



Prepare Yourself

In order to launch a successful IRV campaign, one of the most important things is to start of by knowing where you are going in the campaign. This means understanding the problem, the solution, what your goals are and how you plan to get there.

1. Organize Yourself and Your Thoughts

- **Budget your time and find some help (ask FairVote)!** If you can, build a core of enthusiastic advocates. Even one or two will help you divide the initial tasks and will later on lead to a wider sense of ownership over the campaign.
- **Record everything.** Develop a way to keep track of contacts, supporters, notes from meetings and conversations, campaign strategy, etc. Also use FairVote and the Yahoo! IRV Group for resources and helpful information.

2. Gather Basic Information

What elected body or positions are the target for reform?

- Executive or legislative _____?
- How are the elections and offices currently configured (Multi-member, single-member, etc.) _____?
- Do the targeted seats use a plurality system or a runoff
_____?

Find out more about how voting is conducted at your school. See the **Services and Resources** page for more information on how FairVote can assist you in bringing IRV compatible systems to your campus.

3. Build the Argument for Reform

- **Studying the problems** before you begin your campaign will help you understand how to sell the benefits of reform.
- **When thinking about elections, here are some things to consider:**
 - Yes No **Negative campaigns** – do campaigns focus less on issues and more on personal attacks?
 - Yes No **Minority rule and the “spoiler effect”** – do the winners end up representing less than 50% of the voters?
 - Yes No **Low voter turnout** – are students not engaged in elections?
 - Yes No **Vacancies** – are they filled by appointment instead of special election? Do many people run, thus making a weak plurality winner likely?
 - Yes No **Runoffs** – do they exist? If so, is voter turnout lower in the runoffs?
 - Yes No **Underrepresentation** – are some voting groups shut out? By party or political beliefs? By gender? By race?
- **If you answered yes to any of these questions, your school needs IRV!**



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4. Understand the Legal Aspects

- The procedure as it stands: What does your student government constitution and bylaws say about voting and elections? Which document is the target of reform?
- Gate-keepers of reform: Who can make the decision to change the policy? Are there multiple layers of decision-makers; for instance, must the campus government decide to put reform on the ballot, and let the student body decide from there?
- What power do I have?: Some schools allow students to place questions directly on the ballot through an initiative process. Is this an option? Is it the best option? Is it something to fall back on?

5. Design your Campaign Strategy

The purpose of any strategy is to allow you to achieve your objectives in the most efficient way possible. Here is a sample campaign strategy skeleton, to give you an idea.

Goals

- Short-term / partial victories: Recommendation by a rules commission, passage of a non-binding resolution or referendum, etc.
- Short-term goal: Have the student government place a referendum on the ballot.
- Intermediate goal: Pass a binding referendum to adopt IRV.
- Intermediate goal: Ensure logistical feasibility of implementation.
- Long-term goal: Adopt instant runoff voting (IRV) at your college.

Organizational Considerations

- Resources: Two or three core leaders; six occasional volunteers...
- Group-strengthening goals: Raise some money; build leadership group and supporters

Constituents, Allies, and Opponents

- Who cares enough to help / whose problem is it? Ethnic and political minority groups with historically poor representation; students with free time or want campaign experience; challenger candidates looking for an issue to champion...
 - What do they gain / what risks do they take? Groups gain representation; challenger candidates gain political traction
 - Into what groups are they organized? Campus groups / campus parties
- Who are your opponents? One "old guard" student politician; a stubborn school newspaper; a skeptical school organization
 - What will my victory cost them? The traditional way of voting; potentially may cost them politically
 - What will they do to oppose you? Use ads; write negative editorials

Targets

- Primary target(s): School elections administrator for implementation; student voters; campus policymakers; a relevant committee or commission
- Secondary target(s): Supportive professors; influential school groups; friends of students in school government.

Tactics

- Publicize support from candidates, officials, alumni, student group leaders; educate voters and collect petitions through student government meetings, voting demonstrations, and canvassing; get positive op-eds and letters-to-the-editor published.