

# STUDENT LEADERS IN ELECTIONS

A CASE STUDY IN COLLEGE  
POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT

2015  
SEPTEMBER



CHICAGO  
LAWYERS'  
COMMITTEE

FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW, INC.

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ROBERT R.  
**McCORMICK**  
FOUNDATION

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 1
- INTRODUCTION ..... 2
- PART I - THE STUDENT LEADERS IN ELECTIONS PROGRAM ..... 4
  - Why student poll workers?.....4
  - The Chicago Program .....5
- PART II - FINDINGS ..... 6
  - Making a Successful Recruitment Program .....6
    - Recruitment Methods .....6
      - Personal contact is not better or worse than sending an email.....8
      - Professors are effective recruiters but may have limited reach.....8
      - Career/involvement/activity fairs result in many applicants who later withdraw .....8
      - Program managers can prioritize methods that efficiently bring in large numbers of poll workers.....9
    - Recruiting particular types of students .....9
      - Recruit community college students .....9
      - Recruit bilingual students.....10
    - Combined effects of recruitment methods and student characteristics.....12
  - Making Elections More Efficient.....14
    - College students can work efficiently with technology.....14
    - Students can be sent to understaffed precincts.....18
  - Student Feedback.....18
    - Participants report greater levels of civic engagement .....18
    - The biggest problem that students reported encountering is inattentive or unqualified fellow poll workers.....18
    - 37% of students report that they did not vote in the Municipal Election .....19
    - Students felt more prepared for certain tasks on Election Day.....19
- PART III - RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 20
  - Recommendations to Election Jurisdictions.....20
    - Put everything online .....20
    - Follow up to catch drop-outs .....20
  - Legislative and Policy Recommendations.....21
    - Fund the EAC College Poll Worker Grant Program.....21
    - Remove GPA requirements.....21
    - Allow students to serve without being registered voters .....21
    - Allow non-citizens to serve as poll workers .....21
    - Allow students who serve as poll workers an excused absence from college classes.....21
- PART IV - AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY..... 22
  - Recruitment Strategy.....22
  - Impact .....22
    - Effect on participants .....22
    - Effect on election efficiency.....22
  - Sociological Research .....22
    - Bilingual and immigrant students .....22
    - Felon enfranchisement .....22
- PART V - CONCLUSIONS ..... 23
- APPENDIX 1 - ACTION PLAN FOR A COLLEGE POLL WORKER PROGRAM ..... 24
- APPENDIX 2 - STUDY DESIGN AND REGRESSION RESULTS ..... 27
- APPENDIX 3 - TRANSMISSION TIME REGRESSION ANALYSIS ..... 31
- ENDNOTES ..... 34

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a national recommendation, election jurisdictions have been recruiting college students to work at the polls, a move that can engage young people in civics and improve election administration. This case study examines a successful college student poll worker program—run by the author of this report—in order to identify effective strategies and document the program’s impact. The Chicago Program—branded as Student Leaders in Elections—recruited college students to work in three elections in 2014 and 2015. More than 3,500 students applied and more than 1,500 served, making it one of the largest college poll worker programs in the country.

The key findings for program managers trying to recruit students and for policy-makers deciding on the impact and value of these programs are:

**RECRUITMENT**

- Unlike recruitment to other political activity, **personal connection and face-to-face contact is no better or worse than sending an email** for reaching a large number of students who will show up on Election Day.
- **More than 50% of community college students served in a second election**, compared to only 32% of other students.
- **Spanish-speaking students were more engaged:**
  - The percentage of Spanish-speaking students who **showed up after applying** and the percentage who **served in all three elections was nine points higher** than that of other students.
  - Around **18% of Spanish-speaking students took extra steps to help improve** the poll worker program, compared to 14% of other students.
- **73% of the students who served in two elections went on to serve in a third election**, suggesting that these programs can identify people who will have a lasting commitment.

minutes faster (a 9-18% improvement) and precincts with two students transmitted 9-12 minutes faster (30-40% improvement). These results support the hypothesis that **college students have the comfort with technology necessary to make polling places more efficient.**

- **College students eliminated the need for backup poll workers** in three city wards because they were willing to work outside their home precincts.

These results also suggest legislative changes, such as reinstating federal funding for the Election Assistance Commission to support programs like the Chicago Program, and allowing bilingual non-citizens to serve as poll workers and translators.

Evaluating the Chicago Program answers questions about college students working at the polls and raises new considerations. Will students who had this experience be more civically engaged over the long term? Is there a different conception of civic service that inspired Spanish-speaking students to be more committed? Running these programs and pursuing the questions they raise can deepen our understanding of civic life and improve the administration of American elections.

**IMPACT**

- **College students improved election efficiency by helping to transmit results faster.** A difference-in-differences analysis shows that precincts with one student transmitted 4-5

# INTRODUCTION

President Obama’s Commission on Election Administration—established in response to widespread administration problems in the 2012 election—recommended that election jurisdictions employ college students as poll workers in order to expand the pool of available workers and to help ease the chronic shortages that lead to long lines at the polls.<sup>1</sup> College poll worker programs improve election administration and give students a chance to learn about and participate in democratic society. Implementing this recommendation is not easy, though. Many election jurisdictions have little experience recruiting college students (or running intensive recruitment at all) because most poll workers are retirees who serve year after year and do not need to be actively recruited.<sup>2</sup> In response to these difficulties, a small literature base has been developing to help program managers figure out how to run college student poll worker programs. The data analysis in this report contributes to that literature by answering key questions for election authorities that are deciding whether and how to run such a program:

- Which recruitment methods are the most effective for reaching students and getting them to show up on Election Day?
- What types of students are likely to serve as poll workers and to remain committed to further service (making them a high priority for outreach)?
- What impact do college student programs have on the efficiency of election administration?

These questions are answered by this case study of the Student Leaders in Elections program (“the Chicago Program”), a college student poll worker recruitment program run by the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc. (CLCCRUL) in partnership with the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners (the Board of Elections), and with funding from the McCormick Foundation. The Chicago Program used a variety of methods to recruit college students, described in greater detail in Part I. In total, 3,535 applications were collected and 1,578 students served on at least one of the three Election Days, with over 500 students serving for two or more elections. That makes the Chicago Program larger than any of the college student programs that were funded through the Election Assistance Commission’s grant program, and most likely larger than any such program in the country.<sup>3</sup>

In answer to the questions set out above, the case study of the Chicago Program shows that the best recruitment methods were email, in-person recruitment tables, and referral from a friend (in that order of priority). For the types of students to prioritize in outreach, bilingual students and community college students were uniquely likely to be highly committed. In analyzing the impact of the Chicago Program, students improved efficiency in two main ways: by helping to do certain Election Day tasks more quickly (probably because of a greater comfort with technology) and by filling vacancies in understaffed precincts.

Poll workers are called “election judges” in Illinois, but we use the more popular national term “poll workers” throughout this report.

The data presented here will help fill some gaps in the existing research on college student poll worker programs. Existing research mainly consists of practical guides based on the reports of program managers and analysis of impact based on subjective survey results.<sup>4</sup> The existing guides are valuable tools for program managers and the Chicago Program relied heavily on them. However, the new data in this report can build on earlier knowledge and question some of the underlying assumptions because of several unique features of the Chicago Program and the data collected from it:

- The close partnership between CLCCRUL and the Board of Elections allowed ongoing tracking of the students over the course of three elections. Previous programs have not been able to observe students in multiple elections to see who stayed committed. Indeed, many of the previous reports were written without knowing if the applicants recruited by the organization even showed up the polls.<sup>5</sup>
- The Chicago Program used a variety of recruitment methods, making it possible to compare directly between them.
- The dataset gathered during the Chicago Program—much larger and more detailed than that from other programs—allows the use of statistical analysis that can clarify the quality of the recruitment methods and the features of students likely to remain committed to service.

In addition to the practical questions of which recruitment methods work best, the dataset allows exploration of the social and democratic questions surrounding this form of civic participation. The factors that turn out to be positively associated with participation (for example, being bilingual) reflect social trends. These broader social questions are not merely academic either, because program managers face choices of how to work within or attempt to change the patterns of civic participation that they come into contact with by running a recruitment program.

Part I of this report explains the motivation for running college student poll worker programs and details what happened in the Chicago Program. Part II explores the data, by comparing recruitment methods and characteristics of students to see which methods are successful and which students are likely to be highly engaged. The report further analyzes the impact of the Chicago Program on the efficiency of the elections. The data analysis proceeds by first assessing factors individually and then using a regression to give a more nuanced view of the combined effect of various factors. Part III makes recommendations to election jurisdictions and suggests legislative and policy changes based on the results of the Chicago Program. Part IV lays out directions for further research. After the conclusion in Part V, Appendix 1 distills the findings into a research-based action plan for program managers seeking to run a college student recruitment program. Appendixes 2 and 3 give detailed information about the statistical analysis used in the report.

# 3,535

student poll worker applicants

# 1,578

students who served at least once

# 500

students who served more than once

# PART I – THE STUDENT LEADERS IN ELECTIONS PROGRAM

## WHY STUDENT POLL WORKERS?

Election jurisdictions often face shortfalls of poll workers. According to the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC's) 2014 National Election and Voting Survey (EAVS), 45% of jurisdictions report that finding sufficient poll workers is somewhat or very difficult.<sup>6</sup> Several states report that not finding younger poll workers is contributing to the problem because their existing pool of workers is retiring.<sup>7</sup> The increasing technological sophistication of voting machines demands new skills from poll workers, which makes recruitment even more difficult: a survey of poll workers in Cuyahoga County, Ohio conducted by the Election Science Institute in 2006 indicated that 57% of poll workers felt they had not received enough hands-on training in using voting machines prior to the election. Moreover, the percentage of workers who felt their training was insufficient correlated with age, as those over 65 expressed the lowest comfort levels with the election technology.<sup>8</sup>

Recruiting college students to be poll workers helps deal with these problems. The total number of potential poll workers increases because a previously unused source is utilized. College students may also bring the skills needed to deal with the kind of modern technology that they grew up with.

In addition to the benefits to election administration, being a poll worker is a civic learning opportunity for young people. Students learn the role

of “street-level bureaucrats” who are responsible for the details and decisions involved in the final stages of implementing law.<sup>9</sup> Recent randomized field research also suggests that participating in a civic activity like this—even if it is done without previous political interest—acts as a catalyst for adopting new civic attitudes and potentially greater civic participation.<sup>10</sup>

The civic engagement benefit of serving as a poll worker is especially important for the traditionally underrepresented and less engaged population of community colleges, who were a focus of the Chicago Program. Seventy two percent of the 120,000 students at the City Colleges of Chicago are Black or Latino and 69-92% receive some sort of financial aid.<sup>11</sup> Being low-income or a person of color (and especially both together) is associated with reduced civic participation.<sup>12</sup> That disparity is fueled by differences in who gets asked to participate: African-Americans and Latinos are less likely than whites to be asked to engage in civic life.<sup>13</sup> The racial inequities that fuel unequal participation in (and, ultimately, control of) our democracy run deep. Much needs to be done to solve them, but we can start with the things that are within our power. Election authorities and program managers can choose who they ask to participate, and they should take the opportunity to ask for the participation of low-income students and students of color. College student recruitment programs provide that opportunity.

