



# ELECTION IMPERATIVES 2020

*A Time of Physical Distancing and Social Action*

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION



Jonathan M. Tisch  
College of Civic Life

## INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY & HIGHER EDUCATION

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**In 2018 and 2019** IDHE issued [Election Imperatives](#), a compilation of ten research-driven recommendations to increase student voting and change campus climates to improve equitable political learning, discussion, and participation in democracy. The ideas presented in all editions of *Election Imperatives* derive from multiple campus climate studies and the programs, cultural norms, behaviors, and practices of highly politically engaged (and some disengaged) institutions. *Election Imperatives* was designed for long-term, year-round action and impact, not just short-term electoral engagement. While educating for democracy should be perennial and year-round, we call upon educators to develop thoughtful approaches to providing students with opportunities for safe and effective political participation.

**The recommendations in this document complement those in the original [Election Imperatives](#). They should be read together.**

## DEAR COLLEAGUES:

As this 2020 edition of *Election Imperatives* goes to print, the nation faces a deadly pandemic and economic crisis that is disproportionately impacting communities of color and other historically disadvantaged groups. The world also witnessed the agonizing killing of George Floyd and learned about the shocking death of Breonna Taylor, as well as the hate-driven attacks on Ahmaud Arbery and others targeted because of their skin color. These acts expose truths about systemic racism and implicit bias that have conditioned too many Americans to accept or overlook violence and injustice and the political systems that preserve the status quo. They also provide the context for students returning to campuses this fall, either in-person or online, and for their participation in the 2020 election.

That context also includes:

- When we first issued *Election Imperatives*, we characterized the public square as a place of extreme partisanship; divisive, discriminatory rhetoric; growing white nationalism and other undemocratic forces; and eroding trust in democratic institutions. These underlying conditions remain, alongside new levels of widespread anger, protests, and conflict. Demands for "[neutrality](#)" and denials of higher education's democratic purpose can intimidate learning and [encroach on academic freedom](#).
- Communications are more difficult when learning experiences, celebrations, meetings, and socializing move online. Physically separated from their professors and their peers, students report that they feel isolated and disconnected. Social cohesion is critical to student learning, development, and shared responsibility for their collective success and well-being. Faculty will be in the best position to foster social cohesion, whether students are physically together or apart.
- Electoral participation and political action thrive on a campus culture that nurtures social cohesion across differences of identity, ideology, and experiences, and when students, faculty, and staff share responsibility for each other's well-being and success. Events like voter registration and turnout drives, and forums to discuss 2020 election issues, will need to be reimaged online. Popular activities like campaign rallies, meeting politicians, and crowded debate watches will be cancelled or curtailed. Mobilizing voters is an exercise of intercultural community organizing. Educators and students will need to find ways to kindle spirited electoral engagement while keeping students and others safe.

- Voting, elections, and even democracy itself have come under increased scrutiny this year following centuries of injustices, exclusion, and lack of representation. These are valid discussions, and they may be cause for some students to participate reluctantly or refuse to engage altogether. Educators should acknowledge and directly engage these issues. Feelings of disillusionment with the existing U.S. political system are widespread at the moment, and discussions will be difficult.
- Many students will be strong activists on a wide range of issues, and they may feel so strongly that they violate institutional protocols for social distancing. Off-campus groups, including some promoting racism, hate, or violence, may demand access to campus property and even virtual campus gatherings at public institutions, or may be granted access by people on campus whose viewpoints align. Students expect proactive institutional support for activism and countering hate.
- Recent primary elections foreshadow what students might face when trying to register and vote — a combination of confusing rules, restrictive identity and residency requirements, challenges pivoting to mail-in voting, fewer volunteer poll workers, last minute closings of polling locations, long lines, and potentially unsafe in-person voting conditions. Currently, dozens of lawsuits have been filed over proposed changes to election laws. *New York Times* reporter [Emily Bazelon warned that accusations of an illegitimate election have the potential to “rip the country apart.”](#)

For too long, higher education’s civic movement has been defined in ways that are apolitical. This is no longer an option. Educating for democracy is inherently political. Now is the time to educate and act to eradicate systems of discrimination and injustice both in public life and within the academy.

