- They tend to be comfortable with computers and other new technologies and may bring skills that can solve technology-related problems. These skills are increasingly important, given the greater use of electronic polling equipment.

*"There is a critical shortage of poll workers in this country. Many election officials fear the problem will grow even worse as the volunteers they rely on, many of them retirees, grow older with little national effort to recruit new volunteers. Experienced and well-trained poll workers are essential to making our elections run properly...."*

*—House Report from  
Help America Vote Act*



*Photo credit: Cleveland State University*



- They have enough energy and enthusiasm to get through a long day at the polls.
- They are usually strong enough to carry supplies and set up heavy equipment.
- They often have flexible schedules.

College student poll workers find the poll working experience benefits themselves and the community at large. They are more likely to vote and to develop a lifelong commitment to civic involvement if they are encouraged and integrated into the electoral system in their student years. Serving as a poll worker can facilitate this process.

### Student Poll Worker Challenges

The use of college poll workers, however, presents special challenges, including the following:

- Some State laws may limit or prohibit the use of nonresident college students as poll workers.
- In addition to requiring an effective election jurisdiction program, student poll worker programs require an effective campus recruitment and management process. These programs require a substantial investment of time to design, implement, and manage.
- Although students are often enthusiastic and more available for poll work than people who are fully employed, many interests and commitments compete for students' time and attention. Special retention techniques should be used to sustain their interest in poll work and their reliability as workers.



*Photo credit: Cleveland State University*



## Legal Guidelines for College Poll Worker Programs

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### In This Chapter

- Residency and Registration
  - Political Party Affiliation
  - Term Requirements
- 

A fundamental question for schools and election officials wanting to establish student poll worker programs is whether their State's laws will unduly hamper their ability to do so. States' legal criteria for the selection of poll workers can impede the establishment and implementation of college poll worker programs in three ways:

1. Some State registration and residency requirements limit or prohibit participation by college students.
2. Some State laws mandate that poll workers be affiliated with political parties or be chosen primarily from nominations by political parties.
3. Many State laws obligate poll workers to serve for a specific number of years, a condition that may be difficult for college students to fulfill.

### Residency and Registration

In most cases, a poll worker must be registered to vote in the State in which he or she lives. Some States do not allow out-of-State college students to register, because they do not consider them to be bona fide State residents.

Even when students are allowed to register, the State often requires or prefers that poll workers be voters in the precinct or county where they serve.

- Approximately 30 States have statutory preferences for poll workers to be residents of the precincts in which they work, although it is difficult to know whether those statutory preferences are honored in administrative practice, or whether lack of county residence is truly a limiting factor for potential student poll workers.
- Two States—California and Massachusetts—allow State residents to serve as poll workers anywhere in the State.



*Photo credit: Grand Rapids, MI, city clerk*



- Six other States allow State residents to serve as poll workers anywhere in the State if insufficient numbers of county residents are available: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, and Virginia.
- At least one State, Delaware, has created a special exception for students. Normally, Delaware poll workers must be residents of the election district in which they serve, unless an insufficient number of local workers necessitates the appointment of residents elsewhere in the county. Delaware's election law, however, includes a college student exception, allowing State residents who are registered voters and who are enrolled at least half time as students in colleges or universities within the respective county to be appointed as election officers for that county.
- Other States allow students to serve as poll workers but may deny them the right to vote in that State.

Restrictions on the registration of college students usually are based on the premise that their residence is not bona fide because their presence is temporary and the community in which their college is located is not their primary concern. Critics of these State laws say such restrictions create an ethical dilemma by asking a college student to be a poll worker in a precinct, county, or State that will not allow him or her to register to vote. They argue that a student's willingness to serve as a poll worker is strong evidence of interest in the community.

Several States have changed their laws in recent years to allow State residents to serve as poll workers in any county, regardless of where they are registered to vote. Some jurisdictions obtain special disclaimers allowing them to use nonresidents. Others create special roles for students that do not require residency. For example, out-of-State students at the University of Baltimore were able to serve as "parallel testers" of the State's new election voting system on Election Day.

Those who administer student poll worker programs should also be aware of other possible effects of State requirements. Some States allow students to register in the jurisdiction where the college is located, which means that almost all students will be voters in one precinct. Since only three or four poll workers are usually needed in any given precinct, if the State follows a protocol giving preference to residents of the precincts over nonresident students, very few spots may be available for college poll workers.

In addition, some out-of-State students may prefer to remain registered in their home State and to cast absentee ballots. A 2004 survey found that 70 percent of college students

*"The position inspired so much passion in me to continue the fight for justice and equality, so that this country can continue to be a greater and better democracy."*

—College poll worker, Wiley College

register to vote in their hometowns, while only 28 percent register at their school address. Research suggests that those who change their voter registration to their school address believe their vote matters more in their new location than in their hometown.

### Political Party Affiliation

Many States require that poll workers be affiliated with a political party. At the time this guidebook was written, all but six States or territories (California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Nevada) either require that poll workers have political party affiliation or that preferences be given to the political parties' nominees. Massachusetts, for example, allows the selection of a limited number of unaffiliated poll workers, but only after the leading political parties are represented. Even when party affiliation is not explicitly required, in practice, poll workers are often chosen first from party lists and unaffiliated candidates are chosen only when insufficient numbers of party members are available to serve. Political parties should be made aware of college student programs and should be asked to invite qualified students to serve as poll workers.

### Term Requirements

Of all the States, 23 have poll worker term requirements, ranging from 1 to 4 years, which might be very difficult for college students to honor. The rigor with which such requirements are enforced may depend on the language in a given State statute. Wisconsin, for example, has a 2-year term and statutory language explicitly stating that poll workers "shall serve at every election in the ward during their term of office." On the other hand, some States appear to interpret the term requirement as merely stating the period of time during which the poll worker is certified, rather than requiring that the poll worker actually be available for every election during that period. Certain States have a practice of sending notices to certified election workers asking if they are available for an upcoming election.

A number of States have terms of service only for poll workers in positions of highest authority, while allowing the appointment of poll workers with lesser responsibilities for each election. In Pennsylvania, poll judges and inspectors are elected for 4-year terms. Those elected officials, in turn, appoint clerks and machine operators on an election-by-election basis. Such procedures may ease the participation of college poll workers in subordinate positions, but possibly at the cost of relegating them to less interesting work.





## In This Chapter

- Factors To Consider When Establishing a School Partnership
- Aim for the Top: Enlisting Local College or University Participation

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## Factors To Consider When Establishing a School Partnership

Just as some States are more receptive to student poll worker programs than others, some universities and colleges are better suited to providing poll workers. Although every school is different, the following general considerations can affect the success of a recruitment program.

**Students From Out of Town.** As stated in the previous chapter, in States where residency requirements for poll workers limit student participation, a school whose student body is predominantly from outside the State (or elsewhere in the same State) may find participation difficult. Community colleges have an advantage because their students are almost exclusively local residents and are likely to be registered in the area where they would be asked to work. State schools' students tend to be primarily from within their State, which may also facilitate their service as poll workers. Students in community colleges or State universities are also more likely to remain in the area after graduation, which may make them long-term partners for election officials. At these schools, election officials can enlist the same students regularly and enter them into a permanent database.

**Students Who Work.** All schools have some students who work; however, community colleges tend to have a majority of students with full-time jobs. Working a full day at the polls may be impossible for these students. A smaller private school with most full-time students living on campus may have a higher proportion of students available for a full day's poll work, especially if the school adopts a policy excusing them from all classes on Election Day.

**Size of the Student Body.** The size of a school's student body affects the kinds of recruitment methods needed to interest students in poll worker service. In a small school, a recruiter is more likely to have one-on-one contact with a larger percentage of the student body and to have more high-quality networking opportunities. In addition, student peer networks will also be tighter. Small campuses may also make it easier to create a sense of excitement around a program.



*Photo credit: Cleveland State University*

Larger schools, however, are more likely to have a well-established e-mail system and Web site that students rely on, which facilitates easy and inexpensive contact with students. Also, at large universities, a great number of students often can be reached simply by targeting a few core classes.

For example, 10 professors teaching an “Introduction to Government” class with an average of 200 students per class means reaching 2,000 students with very little effort. If each professor offers extra credit for poll work, the number of students who volunteer could be significant.

### Aim for the Top: Enlisting Local College or University Participation

Election officials who have not yet identified colleagues at local schools to help recruit college students should try to start at the top. Gaining support from high-level campus administrators will greatly ease the tasks of finding a campus coordinator and implementing the program.

A variety of approaches can be employed. An election director or board chairman could call the college or university president to explain the proposed program and to ask to be put in touch with staff or faculty members who might serve as election liaisons. Election officials have also used connections with their State senators or representatives to ask them to initiate contact with a school. Inviting all area schools to an introductory meeting to encourage participation in poll worker programs may cause administrators from different colleges to motivate each other. Because school presidents are usually interested in positive media coverage, an offer to send out a press release about an agreed-upon partnership may provide added incentive.

When the college or university president has agreed that the school will participate, he or she can pave the way to full campus support. Election officials may wish to suggest that the school president promote a campuswide policy excusing student poll workers from all classes on Election Day. The school president also could work with faculty to develop an extra-credit policy for student poll workers. Although some presidents have more influence than others in these matters, starting at the top is usually the best way to begin a long-term working relationship with a school.

*“I helped a Somali woman vote for the first time and she gave me a hug. It was the most patriotic feeling I’ve ever had.”*

*—College poll worker, Suffolk University*

## The Campus Champion and the Team

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### In This Chapter

- The Importance of a Campus Champion
  - The Role of the Campus Champion
  - How To Select a Campus Champion
  - How To Build a Well-Functioning Team
  - The Election Office Liaison
- 

### The Importance of a Campus Champion

Running a successful college poll worker program requires two key people: a dedicated staff person at the election jurisdiction and an advocate, or campus champion, at the partner school to present the program to students. This section explores the role of a campus champion, how to find one, and how to develop his or her team. The school's poll worker advocate and the election jurisdiction leaders will interact, so their tasks should be coordinated. This section also discusses the important role of the election office liaison.

Colleges have successfully managed student poll worker programs through a variety of school structures, including academic departments, service learning or career services offices, and student activity centers. What is more important than which department the program falls under is that it be led by someone who is committed to fostering the program's needs and administering it effectively. This campus champion serves as the main contact for students and as the liaison to election officials. The more passionate the champion is about the student poll worker program, the better, because the champion will spread enthusiasm and energy about the initiative and attract others to the cause.

The campus champion may be a professor or student services staff member or may hold another staff position, but he or she must be willing to commit the substantial amount of time required to manage a well-run program. At California State University, Long Beach, the secretary of the political science department dedicates 4 to 5 hours per day for several weeks before an election. The program administrator at Roxbury Community College worked 35 hours per week for the 8 weeks of the college's 2004 program. Cleveland State University's Office of Career Services committed two part-time staff people to run its program; each person works 15 to 20 hours per week for 3 months.