## THE CHICAGO PROGRAM

The responsibilities for the Chicago Program were divided between CLCCRUL and the Board of Elections. Recruiting students and developing relationships with universities was handled by CLCCRUL while training and assignment to polling places was handled through the normal poll worker system at the Board of Elections.

The recruitment effort reached every college and university in the City, with a particular focus on community colleges—the program recruited 1,364 applicants from community colleges (45% of the total) of which 651 served on an Election Day (49% of the total). The median age of the students that applied to the Chicago Program was 22. Students from 71 schools applied, and students from 51 schools served as poll workers. The table lists colleges with more than five applicants.<sup>14</sup>

CLCCRUL used the following strategies to recruit these students:

- Emails sent through:
  - University-wide system
  - Career centers
  - Community service organizations and offices
  - Leadership and academic advising centers
  - Multicultural affairs
  - Academic departments and individual professors (especially political science, sociology, history, and foreign languages)
  - Student groups (ethnic/cultural, political, and social)
- In-person recruitment tables both at welcome events and in well-trafficked areas
- Distribution of flyers and posters
- Online job boards and ads (Indeed, LinkedIn, Idealist, Facebook)
- Presentations to classes and student groups
- Creation of a dedicated website (slechicago.org)
- Peer-to-peer motivation (including incentives for students to recruit friends to apply)
- Posting on campus social media
- Incorporation into service-learning curricula

The program was run by one full-time staff member, with several other staff members assisting for recruitment events. Students either applied on paper or online and data was collected on the students both from their responses on the application and through the information on program participation provided by the Board of Elections.

**FIGURE 1: STUDENT POLL WORKER APPLICANTS, BY COLLEGE**

Harold Washington College*	425
DePaul University	348
Loyola University	348
Richard J. Daley College*	235
Northeastern Illinois University	198
Olive-Harvey College*	188
University of Chicago	172
Truman College*	162
Malcolm X College*	123
Wilbur Wright College*	114
Robert Morris University	109
University of Illinois-Chicago	104
Kennedy-King College*	65
Northwestern University	43
Saint Xavier University	39
John Marshall Law School	36
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology	33
Illinois Institute of Technology	31
Chicago State University	18
Columbia College	11
Roosevelt University	10
Prarie State University	8
Governors State University	8
Northern Illinois University	7
DeVry University	6
South Suburban College	6
Westwood College	5
Northwestern College of Law	5

The table includes the number of applicants from all colleges in the program that had at least 5 applicants. There were 42 more with fewer than 5 applicants, listed in this endnote.<sup>15</sup>

\* indicates a City College of Chicago

# PART II – FINDINGS

## MAKING A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE STUDENT RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

This section examines which recruitment methods worked best in the Chicago Program and which types of students seemed to be highly engaged and committed. Students are directly compared in terms of their recruitment method and the characteristics available about them from their applications (bilingual status, community college) to figure out the profile of the average highly engaged participant versus someone who withdrew from the program or was not particularly committed. Each factor is examined separately and then in combination with other factors in a regression. The goal of the section is to identify the methods and types of students that recruiters should prioritize.

## Recruitment Methods

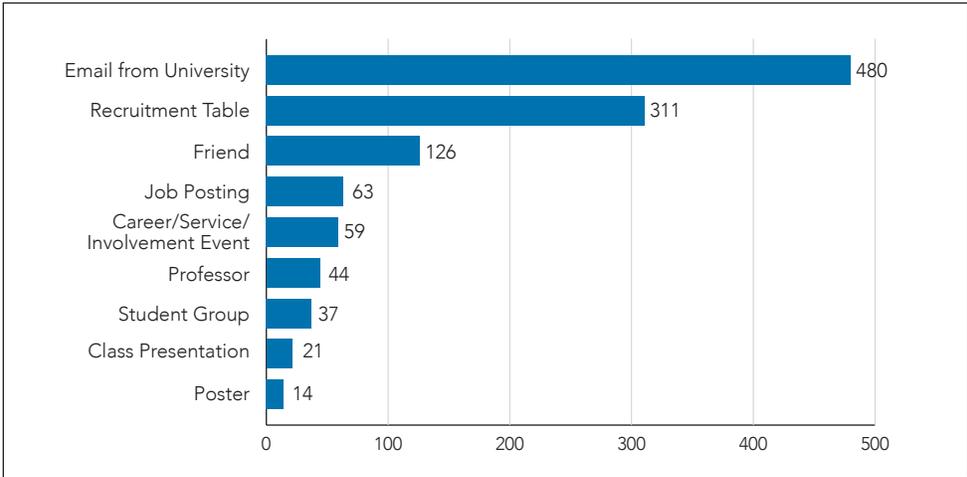
Throughout the recruitment program, staff pursued every method outlined in Part I for every college and university in the Chicago area, prioritizing the City Colleges and the largest universities. At most schools, more than one method was used. The typical procedure was to set up an in-person event, then use the time on campus to visit administrators, professors, activities/involvement offices, and student groups and ask them to promote the opportunity to their constituency.

The total number of poll workers recruited by each method is a product both of the effectiveness of that method and the amount of energy we put into pursuing it. We initially pursued most methods with equal vigor, but continuously analyzed results (especially between the November and February elections) to focus on the methods that seemed to be working best.

**TOP RECRUITMENT METHODS**

1. Email
2. Recruitment Table
3. Friend Referral

**FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF POLL WORKERS BY RECRUITMENT METHOD**



This shows the number of students who actually served on Election Day, broken down by recruitment method. Recruitment table should be distinguished from career/service/involvement event. Both involve standing at a table, but career/service/involvement events involve many other people also standing at tables nearby.

A recruitment table is a table set up in a busy area of campus where students can learn about being a poll worker and fill out an application. It's distinct from a career/service/involvement event where there are many such tables set up from different organizations.

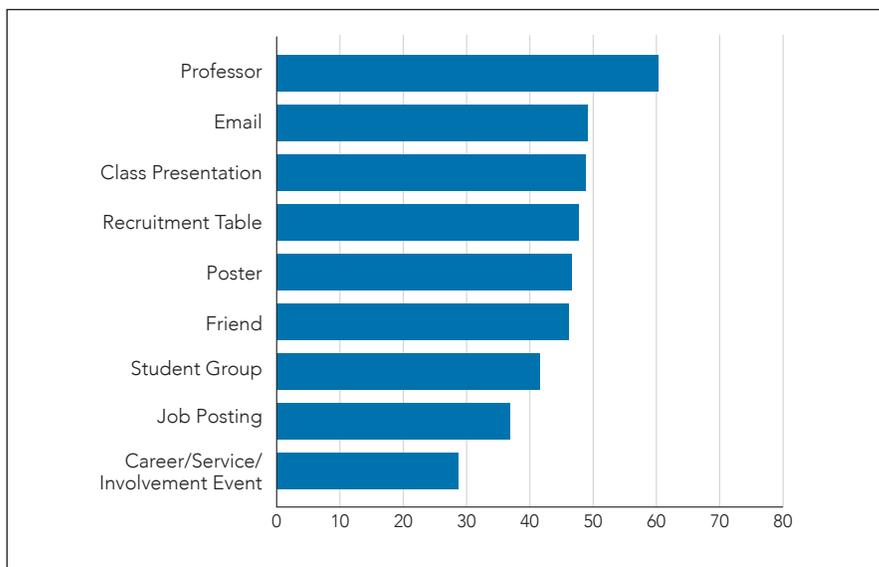
The Chicago Program attracted the plurality of poll workers through emails (which were sent out by student services/activity offices, academic departments, student governments, and public relations directors). The emails went out either to a targeted list (say, the political science department) or to the entire university. University-wide emails, expectedly, were best. The second best method used to recruit poll workers was recruitment tables, which were a reliable source of students, especially those who were not reached through email or perhaps needed a reminder.

The third most effective method of recruiting poll workers was through referrals from friends, which offered a great return for the time invested despite bringing in substantially fewer students than the top methods. The Chicago Program offered incentives for people to refer their friends:

Anyone who recruited a friend was entered into a raffle and the person who recruited the most friends won a prize. These prizes were modest (\$30-\$50 cash or gift cards) and required only the time necessary to send those emails and to update students about who was currently winning the "best recruiter" prize. It was an easy way to get over a hundred additional poll workers.

In addition to the total number of students recruited, each method should be analyzed by how many of the initial applicants dropped out before Election Day. For practical purposes, withdrawals create headaches for the election authorities, which need to assign poll workers to precincts well in advance of Election Day. Figure 3 shows the percentage of students who showed up after applying by each recruitment method.

**FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS WHO SHOWED UP ON ELECTION DAY, BY RECRUITMENT METHOD**



These are the percentages of applicants who actually followed through to serve on at least one Election Day (that is, the number who served on Election Day divided by the number of applicants). The turnout rate was substantially higher for students recruited by their professor and substantially lower for students recruited at events and through online job postings. The other recruitment methods had very similar turnout rates.

Most of the recruitment methods had very similar turnout percentages, falling between 45-50%, meaning that in most cases over half of the students who filled out an application did not show up on Election Day. The noteworthy exceptions are that turnout percentage was higher for students recruited by professors and lower for students recruited at career/involvement fairs. Based on all of the results above, a number of conclusions can be drawn about good practices for recruiting student poll workers:

### **Personal contact is not better or worse than sending an email**

Most of the reports and research about college student poll workers (and poll workers in general) claim that “face-to-face recruitment and personal contact are the most effective and successful recruitment methods.” That claim is backed up by research on other sorts of political activity, like protest or demonstrations, where repeated empirical study shows that personal connection truly is influential.<sup>17</sup>

But the results here show that there is not a reason to give priority to personal contact methods, and the research from other disciplines is misapplied in the case of poll worker recruitment. Non-in-person methods recruited more people, and the applicants they brought in were just as likely to show up after applying as those recruited through personal contact. It could be true that personal contact is more influential than sending an easily ignorable email for motivating a randomly selected person. However, program managers do not have a practical interest in maximally motivating randomly selected people. Instead, they have a practical interest in using methods that reach a large number of people who turn up on Election Day, and for that goal personal contact has no special place.

