

# CALIFORNIA STUDENT VOTE PROJECT FACT SHEET

## Improving Civic Engagement on all California Campuses

The California Students Vote Project was an effort established by the California Secretary of State in partnership with then California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom and now Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, and three nonprofit organizations; CalPIRG, California Common Cause, and the Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus in 2016.

### California Student Voter Registration Coalition:



**CALPIRG**



## Students as Holders and Creators of Political Change/Transformation

Within the first three months of 2016, over 204,785 youth registered to vote. By the end of 2017, the Secretary of State received over 1.3 million online registrations by youth. In addition, the Secretary of State “Pre-Register to Vote” program enlisted over 100,000 students to pre-register to vote by April 2018. By October 2018, prior to the 2018 General Election, the Secretary of State received over 2.5 million registrations by youth voters.

This only begins to scratch the surface of our responsibility to provide students meaningful opportunities to register and pre-register to vote.

The California Students Vote Project is a first of its kind partnership in the nation where all major institutions of higher education in California have solidified commitments to partner with the Secretary of State’s office and encourage student civic engagement efforts. This includes all the 484,300 students in the California State University, the 251,700 in the University of California, the 2.1 million students in the California Community College, and the 186,600 students that are part of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities sector.

## A Public-Private Coalition Seeking Change

The California Students Vote Project is an effort that recognizes that it is essential to provide students the information and tools to be effective citizens and advocates in their communities.

In 2019, AB 963 codified the SVP into state law, allowing the Secretary of State’s Office to continue the mission of engaging California students in the democratic process. The Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act will allow

the Secretary of State’s Office to continue the mission of engaging students in the democratic process by providing funding for two permanent positions to staff the project, in addition to providing funding for community colleges to hire Civic Voter Empowerment Coordinators.

## Implementing Best Practices Significantly Improve Student Voter Participation and Registration

To guarantee strong voter registration amongst students, the Secretary of State compiled a group of strategies that colleges and universities can implement in their respective campus.

Strategies include:

### **1. Asking students via their student portals to register to vote.**

In 2016<sup>1</sup>, the Secretary of State observed an increase of online voter registrations from youth voters between the ages of 17 – 25. Currently, online voter registration by youth within higher education institutions doubled from 9,708 in the 2014 general election to 20,758 in the 2016 general election. The numbers continue to rise largely due to the online registration opportunities made available to students.

The California Student Voter Registration Act (SVRA) requires every Community College and California State University (CSU) campus to allow its students to register to vote during critical academic times (i.e. class registration, school portals, and school webpages) via a link to the California Secretary of State online voter registration system. By making voter registration links highly visible and accessible, we are determined to register as many eligible California college students, a combined enrollment of 2.8 million (2014 –2015 academic year).

<sup>1</sup>California Secretary of State, 2016 Annual Report to the Legislature on Student Voter Registration.

## **2. Collaborations and Partnerships**

Both the CSU and UC systems demonstrated that collaboration and partnerships are essential to facilitate student engagement efforts. Various campuses collaborated with their local governments like their city mayor, county registrar, and city elected officials. Campuses partnered with their school government, on campus clubs and organizations, and community to help students register to vote online.

## **3. Sending campus messages before voter registration deadlines and elections.**

Experiences from the UC and CSU in previous elections showed that sending students emails from their student body government and campus administration led to higher voter registrations.

The CSUs released a message through their Common Management System reminding students to register to vote. UC campuses sent campus-wide e-mails with instructions of how to cast vote and when to register to vote. UC campuses sent emails to students notifying them about on-campus voting booths and polling sites.

In addition, emails sent after the voter registration deadline and before Election Day can create an atmosphere of excitement around voting and drive turnout.

## **4. Implementing established best practices for on-the-ground voter registration efforts.**

The CSU and UC reported that access to high-traffic and central locations on campuses are critical for successful student voter registration drives. Campuses should develop protocols to allow access for student voter registration drives such as in residential housing, campus plazas, central quads, libraries, and student unions.

## **5. Taking part in the California University and College Ballot Bowl, presented by the California Students Vote Project**

During the Inaugural California University and College Bowl in 2018, more than 45 public and

private institutions cooperated to register more than 10,000 students to vote in the General Election within a span of nine weeks, nearly doubling the amount of registered students in the last midterm election in 2014.

California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo was the Inaugural California University and College Ballot Bowl champion. We applaud the efforts of their students and administration in registering 3,178 students to vote.

## **Secretary of State Commitment to Support Higher Education**

As part of the Memorandums of Understanding, Secretary of State Alex Padilla has made his own set of commitments to provide meaningful voter registration opportunities to students. The Office of the Secretary of State is devoted to the following:

- (1) Amplify voter registration messages via the Secretary of State Press Office and social media platforms,
- (2) Provide voter registration materials,
- (3) Give the necessary technical support to guarantee students receive effective online registration opportunities; and
- (4) Attend on-campus voter registration events when possible.

## **Important Links**

Memorandums of Understandings – CSU, UC, and AICCU [\[Link\]](#)

Community College Resolution [\[Link\]](#)

University Report [\[Link\]](#)

University and College Ballot Bowl [\[Link\]](#)

Pre-Register to Vote [\[Link\]](#)

# How You Can Help

*If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact:*

**Lizette Mata**

Assistant Chief Deputy, Secretary of State  
lizette.mata@sos.ca.gov, (916) 695 – 1649

**Emily Rusch**

Executive Director, CALPIRG  
erusch@calpirg.org, (510) 844 – 6803



California Student Voter Registration Coalition:

