



2024 Post-Election Campus Resource And Response Guide

This resource has been updated from the [2020 version](#) that was developed by the [Students Learn Students Vote \(SLSV\) Coalition](#)'s Resources and Support Working Group, and [Ask Every Student](#).

The framework for this resource was developed in October of 2020 when over 100 stakeholders – primarily campus administrators and faculty members – in the nonpartisan student voting space came together to ideate around the question, “**How might we prepare to support campus stakeholders in processing and responding to a tumultuous post-election season?**” This document is a synthesis of their ideas for how best to address that challenge with information updated to fit the context of the 2024 election. We’ve provided helpful resources that can support you and your community in enacting these ideas, though this is by no means an exhaustive list.

The 2024 version of this resource was developed by the [SLSV Coalition](#) and the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge \(ALL IN\)](#). We’d like to also thank and acknowledge Nancy Thomas, Senior Advisor to the President of AAC&U and Executive Director of the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) for her input.

This is a live document that is primarily meant for campus administrators and faculty members and will be updated with more resources over time.

Under each of the sections listed below in the Table of Contents, we offer suggestions for addressing the potential areas of concern listed here that may pose a challenge in the 2024 post-election period.

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Prepare partnerships ahead of time.

Campus vote coordinators cannot and should not do this work alone. This work should not rest solely on the shoulders of the folks who have been leading your nonpartisan voter engagement efforts through your campus's voting coalition as they will likely be burnt out after Election Day. Instead, we encourage higher education institutions to involve relevant stakeholders across the campus that can support processing, reflection, engagement, and messaging.

- **Bring campus administration into the conversation.** Work with your institution's administration to prepare strong statements about the importance of equity and inclusivity, express explicit support for marginalized groups, backed by actionable steps to strengthen all units of the institution.
- **Work with various departments across the division and university** to offer programs that share different perspectives related to areas of student concern. (Offices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy; Center for Women and Gender Equity, Wellness, etc.)
- **Partner with your wellness/counseling center now.** Be mindful that they may already be preparing to support students and may have a lot on their plates. Collaborate on creating a post-election plan that can meet everyone's needs.
- **Work with staff and faculty centers, caucuses, or organizations** to plan a space and structure to support staff and faculty in processing their own emotions and preparing to hold dialogue with students.
- **Train student leaders** to address concerns/fears specifically with regards to the election/post-election and make sure they know where they can direct their peers for additional support. Some of the groups to connect with include resident

advisors, fraternity and sorority life leaders, student-athletes, peer mentors, and student activities leadership.

- **Work with faculty from political science and psychology departments** to provide expertise in their areas around electoral processes and coping mechanisms.
- **Coordinate with your campus Communications and Marketing professionals** to support messaging to students about the election. This could include information about support services, how to understand election results and the certification of the vote, as well as the celebration of students participating in elections throughout 2024.
- **Collaborate with your local election officials** to receive accurate and up-to-date information about the electoral process and to ensure students' votes are protected and validated. You can also bring in local nonpartisan electoral agencies such as the League of Women Voters into this process.
- **If possible, compensate professionals** to lead processing, healing, and dialogue workshops and spaces.

Helpful resources

- [Ask Every Student's building institutional partnerships for full participation resources](#)
- [Election Official and Campus Engagement – Report and Toolkit](#)
- Montclair State University's [Trauma Informed Pedagogy](#) resource from their Office of Faculty Excellence
- Ask the wellness/counseling center to publish resources for people needing post election support. Here are some helpful examples from [Brandeis University](#) and [the University of Michigan](#).

Instill confidence in election results.

Prepare students now for a prolonged outcome. In 2020, it took major news outlets several days to declare a presidential election winner, during which time bad actors spread mis- and disinformation about the vote-counting process, sowing mistrust among the electorate. While many states have made changes to speed up their vote-counting process, results in the most competitive (and likely decisive) states in the presidential election may still take days to count from Election Day.

On the local level, where margins are sometimes just a handful of votes, it is rare but not unheard of for results to take weeks to certify.