The assumption about personal contact could be tested even more directly in the case of the February election because students had the option of naming a friend they wanted to work with. If personal contact were to matter in influencing applicants to turn out, it would seem to matter most here, where the friend was a significant enough connection that they wanted to work together on Election Day. But the turnout rate for students who chose to work with a friend was nearly the same as the average turnout for February (in fact, it was 2 percentage points lower). There seems to be no significant difference in the turnout rate between students who chose friends to serve with and students who did not.

“There seems to be no significant difference in the turnout rate between students who chose friends to serve with and students who did not.”

Thus, it is incorrect to assume that lessons about recruitment to other kinds of political activity can all be applied to poll worker recruitment. In the case of more ideological political activity, personal contact may be crucially important because one needs to be motivated into action. But that kind of motivation is less important for poll workers. Students get paid to work at the polls, which for many serves as the strongest incentive and may be all they need to motivate them.<sup>18</sup>

“It is incorrect to assume that lessons about recruitment to other kinds of political activity can all be applied to poll worker recruitment.”

“51% of community college students who served in one election served in another one compared to only 32% of other students.”

### **Professors are effective recruiters but may have limited reach**

The turnout rate for students recruited by a professor was 10 points higher than the average. Part of the explanation is that the professors who were asked to recruit their students taught political science classes, which may be full of students already predisposed to participate. Moreover, professors sometimes offered incentives like extra credit (along with the implicit incentive of wanting to please the professor). However, the absolute number of students recruited (44) was small, because most of the professors the Chicago Program built relationships with did not teach large lecture classes.

Program managers can best take advantage of the persuasiveness of professors if they find teachers of large lecture classes and if they plan on running the program for several cycles, so that the up-front time investment of building the relationship can yield further benefits.<sup>19</sup>

### **Career/involvement/activity fairs result in many applicants who later withdraw**

The turnout rate for students recruited at special events was 20 points lower than for students who applied through email. That is presumably because at such events students are in the mindset of eating the free candy and signing up for everything, without much thought to whether they can (or even want) to follow through. There is little time for interaction with the recruiter to fully explain the program. This bad turnout rate held even though some of the special events were explicitly about political and public service activities.

Since these events still result in a decent number of poll workers (59), program managers should still recruit at them, but should give them no priority over just setting up a recruitment table in a busy part of campus.

### **Program managers can prioritize methods that efficiently bring in large numbers of poll workers**

This section gives program managers guidance on how to spend their time well. The order of the recruitment methods in Figure 1 is the rough order of priority that program managers should follow in planning recruitment. The methods with the highest volume of applicants were also time-effective: sending out an email has an immediate huge reach. Standing at a table in an area of campus with heavy foot traffic produced a very reliable 50 applications per two-hour engagement. Of course, all methods should be attempted, but email and recruitment table represent well-tested strategies that have a high upside.

### **Recruiting particular types of students**

Large metro areas like Chicago have many types of colleges and students, so program managers will need to decide which students to prioritize in outreach. These decisions can be made on the basis of normative concern for who ought to be offered this opportunity or on the basis of the pragmatic need to recruit large numbers of people. The results from the Chicago Program presented in this section show that these normative and pragmatic concerns are both well-served by recruiting community college students and bilingual students.

### **Recruit community college students**

As explained in Part I, CLCCRUL was particularly interested in recruiting community college students as an effort to close the civic engagement gap that exists by race, income, and level of education (over 1,300 applications were collected from community colleges). As a pragmatic matter, program managers have an interest in recruiting students who will serve in multiple elections because those students are a better return on the investment necessary to bring them in. Community college students were a particularly good source of poll workers who would commit to serving multiple times after serving once: 51% of community college students who served in one election served in another one (329/651) compared to only 32% (219/688) of other students.

“Recruitment of bilingual and community college students serves a social interest at the same time as a pragmatic one: it promotes civic engagement in an underrepresented group and it is a source of workers who will reliably commit to service.”

Several factors could explain the higher levels of commitment among community college students:

- Community college students are more likely to be from the local area, and so may feel a stronger connection to it.<sup>20</sup>
- Community college students may be more in need of a job and interested in earning money for the day than students from four-year colleges who may have families paying their way.<sup>21</sup>
- The staff at Chicago’s City Colleges were excellent recruiting partners. At several of the colleges, the Chicago Program was able to recruit via a recruitment table and a campus-wide email for both election cycles.

Recruitment of community college students thus promotes civic engagement in underrepresented groups and is a way to find students who will commit to multiple terms of service.

### Recruit bilingual students

To support a healthy democracy, we must have bilingual workers at the polls to ensure that voters who speak a language other than English have equal access to their right to vote. In some jurisdictions—including Chicago—this requirement is mandated by section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, but even where this provision does not apply, recruitment of bilingual poll workers is still important. Moreover, there exists a civic engagement gap in immigrant populations similar to that for African-Americans and people of color, which is produced in part by the failure of traditional civic institutions to ask for the participation of immigrant communities.<sup>22</sup> Despite the importance of the task, many election jurisdictions struggle with recruiting an adequate number of bilingual workers.<sup>23</sup>

College campuses are excellent places to find bilingual students. In Chicago, there were 780 bilingual students who applied and 378 who served, over 25% of the total number of poll workers (the data does not allow us to know whether bilingual students are immigrants or what their first language is). There are many cultural and language groups on campuses that make it easy to find bilingual students who are excited to engage with and serve their community.

FIGURE 4: BILINGUAL STUDENTS

Language	Applied	Served
Arabic	24	7
ASL	5	0
Cantonese	3	2
Chinese	16	9
Filipino	2	1
Gujarati	6	2
Hindi	13	3
Korean	6	1
Mandarin	4	1
Polish	38	12
Russian	10	4
Spanish	525	279
Tagalog	5	4
Urdu	24	9
Other	99	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>378</b>
<b>As a Percentage of All Students</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>

The table lists the number of students who applied to be and served as poll workers. There was a huge variety of languages spoken, including 99 students who spoke a language other than those listed here. Spanish was by far the single largest category, composing 67% of all bilingual applicants.

The results also show that these students are particularly likely to turn out multiple times and to be highly engaged.

Figure 5 on the next page displays the engagement of bilingual students by showing that a higher percentage of those students turned out at least once, served in all three elections, and were “highly engaged.” Here, “highly engaged” is measured by whether the student provided in-depth answers in response to an optional survey aimed at improving the program.<sup>24</sup> It turns out that in the Chicago Program, the differences between bilingual and monolingual students was

Spanish-speaking students were more likely to serve three times, but the overall rate among those eligible was in general quite high: 73% of students who served twice went on to serve in a third election, suggesting that serving twice is a good indication of commitment to further service.

**FIGURE 5: SPANISH-SPEAKING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

	Serve 1+ Times		Serve All Three Times <sup>26</sup>		Highly Engaged	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Spanish-speaking	279	53.1%	43	72.9%	50	17.9%
All others	1,090	44.0%	128	63.7%	148	13.6%
<b>Percentage Increase for Spanish-Speaking Students Over Others</b>		<b>+9.2%</b>		<b>+9.2%</b>		<b>+4.3%</b>

This table shows the number of students who met each engagement benchmark, and the percentage within that group that met the benchmark: e.g., looking at the “Serve 1+ Times” column for Spanish-speakers: out of 525 Spanish-speaking applicants, 279 showed up for at least one Election Day (53.1%). “Highly Engaged” is a measure based on the length of responses to an optional survey.<sup>27</sup> The bottom row is the difference between the first and second rows, showing how much higher the percentage of Spanish-speakers was for each engagement benchmark (the engagement benchmark).

being driven by the Spanish-speaking students, who comprised the large majority of bilingual students (there were not significant differences along these measures for bilingual, non-Spanish students—or else those students were less likely to meet the engagement benchmark).<sup>25</sup>

The bottom row of the table shows the difference in engagement: 9.2 percentage points more of the Spanish-speaking students decided to follow through after applying, and the same percentage more decided to serve in all three elections. For the “highly engaged” measure, the increase for Spanish-speaking students is smaller in absolute terms (4.3 points), but the increase is clear considering the very small percentage of students who met that benchmark at all: that 4.3 point difference amounts to a 32% increase in the proportion of highly engaged students (only 223 students got the “highly engaged” designation).

**Why were bilingual students more engaged?**

An explanation supported by student survey responses is that bilingual students felt connected to the community they were serving and felt that serving as a translator was a vital service. The following student survey responses are illustrative. Students are listed with their university and the neighborhood where they served:

For me the best part of my day being an election judge was being able to assist Spanish-speaking citizens and also see the enthusiasm in people coming out to vote... that is what [influences] us young adults to be involved in politics and expand our knowledge on it.  
 – Cahue Zabdi (Northeastern Illinois University), Little Village

I was very excited to be part of Student Leaders in Elections and to be a judge because I recently became a U.S. citizen. I was influenced by seeing how my Mexican community needs more involvement in the elections and signed up as a bilingual judge.  
 – Anonymous (Harold Washington College), Pilsen

“ Bilingual students are more likely than others to follow through to Election Day after applying, to remain committed for multiple cycles, and to be highly engaged and attentive on the day. ”

Even though the ballots had Spanish translations, I enjoyed reading the ballots for those who did not understand English or were unable to read small letters.

– Carolina Cruz (DePaul University),  
Humboldt Park

Being one of the election judges in my precinct showed the difference that I made in my community as I was able to help both voters that spoke English and Spanish.

– Anonymous (DePaul University),  
Back of the Yards

Though we do not know how many of the bilingual students were immigrants, the quotes from students above are consistent with research on civic participation in immigrant populations. Analysis of National Exit Poll and U.S. Census Bureau data finds that immigrants who become citizens are more likely to vote than U.S.-born citizens and second- or third-generation immigrant citizens.<sup>28</sup> People who chose to go through the onerous naturalization process have done more to gain their right to participate, and so may be more inclined to exercise it.

If the sentiments expressed by these students are driving the effect of higher engagement among Spanish-speaking poll workers, it makes sense that this effect would not extend to other language groups: there is a large Spanish-speaking population in Chicago and therefore a high demand for translation services, but a much smaller demand for other languages. In that case, a bilingual student's experience would be no different than any other student's. However in a city where a different language minority community was larger, we might expect to see a similar effect play out.

An alternative explanation for the higher engagement among Spanish-speaking students might be that the Municipal Election had a popular Latino mayoral candidate, Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, who forced a runoff with the incumbent. This possibility is not well-supported by the data, though. The regression analysis (discussed in detail in the next section) found that the Spanish-speaking variable was actually more significant for the General Election than the Municipal Election, and did

not have an effect on who served for the Runoff Election, where this theory would expect it to be strongest.<sup>29</sup> Garcia's campaign thus may have had some effect, but the sentiments expressed in the survey seem like a better explanation for the high commitment of Spanish-speaking students.