Institutional leaders should use their positions to advocate for students’ civil right to vote. States have requested millions of dollars in federal aid to overhaul their election procedures. Many secretaries of state have now established emergency commissions to recommend reforms. These are public meetings where institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students can request changes that protect student voting rights. We also see opportunities for community building, healing, cross-campus dialogues, debates, and activism. Learning, social change, and voting are normally communal acts. The challenge will be doing them during a time of physical distancing.

*Election Imperatives 2020: A Time of Physical Distancing and Social Action* is organized by role: 1) presidents and other senior leaders; 2) provosts, deans, chairs, and professors; and 3) coalitions, staff, and students. These recommendations do not replace the ten recommendations in *Election Imperatives*, and in places, we refer to the main document (Recommendation #4 or #7, for example), to add context. This new supplement adds suggestions specific to the current context.

Please contact us if you have questions or are looking for tools, resources, or data. We look forward to working with you to educate for a more participatory, equitable, educated and informed, ethical, and just democracy.

Best,



**Nancy Thomas**, Director, on behalf of the team  
at Institute for Democracy & Higher Education  
Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University

# Equity Checklist for Collaborative Action

*We imagine the work in 2020 as highly collaborative and involving all constituents connected to the campus community. For everyone, we recommend:*

- ✓ **CHECK IN.** Acknowledge that people may be devastated by the entwined crises of COVID-19 and racism. The crises have exposed structural inequalities and disproportionately impacted Black Americans and other historically disadvantaged groups. Set aside time to acknowledge feelings and hardships. Adopt an agreement about active listening.
- ✓ **CULTIVATE AND COMMUNICATE** a set of institutional norms that include sharing responsibility for each other's success and well-being. Recruit everyone on campus to play a role in advancing social cohesion across difference.
- ✓ **DESIGN INTERVENTIONS** that are embedded, not short-term add-ons, yet act in ways that reflect an urgency to address long-standing political inequalities.
- ✓ **ASK: WHO IS MISSING FROM THE ROOM,** and what processes will you use to include them?
- ✓ **HOW WILL YOU MAKE DECISIONS?** Through a process of “decide and announce,” consensus, or something in between? For small matters, simply decide. But for matters that involve institutional values, behaviors, attitudes, and programs, aim for as much collaborative decision-making as possible.
- ✓ **ARE THERE POWER DYNAMICS IN THE ROOM THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED?** Some groups decide that positional authority should be checked at the door, but that only works if status differences are identified, and mechanisms for accountability are reinforced.
- ✓ **HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU AS A GROUP** talking about race, identity, religion, politics, and power? Establish group agreements that encourage candor and trust. Practice intergroup discussion norms.
- ✓ **DEFINE LANGUAGE AND TERMS** to avoid misunderstandings. For example, is “racism” person-to-person bigotry or does it concern systems and structures (or both)? [Racial Equity Tools](#) has a [glossary](#) you can use.
- ✓ **LEARN TO SPOT STATEMENTS** that (intentionally or unintentionally) discriminate against marginalized groups. As a group, [practice interrupting speech that reveals prejudice](#).
- ✓ **EXAMINE ISSUES OF ACCESS** to voting and voter engagement practices, including poll worker training, to include students with disabilities.
- ✓ **PROVIDE LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE** to non-English-proficient eligible voters.
- ✓ **CREATIVELY INVOLVE** undocumented and international students who are not U.S. citizens. These students have stakes in election outcomes, and they bring a fresh perspective to U.S. politics.
- ✓ **IS EVERYONE CONNECTED** to this work who is eligible to vote registered to vote? Work to build commitment across campus by modeling what you expect of students.
- ✓ **TAKE TIME TO CELEBRATE** the revival or creation of the coalitions and any other groups working on these steps. Ask participants: what about our work makes this coalition important to you? Relationship-building takes time.
- ✓ **ENSURE ACCESS** to mental health services, including remote options for care. Align counseling center staffing with the needs of a diverse student population.

