

Civic and Voter Empowerment Recommendations for Secretary of State Officials

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California is the only state with a comprehensive law to encourage college student civic and voter engagement. As demonstrated by the findings from my research, [Cultivating a Culture of Civic Engagement and Democratic Learning: Examining Institutional Responses to the California Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act \(A.B. 963\)](#), there are specific considerations that would benefit not only the [California Students Vote Project team](#), but also officials at Secretary of State offices across the U.S. seeking to support college and universities.

In the following document, I incorporated strategies employed by the California Students Vote Project team and added additional recommendations to build upon their good work.

1.1 21 Recommendations for Secretary of State Officials

- **Encourage the Appointment of a Designated Campus Coordinator:** Whether or not state law requires campuses to name a designated person, Secretary of State officials can encourage campuses to name a Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator (CVEC). The SOS office would then maintain a network of officials to share instructive information.
- **Formalize the CVEC Appointment Process:** Consider formalizing the appointment process so the CVEC position feels more official/recognized. Small gestures, like a welcome video from the Secretary of State or a signed letter, could increase the sense of responsibility and understanding of the role and any requirements.
- **Orientation for New CVECs:** Host open orientation sessions for new Coordinators to learn about the role, any requirements, SOS office initiatives, and promising practices.
- **Tracking Where the Work is Housed:** SOS offices should track which departments the CVECs belong to, helping to understand longitudinal trends for high performers.

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- **Facilitate Networking Groups and Contact lists:** Offer opportunities for CVECs to gather with one another to share promising practices. Cohorts could be developed and self-managed. With prior approval, share contact information within the CVEC network, facilitating organic connectivity and outreach among peer institutions. SOS offices could also consider posting this contact list publicly to facilitate communication.
- **Regular Meetings, Office Hours, and Availability:** The California Students Vote Project hosts regularly scheduled meetings, “[office hours](#),” and makes themselves readily available. The CVECs in the study found the consultation time extremely beneficial.
- **Visibility of the Secretary of State:** The CVECs in the study were particularly appreciative of the opportunity to see and hear from the Secretary in California.
- **Student Advisory Committee:** Consider convening a student advisory committee to help make content and programming relevant. Excellent leadership development!
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** The CVECs in the study were eager for opportunities to learn and grow their skills. Provide virtual learning opportunities, and also encourage campuses to invest in professional development for CVECs.
- **Guidance on Civic Education Activities:** The research demonstrated the resources CVECs received for voter education and engagement. They felt less prepared, however, to facilitate campus-wide educational programs that were more broadly civic in nature.
- **Resource Bank:** The California SVP team maintains a [website with resources](#). This growing effort continues to serve the CVECs well. Clarity on requirements is key.
- **Communication Templates, Timelines, and Toolkits:** The California Students Vote Project team developed templates for email and social media communication, which proved helpful for faculty and staff, already over-committed and under-resourced.
- **Share a Definition for Nonpartisanship:** Ensure CVECs have received expectations, including practices to ensure a nonpartisan approach to activities/communication.
- **Data Protocols:** Help institutions understand how they can track their efforts in more efficient and reliable ways, such as using a common link for voter registration.
- **Action Plan Design and Feedback:** The CVECs benefitted from the support of the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#), a nonprofit that assisted with the design of action plans.
- **College Ballot Bowl in Off and On Years:** The California SVP team coordinates the “[College Ballot Bowl](#),” a friendly competition to register the most college students to vote. This effort resonated with CVECs and they wished it happened for all elections.
- **Annual Report Support, Confirmation, and Examples:** The CVECs in the study thought they needed to submit an annual report, but they did not. Perhaps an annual report should be encouraged as a best practice. Sample reports could inspire exemplary work.

- **Recognition:** Continue to find ways to recognize CVECs and their campuses for their good work. Many of the CVECs take on the roles without additional compensation or recognition of the time and energy they put into the roles. Even small recognition matters.
- **Encourage System Leadership:** In states with system offices, encourage leadership to coordinate, encourage, and incentivize civic and voter engagement.
- **Trusted Third-Party Organizations:** Given the high number of organizations in this space, providing guidance on trusted third-party organizations would be valuable for CVECs.
- **Contingency Planning:** Ensure CVECs build out contingency plans for if/when they are no longer in the position. Consider appointing a co-CVEC or backup point of contact.

Additions or questions? Contact Alex at Alex.Kappus@gmail.com.