Jurisdictions already have clear reasons to recruit bilingual students in order to ensure equal access to the vote. The results from the Chicago Program add another reason: bilingual students are more likely than others to follow through to Election Day after applying, to remain committed for multiple cycles, and to be highly engaged and attentive on the day.

### Combined Effects of Methods and Student Characteristics

Having examined how more- and less-engaged students differ according to recruitment methods and various characteristics, the next question is what the combined effect of these factors are on the measures of engagement and commitment. The regression analysis—given in detail in Appendix 2—isolates the influence of each factor by controlling for the others. The preceding comparisons give a clear sense of the differences between the groups of students who participate at high levels and those who do not. The regression analysis is helpful to understand which of those characteristics still show up as differences between engaged and disengaged students once other factors are controlled for, allowing some insight into what factors might actually be responsible for the difference between the groups.

“Neither GPA nor affiliation with a political party appeared to be associated with participation as a poll worker.”

Since we did not have access to comprehensive information about the students to control for other relevant factors, the exact regression coefficients should be viewed with caution. Moreover, the claims being made here are not causal ones: the increase in the probability of some outcome based on a certain recruitment method is not necessarily because that recruitment method has special persuasive force. Rather, it may be that the only people who applied through this method were those that were already committed. The complicated causal question is unimportant to program managers who are just seeking to find a large number of committed students.

The results from the regression are generally consistent with the comparisons made earlier in this section about the differences between the recruitment methods and those between bilingual students, community college students, and all others. The results clarify a few of those comparisons:

In comparing recruitment methods, we already saw that most methods had about the same turnout rate, except for recruitment by professor (which was better) or at a career/involvement fair (which was worse). The regression in Appendix 2.1 reveals that random chance is just as good an explanation for that variation in turnout rates as any real difference. Interestingly, the difference for recruitment by a professor became insignificant only once the results were corrected to account for which college each student came from,<sup>30</sup> suggesting that the professors who passed along the message about the Chicago Program worked at colleges where the students were more predisposed to show up after applying. Only recruitment at a career/involvement fair shows up as truly different (and worse than) email.<sup>31</sup>

For community college students, the regression showing the factors influential for turning out multiple times confirms that community college students were more likely to do so (Appendix 2.1), but were no more likely to show up once. For bilingual students, the regressions brings one of the findings into sharper relief: once age, college, and in-person versus online contact were controlled for, the difference in the likelihood of Spanish-speakers showing up all three times is even larger (Appendix 2.2) than it first appeared to be (the coefficient shows that Spanish-speakers were 15 percentage points more likely to serve three times).

Finally, the regressions are helpful in isolating factors that do not have a statistically significant relationship with any of the measures of engagement. In this case, neither GPA nor affiliation with either major political party appeared to be significant in any of the regressions.<sup>32</sup> It might have been expected that people who have a party identification might be more likely to commit to more service, or that students with a higher GPA might be more likely to apply only if they were confident they could serve, but that does not seem to pan out in practice.

The regression analysis thus largely confirms the findings in the preceding section: most recruitment methods have about the same turnout rate from application to Election Day (the differences that appeared to exist are probably, in fact, insignificant) and Spanish-speaking and community college students are more engaged in the ways outlined before, even when controlling for other factors about the students.

## MAKING ELECTIONS MORE EFFICIENT

The previous section of this report showed how college student recruitment can find people to fill the traditional poll worker role. This section lays out ways that the non-traditional features of college students as poll workers in the Chicago Program allowed them to have a measurable positive impact on the efficiency of elections. First, college students decrease the time it takes to transmit election results, which lends support to the hypothesis that college students are more comfortable with technical tasks. Second, the college student program was used in a targeted way to relieve poll worker shortages.

### College students can work efficiently with technology

Earlier reports have suggested, anecdotally, that college students might be the most comfortable with new voting technologies given that they have used modern gadgets since childhood.<sup>33</sup> As Part I explored, many of the current poll workers are not particularly comfortable with that technology, so new poll workers must be found in order to avoid longer wait times at the polls and improper election administration. College students may help with this, but there has not been an empirical study to test the hypothesis that college students have a technological comfort that could make election administration more efficient.

That hypothesis is tested here using the data from the Chicago Program on the amount of time it took precincts to compile and convey the election results from a precinct back to Election Central after the polls closed for the night (“Results Transmission”).

If students helped precincts transmit results at the end of the night more quickly, it is likely that they were more efficient on other technical tasks throughout the day, too, because Results Transmission is one of the most technologically involved parts of the job. In Chicago, the process involves shutting down the electronic poll book, accessing and removing the data storage media from two different types of voting machines, using a third device to consolidate the results, then properly preparing and transmitting those results wirelessly.<sup>34</sup> In the survey, several students said that they found Results Transmission to be one

of the toughest parts of the process and one even suggested that there should be a separate training session just for the end of day tasks. As such, efficiency in Results Transmission is a good proxy for general technological efficiency.

Speedy Results Transmission is also independently valued by election administrators. Jim Allen, Communications Director for the Board of Elections, said that “accurate and quick reporting of results fits with the goal... of transparency. Healthy election systems are marked by participation, transparency, accuracy, and security. The stakeholders—voters and campaigns—tend to have more confidence in outcomes if they can see results reported swiftly that can be matched up with participation data from in-precinct, absentee, and early voting.”<sup>35</sup>

The data from the Chicago Program shows that precincts with college students transmitted results more quickly. This conclusion was drawn by comparing the Results Transmission times in the 2014 and 2015 elections with those of the 2012 General Election to see whether precincts with college students showed greater improvement than those without students (a difference-in-differences design). Since many different factors could influence the efficiency of a polling place, this design is helpful because it only compares each precinct to that same precinct in 2012 so that differences between the precincts don’t cloud the results. This also helps account for the fact that students’ assignment to precincts was not random: students could choose on their application where they wanted to work (either by specifying a ward or by saying they wanted to be near their college or home) and the Board of Elections assigned students according to their needs in various areas. So, a simple comparison of transmission times in 2014-15 would be misleading. Of course, there is still the possibility that this self-selection influences the results, but the difference-in-differences design cuts down on the number and influence of those biases. This design is run both as a simple comparison of averages and using a regression, which produce extremely similar results.

“College students increased the efficiency of results transmission by 32%.”

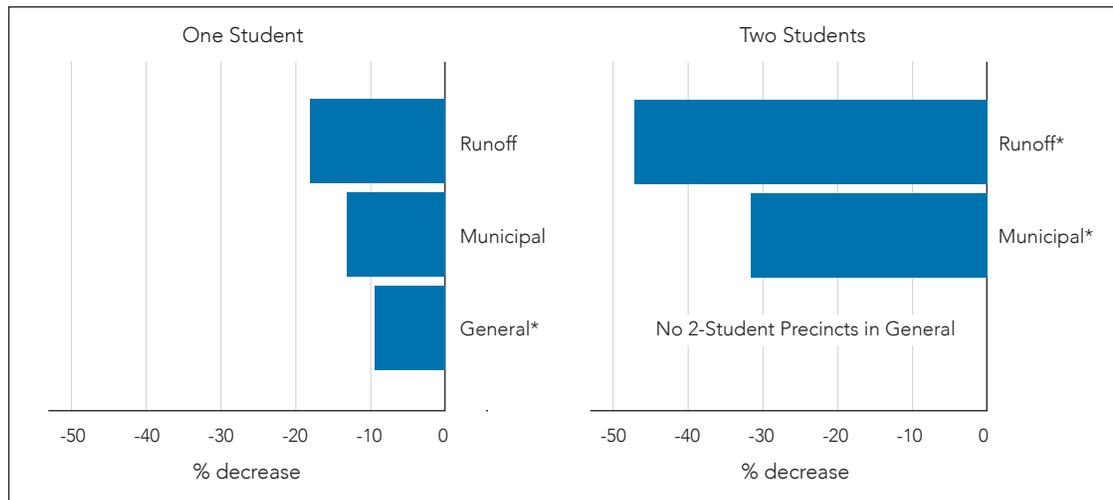
**FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE IMPROVEMENT IN TIME TO TRANSMIT RESULTS FOR PRECINCTS WITH STUDENTS**

Figure 6 shows the estimated percentage decrease in transmission time that can be attributed to the presence of college students in the precinct. The percentages are the result of a difference-in-differences design: the precincts with college students improved more since 2012 than the precincts without college students, and the numbers reported in Figure 6 are based on the differences in the level of improvement. Each difference is shown as a percentage of the average results transmission time for that election. For a table of these numbers, see Appendix 3. The importance of college students is suggested by the fact that the effect increases substantially when a second college student is in the polling place.

\* indicates that these differences were significant at  $p < 0.06$  when the difference-in-differences model was run as a regression. This part of the results and the caveats to interpretation of these p-values are discussed more below and in Appendix 3. All of the time differences were significant at  $p < 0.1$ .

The set-up worked like this: the estimated effect of having college students in a precinct was calculated by first comparing the total time (in minutes) to transmit in 2014-15 with the time to transmit in 2012 for the 2,000+ precincts in the city.<sup>36</sup> Almost every precinct transmitted results faster in 2014-15 than in 2012 (being a presidential election, 2012 was surely a much more hectic Election Day). However, the precincts that improved the most were those with college students. For the 2015 Municipal Election, precincts without college students transmitted results 35 minutes faster on average, while precincts with college students transmitted results 44 minutes faster. Taking the difference between those numbers, we can estimate that the effect of having college students in a precinct was to transmit results 9 minutes faster than they would have without students. Looking at that difference as a percentage of the average transmission time for the 2015 election (29 minutes) makes clear the surprising magnitude of that improvement: college students increased the efficiency of Results Transmission by 32%.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 6 shows the percentage improvements for precincts with one or two college students on each of the Election Days in 2014-15. There were a few hundred precincts with college students in each of the comparison groups for each of the elections.<sup>38</sup>

The presence of students was associated with reduced time to transmit results in all three elections, and the time savings were twice as large for precincts where two or more students were present. This supports the hypothesis that college students (and probably other young people) have a comfort with technology that makes them assets to a modern polling place. This quantitative finding is also confirmed by a few survey responses that discussed the end of the day in particular (and in fact were the motivation for performing this data analysis). This response by a student from DePaul University is a good example:

The other judges [...] had no desire to work with the technology involved in transmitting the results, so that fell solely on my shoulders.

“ For the Municipal Election, we were able to completely eliminate the need for emergency standby poll workers by fully staffing the shortfall with college students in three out of the four targeted wards. ”

This line of explanation is further supported by the increase in the effect when two students were present. Two students who each had some level of technological comfort could work together to problem-solve. Plus, students may not have felt comfortable offering their suggestions without another student around to back them up: the two-student program was started because after the General Election, students reported feeling like they were the odd one out in their precinct and that their suggestions were not taken seriously.