*“Championing a college poll worker program is generally done as a labor of love.”*

*—Charles Noble, political science professor and campus champion, California State University, Long Beach*



The campus champion serves as spokesperson and advocate for the program. He or she may go to classes to recruit students or speak at general school events. The champion also serves as an administrator and must be prepared for the many and various student problems and concerns which inevitably will arise, including students' inability to attend training, rescheduling needs, miscommunication between students and election officials regarding precinct assignments or records of students' poll service, and transportation to polling sites.

### The Role of the Campus Champion

The following examples illustrate tasks for the campus champion and his or her team:

- Planning recruitment strategy.
- Providing poll worker applications, voter registration forms, and absentee ballots to students.
- Going to classes to promote the program and recruit students.
- Answering students' questions about serving as poll workers.
- Collecting applications and e-mailing, faxing, or sending forms to the election jurisdiction.
- Following up with students who did not fill out applications correctly.
- Facilitating on-campus training.
- Confirming student assignments with the election jurisdiction.
- Reminding students of training and Election Day assignments.
- Following up after the election to verify student service.
- Planning a "thank-you" event for the students.

### How To Select a Campus Champion

It may take patience to select your "champion" at a local school. Send out multiple feelers to find the right person, and meet with interested potential partners.

### Tip for Attracting Faculty

*The champion needs to work closely with faculty to encourage them to integrate poll work experience into their curriculum (or, at the very least, to agree to excuse student absences from class on Election Day).*

*Faculty generally will not want the added administrative duty of tracking which of their students are working as poll workers. The campus champion should make it as easy as possible for faculty to be involved.*

Ask for recommendations for a champion from the following sources:

- The college or university president.
- Faculty officials, such as department heads (including, in particular, the head of the political science department).
- The department of student services or student life.
- The office of service learning.
- The office of career services.
- The employment office.
- The student government association.
- Leaders of the campus voter registration campaign.

When you find a passionate champion, nurture the relationship. Keep in touch with your champion between elections. Be aware that positions at universities frequently change (for example, department heads change and faculty take sabbaticals) so your champion may not be able to serve in this role the following year.

### How To Build a Well-Functioning Team

To be effective, every champion needs a strong team. Champions, and their poll worker programs function better when administrative staff are available to execute organizational tasks, answer students' questions, and solve problems. Champions should also build a multidisciplinary team of individuals and campus organizations to help implement the program. This will help improve the program's results by allowing access to different individuals' skills and by increasing access to students. Campus champions should consider collaborating with—

- Interested faculty members and department heads.
- The department of student services.
- The office of service learning or career services.
- The student government association.
- Student groups, such as fraternities, sororities, and sports teams.
- Campus news outlets (newspaper, radio, television).



*Photo credit: Northampton Community College*

- Voter education and registration groups on campus.
- The department of public or media relations.

It is not enough, however, to merely add a wide variety of individuals to a program to make it strong. The campus champion must ensure that all participants are following the same plan. The champion needs to maintain leadership and keep everyone working together.

The champion will need to work closely and tactfully with campus faculty, whose cooperation can be vital to the success of the poll worker program. The champion should encourage professors to integrate poll work experience into their curricula, or, at the very least, agree to excuse student absences from class on Election Day.

Champions should avoid burdening faculty with the administrative duties of monitoring which of their students serve as poll workers and evaluating their performance in those roles, because many faculty members will resist taking on these duties.

The campus champion should make it as easy as possible for faculty to be involved (see the section on Integrating Poll Work Into the Classroom). In one county, faculty who participate in the program by recruiting students are paid a small poll worker stipend as a “thank you” for the time and effort they contribute. Although it is not much money, it is an effective way to show appreciation.

### The Election Office Liaison

Just as schools should designate a campus champion, election jurisdictions should also identify someone to serve as the main liaison with schools providing poll workers. This person should be responsible for reaching out to schools and for serving as the contact with the jurisdiction to answer poll worker program questions and solve problems as they arise. The college poll worker program may need special attention in its startup year.

Depending on the design and scope of the program, this may require an extensive time commitment. Election jurisdictions report working with student poll workers for 10 to 25 hours per week during the 4 weeks before an election. Based on their experience, they recommend that jurisdictions hire a part-time employee for 6 months to coordinate and administer the program.

*“Several wardens told me on election day that ‘they could not have done it without our students.’ It felt good to hear that many older elections officials truly appreciated young people getting involved in what is usually their turf.”*

*—Ree Armitage, campus champion, Suffolk University*

## In This Chapter

- Start Early
- Timelines Help
- Sample Student Poll Worker Calendar

## Start Early

Timing is so critical to the success of student poll worker programs that it merits separate discussion. Designing and implementing these programs—especially new programs—take much more time than might be anticipated.

Election officials and college administrators who have experience with student poll worker programs recommend beginning to plan programs as early as January of a general-election year. It takes time to develop a good relationship between the school and the election jurisdiction. It cannot be done during the rush of final election preparations. Both election and school officials need time to approve policies and coordinate timelines for recruitment and training.

Election officials should keep in mind that schools may work with several jurisdictions and will need time to establish a good relationship with each.

Both sides will need time to comply with State poll worker requirements and discuss alternative roles for students who do not meet them.

An early start also gives a school time to establish a good internal team, introduce information about working the polls into registration and welcome week activities, and integrate the program into course outlines. Have all recruitment materials (handouts, posters, banners, and/or Web site) ready before students arrive on campus for the Fall semester. This allows you to start recruiting immediately.

After a college recruitment program is in place, with committed advocates on campus and established relationships with local election officials, the bulk of the work will be in two phases: (1) recruitment efforts at the beginning of each semester and (2) the time preceding and immediately following Election Day.



## Important Dates for Any Timeline

### School Dates

- Welcome week and other new student activities.
- Course registration period.
- Classes begin.
- Midterms and finals.
- Campuswide events.
- Deadlines for entries for campus publications.
- Mailers going out to entire student body.

### Election Jurisdiction Dates

- Primary Election Day.
- Voter registration deadline.
- Poll worker application deadline.
- Other statutory or logistical deadlines.
- Training schedule.
- General Election Day.

## Timelines Help

A good timeline will facilitate college poll worker program planning. An 8-month calendar used by Los Angeles County, CA, to implement its program is printed below. Even if a student program must be implemented in less than 8 months, this “to do” list can help you create your own timeline of tasks. A list of typical calendar items is included on the previous

page. Regardless of when a school and election jurisdiction begin their joint program, they should take time to develop a common work plan, clarify roles and expectations, and list the important dates, including when applications are due, when training begins and ends, and dates of midterm exams. Each side should be aware of the other’s calendar items as well as their own obligations.

## SAMPLE STUDENT POLLWORKER CALENDAR for Election Officials

Adapted/Excerpted from Los Angeles County Calendar

| E-DAY | BEGIN DATE | END DATE | EVENT   | WHO  | DONE |
|-------|------------|----------|---|------|------|
| E-200 |            |          | Refer to previous elections to determine hard to recruit problem areas. Decide where College Pollworkers are needed.  | K.M. | ✓    |
| E-180 |            |          | Make calls to College contacts and get commitment for this year’s program. Discuss number of pollworkers needed.  |      |      |
| E-80  |            |          | Mail the Student Application Packets to participating colleges with the training schedule. Include Voter Registration cards.  |      |      |
| E-55  |            |          | Visit college classes to discuss Election Day opportunities. Bring voting machines and extra Application Packets.   |      |      |
| E-50  |            |          | Schedule Pollworker Training Class on college campus.   |      |      |
| E-50  |            |          | As student application forms are received, assign students to polls. Send out appointment notices with training schedule.   |      |      |
| E-34  |            |          | <b>DEADLINE</b> to receive College Pollworker Applications.   |      |      |
| E-4   |            |          | Fax report of college pollworkers who are assigned to serve to the university.  |      |      |
| E-Day | 11-7-06    |          | <b>ELECTION DAY</b>   |      |      |
| E+13  |            |          | Generate a report of who served on Election Day. Send list to College contacts. Generate payroll. Call students to find out the reason for no shows.  |      |      |
| E+17  |            |          | Collect evaluations from College Pollworkers.   |      |      |
| E+22  |            |          | Prepare pie charts of post election results for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of student application received</li> <li>▪ Number of students placed vs. not placed</li> <li>▪ Number of student served, cancelled and no shows</li> </ul> |      |      |
| E+27  |            |          | Send Campus Champion and college students “Certificates of Appreciation” and thank you letters to everyone who participated.  |      |      |

## In This Chapter

- Establish a Clear Relationship and Easy Communication as Early as Possible
- Sample Memorandum of Understanding
- Issues To Discuss

Student poll worker programs vary significantly. Similar steps, however, can facilitate the development of any school-jurisdiction relationship and student poll worker program. Here are several suggestions for laying the groundwork for a successful and sustainable program.

### Establish a Clear Relationship and Easy Communication as Early as Possible

The key personnel and obligations of both sides in a student poll worker program must be clearly identified. If the program is intended to be ongoing and involve more than a small group of students, it may make sense for the school and jurisdiction to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU), a written document governing the relationship between the school and the jurisdiction by outlining each side's roles in and expectations for the program. Although signing an MOU is a formal step, it provides a clear understanding from the beginning and can help build trust between the parties. In addition, announcing the signing of an MOU to the press can garner positive media attention for both partners and for the student poll worker program.

Sometimes school-jurisdiction relationships begin without a MOU, making a more formalized agreement only if and when the program proves successful. Even without an MOU, it is important to clearly define to both sides' satisfaction the elements of the poll worker program, the process by which it will be developed, and the timeline under which it will unfold. An initial luncheon meeting of the main players is a friendly way to establish a working relationship and to clarify needs, timelines, and requirements in one meeting.

The parties may wish to establish a regular weekly meeting or phone call to work on the program. As elections draw near and schedules get busy, having a set time when you know you can reach each other will be invaluable. Schools need to be aware that election jurisdictions are public entities and that their officials are often subject to public scrutiny.



### Tip for Election Officials

**Student Intern.** *If your poll worker recruitment staff is already overextended, consider hiring a part-time intern from the partner school to serve in the role of liaison. The intern can answer questions, track applications from students, smooth the communication between the school and the election jurisdiction, and possibly aid in recruiting other students.*



**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

between

THE LOCAL ELECTION BOARD/COMMISSION  
(hereafter referred to as ELECT)

and

ABC-XYZ COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY  
(hereafter referred to as ABC U)

to jointly implement  
**A College Pollworker Recruitment Program**

Preamble: Recognizing the shortage of pollworkers faced by our community as well as the special skills, knowledge, and energy that students can offer, the leadership of ELECT and ABC U have agreed to jointly support and implement a College Pollworker Recruitment program. Both parties appreciate the tremendous civic experience being a pollworker can offer in shaping students' lifelong outlook on the democratic process and the role they can play as individuals within a greater community.