## For Presidents/Chancellors and other Senior Leaders

*Presidents and chancellors can provide essential leadership in establishing priorities, setting a tone, and advocating for action on and off campus. Reflect on what role you want to play: activist, cheerleader, messenger, community organizer, convener... You don't need to run everything, of course, but you need to play a visible role by reminding the campus community of the importance of political learning and electoral engagement.*

### 1 DEFEND DEMOCRACY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM.

How we adapt to this year's election conditions will be a reflection on the state of U.S. democracy. Colleges and universities have the academic freedom to examine and draw attention to the threats facing democracy around racial injustice, structural inequality, unequal opportunities to vote, underrepresentation of historically marginalized groups in our political system, and other equity matters. Institutional leaders need to frame electoral engagement around democratic principles and practices to set the tone, expectations, and goals. Be ready and willing to defend faculty who talk politics.

2 READ YOUR NSLVE REPORT(S) for turnout gaps and top-line rates. Check your registration and yield (the percent of registered students who voted) rates. For example, if 75% of your eligible student voters registered and only 55% of those who were registered turned out (what we call the yield rate), then only 41% of your students voted. Aim higher this year. Look at age, class-level, demographic groups, and fields of study. Flag turnout gaps and address them. Remember that NSLVE reports flag gaps, but only by working with students and understanding your institutional context will you understand what's behind them.

### 3 NURTURE STUDENT ACTIVISM AND STUDENT VOICE.

Think ahead about your stance on student activism on campus. We recommend a position of support, education, and active listening, not regulation. That said, we also understand the need to continue normal operations in the educational process and institutional governance. Identify work already being done by student activists and work to amplify their efforts. Learn about

the student experience over the previous months through open forums, surveys, and peer-to-peer conversations. What has changed for them? What are they most concerned about, and what role (if any) can the institution play in helping advance educationally centered and equitable goals? Education and discussion will be better received than regulation, so consider an online series of conversations (not lectures or info sessions) that invite student perspectives on their health and safety during the pandemic.

### 4 IDENTIFY OR RECONSTITUTE A SMALL CIRCLE OF ADVISORS.

Building on the *Election Imperatives* (EI) Recommendations 1 and 4, select 4–6 colleagues and students to form a small working group that will coordinate a larger, permanent coalition responsible for year-round, continuous efforts. Include someone with positional authority in academic affairs or with a high level of trust among faculty. Address public issues and include advisors with experience in racial equity and intergroup community building, as well as an expert in online teaching and/or communications.

5 REBOOT OR RECRUIT A COALITION, as suggested in *EI* Recommendation 4, that is truly inclusive in terms of members' roles, tenure on campus, social identity, lived experience, political ideology, and the constituents they reach. Involve groups that might not normally talk with each other and some "unusual suspects." Provide enough oversight to ensure the recommendations below are followed and implemented.

6 REFRAME THE COALITION'S CHARGE. Task them with the responsibility of overseeing not just voter mobilization, but

efforts to close turnout gaps, improve intergroup relationships, advance political learning across disciplines, advocate for faculty development in (and use of) teaching about both longstanding and 2020-specific policy issues. Coordinating efforts to close turnout gaps will be aided by and revealed in your NSLVE report. Lean on the data to jumpstart your efforts.

**7 ADVOCATE FOR YOUR STUDENTS' CIVIL RIGHT TO VOTE**, which might mean advocating for changes in election laws and procedures. Voting in the U.S. is unnecessarily complicated and inconvenient, and many laws have a disparate impact on students, communities of color, mobile populations, and youth overall. The pandemic will make voting for students, a uniquely mobile population, more difficult. States have requested millions of dollars in federal funding to overhaul election rules. Write to the legislature or secretary of state requesting a role on an election commission, providing testimony, or offering public comments.

**8 KNOW THAT PROFESSORS WILL BE YOUR MOST DIRECT AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATORS WITH STUDENTS**, especially if your students are remote or unable to gather given health concerns. You may need to do some incentivizing to get faculty across all disciplines to step up to the role. Read the section below for faculty so you know what you are requesting.