The comparison of averages between precincts with and without students holds up even at higher levels of statistical rigor. Appendix 3 contains a regression version of the difference-in-differences design that controls for individual variations for every precinct (fixed effects) and finds results nearly identical to the ones obtained from the comparison of averages. As indicated in Figure 6, the relatively strong p-value for these results indicates that it is unlikely that the variation in transmission time from the presence of students is due to random chance (but see Appendix 3 for a fuller discussion of this interpretation).

The transmission time differences are most noteworthy if it is true that they serve as a proxy for efficiency and technical competence elsewhere during the day. If not, the differences are too small to be of much practical importance to election administration. But the results suggest that there is some underlying characteristic shared by many college students that contributes to technical efficiency, since the time differences are seen consistently across elections and are unlikely to be from random chance.

A relevant alternative explanation is that the difference in Results Transmission time could be a result of there simply being a greater total number of poll workers in the precincts in which college students worked. There is not likely to be a lot of bias introduced by this possibility, though, because the tasks involved in transmitting results

do not lend themselves to a divide and conquer strategy; they mostly need to be performed sequentially by a single person. Thus, more bodies in the room would not necessarily translate to quicker transmission unless they also brought more insight. But even if the increased efficiency can be somewhat attributed to more bodies in the room, that would still show a benefit to expanding the poll worker recruitment pool to increase the number of staff at polling places, even if it did not demonstrate the technological comfort point.

Some sources of variation cannot be accounted for: although the Board of Elections encourages precincts to put a priority on Results Transmission, some may just choose to do other tasks first, for reasons completely unrelated to their comfort with the transmission-related tasks.

The conclusion on Results Transmission times is that, barring unobserved explanations for the variation, there are substantively and statistically significant results that make it plausible that college students contribute to increased efficiency at polling places.

### **Students can be sent to understaffed precincts**

The traditional pool of poll workers consists of longtime community residents who have served for many years. There are many advantages to this reliable group of workers, but one disadvantage is that those people tend to want to serve in their own community and so cannot move to other precincts to cover staffing shortfalls.<sup>39</sup> Footloose college students can be sent where they are needed, and our program for the 2015 Municipal Election took advantage of that flexibility.

The Board of Elections identified four wards in the city that consistently had shortages of poll workers. All of these wards had six or more teams of extra standby poll workers deployed to fill in for the 2014 General Election. For the 2015 Municipal Election, we were able to completely eliminate the need for standby poll workers by fully staffing the shortfall with college students in three out of the four targeted wards.

The shortfall was not solved in one of the wards (the 47th), despite more students serving there than in any other ward. Given the pattern in the other wards, it is likely that the unmet need in that ward would have been even worse in the absence of the students. Indeed, the number of standby teams deployed increased to ten in the Runoff Election when fewer students were available to serve.

Two strategies were employed to get students to areas in need:

- **Campus Program:** The University of Chicago's Institute of Politics provided transportation and support for its students to go anywhere in Chicago. These students were able to work in a ward twelve miles away that would have been inaccessible by public transit in the early morning.
- **Voluntary Sign-Up:** Students were told during the application process that it would be helpful to the City if they chose to work in particular wards. They were given the incentive that they could name a friend that they would like to work with if they chose to work in one of those wards. In total, 187 students signed up for one of these wards and 99 showed up on Election Day.

For jurisdictions considering implementing these strategies, the voluntary sign-up strategy took minimal effort. A notice was posted on the website and students indicated on their application where they wanted to be placed (in Chicago we have the benefit of good public transit and several universities that were close to the areas of need). The Campus Program strategy could be used by election jurisdictions that can develop a strong partnership with a local university. Otherwise, the logistical costs might be overwhelming. The Campus Program would not have been possible without the partnership of the Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago, which handled the transportation costs, Election Day meals for students, and the arrangement of all logistics. In whichever form, though, using college students to shore up worker shortages is a way to take advantage of a unique characteristic of student workers in the service of improving elections.

**STUDENT FEEDBACK**

Having electronic contact with hundreds of student poll workers made it easy to solicit feedback on their experience with the process. A total of 1,053 survey responses were collected—854 from students who served (a 54% response rate) and 199 from students who withdrew (10% response rate). Like all subjective surveys, these results are subject to bias in the direction of giving responses that seem more socially praiseworthy. Additionally, we did not conduct a before and after survey so students also self-reported the degree of change in their attitudes or behavior as part of the experience. Still, they give some idea of what students thought about the experience.

**Participants report greater levels of civic engagement**

**FIGURE 7: PERCENT OF STUDENTS THAT REPORTED GREATER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

- 86%** learned more about the democratic and voting process

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- 77%** are now more motivated to reform the electoral process

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- 82%** would like to be an election judge again

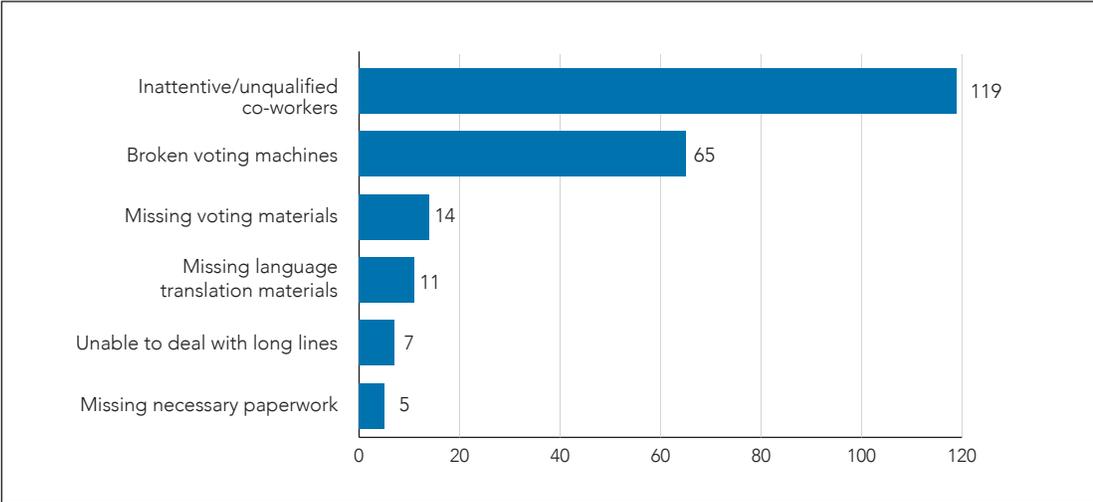
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- 89%** are more likely to vote in future elections

These are the percentages of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements, combining results from the February and November surveys.

**The biggest problem that students report is inattentive or unqualified co-workers**

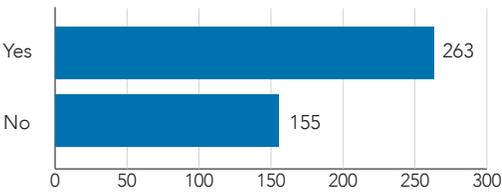
**FIGURE 8: NUMBER OF REPORTS BY PROBLEM TYPE**



These results are from the survey following the February election. The free-response answers were filled with stories that confirm the result about the troubles students had with other poll workers: many reported seeing other poll workers who were not committed to their duties or who, on the other end, were domineering and unwilling to listen to or respect the student.

### 37% report that they did not vote in the Municipal Election

**FIGURE 9: STUDENTS SELF-REPORTED VOTING IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION**

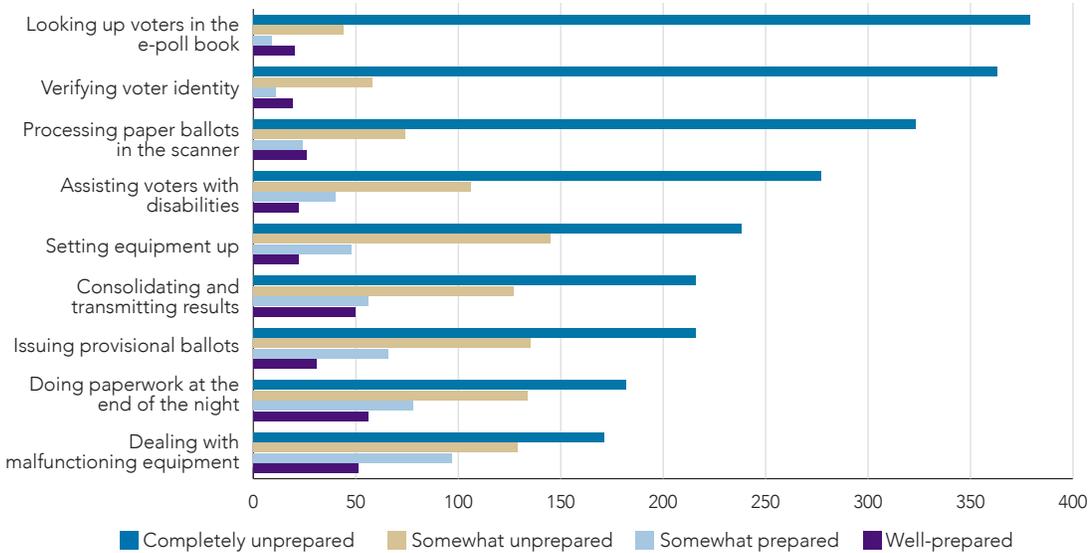


This result means that participation as a poll worker is not a guarantee of political engagement through voting. It also underscores that choosing to be a poll worker may in many cases have apolitical motivations, like the desire to get paid for the day. However, if the self-reported attitude shifts hold true, students may be more likely to vote in the future (an area for further study).

### Students felt more prepared for certain tasks on Election Day

Students were asked to rate how prepared they felt to perform various tasks on Election Day. Unsurprisingly, they said that they felt most prepared on the straightforward and central tasks like verifying voter identity and looking them up in the poll book, and felt less prepared on difficult tasks like dealing with malfunctioning equipment and doing the paperwork to close down the polls.

**FIGURE 10: LEVEL OF COMFORT WITH TASKS ON ELECTION DAY**



These results have implications for poll worker training, particularly in Chicago. The poll worker trainings are primarily focused on nuts-and-bolts tasks, like practicing looking voters up in the poll book and processing their ballots. That makes sense, because those skills are essential. Since those tasks are also easy to learn on the job, trainings could shift their focus to spend slightly less time on easier tasks and slightly more time on the troubleshooting issues (like provisional ballots and handling various materials at the end of the night) that students felt unprepared to deal with.

In order to facilitate abundant and honest feedback, students had the option to take the survey anonymously. The consequence of the anonymity

is that despite the high response rate, many of the responses could not be matched to student files to allow for a meaningful continuation of the empirical methods in this report. However, that high response rate to the survey (54%) should be heartening for researchers who want to rely on surveys to collect statistically viable information about programs like this in the future. Election jurisdictions could even make completion of a survey mandatory in order to receive payment, or offer some kind of incentive to complete the survey. Students are used to filling out surveys that are emailed to them, and their feedback can be an excellent source of information for program managers seeking a fresh perspective on the administration of polling places.