1. Names of Key Liaisons: \_\_\_\_\_ will be the lead liaison and "campus champion" for the program on ABC U campus. \_\_\_\_\_ will be the main liaison and election official in charge of implementation for ELECT.
2. Goals: ELECT faces a potential shortage of approximately \_\_\_# pollworkers for the elections on \_\_\_\_\_ (year or date). As part of this partnered effort, ABC U plans to recruit and train \_\_\_# qualified college students to fill pollworker slots. These goals will be modified in subsequent years to reflect actual needs.
3. Timeline: ELECT needs the names and contact information of interested students by \_\_\_\_\_ (date or XX days before the election). Qualified students will receive their pollworker assignment and information from ELECT within \_\_\_ days of filling out an application.
4. Special Roles for Students (Optional. This is meant as an example only. Actual alternative roles depend on needs of election jurisdiction, voting technology used, and legal requirements of the state.) For those students who do not meet regular pollworker requirements (e.g., they are registered to vote in a different state, etc.), ELECT will create two special positions of "roving technician" and "translator." These positions will take advantage of interested students with special computer or language skills.
5. Roles and Expectations (These are examples; modify as desired.):
  - ELECT will supply all pollworker recruitment materials to ABC U
  - ABC U will distribute and post recruitment materials in high traffic areas on campus, on their website, to targeted classes, through the university email system, and in the school newspaper.
  - ABC U will grant all students who work as pollworkers on Election Day with an excused absence from all classes. ABC U will request that its faculty not schedule tests or assign due dates for major assignments on Election Day.
  - ELECT will send out press releases to local media on this groundbreaking partnership with ABC U and the important role the students are fulfilling for the community.
  - ABC U will provide space and logistics for pollworker training session(s) on campus.
  - ELECT will conduct special pollworker training session(s) with students on campus
  - ELECT and ABC U will coordinate their efforts via their liaisons and other personnel to secure the success and longevity of the college pollworker recruitment program

This Memorandum of Understanding can be modified at anytime if both parties agree to the modification.

## Issues To Discuss

A clear agreement on the issues listed below is critical to the design of a program. School and election officials may want to review their initial decisions on these issues as matters evolve, but as long as they are in regular communication, this should not cause problems.

- **Review the State requirements for poll workers.** Do all poll workers have to be registered to vote in the election jurisdiction? What additional local requirements or variations are in the State guidelines? Do these issues affect student recruitment? Officials may need to register students to vote when they are recruited as poll workers; some students may not be eligible.
- **How many poll workers are needed?** Decide on the number of college students to be recruited. It is extremely discouraging for a student to get excited about working at the polls and attend training, only to learn that he or she is not needed. Take into consideration the number of students who can be processed and trained with available resources. Be realistic.
- **How will poll workers be used?** Sometimes roles are specified in a State's election statutes, but it is often left to the local jurisdiction's discretion to create needed positions. Local jurisdictions must decide what positions they will have and what requirements are specified for any special positions.

Students often express particular interest in those jobs that require them to be active, moving between precincts on Election Day, and using whatever special skills they may have (technical, language) to feel they have really contributed something vital to the electoral process. These can include—

- Serving as runners.
  - Serving as voting center coordinators.
  - Answering phones at election headquarters.
  - Working information tables.
  - Serving as translators.
  - Serving as roving voting-equipment technicians.
- **Decide where poll workers are needed.** Are the polling sites near the college or university? If not, are they accessible by public transportation? Will the students need private transportation? Students should be informed immediately if they may be asked to serve far from their homes or campus.

## Tip for Schools

**How To Budget.** Program costs will vary depending on the scope and design of the program and the school's role in promoting and administering it.

*The number of staff hours needed to administer the program can be extensive. Although some schools find the tasks fit within a staff member's existing workload, many need to hire part-time workers. Student workers or recent graduates can be excellent program coordinators and are generally less costly to employ.*

*Marketing materials are another expense. Although some election jurisdictions can provide the recruitment materials, schools often spend money designing and producing fliers, posters, bulletin boards, Web sites, advertisements, and T-shirts.*

## Tip for Election Officials

### **Pre-Election Employment.**

*Some election officials may also be interested in using students before Election Day. The urgency and hustle preceding elections can create an exciting working environment for students. They might help process voter registration forms or provide general office assistance. The election office may have enough work in the months and weeks leading up to elections that some students might find a good part-time job working there.*

- **Assign students to polling sites close to their homes or campus** to facilitate participation and reduce last-minute dropouts. Some schools organize car pools on Election Day, while others ask local election officials to place students at polling stations within walking distance of campus or near public transportation.
- **Decide who will provide recruitment materials.** Is the school or the jurisdiction in a better position to design eye-catching recruitment materials? Should they collaborate on materials? Whose budget will cover the costs if specialized recruitment materials are designed?
- **Create a procedure for assigning students.** Some jurisdictions prefer to simply follow their normal routine for dealing with poll workers, notifying each student individually after his or her application is processed, and he or she is assigned to a polling locale. Others prefer to use the school as a go-between to communicate with the students.

Although both methods are fine, keeping the school in the loop about students' assignments will enable schools to help monitor students to make sure they fulfill their commitment and for post-election debriefing.

- **Set up a system for tracking students' availability.** Some election jurisdictions hope to use student poll workers for primary and general elections, but primary dates may coincide with students' breaks or exams.
- **Decide on the student stipend.** The financial incentive is important to many students and plays a major role in recruitment. Compensation should be determined at the outset. Will students also be paid for training? What about transportation or food costs?
- **Create a procedure for processing applications.** Election jurisdictions usually prefer to receive student applications on a rolling basis rather than to ask the school to collect and turn them all in at once. This gives the jurisdiction more time to process applications and begin to fill positions.

### **Tip**

**Working With Several Jurisdictions.** Depending on where your school is located and the nature of your student body, it may be necessary to establish a relationship with several counties or electoral jurisdictions. If your State requires that poll workers volunteer within the jurisdiction in which they are registered to vote and your school draws from a large area of contiguous jurisdictions, you may want to develop a relationship with all the surrounding jurisdictions. Some schools have contacted as many as 14 jurisdictions to place their students. It is clearly easier to coordinate with only one jurisdiction, but if your student body commutes from multiple electoral jurisdictions, it is worthwhile to work with all of them.

## In This Chapter

- Developing Policies and Procedures To Facilitate the Student Poll Worker Application Process
- Sample College Poll Worker Application
- Anticipating Student Concerns
- Recruitment Methods
- Sample Excused Absence Policy
- Recruitment Tools
- Sample Recruitment Posters
- Sample Press Release



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## Developing Policies and Procedures To Facilitate the Student Poll Worker Application Process

Student poll worker applications should both facilitate the selection of students and provide information and outreach to them. The application materials should include an application form and a frequently asked questions (FAQs) sheet.

**The Application Form.** This form should be simple and clear, and it should request the same information that jurisdictions require of all poll workers. Election jurisdictions might want to request additional information of particular relevance to student workers, including the following:

- **E-mail addresses and cell phone numbers.** These are generally the best ways to reach students.
- **GPA.** You may want to set a minimum grade point average.
- **College year and major.**
- **Access to transportation.** This will help you with placement decisions.
- **Willingness to serve in hard-to-recruit areas.**
- **Fluency in a foreign language.** In which languages and at what level of proficiency?
- **Work-assignment preference,** if applicable.
- **Source of information about poll worker service.**
- **Reason for responding to request for poll workers.** This may help identify students who are less likely to fulfill their commitment.

The application form should include the deadline for submission and clear instructions on how and where to return the completed application. The application process should ideally be a one-step procedure. Designating a dropoff point on each campus is an excellent idea, because it saves students the extra step of faxing or mailing their applications. Ideally, students should be able to apply on line; however, many election jurisdictions do not yet have this technological capacity.

Election jurisdictions may wish to create a special application form for each school at which they recruit, with each school's name clearly indicated at the top of the form, to facilitate tracking the number of students recruited at each school.

**The FAQs Sheet.** Create a handout for all students that clearly explains the requirements and process for becoming a poll worker and provides answers to the most frequently asked questions. If possible, post this information on both the jurisdiction's and the school's Web sites. This will save the campus champion and the election-official liaison from having to answer the same questions repeatedly. Frequently asked questions include the following:

- What are the requirements to serve as a poll worker?
- What will I be expected to do?
- What are the hours?
- How much will I be paid?
- Where will I be posted?
- How soon will I receive my post assignment?
- How long is the training and where and when is it?
- How do I get to my assigned post?

Regarding the important question of what they will be doing, the FAQs response can state that, as poll workers, students can expect to—

- Set up the polling place.
- Greet voters.
- Check off names on the registry and check identification.
- Ensure that all registered voters get the chance to vote.
- Demonstrate how to use voting machines.





**COLLEGE POLLWORKER APPLICATION**  
 County of Los Angeles – Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk  
 12400 Imperial Highway, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Norwalk CA 90650  
**Uniform District and Statewide Special Election**  
 November 8, 2005

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If under 18 needs Parent's signature)

College: \_\_\_\_\_ Professor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you speak and understand a language other than English?.....YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

2. Which language do you speak/understand (If answered Yes to # 1)? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you like to be placed as a bilingual poll worker? ..... YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

4. Would you like to also work the Primary Election on June 6, 2006.....YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

5. Would you be willing to serve in any of these hard to recruit areas?

Pomona-Walnut Valley  West L.A./Pacific Palisades  San Gabriel Valley  San Fernando Valley

Beverly Hills  Malibu/Santa Monica  South Bay/Beach Cities  Rowland Heights  Glendale/Pasadena

Antelope Valley  Crescenta Valley  Santa Clarita Valley  Gardena  Torrance  Hacienda Heights  Other \_\_\_\_\_

.....

I Certify that I am at least 18 years of age, a United States Citizen and a Registered Voter in  Los Angeles County  Other County \_\_\_\_\_

College Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Voter I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_ NEW Affidavit # \_\_\_\_\_

Business Pct. # \_\_\_\_\_ Assigned Pct # \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Pct. # \_\_\_\_\_

Position: Inspector / Clerk \_\_\_\_\_ SUP # \_\_\_\_\_

**FAX: 562-651-1035 OR 562-462-1073**

**OR turn in completed application to your College Professor or College Pollworker Coordinator**



- Ensure the secrecy of each ballot.
- Answer voters' questions.
- Solve problems as they arise.
- Act as translators (if needed and if they are able).
- Secure machines and votes at the end of the day.
- Count ballots.
- Transmit the results.

With new electronic equipment being introduced in many jurisdictions, students can be told that they will play a very important role in explaining how to use the machines.

### Anticipating Student Concerns

Efforts to anticipate students' concerns about the obligations of poll work can reap large dividends in their participation.

**Consider split shifts.** One frequent student objection is that they are not able to work an entire 12-hour shift. Some students welcome the option to work a split shift because they would then be able to serve. Jurisdictions which permit split shifts may want to consider pitching this to students.

**Anticipate fears about grades.** Students will often miss several classes by serving as a poll worker. Schools need to assure them that they will not be penalized for this: seek faculty cooperation when you set up your program. Many students also have job obligations; this is also a problem for most working people when they are asked to commit for a full day, and it is why the majority of poll workers are retirees. Some jurisdictions provide students with a flyer or letter explaining to their professors or employers why they will be absent on Election Day.