Messages to students should emphasize that taking time to count votes will help ensure fair elections in which results are accurately reflected. Some suggested talking points:

- *Election Day is not “results day.” It takes time to count all the votes and if we don’t know the results within 24 hours, that’s ok. It means the system is working to ensure accuracy.*
- *Our ballot-counting process is meticulous, nonpartisan, and designed to ensure accuracy, transparency, and integrity. The equipment used is tested by both major parties, and monitored by bipartisan teams of poll workers.*
- *There is no changing the election results after Election Day, even if we don’t yet know the results. Election workers are simply counting all the votes already cast.*

Mitigating unrest & violence

- **Be prepared to explain the legal or political options and reality of an unpeaceful transition or a delayed election result.** Make sure to frame this as something that could happen, but isn’t a given. If possible, bring in political science faculty or outside experts who can explain the electoral process to students and answer any questions.
- **Encourage leaders, professors, and campus-level publications to spread information about how the electoral process actually works before the election takes place** so that the community is prepared in case of a close election and is ready to accept the results as they are given.

Managing distrust in election results

- **Make sure to share local election results as they come in!** By focusing on local results that we *do know*, we can redirect anxious energy and instill confidence in results.
- **Encourage students to follow up on their ballot’s status and ensure their vote gets counted.** Promote [ballot tracking for applicable states](#). Proactively connect students to the Election Protection Hotline if they run into any issues in making sure their vote gets counted.

Addressing emotional distress among students, faculty, staff, leaders

- **Emphasize that the election process is trustworthy AND a tool for agency and accountability.**
- **Emphasizing to students, faculty, and staff that all their votes will be counted in 2024**, and will be again four years later, underlines the fact that the democratic process is never-ending. The work to counteract the undesired impact of an

election result can begin the moment a candidate wins their election - as can the effort to unseat them through the same electoral process. The rightful winner will take office based on the election results, and everyone should respect that even if they don't support the winning candidate.

Safeguarding campus climates and intergroup relationships

- **Underline the value and legitimacy of every vote cast.**
- **Counter claims of voter fraud levied against any individual or group forcefully** with facts and data that show this to be a myth.
- **Only acknowledge claims of fraud if they have already been made visibly in your campus community.** Otherwise, avoid introducing the topic into public discourse.

Combating disinformation

- **Elevate credible sources of information.** Look to your local elections officials for information and updates on election results.
 - [Election officials page lookup.](#)
- **Help students identify misinformation and disinformation.** Remind them to always fact-check sources and that news sources may not be reliable sources when it comes to election results.
- **Help students learn about the Electoral College process.** Understanding helps demystify the process. Note that the 1887 Electoral Count Act requires all states to have all ballots counted by 41 days after the election, so regardless of what happens immediately following, the public will know the results by mid-December.
- **Be proactive!** Seek out questions before the election from students, faculty, and staff about how elections are administered, and answer them using verified sources. In other words, eliminate information gaps before disinformation can set in.

Helpful resources

- United States Election Assistance Commission's resource [Election Results, Canvass. and Certification](#)
- [Issue One's Election Integrity Toolkit](#)
- Voting Rights Lab & Secure Elections USA: [Talking Points to Sustain Trust in Our Elections](#)
- [Election Protection Hotline](#) (Text or Call 866-OUR-VOTE/866-687-8683 or Tweet @866OUR VOTE)
- [Ideas42 Guide to Responding to Misinformation](#)
- [National Taskforce on Election Crises](#)
- [Why Some States Will Take Longer Than Others](#) from Vote at Home

- [Brennan Center Report: The Myth of Voter Fraud](#)
- [Civic Alliance 2020 Post-Election Day and Election Day Guide](#)
- [National Voter Education Week: Understand the Process](#)

Allow time and space for processing.

It's important that *all* campus community members (not just students!) have the space to process the outcomes of the election before having to engage in potentially difficult dialogue. The results of the election will impact campus community members differently. Processing can take place individually, one-on-one, in small groups, or collectively. Make sure to factor in the possibility of a prolonged outcome and certification of results in planning spaces and events for processing.

Mitigating unrest & violence

- **Share a variety of opportunities for students** to process their feelings related to the election widely, to help students express themselves healthily and safely, based on the ideas below that your campus chooses to execute.