# PART III – RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELECTION JURISDICTIONS

### Put everything online

Election jurisdictions should use an online form to collect and process applications. The Chicago Program used a fillable PDF, which is not nearly as good, and will be changing to an online form for the next iteration of this program in order to streamline the process.<sup>40</sup> Online application forms can be directly connected to a system allowing people to choose their training times from an online scheduler.<sup>41</sup> This would reduce labor on the part of the Board of Elections in assigning people to classes and would decrease the number of people who drop out due to problems with the system. The system could also be used for people to choose the location where they want to serve, taking another responsibility off the shoulders of the election authority.

The online form recommendation is supported by the results of a program run by the Citizens' Union in New York City in 2006 and 2008 and by the survey data from the Chicago Program. The Citizens' Union program reported a significant increase in applications once they switched to an online system, and attributed that improvement to the use of that new system.<sup>42</sup> The Chicago Program used an online training scheduler for February, but not for November. In the follow up survey about reasons for not serving as a poll worker in November, "not getting information about training" and "application process was too difficult" composed 18% (29 people) of all the reasons given; in February, those two responses were just 5% (4) of the reasons given.

A central body like the EAC could develop the software to handle this process and give it to election jurisdictions in exchange for access to the anonymized data that is generated by the process, which could be aggregated and analyzed to fuel

further research. Such a system would help in the short-term by providing an efficient management platform and it would help in the long-term by creating a great source of data for researchers and policymakers.

### Follow up to catch drop-outs

Election jurisdictions should expect (depending on the recruitment methods that they use) that up to 50% of the applicants who initially sign up will not serve on Election Day. Program managers for other college student poll worker programs experienced similar or worse attrition rates.<sup>43</sup> Programs can take two different approaches to following up, depending on whether it is more important for the jurisdiction to be confident that assigned poll workers will turn out or to maximize the number of potential poll workers:

- Assign an applicant to a polling place only if they take some action step between sign-up and Election Day (for example: clicking a link in an email to confirm continued interest).
- Assign all applicants to work except those that explicitly drop out. This strategy should include a way that makes it very easy to inform the election authority that they are withdrawing and includes frequent reminders to do so if they can no longer make it.

The Board of Elections did not have a follow-up procedure and students were assigned to work even if they had not been to training in the 2014 General Election, so to improve on this the Chicago Program successfully implemented the "assign all applicants" procedure for the 2015 Municipal Election. Over 300 students responded confirming they would not be able to show up, giving the Board of Elections a more realistic idea of who to expect on Election Day. Of those that didn't explicitly withdraw, 59% showed up on Election Day (compared to 49% of all applicants).

“ If GPA is related to educational attainment, that means that the program is only targeting those people who are most likely to be civically engaged already, which does not take advantage of the chance for this program to act as a catalyst for engagement. ”

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Fund the EAC College Poll Worker Grant Program

From 2004-2010, the EAC funded dozens of college poll worker programs across the country. The grant program stopped when the EAC did not receive congressional appropriations past 2010. Given the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration and the success of the Chicago Program, there is strong reason to re-instate the program. The costs are relatively low, especially compared to the returns they generate.<sup>44</sup>

### Remove GPA requirements

Illinois legislation requires that student poll workers have a 3.0 GPA. This is impractical and unnecessary. The regression models run on the Chicago Program, discussed in Part II, show that a student's GPA had no statistically significant effect on whether they were likely to show up after applying or on how many times they would serve (which can be used as a measure of engagement and commitment). It is impractical to implement the GPA requirement because of the large number of first-year students who have no GPA, especially in the community colleges where the student may have been out of school for so long as to no longer remember their last GPA. The enforcement of the rule is therefore inevitably arbitrary.

Even if the rule could be consistently enforced, it should not be. The GPA requirement is contrary to one of the purposes of the program, which is to promote civic engagement. It is well-established that educational attainment is a significant predictor of civic engagement.<sup>45</sup> If the program is only targeting those with a high GPA, that means that the program is reaching those who are more likely to be civically engaged already, which does not take advantage of the chance for this program to act as a catalyst for engagement. Plus, there may be benefits in the other direction, too: if the program does turn out to promote civic engagement, longitudinal research suggests that this could ultimately increase a student's GPA.<sup>46</sup> Unlike people in the rest of the world, students have ranks and grades that are tempting to use for the purpose of picking out “the good ones.” But we have good reason to resist the temptation to use that ranking.

### Allow students to serve without being registered voters

Many college students are not registered voters, or are not registered in the place where they are going to school. Students are allowed to vote either in the election jurisdiction of their college or in a home jurisdiction to which they intend to return. Some students who would be interested in serving as poll workers may not be interested in changing their registration. Illinois law allows students to serve even if they are not registered voters in the state, which made it easier to recruit students for the Chicago Program.

### Allow non-citizens to serve as poll workers

Bilingual poll workers are required by law and it turns out that bilingual college students are also more likely to be committed and engaged. The pool of these valuable bilingual poll workers would significantly increase if non-citizens could serve as poll workers. California passed a law in 2013 allowing non-citizens to serve, and other jurisdictions should do the same.<sup>47</sup> This makes conceptual sense, as poll workers are not supposed to be expressing any political views or attempting to influence the process, so there is nothing inconsistent about having a poll worker who cannot vote.

### Allow students who serve as poll workers an excused absence from college classes

Students' attendance at classes is often important for grading and so they may be reluctant to miss a day of class to be a poll worker. In Illinois, students are pardoned by law for missing the day of college classes to serve as a poll worker. The election authority gives letters to the students that they can show to their professors to explain why they cannot make it to class on Election Day.<sup>48</sup> Still, not being able to miss class was the number one reason why students withdrew from the program: 31% of November respondents and 48% of February respondents cited this as their reason for withdrawing. There is a gap between having that line in the legislation and professors actually adhering to it, suggesting that university and professor-level buy-in is necessary for the excused absence to be meaningful.

# PART IV – AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

## RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Other college student programs, especially large-scale ones, could keep track of the same kind of data that was used in this study in order to verify the conclusions reached here. To make it more robust, the poll worker application could be revised to include some questions that are purely for research purposes. Researchers could employ an advanced suite of online marketing tools to keep more precise track of which links and pages were bringing in applicants, and use A/B testing to isolate factors even further. Implementing those tracking strategies requires foresight but not much additional technical expertise.

## IMPACT

### Effect on participants

- The college students who participated in this program could be tracked further in order to create a longitudinal data set. Researchers could see whether the students serve as poll workers again (for example, in the 2016 elections), and which factors are influential in that outcome. They could track students' records of civic participation, including voting and other political or civic action.
- A randomized study design could compare students' civic attitudes and actions before and immediately after serving, and track them long-term. Creating a valid control group would require election authorities to not assign some qualified students, which would require persuasion.

### Effect on election efficiency

- Researchers could conduct a polling place observation study, paired with interviews with poll workers, in order to more directly test the hypothesis that college students can improve efficiency in handling technological tasks in the polling place.<sup>49</sup>

## SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

### Bilingual and immigrant students

The regression results and survey responses suggest an interesting effect of being bilingual or being an immigrant (or both). A deeper investigation of this effect would get at central questions about social and democratic life in America:

- How does the conception of civic service differ between immigrants and native-born citizens (including both bilingual and monolingual people)? This question could be analyzed qualitatively through interview and ethnography and quantitatively through studying the factors that are influential in predicting civic service or participation for immigrant communities versus others.
- Could the Spanish-speaking effect hold for other large language minorities? This study should be repeated in cities with a different predominant language minority in order to see whether there is something unique about the Spanish-speaking community or whether the effect is generalizable.

### Felon enfranchisement

Could a poll worker program be used to help re-incorporate people with criminal records into civic and political life? During the Chicago Program, a staff member at a recruitment table talked with an ex-felon who was unaware that Illinois law allows felons to vote upon leaving prison, in addition to being eligible to serve as a poll worker.<sup>50</sup> He was excited about the opportunity to have paid government service on his resume because it would help build up his work experience and allow him to start re-incorporating into political and community life. Recruitment programs could target ex-offenders more directly by reaching out to community college and vocational school programs designed for that population. Researchers could study whether the experience is in fact helpful in increasing civic involvement or getting further employment.

## PART V – CONCLUSION

The Chicago Program managed to recruit more students than any other similar program in the country. In the course of doing so, it provided thousands of students with a civic experience and helped improve Election Days in Chicago in 2014 and 2015. It also produced a new dataset and analysis which has sociological and practical conclusions. It turns out that the principles that apply to the study of recruitment to political and social movements (and similar activities) are not necessarily a recipe for a recruitment program. In particular, the common assumption on the importance of personal contact should not be taken as dictating recruitment priorities. On the other hand, it is illuminating to learn how service as a poll worker is apparently perceived differently by bilingual students, and in particular Spanish-speaking students.

The recommendations and results from the Chicago Program should help guide jurisdictions who want to recruit college students, particularly if they want to run a similarly large-scale program. Endnote 4 collects the existing resources on

college student recruitment. If they have the time and money, jurisdictions should try every strategy they can think of in order to find what works best for their situation. But with the reality of limited resources, the data from the Chicago Program on recruitment method and the factors influencing student commitment offers a rational way to prioritize strategies based on how many students are recruited by various methods and how likely those students are to serve on Election Day. These practical implications have been noted throughout and are synthesized into a practical action plan in Appendix 1.

Engaging college students in elections is not just a good learning experience: it is a way to improve democracy. For underrepresented populations, it is a way to participate in democratic community. For election jurisdictions, there are measurable improvements in efficiency from employing student workers. By continuing to run and study these programs, we can develop the next generation of citizens and make elections better.

# APPENDIX 1 – ACTION PLAN FOR A COLLEGE STUDENT POLL WORKER PROGRAM

## PRELIMINARY WORK

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Starting early (months in advance) is ideal, and recommended by most program managers. However, a late start date does not doom the program. The Chicago Program did not begin any work until a month and a half before the recruitment deadline. This short timeframe puts more pressure on staff to work intensively, but it can be done. Here are the starting points:

- **Set a recruitment target**, informed by the expected attrition rate.
- **Establish messaging.** In the Chicago Program, we decided to promote the opportunity to improve the democratic process as well as the opportunity to get fairly good pay for a day's work in order to catch all types of students.
- **Map out the recruitment pipeline** to make sure that the system for students signing up, having their applications approved, signing up for training, and being placed on Election Day, are all clear so that you can plan ahead for the next step.
- **Determine research goals** so that you know what information you want to collect about students to analyze later, and build this into the system.
- **Develop visual identity** through posters, website, flyers, etc.
- **Ensure data quality** in the establishment of the system for gathering information about the students by requiring confirmation of email addresses, making it possible to edit responses without submitting a duplicate application, and setting up required fields.