**Follow up.** Students can be impatient. If possible, email students when their applications are received and let them know how long it will take to process the applications. Tell students when they can expect to get their assignments and when training will be scheduled. This follow-up task could be the responsibility of either the campus champion or the election liaison, depending upon how your program is designed.

Treating students professionally and with respect increases the likelihood that they will honor their commitment to serve on Election Day, and will do so in a professional manner.



### Tips for Election Officials

**Transportation.** Keep in mind that only so many polling places are within a comfortable radius of a school and that you will want to mix college students with veteran poll workers.

*Some students may have to drive some distance to their assigned polling place on Election Day. Make sure students know this when you are recruiting. Also be aware that some students are apprehensive about serving in an area they do not know. Be prepared to help them with maps or to find the best available public transportation.*

The Cuyahoga County, OH, Board of Elections sent a letter to all college poll worker applicants immediately after receiving their applications. Here is an excerpt from their letter:

*Thank you for your interest in becoming an Election Day Worker for the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. We have received your application and are in the process of assigning you to a polling location for Election Day.*

*Enclosed in this packet you will find information regarding the mandatory training session. The training is eight hours. Please follow the attached instructions and register for a training class today. Once we have placed you in a polling location, we will send you a Notice-to-Serve card. You must return the bottom portion of that card to confirm that you will work on Election Day.*

*If you have any questions regarding training or your responsibilities as a poll worker, please call 216....*

*“It’s fun to work with veteran poll workers who know so much about the community.”*

*—College poll worker, Cleveland State University*

## Recruitment Methods

Recruiting students is similar to any other poll worker recruitment campaign, including the use of incentives, selection of a message, and use of proper outreach tools. But effectively reaching and motivating potential student poll workers involves additional challenges.

**Create incentives.** Motivating students to become poll workers begins with understanding the primary incentives for their participation. For college students, the three primary incentives are course credit, money, and fulfilling civic duty.

- **Give course credit.** Course credit, or offering Election Day work as an alternative to a class assignment, is an attractive incentive, especially when paired with the incentive of pay for the day’s work. Courses can be designed around Election Day poll work.
- **Money talks.** Marketing poll work and training as a chance to make some quick cash is universally successful. Poll workers are paid for their Election Day service, and most election jurisdictions also provide compensation for the training sessions. Jurisdictions determine the stipend, usually in the \$50 to \$250 range. Promoting the stipend provided by the election authority should attract many cash-strapped students. Schools that are able to provide an additional stipend from the college find it even easier to motivate students to turn out at 5:30 a.m. on Election Day.

- **Civic responsibility.** Many students regard poll work as an opportunity to play an important role in the political process—to become involved and to feel, perhaps for the first time, like responsible adult citizens.
- **Other incentives.** Schools offer a variety of incentives, which, although they do not always attract students to work on Election Day, nonetheless raise the energy level and make poll work a more pleasurable experience. For example, a program at the University of Indiana-Purdue University gave student poll workers invitations to Election Night parties thrown by the political parties. The chance to celebrate in a relaxed, festive setting with political and community leaders proved extremely popular among the students and added a touch of glamor to a long, tiring day.

Other successful incentives include—

- An excused absence from classes.
- Mention of poll-work experience on scholarship applications and resumes.
- Free T-shirts or sweatshirts.
- Coupons for lunch on Election Day.
- Free transportation.

Finally, students always appreciate public recognition for a job well done. Some schools hold ceremonies or luncheons to thank students and publicly recognize their contribution, or they add mention of poll-work service to regularly scheduled events. For example, the graduation ceremony at Roxbury Community College featured speakers who praised poll-working students for “carrying the torch of leadership” among a new, young group of political activists, and the college presented course diplomas and award plaques to deserving students. Another idea is to invite a public official (e.g., mayor, council person, State representative) to a post-election celebration for poll workers. In Boston in 2006, student poll workers were invited to a reception with the mayor.

**Develop a message.** To a greater degree than the general population, college students lack a clear idea of what a poll worker does and do not realize they can serve. Recruiting materials and presentations should explain basic poll worker duties and the financial stipend, but they should also emphasize the important role poll workers play in the democratic process. Explaining the impact students can have in implementing citizens’ right to vote and the importance of counting ballots accurately can help persuade students that the role is an important one and motivate them to want to participate. When designing recruitment materials, consider including photos of



*Photo credit: Suffolk University*

*“Just put up fliers saying you get paid, and anyone without a job will jump at the opportunity.”*

*—College student in focus group, Cleveland State University*

**SAMPLE**

*Adapted from Cleveland State University Faculty Senate*

**Approved Excused Absences for College Student Poll Workers**

**Whereas:**

- The [XYZ Election Jurisdiction] is undertaking a major effort to recruit new persons into serving as poll workers for the November Elections, with over [#] persons needed to qualify and serve as poll workers;
- The work of a poll worker has become more demanding than in past years due to new technology at the polls, new laws governing voter ID, provisional ballots, and disabled voter access, and the correct implementation requires analytic, highly competent poll workers; and
- Students have expressed worry about whether they can serve as a poll worker without academic penalties– thus greatly reducing the number of students who will be willing to serve as poll workers;

It is proposed that the Faculty Senate enact the following as an amendment to the Missed Class Policy:

**Poll Worker Excused Absence Policy**

1. [ABC College/University] faculty are required to excuse from class attendance and from any assignments, quizzes and other work otherwise due during the period including the day (November x) before the General Election from 6:00 pm through Election Day (November xx), all students who serve in any of the official poll worker and polling support positions (which can include, e.g., polling place translators, technical support for e-voting machines) for the [XYZ Election Jurisdiction].
2. Any [ABC College/University] student who desires to exercise the excused poll worker service option must:
  - (a) have officially applied and been selected to serve;
  - (b) be scheduled for or have completed training by xx weeks before Election Day;
  - (c) inform the faculty whose classes are affected in writing (electronically or in whatever manner the particular faculty member requests) no later than by October xx;
  - (d) arrange to make up any course work or quizzes due to their absence; and
  - (e) provide official documentation to the faculty member at a later appropriate point of having served as a poll worker or in a polling support position. At all times the responsibility for making up coursework rests with the student.

\*\*\*\*\*

students and quotes from them about why they liked being a poll worker, an exciting moment while volunteering, or why their participation was important. Students can be effective persuaders of other students.

Similarly, recruitment materials should try to counterbalance some students' negative perceptions of being a poll worker. Student comments have included—

- “It’s boring.”
- “Spending the entire day with ‘old people’ is not appealing.”
- “I’ll be the only young person there.”
- “I don’t want to just sit there all day.”
- I want to do something important like working for a candidate.”

### A Word of Caution

Honor the importance of ALL poll workers. In designing your recruitment message for college students (particularly if you are sharing it with the media), be careful not to inadvertently insult your older, veteran poll workers, who remain the backbone of your team. Rather than emphasizing the need for young people, which might make the veterans feel rejected or unappreciated, emphasize the need for new poll workers to replace those lost to attrition and for new workers with special skills.

## Recruitment Tools

**Personal contact is best.** Face-to-face recruitment and personal contact are the most effective and successful recruitment methods. Being asked to participate by a friend, student leader, or professor is persuasive. Consider the following effective strategies:

- **Peer networks.** Many schools use student workers to recruit fellow students as poll workers. A single motivated student leader or recruiter, using natural peer groups and existing networks, can reach an impressive number of students. For example, eight youth leaders for the Los Angeles Conservation Corps recruited 152 poll workers, 120 of whom worked on Election Day.
- **Professors as partners.** College professors incorporate student poll work into class curricula in a variety of ways. Professors at several colleges have used poll work as a service-learning opportunity or have offered poll work in lieu of a class research paper. Other professors integrate poll work into their curricula and give students class credit or extra credit.

*“Working with people from my neighborhood gave me a sense of being, a sense of purpose.”*

—College poll worker, Roxbury Community College



**Did You Know?**  
Not having enough poll workers can force a polling site to close or lead to delays at the voting booth. According to election officials, the result could prevent people from exercising their right to vote.

# Help North Texas Vote

college program



**Election Day is November 2, 2004**

Sign up to become part of the Help North Texas Vote College Program and take on a larger role in the United States election process. The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and assuring access in all our communities is critical. Because of this, it is imperative that the election process runs smoothly for everyone. A large part of this includes the people that actually work the polls on the Election Day. By signing up on the HNTV website, you will provide your name to the county in which you are registered to vote, and if there is a need for poll workers in that county, it is very possible that you will be called upon to serve on Election Day, November 2, 2004.



You Can Make The Difference!

**BE A POLL WORKER!**

**The Need for Poll Workers**

The number of poll workers serving on Election Day is consistently not adequate, according to election officials in Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant counties. While an inadequate number of poll workers is a significant problem of its own, an added burden results from the lack of bilingual poll workers. All three aforementioned counties have a need for bilingual workers that includes both Spanish and Vietnamese-speaking workers.

[www.helpnorthtexasvote.com](http://www.helpnorthtexasvote.com)

To those who vote, we salute you. But for some, casting a ballot isn't enough. They are America's poll workers, and they make our votes count.

polling places need **Smiling faces**




Our polling places need your smiling faces — nearly two million of them. So join a new generation of poll workers, and help ensure America's voice is heard.



Contact your area Golden Key chapter today




WE NEED YOU!




**Grand Rapids Community College and the City of Grand Rapids College Pollworker Program**

The GRCC Job Placement Center will be working, in conjunction with The City of Grand Rapids, to recruit up to 200 college students to work as pollworkers for the **November 7th state election. Students will be paid \$125** for the assignment and will be required to attend a paid training session prior to Election Day (after applying, you will be notified of the available training sessions).

 Grand Rapids Community College

To learn more, visit:  
The Job Placement Center, Room 103 Main • Phone: (616) 234-3738 • E-mail: [callen@gbcc.edu](mailto:callen@gbcc.edu)  
[www.grcc.edu/collegepollworkers](http://www.grcc.edu/collegepollworkers)



Even if poll work is not incorporated into the curriculum for extra credit, promoting the program in classes has proven to be a very effective recruitment tool in many schools. Presentations in classes on communication, business, psychology, philosophy, and government have proven highly successful in recruiting students.

- **Student activities office.** Getting the word out to students about a paid “volunteer” opportunity like poll work is a natural function for many student activities or student life offices. Staff in these offices often know many students by name and can personally recruit those who they think will be interested.

For example, in the autumn of 2005, an election official asked the student activities office at Illinois Central College to recruit students for the March 2006 primary election. By offering a service credit and a stipend paid by the county, the office easily recruited 10 students as poll workers in a very short time.

- **Student groups.** Outreach to large student groups is an effective recruiting tool on campuses with strong student organizations. Informal meetings with student civic organizations give poll worker recruiters an opportunity to quickly reach a large group of students.

For example, the Golden Key chapter at the University of Tennessee collaborated with the Student Government Association, the Intra-Fraternity Council, the Pan-Hellenic Association, and Team Vols (a large volunteer organization) to recruit more than 140 student poll workers.

