This workbook provides a summary of the core recommendations identified in the IDHE Action Guide “Addressing Hidden Barriers to College Student Voting”.

While it is informed by research, the recommendations outlined below are not the results of a specific study. Rather, the workbook is a practical resource for campuses looking to address the non-statutory barriers on their campus.

- Core Recommendations
- Area-Specific Recommendations
- Resources
Core Recommendations

✅ Stand by your students and democracy
An individual’s right to vote is a core value of democracy. In the 2012 State of the Union, President Obama stated that “When any American, no matter where they live or what their party, are denied [the right to vote] … we are betraying our ideals.” Voter registration is not just a legal obligation under the Higher Education Act, it is a part of higher education’s civic mission in our democracy. While elections are partisan, advocating for your students’ right to vote is not. If institutions remain silent and refuse to act, these barriers to voting will persist, and perhaps intensify. By standing up for your students’ right to vote, you stand for democratic values and our nation’s ongoing experiment in self-governance.

✅ Ensure that at least one faculty or staff member on campus is assigned the responsibility to coordinate your institution’s efforts
An often-used model on campuses is for a staff member to have program coordination in her or his job description, often in combination with student leaders. When someone is responsible for an activity, they are more likely to implement lessons learned, develop innovative ideas, and foster relationships with other offices on campus (e.g. Residence Life, Orientation, Online Communications) to partner with. This should be the case with student voting. Additionally, if there is a specific individual coordinating institutional student registration and voting efforts from year to year, if changes occur or problems arise, the elections office will know whom to call (see below).

✅ Develop and sustain a relationship with the local elections office
Many of the examples we share in this guide involve local elections staff or activities that elections staff coordinate and control (e.g. poll worker training). A relationship with this office can go a long way toward understanding the exact processes that go into election planning, registration and voting. This knowledge can help prevent confusion or future barriers. In addition, establishing a relationship is a good way to find out about important changes that may result in barriers to student voting, and to be in a position to make a case for adjustments. Don’t assume a political motivation behind a barrier; in many cases, election officials lack the capacity to handle large numbers of voter registration forms or to serve large numbers of student voters.

✅ Nurture a positive relationship with the local community and be a good neighbor
When a community perceives that a campus and its students stand apart, students are less likely to be viewed as part of the community when it comes to elections. While students have a right to vote regardless, it may proactively smooth many dynamics if the campus and students are an integrated and integral part of your larger community. How this develops is likely to look different for each institution.
Area-Specific Recommendations

1 Election Administration

To prevent election administration from becoming a barrier to your students voting, we suggest the following:

- **Build a relationship with your local elections office.** This effort should begin well before an election, when the office is not overwhelmed. Find out the best person with whom to speak. After you have developed a relationship with county elections staff, try to understand their timeline for election planning and decision-making.

- **Ask and be clear about what information they will be sending to registered voters, and make suggestions about what information will help students.** If changes are not possible, identify where you may need to target information to fill gaps.

- **Stay in conversation with county elections staff about what will work best for them and your campus.** Make sure you check in well before another election, so that you are abreast of what may be changing. If you plan to advocate for adjustments, you will already know who to reach out to and when the right time will be.

- **Keep regular track of where students will vote and of any changes.** This is particularly important in more densely populated areas where students in one dormitory or apartment complex may vote at a different location than those in another residence.

- **Every election, keep track of the aggregate number of students who vote.** On top of being important for tracking campus participation, this information will also help you determine whether or not the numbers warrant changing or creating a new polling location (check local processes first).

2 Voter Registration

To prevent the voter registration processes from being a barrier to student political participation, we suggest that institutions and the assigned person or group in charge of student registration use these strategies:

- The Campus Vote Project has specific suggestions for questions to ask during an introductory meeting with an elections official, such as:
  - If students live in a dorm or other non-traditional housing, what address information do they need to put on the registration form?
  - Is there someone from your office who can come to campus to educate students and administrators about the requirements or run a registration drive?
  - Do all students who live on campus vote at the same polling place? If not, can you help us identify who votes where? For example, which dorms are assigned to which polling places?
  - What are the student-heavy polling places? How do you estimate how many student voters you will have?
  - What are the most common problems that student voters have when they try to register or vote in [your town]? (Campus Vote Project, n.d., p.2)
The staff member in charge of student registration needs to know the related laws for their particular state. Organizations like Campus Vote Project and the Brennan Center for Justice are good resources for specific state information explained in clear, simple terms.

