

**U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
JULY 19, 2007 PUBLIC MEETING
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA**

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TESTIMONY**

“A GUIDEBOOK FOR RECRUITING COLLEGE POLL WORKERS”

The Recruitment Process

- **The application form.** The form used was simple and clear and collected the same information we require from all poll workers. After meeting with the college representative, it was decided that students communicate much more frequently by cell phone and e-mail, so both of these pieces of information were added to the student form. Additionally, the college thought it would be helpful to add the student identification number so that information was requested for tracking purposes.
 - Attracting bilingual poll workers has been a goal of the Grand Rapids City Clerk’s office for many years. Even though we are not legally bound to provide bilingual assistance at our polls, several precincts have a high population of Spanish-speaking individuals; therefore, Spanish-English speaking individuals have been the focus of recruitment for many years. The question “Are you Bilingual?” and “If so, please list the languages you speak” was added to the application form with the goal of providing persons with these skills where needed.
 - The major task of the college poll workers was to be in charge of a laptop computer downloaded with the entire City of Grand Rapids Voter Registration file and be the first station at the polling location. Since we have a rather transient community, frequently voters would appear at their former precinct and could not be found on our registration rolls. Nothing is more frustrating to a voter and the poll workers than to have a long line of voters waiting, and then not being able to find the person on the registration list. Having the entire City file on a laptop was extremely helpful to the voters since they could be assisted right there on the spot, and it freed up the telephone lines in the City Clerk’s office so that other callers could be helped.
 - The application form asked the question of whether or not the student was familiar with a laptop computer and inquired as to what were their computer skills.

- **Recruitment methods.** The recruitment of community college students officially kicked off during the “Welcome Week” event on September 13, 2006. Even through the pouring rain, 40 students came to our tent and completed application forms “on the spot”. An additional 223 applications were received through the Community College’s designated representative during the following two weeks for **a total of 263 applications received.** Of the 263 applications, 216 were accepted. Forty-seven (47) applications were not accepted due to: Not registered voter = 12; Outside county = 28; Convicted felon = 5; Non-responsive to question re: convicted felon = 2.
 - The key to the success of the recruitment effort was to combine approaches so that students receive the message repeatedly in different ways. The table tent at the ‘Welcome Week’ event, fliers, posters, banners and campus bulletin boards were helpful in the high traffic areas around campus. A media release resulted in the exposure of two articles written in the local newspaper, and public service announcements on the radio and television coverage which also generated information relating to the program.
 - The financial stipend was emphasized. \$125 for one day’s work was a great incentive!

Training and Appointment

- A mandatory training class must be attended by all election workers in the State of Michigan. Separate training classes were held for the college workers. Eighty-nine (89) students attended one of the training classes. Since Grand Rapids Community College is only a few blocks away from City Hall, the classes were held in the City Commission Chambers, rather than on campus. The students received the information provided in the “New Worker Training” class with the addition focus on the operation and purpose of the laptop computer program. A separate handbook showing examples of the voter registration program was provided to the college students. The lack of questions relating to the laptop program and the duties were remarkable. Most students felt entirely comfortable with the computer and the expected tasks on Election Day.
- It was important to provide students with a greater understanding of how their work fits into the larger whole promoting the pride and commitment to future electoral volunteerism.
- Since many of the college poll workers were first-time voters, they were exposed to a hands-on experience of the mechanics of voting.
- In hindsight, more training classes should have been offered. Since we only scheduled one daytime class and one evening class, the choices were limited. Any student who called and asked for make-up class time, was invited to attend an adult training class and received separate training on the laptop at the end of class.

- Of the 89 trained college students, all students were either appointed or they cancelled. To be more specific, 82 students were appointed (one person as a stand-by worker); three (3) persons cancelled prior to Election Day; and two (2) appointed workers did not show on Election Day. Since we have 80 locations for our 100 precincts, **every polling location was staffed with at least one (1) college poll worker.**

Retention and Program Sustainability: Retaining Students for Multiple Elections

- It is imperative that we election officials have a reliable pool of poll workers whom we can call upon to serve several times a year, over many years. These veterans are the core of most poll worker programs. College students, for various reasons, are not likely to become part of this core group. However, since we chose to partner with a community college, the likelihood of the student workers remaining in the Grand Rapids area was increased since these students tend to stay in the community after graduation.
- The key to a successful college poll worker program is not necessarily retaining the same students for every election, but establishing a sustainable process with a partner school so that we can count on receiving a certain number of students for every election (or at least even-year November). We have now been able to create and develop a relationship with the school's leadership and know that they are not only aware of the program, but support its goals.
- Since November 2006, all of the college poll workers have been added to our Master List of election workers. Some were appointed for the May 8, 2007 election. In addition, the voting history of these individuals is being tracked and we have seen some hopeful results.
- Our first experience with the college poll worker program was promising and this program will be repeated for 2008.