**Other recruitment tools.** Schools use a variety of approaches that promote student awareness of poll worker opportunities, although none by itself is extremely effective as a recruitment tool. The key is to use several different approaches so that students receive the message repeatedly in different ways. Schools should begin their recruitment promotion during registration and welcome week activities. Tools and techniques include the following:

- **Table tents, fliers, posters, banners, and campus bulletin boards.** Students report that their main sources of information on campus are table tents, fliers, and posters in dining halls, student unions, and other high-traffic areas around campus. Some schools have campus bulletin boards or television monitors that students regularly check for upcoming events and activities.
- **Information tables.** Many recruitment programs set up information tables in high-traffic areas to hand out materials and application forms. Although some programs set up their tables only daily or once a week, others create campuswide



### **Tips for Schools**

*If you feed them, they will come. The best way to attract students to an information table is to offer free food and fun. Northampton Community College found that its most successful recruitment strategy was a “Recruitment Day” that included tables set up in strategic spots around the campus. These tables featured food, a magician, and a caricaturist to attract attention to the poll worker materials. In a single day, 100 students were recruited.*



excitement with one big “Recruitment Day” and recruit as many students as possible on that day.

Many schools find that providing information tables during welcome week and other campus events yields large numbers of student applicants. One caveat is that this approach can generate a large number of applicants who do not follow through to Election Day.

- **E-mail and Web sites.** Internet recruiting at large universities and at colleges with a well-established broadcast e-mail or listserv system is an efficient and effective way to reach students. Some election jurisdictions regularly ask local schools to send out campuswide electronic recruitment messages and do no other form of student recruitment. Cleveland State University, with a student body of 16,000, cited mass e-mailing as one of its most effective recruitment strategies.

When a student body is accustomed to relying on the college Web site for information and downloading forms, it is a good idea to provide a Web site that serves as “Poll Worker Recruitment Central,” providing information on local requirements for poll work, application forms, and links to local election jurisdictions. Even greater efficiencies can be obtained if the schools’ election jurisdictions are able to accept electronic applications. This way, the school can monitor which students apply for poll worker service and then provide followup. These sites can save staff time and are convenient for students.

**Caution:** It is crucial to know how students receive information from the college administration. Electronic campaigns are not very effective at colleges where e-mail and listservs are not the primary means of reaching the student body.

- **Media.** Paid ads or public service announcements in campus publications or on student radio shows usually do not directly generate applications, but they are effective in heightening the level of awareness on campus.

Ads in noncampus media (newspapers, radio, and TV) also aid in student recruitment and serve a public relations function when students see their school’s program mentioned in the general media. They see that poll service has importance in the greater community and will pay more attention than if they simply receive a flyer on campus. In addition to serving as a recruitment tool, the local media can bring good publicity to the school and the election jurisdiction itself.



*Photo credit: Suffolk University*



- Methods of gaining attention from both local and campus media include—
  - Writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
  - Inviting local media to your kickoff event.
  - Sending a press release to local minority and foreign-language media.
  - Sending press releases to public access bulletin boards, libraries, and other areas where students congregate.

**The special challenge of recruiting for State and local elections.** There is naturally more excitement on campuses about national elections, especially presidential elections, than for local and State elections, so it is easier to recruit student poll workers for a presidential race. The same recruitment and incentive efforts are required for off-year elections as for presidential elections, but schools and jurisdictions should realize that it will take more effort to attract student interest.

Fortunately, jurisdictions often staff fewer poll workers for local elections because voter turnout tends to be lower, and some jurisdictions do not use college students for off-year elections, local elections, or primaries.

### **Tip**

**The Cool Factor.** *Recruitment will be most successful if it generates excitement on campus about volunteering on Election Day. The more students involved as multipliers, the better. For example, California State University, Long Beach, had T-shirts made that said, “Love Me, I’m a Poll Worker.” When students filled out a poll worker application, they were given T-shirts and were asked to wear them around campus. Cheerleaders and other campus groups wore them to school events. Promotional tools such as these raise campuswide awareness of the program and create a “cool factor” that encourages participation.*



## **MEDIA RELEASE (Example)**

**CONTACT:** Name  
Phone

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Date

### **COLLEGE POLLWORKERS NEEDED!**

**Joint Recruitment Effort Between  
Grand Rapids Community College  
and Grand Rapids City Clerk**

**Kick-Off Event  
Wednesday, September 13, 2006  
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Bostwick Commons**

Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) and the Grand Rapids City Clerk are recruiting college students for appointment as election workers for the upcoming General Election to be held on November 7, 2006. The recruitment officially kicks off during GRCC's "Welcome Week" event on September 13<sup>th</sup> between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. located on the Bostwick Commons. Interested students can also go to [www.grcc.edu/collegepollworkers](http://www.grcc.edu/collegepollworkers) or contact the Job Placement Center directly.

The college pollworker program is an important collaboration, leading the nation in a growing interest to use college students as pollworkers. The City will collaborate with Grand Rapids Community College in the development of a plan for recruitment and training of college students for appointment as election workers. The partnership is designed to motivate students to be involved the electoral process.

GRCC students interested in applying for appointment as a pollworker must be registered voters in Kent County, complete an application form, and attend a mandatory training class. Students appointed will be paid \$125 for election day pay and \$7.50 per hour for the training class.

City Clerk Terri Hegarty said that "My hope is that the college students will vote and adopt a lifelong commitment to civic involvement if they are encouraged and integrated into the democratic system at an early age."



## In This Chapter

- Outreach Techniques
- Tips for Schools: Public Recognition

Minority and bilingual students can be important to the success of poll worker programs in jurisdictions where the population is heterogeneous. Let these students know that their participation is highly valued.

Attracting bilingual poll workers is not just good community relations; it is Federal law. Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires certain jurisdictions to make language assistance available at polling locations for citizens with limited English proficiency. College students who have second-language skills can help jurisdictions meet this Federal requirement. The *Federal Register* lists these jurisdictions at [http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/sec\\_203/203\\_notice.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/sec_203/203_notice.pdf).

## Outreach Techniques

The following outreach techniques have been used to recruit minority or bilingual students:

- **Target organizations, groups, and classes that attract minorities.** These organizations and departments may provide the key to creating a more diverse base of student poll workers.

The University of North Texas held a pizza party at its multicultural center to attract bilingual students. The university's poll worker recruitment program also sought out academic and civic groups, fraternities and sororities, religious and spiritual groups, and other organizations that attract bilingual students. The program also contacted faculty who teach classes with a large percentage of bilingual students.

- **Work with a community-based organization.** Sometimes neighborhood recruiting is a good strategy. Tap into professional and civic organizations such as local chapters of the National Association of Asian American Professionals, National Council of la Raza, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Enlisting bilingual and minority students to recruit within their communities can also be very effective.

For example, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps' "Girls Today, Women Tomorrow" program hired eight students to be team leaders and to recruit other students. They



Photo credit: Cleveland State University

recruited 152 college poll workers, 75 percent of whom were bilingual. Of those, 120 served at the polls.

- **Offer a class on civil rights and political participation.** Roxbury Community College in Boston, which has a predominantly African-American and Hispanic student body, included in its 2004 poll worker program a course on the democratic process, the history of civil rights in the United States, and how individuals can make a difference. Students were encouraged to participate in political and civic activities and to educate their friends. As a result, these students embraced the task of encouraging their generation and their neighbors to vote. They came to see their role as peer-educators as pivotal. Although money was initially the biggest incentive for these students to sign up, taking part in a class that discussed history, voting rights, and the importance of civic participation kept them engaged. (See **Integrating Poll Work Into the Classroom** for more details on this curriculum.)

Consider taking the following steps to get to the heart of the minority and bilingual student population:

- Recruit through student organizations that represent minority and/or bilingual students (minority student unions, fraternities/sororities, religious and spiritual groups, multicultural or international centers).
- Ask professors and students in African-American, ethnic, or international studies departments (Asian/Pacific, Latin American, or African studies) to serve as recruiters.
- Recruit in advanced language classes.
- Invite inspiring role models to speak about voting rights and political participation.
- Ask local media that serve minority and ethnic or foreign-language populations (radio stations, TV news shows, newspapers, Web sites, etc.) to promote the college poll worker program.

International students who are ineligible to serve as poll workers can fill other roles. Some programs employ international students in jobs that do not explicitly require U.S. citizenship, such as—

- Translators or interpreters.
- Runners.
- Voting center coordinators.



*“If not for the class, we wouldn’t have been poll workers. We had a much better appreciation of voting. We heard from political speakers. It opened our eyes to legislative issues like the Voting Rights Act.”*

*—Student poll worker, Roxbury Community College*

- Processors of voter registration applications.
- Telephone receptionists at election headquarters.

Election office liaisons should check their State's eligibility requirements. In addition, some States require Election Day workers to have Social Security numbers, even if they do not require citizenship.

### Tips for Schools: Public Recognition

Many students who have served as poll workers emphasize the importance of receiving public recognition for their service. This public acknowledgment may deepen their commitment to continuing community service. At Roxbury Community College, the program held a graduation ceremony and provided certificates of participation. Students expressed pride in their participation and believed they had an important civic role to play within their communities.

*“Though the extra paperwork and separate training sessions for the students were time-consuming, nevertheless, we do strongly think that this program is worthwhile and hope to continue recruiting college students for future elections. In addition to having their much-needed help, we also hope that their involvement in the electoral process will lead to greater civic interest and participation in the future.”*

*—Helen Wong, Language Coordinator, Boston Election Department, MA*





## In This Chapter

- Announcements in Class
- Sample Letter to Faculty
- Excused Absences
- Extra Credit
- Service Learning Requirement
- Create a New Class
- Suggestions for a Course Reading List
- Sample Curriculum

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Integrating poll work into the classroom is a good way to reach a fresh pool of students every year and to show them the importance of poll work in the democratic process. There are many ways to integrate the poll worker experience into the classroom. Some popular methods are discussed below.

It is important that students be granted an excused absence from all their classes on Election Day and for training as well. Schools can accomplish this in several ways. A memorandum of understanding (MOU), signed at the beginning of the year between the school and the election authority, may make this a schoolwide policy; the faculty senate may pass an Election Day excused absence policy; or an individual professor may give students a letter to their other professors requesting excused absences on Election Day.

Schools planning to integrate poll service into class work should allow time for internal faculty review and approval. Presenting the idea at faculty meetings in the spring semester preceding a general election will give faculty time to consider the options for integration into their courses.

## Announcements in Class

The basic technique for integrating poll work into a class is for the campus champion to make a brief presentation of the program, sometimes accompanied by an election office liaison. The campus champion often targets classes related to the political system, although other classes can, and have, been used. The campus champion explains the need for young and intelligent poll workers, what the job entails, and the requirements for service. It is critical to have application forms available for interested students to fill out on the spot.

For some programs, this is the extent of the school's role. The election office liaison collects the applications and contacts students directly, giving training and placement details, as the election jurisdiction would with any volunteer. The professor is



**Sample Letter to Faculty  
Seeking Their Involvement in a College Pollworker Program**

Dear Professor \_\_\_\_:

As you may be aware, our college/university has initiated a partnership with the local Elections Office. We are working together to recruit and train college students to work as Election Day workers. Our local Elections Office faces a shortage of qualified pollworkers every year and we feel confident our students could fill those positions while gaining important hands-on experience in the democratic process.