In turn, make sure that students are aware of important details in state voting laws that may influence their registration, such as the need to update their address if they move.

For students who want to register locally, the institution needs to be proactive and aware of what address they should use depending on where they live on-campus.

Make sure voter registration volunteers know this information, so that there is less confusion with elections officials and a process exists for dealing with incomplete forms.

After dropping off the registration forms, stick around and make sure there are no issues with them. If there are, you can help follow up and make sure the students get registered.

3 Voting Process

To prevent barriers at polling locations from disenfranchising students, we suggest the following:

Take proactive steps during the planning and registration processes, like the ones mentioned in the previous sections.

Advocate with elections officials that poll workers are trained on and know accurate procedures relative to students.

Help make sure that your students’ votes will be counted. Institutional representatives need to know the law related to provisional/affidavit ballots in the event that issues arise.

Organize efforts to have someone at the polling location who knows the law and can advocate for students, if issues arise. A Student PIRG chapter on your campus could be a good partner, as this is something Student PIRGs have been doing for several election cycles.
4 Institutional Discretion

In order to be continually supportive of students, we suggest campuses build student registration and voting into ongoing processes:

- **Proactive steps during the election administration planning process, such as the ones mentioned in the first section, can be one way to prevent issues when students go to vote**

- **Incorporate voter registration into programs and projects related to civic and policy matters**, thereby connecting the political process to relevant activities concerning community and civic life

- **Assign someone to think about voter registration regularly** so that opportunities can be leveraged to integrate voter registration into related campus civic and policy-related activities

- **The same person should be aware of state voting and registration policy and how it influences students**, to make sure that the campus is not standing in the way of student voting.

- **Assess what is and is not working to get students registered**, especially if there are activities you have been doing for some time but have not evaluated

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A Student PIRG chapter on your campus could be a good partner
Resources

Throughout this Guide, we have referenced several resources to help campuses implement some of our recommendations. Those resources are listed again here, with some additional suggestions.

▶ **Meeting with Local Elections Officials**
  
  
  A short guide from the Campus Vote Project, with suggestions for questions to ask your local elections official during your initial and subsequent meetings.

▶ **Voter Protection Campaign Toolkit**
  
  
  The New Voters Project (a project of the Student PIRGs) developed a campaign toolkit for ensuring students would be able to vote in the 2012 election. Still applicable for future elections, the toolkit provides recommendations and other specific tools for taking action.

▶ **TurboVote**
  
  turbovote.org
  
  A part of Democracy Works, TurboVote is a fee-based system that assists campuses with facilitating student registration and learning from various outreach efforts. In 2014, TurboVote launched a new feature to help students look up the right address for registration based on where they live, thereby mitigating confusion.

▶ **State-by-State Guidance about Students Voting Law**
  
  Voting and registration laws vary greatly by state. Use resources from the Brennan Center for Justice and the Campus Vote Project to understand what, specifically, may influence student voting in your state.
  
  — Online guide with a review of laws by state (brennancenter.org/student-voting)
  
  — Handouts by state with specific information about deadlines, voting law and what students need to know (campusvoteproject.org/studentguides)

▶ **Election Protection Hotline**
  
  866ourvote.org
  
  A nonpartisan coalition of organizations that provides voters with assistance should any issues arise while trying to vote. You and students can call 1-866-OUR-VOTE or 1-888-Ve-Y-Vota.

Assess what is and is not working to get students registered
Institutionalizing Opportunities for Democratic Participation and Political Learning


The Campus Vote Project also has specific suggestions for campuses that are thinking about sustaining efforts for student registration and voting.

In collaboration with the American Democracy Project, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ran the Political Engagement Project, which led to a wide variety of resources (http://archive.carnegiefoundation.org/educating_for_democracy/docs/index.html). The project engaged several campuses in using, documenting and assessing curricular and co-curricular programs for student political learning.

Forthcoming Tisch College research will address this broader topic in great detail, including through analyses of what can help to create a campus culture that supports student political engagement and learning.