**9 EXPECT CONFLICT** due to ideological polarization, disagreements over policies that disproportionately impact disadvantaged groups, hate by on- or off-campus actors (e.g., white nationalists). Prepare for disagreements, and even intergroup contempt. Consider launching remote, campus-wide discussions about *shared responsibility* and other core institutional values. Emphasize the role of intergroup dialogue in political learning and participation. Campuses teaching entirely online this fall may be able to avoid physical confrontation, but

social media and online forums can turn into vitriolic arenas. Platforms like Zoom allow for large discussion events and small breakout groups, but also require some training to facilitate and manage a constructive space.

**10 ASSESS CAMPUS SECURITY AND LOCAL POLICE PRACTICES, TRAINING, ATTITUDES, AND INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS.** Based on that assessment, decide whether the relationships need improvements, small changes, or complete overhauling. Ensure that campus security members are trained in how to de-escalate tensions and protect the campus community without violence. Emphasize that the role of campus security is to enable, not quash, student protests. Discuss with public safety officers their role in maintaining campus protocols on physical distancing. Host community conversations on activism, inclusion, and community policing. Ask the students for advice on keeping them safe while simultaneously encouraging discussion and activism. Co-create new policies and procedures. If the campus is not reopening this fall, do the work remotely in anticipation of students' return next year.

**11 PROVIDE A SAFE PHYSICAL LOCATION FOR IN-PERSON VOTING.** Many gymnasiums and field houses can be set up so that voters stand far apart. Recruit students and staff to help keep those locations sterile. Purchase shields for poll workers. Donate an adequate number of face masks so that voters can wear them while inside. Educate local voters *in advance* of the polls opening, so that voters come prepared to participate safely.

**12 ENGAGE YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES OR BOARD OF REGENTS TO MAKE THE CASE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION'S DEMOCRATIC MISSION.** Be prepared to face naysayers or people who are not familiar with higher education's role in ensuring a healthy, just, and educated democracy.

## For Faculty, Chief Academic Officers, Provosts, Deans, and Chairs

*This fall, professors will be the most consistent and direct pathway to students regardless of whether/how institutions open, but particularly if physical distancing regulations remain in place. Chief academic affairs officers and provosts, deans, and department chairs will need to recruit faculty to the cause of promoting political learning and electoral participation. This is an across-disciplines mandate, not one relegated to “usual-suspect” departments (e.g., political science).*

**1 DISCUSS AS A DEPARTMENT WHY INSTITUTIONS HAVE ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND HOW TO USE IT.** Academic freedom is half of a social contract between higher education and the public. Institutions and those that teach at them have the privilege of academic freedom in exchange for catalyzing a robust exchange of ideas about public affairs, controversial issues, and the health and needs of democracy. Remember, “political” and “partisan” are *not* interchangeable terms. Professors have the academic freedom to discuss policy questions (and answers) and to teach the public relevance of their field, but they cannot support or direct students to support a candidate or political party. Talking about public affairs and the health of democracy is not optional. It’s the job.

**2 REVIEW YOUR INSTITUTION’S NSLVE REPORT AND COMPARE THE STUDENT VOTING RATES FOR FIELDS OF STUDY RELEVANT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT** with that of other departments. Develop strategies for closing those gaps that include teaching about the technical and motivational challenges to voting, exploring the public relevance of your discipline, and other strategies on this list. Your department’s disciplinary club can be an important tool for involving students and faculty. Share the field-of-study voting rates in remote club meetings. Task the students with the responsibility for developing strategies to close voting gaps. Share information via Zoom (or other) platforms that lend themselves to online meetings and discussions.

**3 DISCUSS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED YOUR FIELD** and develop opportunities — in the classroom or through re-energized disciplinary clubs or societies — to teach COVID-19’s impact. For

more on the role of disciplinary clubs, which we view as a grossly underutilized structure for faculty-student meetings, learning, and discussion, see Recommendation #8 in [Election Imperatives 2.0](#).