## RECRUITMENT

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These methods are listed in order of priority, based on the research on the Chicago Program.

- **Identify the people who can send emails to large groups of students.** This may be a dean, academic advisor, department chair, student government president, extracurricular office, career office, or publicity director. These people can be hard to reach and should be pursued through email, phone, and just showing up to their offices.
  - **Tailor your messaging:** Many of these people (especially at larger universities) will feel that their students are already bombarded with emails and will need to be persuaded that it's worth promoting this program. For cultural/diversity centers, you can emphasize the program as a way to close the civic engagement gap. For language departments, translators are needed to ensure equal democratic access. For publicity directors, successful recruitment numbers are a way to publicly tout the civic engagement of their students. For the career office, students will have a government service line on their resume.
- **Book in-person recruitment opportunities.** The timeline of November elections will put recruitment at the beginning of the school year, so there will likely be involvement fairs where you can set up a booth. However, remember that such fairs have low yields of students who actually serve, so also book recruitment table opportunities outside of an event context that will allow better interactions with interested students.

- **Reach bilingual students** through student cultural groups, language departments, ethnic studies departments, religious organizations, and offices of international students.
- **Use peer motivation.** Being recruited by a friend is just as good at finding students who will turn out, and it is an easy way to increase numbers. Use “affiliate marketing” techniques like entering students into a raffle if they refer a friend and offering a prize to the person who recruits the most people.
- **Pursue other strategies.** The strategies recommended above were the most successful and time-effective for the Chicago program. For a list of the other things the Chicago Program did, see Part I. For further ideas, see the EAC’s “Guidebook to Recruiting College Poll Workers.”<sup>51</sup>

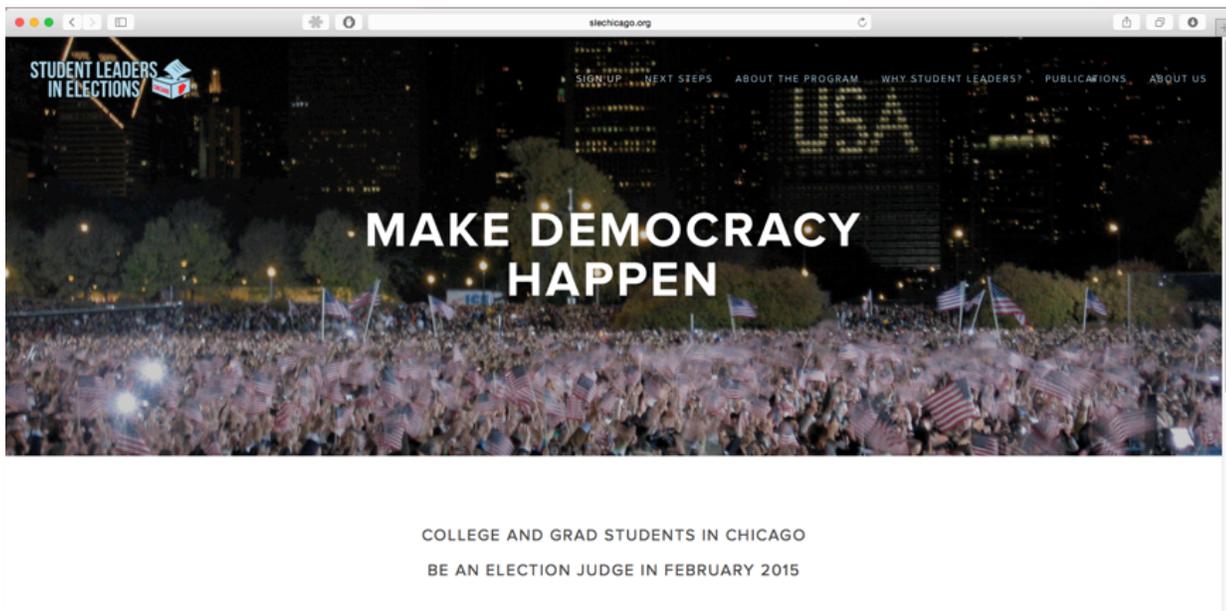
### Follow-Up

- **Keep in continuous contact** with students who have applied. Students need to be reminded and reassured that their application has been received and accepted and need to be informed of the next steps. Build a FAQ page like [www.slechicago.org/next-steps](http://www.slechicago.org/next-steps) that you can direct students to.
- **Decide what level of service to provide.** A tiny minority of students will occupy a substantial share of staff time with a host of questions. Programs with a lean staff and a large number of applicants could consider simply setting up an auto-response for phone or email that directs students to the pages that answer most frequently asked questions and just decline to engage with every question that comes their way.
- **Make it easy to withdraw from the program** using an online form, and remind students that crucial Election Day decisions depend on knowing how many of them will actually be showing up.

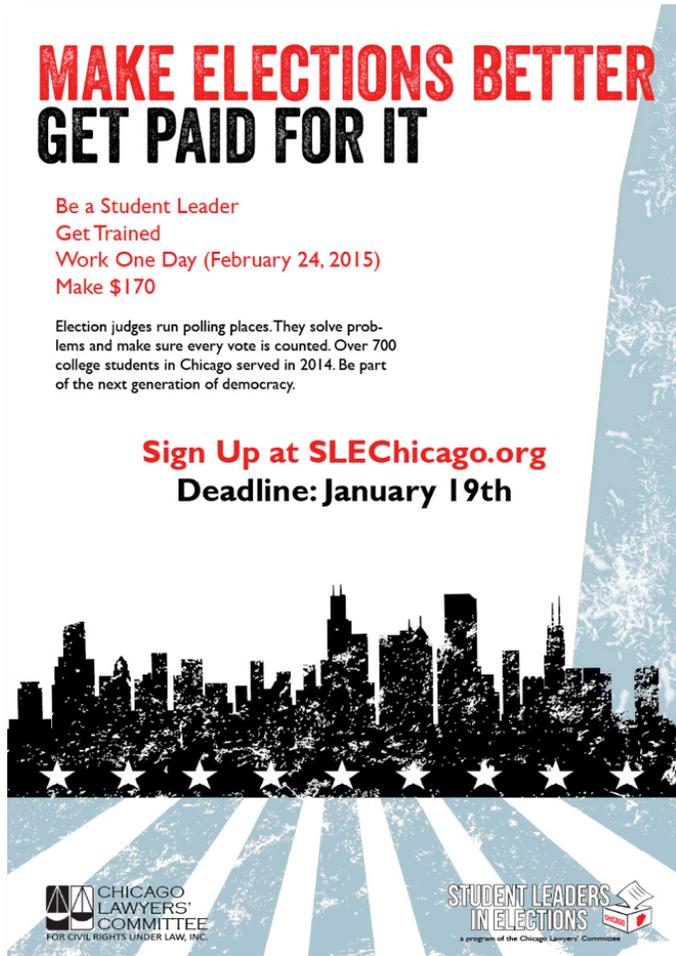
### MATERIALS USED BY STUDENT LEADERS IN ELECTIONS-CHICAGO

The materials shown are those used for the February 2015 Municipal Election.

#### WEBSITE



POSTER



FLYER (BUSINESS CARD-SIZED)



## APPENDIX 2 – STUDY DESIGN AND REGRESSION RESULTS

The findings in the last section of Part I are based on regressions of the data collected over the course of running the Chicago Program. The data collected about each student at the time of application were age, political party, bilingual status, college, GPA, and recruitment source. After each Election Day, a student's file was updated to note whether they served in that election. This appendix gives a detailed account of the data behind that regression and the methodology, assumptions, and caveats to interpretation associated with that analysis.

### DATA COLLECTION

If the student applied online, they reported their recruitment method using an online form with a range of options. If the student applied in-person, the researchers knew and could record their recruitment source directly. Since data was being matched from various sources, there is not data for every student for every variable. Students who lacked values for all variables were excluded (listwise deletion). The amount of deletion differed for each of the regressions, but even the model that shrunk the most still included 82.9% of the original observations. A possible source of bias is that students who applied online were less likely to have missing information than students who applied in-person because the online form could not be submitted without filling out every field, while staff members recruiting in-person sometimes failed to catch a blank item. To maximize data usage and reduce this bias, variables with a high number of missing values were excluded from the final model if their inclusion was statistically insignificant and had little impact on the other variables. In particular, this meant that GPA and political party were excluded from the final models, which allowed nearly 400 observations to be re-included.<sup>52</sup> An additional reason to exclude those variables is that the distribution of missing values (and hence exclusion of observations) is likely to be non-random: students with low GPAs and who did not care about political parties would be more likely to leave those fields blank.

A final potential source of error is from unintentional loss of applications. A student whose application information was lost (by the Board of Elections) and who therefore never got the necessary follow-up information cannot be distinguished from students who got that information and chose to ignore it. Some paper applications could have been incorrectly copied into the database, such that some students never received proper follow-up information. The error from this source can be estimated by checking the email bounce rate (indicating a mistaken email) for the initial contact for all students. The number of successful deliveries was 96%, indicating that 4% may not have received follow-up information. Students were also sent physical mail, so failing to get in contact by email did not mean that students had no chance of participating.

### STATISTICAL MODELS

Three models were used to study students' participation in the program according to various outcomes. All outcomes are binary variables and the equations were OLS regressions, so the coefficients should be interpreted as changes in the probability of the outcome occurring based on the variable. A logistic regression is customary for binary outcomes, but Angrist and Pischke argue that it actually provides little additional explanatory power, especially given how much it increases the interpretive burden.<sup>53</sup> In line with that argument, the choice appears to make little empirical difference in the case of this

particular data: the coefficients in the OLS regressions were nearly the same as the change in predicted probabilities obtained by taking the average marginal effects of each variable after a logistic regression.

The R-squared value was not high in any of these regressions, but that should not be concerning. The goal is not to fully model the data and control for all relevant factors but to investigate the particular questions and comparisons that this report is concerned with.

## 2.1 Number of Times Served

This analysis is composed of two different regressions with the same set of independent variables, one for the binary outcome of serving 1+ times and one for the binary outcome of serving 2+ times. The predictor variables were age and a series of dummy variables indicating the student's recruitment source, bilingual status, college, and a control for which election cycle the students were recruited. Note again that bilingual status includes both native speakers of a non-English language and students who have acquired proficiency. College was grouped as community college or non-community college. Robust standard errors are clustered around individual colleges (40-60 different colleges, depending on the model).

For recruitment methods, the variable indicating recruitment by email was left out, so the coefficients for those variables indicate the difference in the probability of the outcome when compared to being recruited by email.