The job of a pollworker is often underrated and misunderstood. They actually exercise critical powers in their service as the gate keepers for the entire election system on Election Day. They are the first-line protection for election legality and for voter franchise protection. They decide:

- whether a voter's signature is sufficiently like the poll registry to permit the person to vote
- whether a person's ID is deemed sufficient for casting a vote [*only in those states with ID requirements*]
- what kind of ballot will be given to the voter ("regular" or "provisional")
- whether to eject persons from the polling place for voter intimidation tactics
- how to help move lines along so that voters can vote efficiently
- how to set up and monitor the voting machines for privacy and security
- whether to help voters in other ways, such as by directing them to the proper precinct tables

We would like your assistance in recruiting students to these positions. Research has shown that hearing about the opportunity to be a pollworker in a class and having a professor endorse the idea is one of the best ways to attract students. If you are amenable, we would like to schedule a 15 minute presentation to your Government 101 class the week of September 15-19. In that presentation we will describe the opportunity and its requirements and provide applications to interested students.

In addition, if you are interested, we would like to discuss ways that you can integrate the pollworker experience into your class as an extra credit assignment, a service learning opportunity, or even as part of your curriculum. Across the country, professors are beginning to see the value of incorporating this real life experience into their class plans. Your participation would greatly strengthen our recruitment efforts.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Sincerely,

asked only to give class time for the presentation. No followup by the school is required.

This approach works particularly well at large universities with big introduction to government classes that provide a potential pool of hundreds of students who are interested in the political process. For example, in 2004 the campus champion at Indiana University-Purdue University sent an e-mail to 10 professors who teach large classes and asked them to announce the opportunity in class. Students were promised the normal poll worker pay, a day off from classes, and the opportunity to attend either of the political parties' "after parties." Many students expressed interest, and 75 were trained on campus as poll workers.

Smaller schools and community colleges with fewer full-time students find that they have to provide more incentives and coordinate the program from beginning to end to recruit and retain a significant number of poll workers.

### Excused Absences

The program will fail if students are not granted an excused absence from all classes on Election Day. If one professor gives extra credit to those who serve as poll workers, but another professor schedules an exam for that day, some students will not be able to work at the polls. Schools should be encouraged to adopt a general policy of excused absence for poll service on Election Day. Ideally, schools should require or request that professors do not schedule exams or research paper deadlines on that day.

### Extra Credit

Extra credit for poll work is a strong incentive for students. The decision to offer extra credit is made either by individual professors or an entire department. Some courses—political science, American government, civics, sociology, American history, or public policy—are obviously suitable for Election Day extra credit. A school will usually require that alternative extra-credit options be offered to those students who cannot volunteer to work the polls for whatever reason (work schedule conflicts, ineligibility due to residency requirements). Be aware, however, that some university regulations do not allow students to be paid for work for which they are receiving class credit.

At California State University, Long Beach, for example, all professors teaching one of the introduction to American government classes in the fall semester offer 5 to 10 extra points for being a poll worker. This provides a pool of almost 2,000 students with a strong incentive to serve as poll workers. The campus champion visits the classes with an election office liaison, and they spend 15 minutes explaining

### Tips for Schools

*Alternative extra-credit ideas for those who cannot serve as poll workers on Election Day—*

- *Volunteer for a local political campaign.*
- *Volunteer with an advocacy campaign or civic action organization involved with election reform or monitoring issues.*
- *Create your own blog on political issues.*
- *Facilitate other students' applications for absentee ballots.*
- *Work for a Get Out The Vote effort.*
- *Work on a voter registration drive.*
- *Volunteer for your local election board office before Election Day.*
- *Write a paper on some aspect of the electoral process.*
- *Write an essay on the importance of voting.*

the opportunity and answering questions. They also hand out brochures and application forms, which are collected at the end of class. In 2002, the first year of their program, 280 students applied and more than 230 students worked the polls in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This number has increased each year since then.

Some professors offer the option of poll worker service in lieu of another class assignment. A professor at Suffolk University in Boston invited honor students in a political science class to serve as poll workers instead of writing one paper. Eight of the ten students chose to serve.

Schools should be aware, however, that offering extra credit creates another layer of administrative duties for the school. Individual professors or the campus champion will have to monitor student interest, facilitate training, and site placement, and create a system to confirm students' service to qualify for the extra credit.

**The Importance of Tracking.** Election officials need to be able to tell professors quickly which students served at the polls so extra credit can be factored into their grades. This also enables the election jurisdiction to gauge the number of students they need to recruit each year.

### Service Learning Requirement

Service learning is a community-service requirement formally connected to the academic curriculum. Increasingly, service learning is required for graduation, and faculties are gaining experience in integrating service opportunities into their curricula. Introducing poll work as a service-learning opportunity is relatively easy if faculty are given enough time to incorporate it into curricula.

A valuable resource for implementing service-learning curriculum components is Campus Compact, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service learning in higher education ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)). Its Web site provides sample curricula that incorporate service learning, which could be modified to promote student poll worker initiatives. Professor David Redlawsk, a political science professor at the University of Iowa, teaches a local politics class with a service-learning component. Many students have volunteered to work on political campaigns as part of his class, and Prof. Redlawsk expanded the program in 2005 to offer poll work as a service-learning option. Below is an excerpt from Redlawsk's course curriculum in which he explains the required service-learning component.



*Completion of a service learning/civic engagement project focused on local politics in Johnson County is required. This is an election year for the city council of Iowa City and for other cities in our county. In addition, there is a campaign surrounding whether Iowa City should establish a municipal electric utility. Other groups are also active in the local political scene. During the semester, you will work with one of the city council campaigns, as a poll worker for Johnson County or with some other entity directly involved in local politics. This involvement will mean actively participating, maintaining a journal of your experiences, and sharing your reflections on appropriate days as listed in the syllabus.*

*The idea is that you will provide something of value to the campaign or organization and at the same time you will have 'real-world' experiences that should connect to our in-class activities and local government simulation. This project is expected to take a minimum of 40 hours over the semester including your organization/campaign work, your journaling activities, and in-class reflections.*

*By participate, I mean you will do useful work for the organization—something of value—and you will reflect on that experience in an ongoing journal, considering how what you experience in 'real' local politics does or does not fit with what we learn from our texts, discussions, and visitors.*

### Create a New Class

Some schools have created entire classes around their poll worker programs. In general, they include the required election training, additional training by the school, and seminars on political participation, and the democratic process. Some are semester-long courses, while others are 4-week seminars. Schools have offered from one to three credits for the class. The main difficulty is finding a professor who is interested in developing and teaching a new class.

Here are some examples of poll worker courses.

- In 2004, Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield, Connecticut, structured a two-credit course around working at the polls. The course included material on the history of elections in America, the role of State and local governments, and the variety of election regulations across the country, as well as poll worker training sessions.



- Roxbury Community College offered a one-credit class in 2004 taught by an outside consultant who runs a program called “Dunk the Vote Leadership Institute” to engage youth in the political system. He adapted his institute’s leadership training to include serving at the polls on Election Day. This program proved extremely effective in enlisting minority students.

Professors can adapt curricula from schools that currently incorporate poll worker programs in courses. Another valuable resource for academic administrators is a handbook, “Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Political Engagement,” published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This handbook contains the curricula of 21 courses and programs designed to foster informed political activity and to promote an understanding of electoral politics at the local, State, and national levels. A list of relevant curricula is also available on the Carnegie Foundation Web site at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/index.asp?key=25>.

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### Suggestions for a Course Reading List

*The Lanahan Readings in State and Local Government.* John R. Baker (ed.). Baltimore: Lanahan Publishers, 2001.

*City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy*, 4th Ed. Dennis R. Judd and Todd Swanstrom. Longman Publishers, 2003.

*High Tech Grass Roots: The Professionalization of Local Elections.* J. Cherie Strachan. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

*Education for Democracy.* Benjamin R. Barber and Richard M. Battistoni (eds.). Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993.

*An Owners Manual for Public Life.* Harry C. Boyle and Kathryn Stoff Hogg. Minnesota: Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, 1992.

*Democracy in America.* Alexis de Tocqueville. New York: Penguin Group, 1956.

*The Public and its Problems.* John Dewey. Swallow Press, 1927.

*National Service, Citizenship, and Political Education.* Eric Gorham. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

*“The class gave me the knowledge to affect change and to teach others in my neighborhood.”*

*—Student poll worker, Roxbury Community College*



“Give Us the Ballot: We Will Transform the South.” Martin Luther King, Jr. In James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope*. San Francisco: Harper, 1986.

“The Youth Service Movement: America’s Trump Card in Revitalizing Democracy.” Matthew Moseley. *National Civic Review*, Summer/Fall, 1995.

### **A Reading List Drawn From Three Courses**

*Local Politics*. Professor David Redlawsk, University of Iowa.

*Citizen Education*. Professor James Farr, University of Minnesota.

*Becoming a Public Citizen: Connecting Community Service and Public Leadership*. Professors Ruth Mandel and Tobi Walker, Rutgers University.



## Sample Curriculum

### **Student Political Participation**

**Roxbury Community College (Boston, MA)**

**Instructor: Ron Bell, Dunk the Vote Leadership Institute**

#### **Course Description:**

This one-credit course was designed to encourage and develop student voter participation and political activism. Students attended four seminars on the political process and were required to attend a pollworker training workshop and serve as pollworkers on Election Day. They were also encouraged to recruit other students to attend film viewings and events with young role model speakers who are actively involved in local politics and voter activism. They had several writing and speaking assignments.

In addition to the knowledge gained of government and the political process, students acquired skills in writing, public speaking, and social interaction. The course afforded an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to students' lives and to develop civic activist skills by working as a pollworker and recruiting other students.

#### **Seminars:**

1. **Voting and Democracy: Analysis of the Presidential Election of 2004**  
Panel discussion focusing on the attention given to 1) voter registration; 2) appealing to candidate constituencies; 3) the political processes and the inauguration of new voting technology; 4) how these factors affected the outcome. Potential panelists included local politicians and government officials.
2. **Voting and the Constitution: Your Elected Officials**  
Panel discussions with local officials on:
  - Connecting with a local constituency in the age of media and Internet
  - The decision making process in your office – who takes responsibility?
  - Crisis and special event handling – is there a defined plan?
3. **What Does Our Vote Accomplish: The Power of the Vote**  
Focus on “How People Vote,” including what motivates voter to go to the polls and what they connect with in a candidate. Episodes of the Showtime mini-series, “The American Candidate,” will be shown and analyzed.
4. **Current Issues and Voting: Connecting with the Issues**  
Viewing and analysis of “American Candidate” but focus on how voters base their choice on “character” versus “the issues.” Discussion seeks to define how voters determine a candidate’s position on the issues and how they filter those perceptions through their own personal values and activism.