Addressing emotional distress among students, faculty, staff, leaders

- **Create [brave spaces](#) in classrooms, social spaces, clubs, etc. for students to openly process information.** But don't make this required! Some students may not want to openly process with others.
- **Provide processing spaces** for students to come and talk with trusted staff/faculty about their feelings.
- **Don't try and "fix" students' anxiety** but provide spaces where students can hold the tension and discomfort. Let them know it's OK for them to feel the way that they do.
- **Release the power from yourself and other staff** and present yourselves as allies, friends, support, or whatever else the students you interact with feel is appropriate.
- **Make affinity spaces available** facilitated by staff from the Counseling Center and those trained in DEI and trauma-informed care if possible. Work with leaders of marginalized communities to co-create these affinity spaces.
- **Provide guidance and training for faculty and staff leading these spaces in advance of the election** to prepare them to host processing spaces, including on how to take care of themselves while supporting students through this time.
- **Ask people "What are your hopes and dreams going forward from this point?"** This question helps keep people on a constructive path.

For Faculty & Staff Specifically:

- **Create dedicated spaces for faculty and staff members with trained facilitators**, ideally with counseling and trauma-informed care experience, especially for those faculty and staff most likely to be engaged in facilitating the above spaces and/or holding space for students to share their feelings.

Helpful Resources

- [From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces](#)
- [Student Affairs Now Podcast: Cultivating Brave Spaces with Kristi Clemens and Dr. Brian Arao](#)
- [Braver Angels' With Malice Towards None](#) is an initiative to help groups of people who are “distressed” at the results, as well as “delighted” to consider how to move forward as a country after a very divisive election.

Facilitate opportunities for healing.

Many campus community members may need access to mental health resources during this time. Be intentional about creating spaces and opportunities for healing. Partner with counseling and wellness centers and psychology faculty to help with this, and ensure that folks providing mental health support are trained and have access to their own mental health support as well.

Addressing emotional distress among students, faculty, staff, leaders

- **Prepare and provide a resource guide** for on-campus and off-campus mental health resources, including resiliency and anxiety management resources.
- **Create pre-election and post-election programming or resources** on coping mechanisms and healing processes.
- **Ensure that all campus community members have access** to free resources through counseling centers, especially after election day through the end of the fall term.
- **Make sure student and campus leaders know how to access mental health resources** that they can direct their fellow students to. Partner with student organizations and other campus leaders to publicize these resources, especially to those who engage with the most marginalized communities on campus. Suggest that individuals confer with campus HR or Insurance policies to be directed to long-term mental health services as well.
- **Plan de-stressing activities** like yoga, meditation, and therapy animal visits.
- **Make sure resource guides and webinar suggestions include the processing spaces created through the guidance in the above section**, as well as options

and resources for one-on-one counseling for folks who cannot or do not wish to participate in group processing.

Helpful resources:

- The Management Center's [Building Your Emotional Resilience Muscle](#)
- [7Cups](#) for online therapy and free counseling
- [Community Care Post-Election Toolkit](#) by J Vu Mai
- Headspace's [Politics Without Panic: Your election season survival guide](#)

Hold spaces for discussions and sharing perspectives.

Faculty, staff, and student leaders will end up facilitating difficult and sensitive conversations with students after the election. While you shouldn't mandate that every faculty or staff member needs to participate in or facilitate these conversations, for those who want to do this, you can set them up for success.

- **Let students decide whether to talk politics right after the election.** While some students will want to debrief the election immediately, others might be tired of talking politics. Faculty should discuss with their students what they want to do well before Election Day. Set ground rules in advance. Aim for discussion, not a lecture.
- **Identify the purpose or expectations of discussions in advance** (e.g., relationship building, active listening). Different goals might call for different approaches and framing.
- **Train students, faculty, and staff to facilitate politically charged discussions.** This is not as easy as it sounds. Bring in experienced facilitators to train a cohort of discussion leaders on how to frame a discussion, build relationships, ask the best questions, and navigate moments of tension or conflict.
- **Involve facilitators who reflect diversity in identity, ideology, and lived experiences.** Consider using co-facilitators.
- **Set group agreements or ground rules in advance.** We have some favorites: "listen for understanding," "assume goodwill," "ask questions of each other," and "share responsibility for making this discussion work for everyone."
- **Develop and test discussion questions or exercises** in advance. Practice! This is also a good way to give faculty, staff, and student facilitators an opportunity to experience the process themselves. Consider that facilitators need space to process what happened too.
- **Facts matter**, especially in an educational environment. Opinions are fine, but it's OK to say they need to be evidence-based.

- **Approach discussions with an equity lens.** Strive for diversity and representativeness of discussion participants. Be aware of who gets to talk the most. It's OK to discuss ideas, policies, and preferences, but bashing groups or individuals is not. Take a stand for humanity and inclusion. The US is a diverse nation where everyone should share responsibility for each other's success, well-being, and sense of belonging.