**4 FREQUENTLY ASK STUDENTS HOW THEY ARE DOING.** It seems like every day brings a new story or issue that piles on top of the enormous challenges we are facing in 2020. The physical, mental, and emotional toll on students is real — from the difficulties of navigating rapidly changing bureaucracy as schools update policies amidst crises, all the way up through societal-level threats. Let the students know that they matter, that they are cared for, and that you and other representatives of the institution want them to succeed. The students should be kind to themselves and, whenever possible, the college or university should exhibit the same to the community.

**5 TEACH THE POLICY QUESTIONS FOR EACH FIELD.** Every discipline has public relevance. And amidst both a global pandemic and a renewed attention to social injustices, there are seemingly endless ways to connect the dots between what students learn in the classroom and issues of power, policy, equity, and the public good. Develop a department-wide strategy to ensure that all students engage in issue and policy discussions. We can help. You can download and discuss topics covered in our [Making Sense of...](#) and other discussion guides.

**6 USE BEST PRACTICES TO FACILITATE POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS IN PERSON AND/OR ONLINE.** Best practices include setting group agreement/ground rules; taking the time to build relationships and trust among students via

check-ins or icebreakers; setting expectations around standards and evidence; modeling the art of asking good questions and active listening; discussing diverse, and even unpopular, perspectives on an issue; interrupting inappropriate speech or behavior; playing devil's advocate without insulting people; and reducing tensions without quashing ideas or speech. Online discussion teaching requires the same skills needed in the classroom, ideally paired with technical skills such as creating breakout groups or using chat functions in virtual meeting platforms.

### **7 BUILD AND MAINTAIN COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL COHESION WITHIN YOUR CLASSROOM AND DEPARTMENT,**

a task that is even more important in an era of physical distancing. Learning, discussion, and even student voter participation are stronger when students feel an individual and collective sense of belonging and well-being. We don't expect professors to become therapists or the sole mechanism for ensuring that no student falls through the cracks. One strategy is to do one-on-one and group check-ins to ask students how they are faring. If they are not responsive to this, ask the students, *how can we work together to ensure that we all feel connected to this class and to each other?* Let the students design ways to share responsibility for each other and for the success of the class.

### **8 ENCOURAGE FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREAS OF RACIAL INJUSTICE AND MANAGING CONVERSATIONS ON RACE AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN THE CLASSROOM, IN-PERSON OR ONLINE.**

The current context demands new approaches. Explicitly encourage faculty to explore opportunities that advance their knowledge of topics including racial justice and equitable practice. Be sure to explore existing opportunities across your own campus, including at centers for teaching and learning, or look for ways to combine trainings with peer institutions or other college and university departments in your region.

### **9 CARVE OUT CLASSROOM TIME TO TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO VOTE.**

You don't need to do it alone. Whether remotely or in person, allow students or coalition members to visit and address students on voting mechanics and deadlines. Data show that amplifying student voice and utilizing peer-to-peer networks are effective methods for driving student engagement. Obtain a set of resources for students from the coalition (see below) that

will help them learn about voting laws, identification and residency requirements, deadlines, voting locations, how to complete forms, how to register to vote on line, what they need to include in a mail-in ballot, and how to plan for traveling to the polls and voting. Everyone can become an expert resource on these issues.

### **10 PREPARE FOR CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ABSTAINING FROM AND/OR DISILLUSIONMENT WITH VOTING.**

Some students may believe that the system is broken, and they don't want to participate in an undemocratic, broken system. Others will complain that their vote doesn't count or won't change underlying conditions, so why bother? Others will say that voting is so inconvenient that the cost outweighs the benefits. These are reasonable positions that should be acknowledged as valid, but also gently rebutted. Acknowledge the perspective that people are underrepresented and marginalized by how democracy currently works. Host conversations about the democracy we want, and how students can play a role in shaping that future. Read [Why College Student Voting Matters](#), and be prepared to make the case that voting is a way for students to advance their preferences, and that by not voting they give their power to someone else. [Research indicates that what is sometimes viewed as student political apathy is actually a form of political cynicism](#). For educators, this speaks to the importance of building student political efficacy to drive participation.

**11 NUDGE.** Encourage and remind students, repeatedly, to register to vote (know dates and deadlines) and help them set a plan for when and how to vote. Urge faculty to add language to syllabi that includes information about the 2020 election, the importance of political learning and the public relevance of the course material, and resources/links to more information about voting laws and deadlines.