## In This Chapter

- The Problem of Attrition
- Effective Strategies
- Sample Forms To Track Student Participation

## The Problem of Attrition

Filling out an application is just the beginning. After students are recruited, keeping them interested and committed through training and turning out at daybreak on Election Day requires sustained and frequent personal contact.

Attrition is a serious drawback to employing students as poll workers. College-based programs have an average Election Day participation of one-third to one-half of those who initially express interest. This is partly due to the difficulty some jurisdictions have in training and placing students. Time commitment, given the competing demands of school and job, is also a major factor in student dropout.

The following two examples illustrate the historically low poll-service rates of college students:

- A Los Angeles County election official reported that in 2004, only half of the 2,000 students who filled out applications served on Election Day. Some of these were never given assignments, but many were no-shows.
- Grand Rapids Community College, working with the Grand Rapids City Clerk's Office, received 263 student applications in 2006. Of these, only 89 students attended training and 82 worked on Election Day—a retention rate of 31 percent.

The sharpest attrition occurs between filling out applications and the training sessions. When students have demonstrated their commitment by attending training (and being inspired and excited about their Election Day responsibilities), they usually serve on Election Day. Make training sessions as accessible as possible for students and remind them to attend.

In Cuyahoga County, election officials use an automated calling system to remind everyone who submits a poll worker application to sign up for a training session.



## Tips for Schools and Election Officials

**The Importance of Frequent Reminders.** *School programs that closely track which students sign up to work and receive placements appear to have the best retention rates. Calling, e-mailing, and/or text-messaging students with reminders is an effective way to avoid no-shows. Consider communicating with each student—*

- *When his or her application is received.*
- *To provide training times and dates.*
- *To remind him or her to attend training.*
- *To confirm assignments the week before Election Day.*
- *To motivate the day before Election Day.*
- *To thank him or her after the election.*

## Effective Strategies

If students know that their participation will be verified and that they will not receive the promised incentives (especially the work stipend or class credit) if they do not show up, they will perform more reliably.

- **Substitute poll worker service for class assignments.** A Maryland professor assigns a 1-page paper to students who serve as poll workers. If they fail to serve on Election Day, that 1-page paper becomes a 10-page assignment.
- **Use peer pressure to improve retention rates.** In some programs, each student is paired with a “buddy” who is responsible for making sure the other attends training and works on Election Day. The “buddies” use text messaging or instant messaging to keep in touch.

If poll work is required as part of a class or for extra credit, schools must verify that a student served. Most election jurisdictions provide a “proof of service” form that the polling-site manager or monitor signs on Election Day. In addition, in the weeks after the election, many jurisdictions send a list to the college of all students who worked on Election Day. Schools should be able to provide a list of those students who claim they worked and have an election official confirm it. Some schools even require every student to call the school when they arrive at the polls; however, the more students involved in the program, the less feasible is this kind of verification.

On the following pages are two sample worksheets that may help track student participation. The first is an attachment for each student’s application that records how they were recruited, if they were placed in an assignment (or why not), if they attended training, and if they served on Election Day. The second worksheet synthesizes this information for the program as a whole.

## Tips for Election Officials

**With a Little Help From Their Friends.** Many students want to work with friends. Their reasons are varied: they prefer the social aspect of working with a friend, they do not want to spend 12 hours with strangers, or they are too intimidated to go alone. They believe signing up in pairs is an attractive option. Being asked to work by a friend can also be a big incentive. Some jurisdictions have found that if friends were not placed together at the same precinct, both dropped out. Many election jurisdictions, however, do not want to place students with friends because they fear the students will not pay attention to the job. They also want to have experienced workers overseeing new workers. Seeking a balance is probably the best approach.



### Sample Attachment for Student Applications

- Placed
- Attended training
- Served

How did the student hear about the pollworker opportunity? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**If placed:**

- Where? \_\_\_\_\_

**If not placed:**

- Did not attend training
- Ineligible – registered in other jurisdiction
- Ineligible – citizenship
- Ineligible – not registered
- Ineligible – not affiliated with political party
- Applied late
- Unable to contact
- Not placed for another reason

**If did not serve:**

- Did not attend training
- No show
- Cancelled

**Reason cancelled or no show:**

- Transportation issue
- Conflicting class schedule
- Conflicting work schedule
- Don't know/no reason given

### Sample Worksheet for Tracking Participation

Name of College/University: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the highlighted boxes with the number of students in that category.

Please list the different roles or jobs the students played, and the number of each:

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Precinct worker | _____ |
| Other roles:    | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |
| _____           | _____ |

# Number served

# Number placed

# Number not served

# Not attend training

# No Shows

# Cancelled

# Transportation issues

# Conflicting class schedule

# Conflicting work schedule

# Don't know/no reason given

# Applications received

# Number not placed

# Did not attend training

# Ineligible because registered in other jurisdiction

# Ineligible because of citizenship

# Ineligible because not registered

# Ineligible because not affiliated with political party

# Applied late

# Unable to contact

# Felony conviction

# Not placed for other reason

## In This Chapter

- Training Content
- Augmenting Poll Worker Training
- Training for Intergenerational Communication

In most jurisdictions, students will be required to take the training provided by the local election jurisdiction. Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, election officials will offer several different times, and locations for poll worker training. If these are convenient for students, they can simply sign up through the jurisdiction for the time and location they prefer.

If possible, jurisdictions should consider the students' scheduling needs. Students who live on campus may prefer a weekend training session, while those who commute may prefer training during the week when they are on campus for classes.

Many schools, however, find that the location and timing of training is not convenient for their students. Sometimes training locations are accessible only by car, or training sessions are held during class hours. Schools may wish to request special training on campus. Many election officials are happy to do this, especially if there are many students to train. Holding training on campus facilitates retention of recruits.

This solution is not always possible. If a school provides students for several jurisdictions, it may be impractical to organize special training sessions on campus for each. It is also difficult to combine training. Although the training may be similar across jurisdictions, each jurisdiction may have slightly different procedures and equipment. For these reasons, most jurisdictions require poll workers to attend jurisdiction-specific training.

## Training Content

Training quality and content vary greatly among election jurisdictions. Although schools cannot dictate the training materials or trainers used by a jurisdiction, they can make suggestions about how students learn best and how trainers can improve students' understanding and retention of the materials they teach.

Students prefer training experiences in which they take part in hands-on demonstrations, including role-playing, and in discussions about situations they may face on Election Day. Role-playing various potential situations is the best way to teach procedures and to quell any fears students may have about their ability to perform well.



*Photo credit: Peoria County-HAVCP-Training, Illinois Central College*



Realism helps, too. Trainers should bring the actual equipment poll workers will use on Election Day. The opportunity to practice on real voting machines is important. Students also generally prefer smaller training sessions. They complain that it is difficult to absorb all the information presented in a large group and that they feel uncomfortable or unwelcome if they ask questions.

### Augmenting Poll Worker Training

Although schools usually do not direct the primary training of students as poll workers, they can provide independent, supplemental training or education. Such instruction can improve students' performance, enrich their experience, and help them understand how poll work contributes to the American democratic process. Election Day itself can be a long, rather tedious day for poll workers. Providing students with a greater understanding of how their work fits into the larger whole promotes pride and a commitment to future electoral participation. Training can include a number of activities and subjects, such as the following:

- Review the United States electoral system.
- Introduce relevant electoral laws, such as the Help America Vote Act.
- Discuss citizenship and civic duty.
- Analyze the development of the right to vote.
- Describe current issues in voting.
- Outline the political process.
- Discuss the special role of local government.

Many college poll workers may also be first-time voters. Election jurisdictions suggest providing an Introduction to Voting class that reviews the voting process and all election-related terminology before sending these students to a regular poll worker training session.

Schools may also provide additional, specialized, task-related training to improve their students' performance on Election Day. This training can include sessions on topics such as multigenerational communication, multicultural sensitivity, and customer service. Examples of supplemental training programs include the following:

### Tip

**Scheduling.** *Students who live on campus may prefer a weekend training session, while those who commute may prefer training during the week, while they are already on campus for classes.*

**Florida Memorial College.** In addition to requiring county-mandated training held on campus, this college required students to attend training activities offered by the school. This additional training included a documentary on the 2000 General Election in Florida, as well as training on constitutional rights, customer service, and multicultural sensitivity. Prominent political figures spoke to the students to motivate and encourage them.

**Eastern Michigan University.** This school required students to attend a special evening training session in which two professors led discussions on the political process and intergenerational communication. Food was provided to keep the energy level high.

### Training for Intergenerational Communication

College students who work an election, either as a poll worker or as an office worker, will probably find that most of the people they work with are 20 to 60 years older than they are. If you are creating a college poll worker program, it is a good idea to include at least a small training segment on intergenerational communication.

Such training should include the following points:

- Dress appropriately. Casual business attire is considered appropriate. Your clothes should cover your midriff and tattoos.
- Remember your manners. Say “please” and “thank you.” Be courteous to everyone.
- Do not swear.
- Do not use personal portable listening devices.
- Keep conversations polite and nonpolitical.
- Offer to do the lifting and moving of equipment and any type of legwork tasks.
- When someone is having difficulty with technology or equipment, ask if you can help. While you are assisting them, remember that older people did not grow up with computers and may not have the technical vocabulary that you do.
- Many elderly people experience hearing loss. Speak clearly and audibly.
- Have patience.



*Photo credit: Cleveland State University*

- Some elderly people use voting as a social outing, and you are part of this occasion. Seeing young people who are polite, helpful, and understanding makes their experience a positive one.
- Remember that you are working for the election officials and must follow any rules and guidelines they give you.

It is equally important to train older poll workers to work with younger colleagues. Students often complain that older poll workers do not treat them with respect and as equals. In training both younger and older poll workers, emphasize their common goals for Election Day. Keeping their attention focused on what they share, rather than on their differences, helps produce cooperation, and mutual respect.



Election officials and schools should evaluate their programs post-election to see how they can improve the process. As part of the evaluation, election jurisdictions should record the number of student applications they receive each year, how students heard about the program (this data can easily be requested on the application form), and how many students actually serve. Knowing which recruitment methods are most effective in your area is crucial to successful program planning.

Student surveys or focus groups examining the quality of training and poll work experience are

also helpful tools for improving your program. Without this feedback, it is hard to know if the program is fulfilling its goals and if it is worth continuing.

Schools can also play a role in evaluating the program. Some schools have used surveys and focus groups to measure the effect of volunteering on students' civic know-how, political involvement, and views of the political process.

Below is a sample student survey.

Thank you for serving as a pollworker in the recent election. In order to improve our efforts at recruiting college students to work as pollworkers, we need your feedback.

Please take a few moments to fill out this survey. There are only 12 questions. All information will be kept confidential, with only aggregate results reported. Please fill in your responses below and bring it to XXXX Office in CAMPUS LOCATION.

Please respond by Date XX, XXXX. [*Consider offering an incentive*] Thank you!