Helpful resources:

- [IDHE Report: Readiness for Discussing Democracy in Supercharged Political Times](#)
- [IDHE's Facilitating Political Discussions: A Facilitator Training Workshop Guide](#)
- For faculty, staff, and institutional leaders: [IDHE's Campus Conflict and Conversation Help Desk](#)
- Campus Compact: [Better Discourse: A Guide for Bridging Campus Divides in Challenging Times](#)
- James Madison University: [Facilitating Difficult Election Conversations](#)
- Constructive Dialogue Institute: [Maintaining Campus Community During the 2024 Election](#)
- Constructive Dialogue Institute: [2024 Election Dialogue Playbook](#)

Move towards action.

We encourage you to provide students with opportunities for civic action, not just discussion. Prepare tangible actions that students can take to stay engaged and prepare to support student activists.

Mitigating unrest & violence

- **Provide opportunities for action after the election.** Opportunities for civic engagement don't end on Election Day. Share productive strategies for dealing with concerns - letter writing campaigns, organizations to work with, how to contact their elected officials, how to lobby elected officials, how to safely protest, volunteer, and how to use creative expression.
- **Prepare for student activism and potential conflict.** There are a number of scenarios that could arise that may end in conflict. Be intentional about encouraging nonviolent student participation while maintaining a safe and inclusive campus environment.

- **Encourage counterprogramming instead of counter-protests.** A counter-program can draw attention away from a controversial speaker or event and has the potential to build community at the same time.
- **Lean on partnerships created before Election Day.** If violence occurs on or off campus, lean into partnerships established with public safety officials, medical professionals, and professionals trained in mediation to support student safety.

Managing distrust in election outcomes

- **Celebrate local election officials in your community.** Election Hero Day, celebrated officially on November 4 this year, provides content to show your appreciation for election heroes, including in-person activation best practices, resources to share on social media, and general messaging suggestions. [Check out the Election Hero Day Toolkit here!](#)
- **Check out volunteer opportunities with Election Protection!** Plug into work to help ensure this election is fair and ends in a just outcome. Many states plan to have volunteers monitoring the canvassing and counting of ballots (and engaging in ballot curing where possible). Participating in this side of elections, like poll working, is a great way for students to learn how the full process of elections works.

Addressing emotional distress among students, faculty, staff, leaders

- **Help students make a plan for their next steps.** How are you staying engaged tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Next year? How are you taking time to pause, heal, and reflect?
- **Redirect energy** towards supporting the local community. Highlight civic actions that students can plug into, like volunteering in the community and joining local organizations.

Safeguarding campus climates and intergroup relationships

- **Model decency and kindness.** Within and beyond the campus community, the post-election period has the potential to put division, incivility, and indecency on display. Model the opposite for your students through your words, actions, and social media posts.
- **Thank students for voting.** The post-election period is a great time to celebrate our democracy and voters, which can be done while remaining nonpartisan and focusing not on election results but on the process of democracy itself. As an example, the Maryland Institute College of Art's Globe Press has great examples of "[Thank You for Voting](#)" posters that can be purchased.
- **Grow your nonpartisan on-campus voting coalition.** Use the [Ask Every Student Coalition Building tools](#) to learn how to best use this time to actively grow your

nonpartisan student voting coalition and foster a sense of shared community around elections.

- **Get creative.** Create space for campus community members to take part in creative actions, such as an open mic, creative and expressive writing opportunities, and spaces for artistic response. "

Combating disinformation

- **Continue providing information about the election process after Election Day.**
The opportunity to educate students about our election process doesn't stop on Election Day. Continue to provide through the classroom and social media information about how the counting, reporting, and certification process works in your state. Use [these helpful resources from Issue One](#) to explain how elections work.

Helpful Resources

- [Volunteering Opportunities with Election Protection](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education's Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- [ACE's Student Voting and College Political Campaign-Related Activities in 2024](#)
- [Aliento's DACA Resources](#)

Other resources

- Institute for Democracy & Higher Education: [Democracy Re/Designed](#)
- ACE: [Preparing for a Potentially Tumultuous Fall on Campus](#)

*Questions, thoughts, suggestions? Get in touch with us at aes@sylvacoalition.org.
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