### **12 INCENTIVIZE ENGAGEMENT AMONG FACULTY AT ALL LEVELS (INCLUDING ADJUNCT, PRE-TENURE, AND SENIOR FACULTY).**

This work can fall into the category of service to the campus community, and it should be recognized — whether through financial incentives, departmental awards, or campus-wide recognition programs. By calling attention to this work, you incentivize it and send a clear message that this is not just acceptable, it's part of the job.

## For Students, Coalitions, Student Affairs, Civic Engagement Offices or Centers, and Offices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*These groups are usually the “boots on the ground” for voter education and mobilization, community-based civic learning, and fostering inclusive campus climates. If the boots are relegated to virtual communities, some creative planning and action will be needed.*

**1 MODEL THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES YOU HOPE TO SEE ON CAMPUS.** Coalitions, committees, and other groups should reflect compositional diversity in terms of social identity, ideology, department, position, interests, and lived experiences. They also need to walk the talk. Consider the checklist in the box about building inclusive coalitions. These recommendations apply to both in-person and remote collaboration.

**2 EMPOWER STUDENT VOTERS.** In this renewed moment of social action, figure out how much your students know about voting rights, voting mechanics, and voter mobilization. Some campuses can point to a large group of students already doing voter mobilization work and activism. On other campuses, students might just be getting started. Temper the urge to use a “teaching as telling” approach. Instead, ask what experiences and knowledge students already possess. Together, develop strategies that address:

- **Issues.** Provide students with opportunities to connect issues that they care about (Black Lives Matter or immigration) and voting. Ensure that students from historically marginalized groups have a platform and are heard.
- **What it means to live in a democracy and be advocates for a more aspirational version of democracy.** Democracy needs advocates now, but it’s hard to know where to start. Consider having students read this [June 2020 report on 21st Century Democracy](#). Create opportunities for the campus community to study, critique, and discuss the state of U.S. democracy, which we define as both a form of governance and a culture of principles and practices that shape our communities. Include proposals for making democracy on a local, state, national, and global level more participatory, equitable, informed, and just. Insist on a focused examination of racial injustice. We believe that

students should be engaged in dialogue around the systems of governance and political organizing to catalyze change.

- **The civil right to vote.** Students should know that voting at all levels is a reflection of coalition-building and a way to both take a seat at the table and exercise their voice on the issues that matter most in their respective communities. The most immediate needs are related to preserving and expanding voting rights for students and for communities of color, including more choices for early voting, more convenient polling locations, no-excuse mail-in options, transferable identification requirements, easy-to-prove residency requirements, and acceptance of college IDs for voting.
- **The mechanics of voting.** Students face a confusing array of rules about where to register to vote and vote, how to fill out a ballot, where to mail or deliver it or how to vote in person, if that is an option. Ask students to research and create videos for distribution and discussion.
- **How to motivate participation.** Distinguish between registration rates and yield rates on your NSLVE report, and why the group needs to do more than register students; they need to motivate registered voters to vote. Respect the experiences that students bring to voter mobilization work and create mechanisms for reciprocal learning, including on how to organize and run voter education drives. We have advised presidents to get involved in preserving students’ rights to vote, and students should also be activists so that no

### Where Should Students Vote?

Given the unknowns about where students will be this fall and changing voting conditions, we’ll be tracking this issue and offering recommendations at [idhe.tufts.edu/vote2020](https://idhe.tufts.edu/vote2020)

group is denied the right to vote. Provide them with information on how and whom to approach to demand that democratic rights are preserved.

- **Students that are ineligible to vote, and why their involvement matters.** Due to a variety of reasons, including citizenship status, not all students on campus can vote. Still, these students should have a strong voice within the community efforts. Organizing, policy discussions, and peer-to-peer education can bring *all* students into the work of educating for democracy.
- **How to use best practices in intercultural community organizing.** Encourage cultural affinity groups, disciplinary groups (e.g., the Engineering Society), clubs, sports teams, student government, performance teams, and other groups to collaborate, using the approaches outlined above for coalitions.