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1. How did you hear of the opportunity to become a pollworker? Check all that apply:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth/other students | <input type="checkbox"/> Ad or article in campus publication                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professor                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Announcement on college website                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College staff person         | <input type="checkbox"/> Announcement on campus radio                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information table            | <input type="checkbox"/> College-wide e-mail                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters/flyers               | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted e-mail (What affiliation or organization? _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Describe: _____)      |  |

2. What motivated you to become a pollworker? Check all that apply:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A friend was doing it                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra credit            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A professor or advisor suggested I do it        | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning experience     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A student group I'm a part of was participating | <input type="checkbox"/> Pay                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Course credit                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of civic duty     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class assignment                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Service learning credit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other. Explain: _____                           |  |

3. Please tell us about the training you received to become a pollworker. Mark how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

|   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
|   | ▼              | ▼     | ▼       | ▼        | ▼                 | ▼          |
| The training location was convenient .....                    | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| The training duration was appropriate .....                   | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| The training adequately covered all the necessary topics..... | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| The trainers knew the subject matter.....                     | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| I was given an opportunity to ask questions .....             | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| The hands-on part of the training was sufficient.....         | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| I felt prepared for the work.....                             | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |
| I was able to perform well at my assignment.....              | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | DK         |

4. Is there any area in which you feel like you needed more training?

Yes – If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

No

5. What suggestions would you give your election jurisdiction to improve your time as a pollworker?

6. What suggestions would you give your school to improve the recruitment of more college pollworkers?

7. Please indicate how likely you are to do the following:

|  | Definitely<br>▼ | Likely<br>▼ | Unsure<br>▼ | Unlikely<br>▼ | Definitely<br>Not<br>▼ |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Recommend working as a pollworker to other students..... | 1.....          | 2.....      | 3.....      | 4.....        | 5.....                 |
| Work as a pollworker in future elections .....           | 1.....          | 2.....      | 3.....      | 4.....        | 5.....                 |
| Vote in the next election.....                           | 1.....          | 2.....      | 3.....      | 4.....        | 5.....                 |

8. Did you vote in this election?

- Yes  
 No

9. Did your experience as a pollworker affect your likelihood to vote in the future? Are you:

- More likely to vote  
 Same  
 Less likely to vote

10. Overall, how would you rate your experience as a pollworker?

- Very satisfied  
 Satisfied  
 Neutral  
 Unsatisfied  
 Very unsatisfied

11. College students play many roles on Election Day, such as precinct worker, roving technician, translator, assistant at headquarters, etc. What was **your** job on Election Day?

12. Please share any stories you may have, either highlights, challenges or lessons you learned from this experience:

◆—————◆  
Thank you! We appreciate your feedback. If you have any questions about this survey, or if you would like to provide additional input, please contact: NAME, PHONE, EMAIL, LOCATION

## In This Chapter

- Designing a Sustainable Program
- Steps To Building a Sustainable Program
- Top 10 Keys to Success for Election Officials
- Top 10 Keys to Success for Schools

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## Designing a Sustainable Program

Election officials depend on a reliable pool of poll workers whom they can call upon to serve several times a year, for many years. These veterans are the core of most poll worker programs. College students are not likely to become part of this core group. Students' class and work schedules change from semester to semester, their addresses may change from year to year, interest ebbs and flows with the type of election, and, after they graduate, students often leave the city or State. When asked in focus groups if they would be willing to commit to more than one election, students unanimously said no, generally citing their uncertain schedules.

Some students, of course, will embrace the experience and consider it their civic duty throughout their lives. Some may become core poll workers many years later. For most students, however, the best that election officials can hope for is opening these students' eyes to the opportunity and possibly persuading them to serve as poll workers from time to time.

Remember that students and younger adults may move more frequently than older adults. Students recommend reaching them via e-mail and their cell phones, two important data points that are not always collected on application forms. Election officials looking for more practical guidance on successful retention practices should refer to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's guidebook on *Successful Practices for Poll Worker Recruitment, Training and Retention*.

A jurisdiction seeking to increase its regular pool of experienced poll workers should consider focusing on community colleges and those State schools where students tend to be local residents, because these students will be more likely to stay in the community after graduation.

## Steps To Building a Sustainable Program

The key to a successful college poll worker program is to establish a sustainable process with a partner school so the election jurisdiction can count on recruiting a certain number of students for every election (or at least every November

*“Recruiting college students is no more difficult than other recruitment strategies, but more worthwhile. Since the 18-to-21-year-old age group often reflects the lowest voter turnout, any effort to involve students in the electoral process is worthwhile.”*

*—Terri Hegarty, City Clerk,  
City of Grand Rapids, MI*

election). The faces may change, but the energy and skills students bring will be a constant.

Because the student body changes every year, education and outreach must be repeated every year. Every new freshman class should be introduced to the idea of working at the polls and provided with the opportunity to do so. Students who hear this message repeated throughout their college career are also more likely to become involved.

This creates a large burden for school employees who must organize and run the program. Without care, this repetitive effort could lead to burnout. The best way to sustain a program and avoid burnout is to ensure that it is as streamlined and integrated with a school's normal functioning as possible. The poll worker program should become part of the school's culture and should be supported with adequate and reliable funding, and resources.

- **Create institutional memory.** An election-official liaison should document the contact at each school, how many students are recruited from each school, and by what recruitment methods. A campus champion should document how recruitment takes place and who performs what roles to develop a program that will survive beyond one person's tenure as campus champion.
- **Sign an MOU.** Signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the election jurisdiction and the school in the first year will ease administration of a student poll worker program in future years. The MOU spells out what roles the school and the election jurisdiction will play and also guarantees that the school's leadership (the president, the faculty senate, etc.) is aware of the program; supports its goals; and provides the institutional infrastructure, resources, and understanding necessary to enable the program to function smoothly.

For example, the MOU might state that the school recognizes the duty of working the polls on Election Day as an automatic excused absence from all classes.

- **Create an Adopt-a-Poll program.** Some counties have created an Adopt-a-Poll program under which organizations agree to provide all the workers for a specific polling location or precinct. If this is allowed in your State, consider developing an agreement for a local college or university to provide all poll workers for certain precincts for every election. This will simplify the process of assigning students and providing followup. The challenge will be to recruit and train enough students each year. Student organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and sport teams might consider adopting a poll as a fundraiser for the group.





- **Incorporate poll work into course curricula.** Including poll work in course curricula and as a service-learning opportunity guarantees a steady stream of students each year.
- **Use professors at the polls.** Encouraging faculty to serve as poll workers is a good way to attract their students as well. The American Association of University Professors ran a pilot program in Maryland in 2006 to encourage faculty to become poll workers.
- **Pay the program administrators a stipend.** Election jurisdictions could pay a normal poll worker stipend to the campus champion who manages the program, as well as to faculty or staff who help to recruit students. This is only a token amount, but it can help encourage and sustain their participation.
- **Use student spokespersons.** Each year, ask students who served as poll workers the previous year to speak to classes and small groups about their experience. This builds on the idea that students who volunteer to work on elections are civic leaders and leaders in their schools. Hearing about the opportunity from another student might motivate other students.

### Top 10 Keys to Success for Election Officials

1. **Start as early as possible.** For a November election, begin mentioning the opportunity to students during their spring semester (end of April to May). Begin collecting and reviewing applications by the end of September or early October.
2. **Review your State's requirements for poll workers** and decide how to include those students who do not meet residency or registration requirements.
3. **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Complete a memorandum of understanding with the school and set up weekly meetings with them. Select one person at your office to serve as the liaison.
4. **At an early date, clarify the roles students will play** in the election as a whole. Be specific about the legal requirements, the application process, the training schedule, and all important dates and deadlines.
5. **Do not underestimate the amount of time it takes to run this initiative.**



6. **After receiving an application, follow up immediately** (phone, e-mail, or letter) with information on the process and timeline. Do not let the students think you forgot about them.
7. **Provide multiple options for training times and locations**, on or off campus.
8. **Keep training classes small** and provide a hands-on experience with voting equipment.
9. **Be very diligent about keeping records.** Make sure you have complete contact information for all students and keep detailed notes on all your correspondence—placement requests, hours available on Election Day, language skills, last minute dropouts, etc.
10. **Encourage students to return for future elections** by thanking them for participating (send thank-you letters, give certificates of appreciation, or throw a party) and paying them promptly.

### Top 10 Keys to Success for Schools

1. **Begin planning 6 to 9 months before an election.** Give faculty time to incorporate the poll worker experience into the curriculum.
2. **Galvanize broad and high-level support from the school administration and faculty.** Include representatives from various fields/departments who can help with the program, such as career services, the political science department, the communications department, the college of law, student life, and public relations.
3. **Implement an excused absence policy** for all college poll workers.
4. **Stay in close contact with your representative from the election jurisdiction.** Arrange weekly meetings.
5. **Include voter registration information with poll worker recruitment materials.** Poll workers are usually required to be registered voters and students may need to register to qualify.
6. **Face-to-face contact is the most effective way to recruit students.** For example, making classroom presentations is often the most successful recruitment method.



7. **A mass e-mailing is the fastest and cheapest way to communicate** with many students and can be an important outreach tool. It cannot, however, provide oversight to maintain student commitment.
8. **Do not assume all students who filled out applications will serve on Election Day.** Continue to remind and motivate them to attend training and show up on Election Day.
9. **Take photographs of students at training sessions, at recruitment events, and on Election Day.** Use these pictures in campus newspapers, on Web sites, and with the local media to garner recognition for the students and to use in recruitment efforts in future years.
10. **Show students appreciation and give recognition to encourage future participation.** Consider a pizza party for the student poll workers, give out certificates of appreciation, or publicly thank the students by listing their names on a Web site.



*“It was a wonderful networking opportunity and a chance to take pride in our country.”*

*—College poll worker, Cleveland State University*



## The Guidebook

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This guidebook is a collection of practices that have been successful in recruiting, training, and retaining college students to serve as poll workers. It is designed to present these practices in an easy-to-follow format so readers can develop their own programs to fit their specific needs.

More than 20 administrators of college poll worker programs of various sizes and characteristics were interviewed to assess successful practices, constraints, and challenges faced by college poll worker recruiters. A project working group, consisting of three election officials, three university representatives, and one student, provided further guidance on matters related to this guidebook's content and overall structure.

Additional data came from the following:

- **Focus groups.** Focus groups were conducted around the United States with students who participated in college poll worker programs and with students who did not. The focus groups provided invaluable information regarding incentives that motivate students to participate in polls and considerations that impede their participation or interest.
- **National survey of election officials.** Data from the National Association of Counties showed that few counties currently seek out college students as poll workers. Even among counties that employ students, recruitment efforts appear to be rudimentary, mainly limited to putting an advertisement in the college paper or sending out fliers.
- **Pilot projects.** From June through November 2006, three pilot projects planned and implemented college poll worker programs using the draft of this guidebook as their template. The pilot sites were—
  - Grand Rapids Community College and Grand Rapids City Clerk's Office (Michigan).
  - Suffolk University and the City of Boston's Election Department (Massachusetts).
  - Cleveland State University and the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (Ohio).



These represent election jurisdictions of different sizes and different types of schools—a community college, a private university, and a State university. The project participants provided monthly feedback on the guidebook’s content, layout, relevance, and helpfulness and on valuable and practical examples and anecdotes.



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