



Eight Steps to Campus IR *Victory*

Be a “FairVote Campus Leader”

Welcome to the movement for free and fair elections! We're excited to have you. An important part of being a Campus Leader is **sharing your successes**, so we can spread the word. Let us know when something you've done has contributed to an IR*Victory*: from getting an op-ed published to the adoption of IRV at your college. Contact us at IRV@fairvote.org so we can **feature you on our website** and use your achievements as an inspiration for others! IR*Victory* can be yours, *just take these basic steps*.

Step 1: The Foundation of an IR*Victory*

To lead a successful reform campaign, you must organize yourself and your thoughts; gather basic information; build the argument for reform; prepare to overcome logistical obstacles; and design your campaign strategy. Find relevant data from your recent campus elections via website or talking with a student government administrator. Studying the problems will help you to sell the benefits of reform. Understanding how your solution would work and be implemented will help you pre-empt skeptics' criticisms. Developing a campaign strategy, finally, will give you the ultimate roadmap to victory.

Step 2: Sell the Solution

Once you have the base of research and knowledge needed to discuss electoral reform, you must develop a plan to sell the solution, and then carry that plan out. You must target your audience, develop your message, and choose your tactics. Targeting your audience helps to reveal who most needs to hear your message. Developing a message is about determining what to say, and how best to say it. Choosing your tactics involves deciding how you can most effectively speak to your target audiences. Tactics include presenting to school organizations, canvassing around campus or at public events, conducting sample elections, writing letters-to-the-editor of your college newspaper and possibly launching a website.

Step 3: Build Models

Your target community needs to understand that a new voting system is not untested or radical. A number of cities, nations and colleges use “alternative” voting methods; still, it is always helpful to have local examples to breed familiarity and acceptance of reform. One way to do this is to convince on-campus organizations to adopt your system for their board or leadership elections. Around the country, over forty student government elections have moved to ranked and/or proportional voting. These reforms help build trusted models for you to point to for your campaign.

Step 4: Get Endorsed

Another key step toward building momentum and legitimacy for improved voting systems is to gain an official recommendation from your student government. If your student association initiates a committee to study election reform, attempt to join it. If you cannot, take advantage of their investigation by highlighting the problems within the current system. Ask to make a presentation or provide



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educational materials to the commission. The most important thing is to be persistent and thorough. Endorsement by a reform committee or election committee will much improve chances of IRV success.

Step 5: Build Political Support

Other student leaders serve as either the gatekeepers to electoral reforms, or as influential allies. As a result, it is usually critical to try and build support amongst this key group of people, and to keep consistent constituent pressure on them. At this stage, all of the prior work comes in handy. A core group of supporters, armed with extensive research and examples from the community, along with the recommendation of an official body can go a long way towards persuading student government leaders to support voting reform. Part of this process, however, should involve doing active outreach to the student body through Op-eds and letters-to-the-editor.

Step 6: Pass Legislation

If the above steps have been taken, it may be time to seek legislative action. The best way to achieve this is to find governing body members who are willing to sponsor legislation to improve elections on your campus. Your sponsors can help you identify how best to persuade the others, as well as to identify potential obstacles to reform and counter-arguments that are likely to be presented. Should the group decline to pass the reform, ask your sponsors to take the matter directly to the voters by putting the reform on the ballot. On some campuses, a referendum may be necessary either way. Student-initiated ballot initiatives are also a possibility, but should be conducted only after seeking a measure backed by the governing body. Student-initiated drives are time and labor-intensive, but signature gathering is a good way to educate voters while moving the initiative forward.

Step 7: Put It On the Ballot

If your efforts paid off and reform will be put before the voters, the hard work is about to begin! It is time to assemble a team of canvassing volunteers who will distribute easy-to-understand literature to educate others. You should also re-double efforts to gain the endorsements of key student leaders and organizations for your initiative. Also, aggressively seek support from campus editorial boards.

Step 8: Implement

If your campaign for reform is successful, congratulations! ... But the work is not over yet! Stay in touch with student leaders and administrators to develop a timetable for implementation. The best way for this to be done is to have a defined date for implementation written into the legislation so that IRV can speedily be put into place. Most importantly, make sure steps are taken immediately to bring voting equipment into compliance with the new voting method. This often involves online voting for campus elections. Investigate how to acquire or develop software for the election. Lastly, make sure adequate voter education is conducted on the new system and that the ballot design is sufficiently clear.