### 3 REVIEW YOUR NSLVE REPORT AND IDENTIFY GAPS.

Flag turnout gaps between different demographic groups and disciplines. Work to close gaps while simultaneously raising voting rates overall. Solicit participation from faculty who teach large numbers of low propensity voters.

### 4 UNDERSTAND THE FACTS AROUND STRUCTURAL RACISM AND UNEQUAL ACCESS TO VOTING TO EXPLAIN EQUITY GAPS IN VOTING.

Knowing, for example, that white students are more likely to be registered to vote because they are more likely to have a driver's license might change your registration tactics for different demographic groups of students.

### 5 LEARN ABOUT IMPLICIT BIAS, THE UNCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES WE HAVE TOWARD OTHERS OR THE STEREOTYPES WE ASSIGN.

Learn more (and take a test to check your own bias) at [Harvard University's Project Implicit](https://www.harvard.edu/implicit). Consider breaking into pairs to name and discuss your biases. Discuss the pros and cons of this approach.

### 6 LEARN THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS AND LARGE GROUP RALLIES REMOTELY.

Learn to use the chat functions, breakout rooms, preventing "zoombombing," and screen sharing. Establish and test outreach and communications channels and strategies with students. Work with department chairs to establish communications with students through their classes.

**7 DEVELOP FORMAL PROGRAMS AND INFORMAL GROUPS TO FACT-CHECK MISINFORMATION.** Professors are ideally positioned to grapple with and address mis- and disinformation in their classes. The library staff is another underutilized asset. Partnerships between librarians, researchers, faculty, and students can be effective alliances. Include correcting misinformation, not just about issues, but about voting rights and procedures.

### 8 CREATE A WEBSITE AND/OR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE FOR TRACKING LOCAL VOTING CONDITIONS:

Develop a deep understanding of the election laws and conditions surrounding registering to vote and voting. Provide resources for institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students, such as a website with information on varying timelines and identification requirements. Track efforts, including those at the last minute, to change voting conditions in ways that will present barriers to student voting or make voting less convenient (e.g., changing polling locations). Regularly update the online hub as voting laws or administrative rules change. Notify others such as the president or faculty of changes that will affect the mechanics of registering to vote and/or voting. Make sure that your website is accessible and can be used with a wide range of assistive technologies.

**9 RECRUIT PROFESSORS ACROSS DISCIPLINES TO ALLOW CLASSROOM TIME** to register voters, explain the process, and invite participation in activism about voting rights or mobilizing voting. Coach students and others to visit classrooms (virtually or in-person) through a voter registration process and to discuss what students will need to vote (e.g., identification, proof of residency). Train people to do outreach on the mechanics and laws around voting in your state. Work with faculty to attend classes to explain the voting process and register voters.

**10 HELP LOCAL OFFICIALS MANAGE WHAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE AN OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF MAILED-IN FORMS AND BALLOTS.** Proactively reach out to the secretary of state's office to find ways to work together, including exploring opportunities to allow interested students and staff to serve and assist in person.

**11 WORK WITH OTHER CAMPUS COALITIONS ACROSS THE STATE** to develop and disseminate a video on the mechanics of registering to vote and voting in that state. Include how to read and fill out a ballot.

## ABOUT THE JONATHAN M. TISCH COLLEGE OF CIVIC LIFE

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life (<http://tischcollege.tufts.edu/>) offers transformational student learning and service opportunities, conducts groundbreaking research on young people's civic and political participation, and forges innovative community partnerships at Tufts University and beyond. Tisch College's scholarship, which helps shape the national conversation on the role of young people in democracy, is spearheaded by two distinct but complementary research organizations within Tisch College. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)), one of the nation's leading authorities on youth voting, studies the civic education and engagement of young people in the United States with a special focus on disadvantaged or otherwise politically marginalized youth. The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education ([IDHE](#)), which authored this report, studies the political learning and engagement of college students across the country to advance greater equity, more productive discourse and agency, and stronger participation in democracy. IDHE runs the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement ([NSLVE](#)) ("n-solve"), the nation's largest study of college student voting.