**FIGURE 11: REGRESSION RESULTS FOR SERVING 1+ AND 2+ TIMES**

VARIABLES	Serve 1+	Serve 2+
Spanish-speaking	0.0643*** (0.0213)	0.0281 (0.0183)
Bilingual, non-Spanish	-0.0404 (0.0338)	0.00817 (0.0195)
Age	0.00331*** (0.00118)	0.00430*** (0.000671)
Community College	-0.00347 (0.0296)	0.0806*** (0.0221)
Contacted in Nov.	0.0361** (0.0155)	-0.0618*** (0.0192)
Recruitment Method		
Class presentation	0.00460 (0.0752)	0.0680 (0.0716)
Event/Career Fair	-0.183*** (0.0310)	-0.0536** (0.0223)
Poster	0.0196 (0.0782)	0.107 (0.0923)
Friend	0.0112 (0.0259)	0.0228 (0.0232)
Student group	-0.0924* (0.0488)	-0.0267 (0.0405)
Professor	0.152 (0.0917)	0.0827 (0.0578)
Recruitment Table	0.0102 (0.0410)	0.00350 (0.0166)
Constant	0.363*** (0.0379)	0.0703** (0.0288)
Observations	2,416	2,416

Robust standard errors, clustered by college, in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

A note about “Contacted in Nov.,” which indicates whether the student was originally recruited for the November 2014 General Election: The positive effect of this variable for serving at least once is probably due to a General Election producing more excitement than a local one. The slight negative effect for serving two or more times can be explained structurally: students who signed up for the February election knew that there might be a Runoff Election soon to follow (in April) and that they would be needed again in the event of that Runoff. For students in November, their next opportunity to serve was further away and not at all on their mind when they signed up originally.

## 2.2 Serving Three Times

The factors associated with serving all three times needed a separate regression because not all students were eligible to serve three times, based on Board of Elections procedures. The pool of poll workers for the Runoff Election was drawn from the workers for the Municipal Election, so only students who were originally contacted in November and who also actually served in February could have served three times. Due to the smaller sample size, the recruitment method variables had to be limited to a variable indicating simply whether the student was recruited in-person vs. online to avoid creating wildly lopsided dummy variables.

**FIGURE 12: REGRESSION RESULTS FOR SERVING 3 TIMES**

VARIABLES	Probability of Serving 3 Times
Spanish-speaking	0.145** (0.0574)
Bilingual, non-Spanish	0.256 (0.157)
Age	0.00581*** (0.00159)
Community College	-0.0168 (0.0990)
Recruited in-Person	0.105 (0.0705)
Constant	0.417*** (0.106)
Observations	248

Robust standard errors, clustered by college, in parentheses

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

## 2.3 Highly Engaged

The binary outcome for being “highly engaged” was created through analysis of survey responses. All students received an email with a link for an optional survey where they could give feedback about the program and their experience. Within that survey, there was a further optional free-response section where students could write a paragraph about their experience. A student was designated as “highly engaged” if he or she took the survey, gave a response to the optional free-response section, listed their name or email to invite follow-up contact, and the length of their response was in the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th quartile (which worked out to writing at least 130 characters). These students took a number of extra, optional steps to help improve the program and many of the responses in those quartiles were incisive and helpful to the program manager.

In this model, the separate variables for recruitment method were replaced by a binary variable indicating whether the student was recruited by email. The sample was limited just to students who actually served on one of the Election Days. In total, 223 students (7.4% of all students who served that were included in the sample) were designated “highly engaged” by this measure.

**FIGURE 13: REGRESSION RESULTS FOR HIGH ENGAGEMENT**

VARIABLES	Probability of Being Highly Engaged
Spanish-speaking	0.0513** (0.0206)
Bilingual, non-Spanish	0.0212 (0.0270)
Age	0.00256** (0.00116)
Community College	-0.0294 (0.0278)
Recruited by Email	0.0444** (0.0209)
Constant	0.0682** (0.0290)
Observations	1,332

Robust standard errors, clustered by college, in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

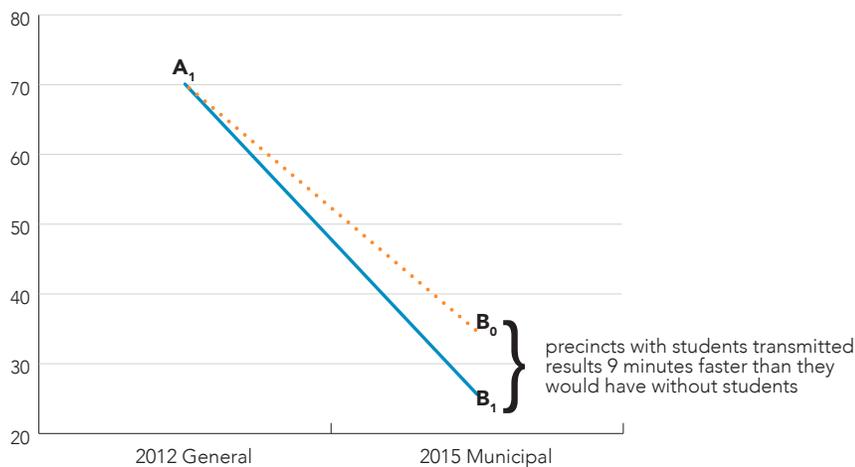
The significance of “Recruited by Email” is more likely explained by how the data was collected for this particular measure than by some underlying causal phenomenon. The “highly engaged” designation was based on results from a survey which was delivered by email. Students who were originally recruited by email were likely to be more easily reachable through that medium, and so more likely to be able to see and do the survey for reasons that may be irrelevant to their actual likelihood to be engaged.

These regressions confirm the picture painted in the earlier sections of Part I. See the last part of the “Making a Successful Recruitment Program” section for discussion.

## APPENDIX 3: TRANSMISSION TIME REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The simple version of difference-in-differences is well-represented by the following chart of the time difference in the Municipal Election:

**FIGURE 14: DECREASE IN TRANSMISSION TIME FOR TWO-STUDENT PRECINCT IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION**



$B_1$  is the average time that it took precincts with two students to transmit results in the Municipal Election (about 25 minutes).  $A_1$  is the amount of time it took for those same precincts to transmit results in 2012 (when there were no students).  $B_0$  is the amount of time that the model predicts that it would have taken those precincts to transmit results had the students not been there. This was arrived at by looking at the control group, the precincts that did not have students in them. The average transmission time in those precincts decreased by 35 minutes. The model assumes that this would have been the trend in the other precincts if the students had not been there, i.e. that without the students those precincts would have followed the trend represented by the dotted line:  $B_0(35) = 70(A_1) - 35$  (trend in the control group).

The following table of averages and counts is the raw data that was used to create the graph in Part II. Not every precinct could be included in the calculations because, due to machine malfunction or other causes, some precincts did not transmit results on Election Night at all. Those precincts were dropped from the calculations, but around 80% of the data remains intact. The data appear to be missing at random and thus not introducing bias in that way.<sup>54</sup>

**FIGURE 15: DIFFERENCE IN AVERAGE DIFFERENCES, MINUTES (# OF PRECINCTS IN PARENTHESES)**

	General	Municipal	Runoff
1+ Students	-4.52 (555)	-3.78 (603)	-4.91 (403)
2 Students	N/A	-9.1 (114)	-12.83 (47)
Average Transmission Time	48.13	28.8	27.22

This table shows the improvement in transmission time that can be attributed to the presence of students. All precincts were faster in the current cycle than in 2012, but precincts with college students got even faster than others, by the amounts shown in each cell. In parentheses are the number of precincts that meet each description. The average transmission time on the bottom row is the number used to create the percentages graph in Part II, Figure 6.

The regression analysis expands on this comparison of averages by using all available data points to calculate and compare the trends. The difference-in-differences was modeled in a similar way for each election. The outcome in each case was the number of minutes to transmit results. Absorbed into the model are the fixed effects variables for each of the precincts. Coefficients are shown for a dummy variable indicating the decrease in transmission time associated with the current election cycle, with having exactly one student, and with having exactly two students (when available).

In interpreting the p-values for the coefficients, we should be cautious given the number of different hypotheses that were tested.<sup>55</sup> The odds of something turning up as significant due to random chance increase as more variables are tested. It should be heartening, though, that there seems to be a pattern (two students is significant, one student is not). But the p-values should still be viewed as underestimates.

It is also important to ask whether this model meets the basic assumption of the difference-in-differences model, which is that the precincts with students would have experienced the same trend as the precincts without students in the counterfactual world where there was no college student program. The worry does not come from fixed factors like the demographics or income of the neighborhood: since each polling place is being compared only with that same polling place in the past, those factors are accounted for. The worry instead is that the precincts with students would have shown greater improvement even without the students. Though it is difficult to test this assumption, transmission time is relatively shielded from influencing factors; things like voter turnout would likely affect all precincts more or less equally. Still, this remains a strong assumption of the difference-in-differences model.

**FIGURE 16: DIFFERENCE-IN-DIFFERENCES REGRESSION**

VARIABLES	General	Municipal	Runoff
Election	-15.66*** (1.344)	-35.39*** (1.254)	-37.09*** (1.163)
1 Student	-4.517* (2.347)	-2.525 (2.324)	-3.883 (2.628)
2 Students	N/A	-9.093** (4.442)	-12.86* (6.973)
Constant	65.31*** (0.551)	65.47*** (0.513)	65.48*** (0.516)
Observations	3,300	3,530	3,433
R-squared	.605	0.726	0.733

Robust standard errors, clustered by precinct, in parentheses. Fixed effects for each precinct absorbed into the model. Specific p-values for the variables within range of significance are 0.054 (General, 1 Student), 0.041 (Municipal, 2 Students), 0.084 (Runoff, 2 Students). The coefficients can be interpreted as the change in transmission time associated with having one or two students. The difference in transmission time is most powerful and consistent in the case of precincts with two students. Coefficients are notably similar to the simple version of the difference-in-differences. The table contains "N/A" because there were no two-student precincts in the General Election.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

The regression analysis confirms the story told by the difference in averages: students helped transmit results faster. In fact, the regression coefficients are nearly indistinguishable from the time differences calculated through the simple method. Having one student only approaches statistical significance in the case of the General Election (this was also the election that had the largest number of one-student-only precincts). In the other elections, breaking the variables into one- and two-student effects revealed that the effect was driven by the two-student precincts.

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> R. F. Bauer & B. L. Ginsberg, *Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration*, PRESIDENTIAL COMM'N ON ELECTION ADMIN. 46 (2014) ("Jurisdictions should recruit public and private sector employees, as well as high school and college students, to become poll workers."); see also *Presidential Commission on Election Administration Launched*, PRESIDENTIAL COMM'N ON ELECTION ADMIN. (May 21, 2013), <http://www.supportthevoter.gov/2013/05/21/presidential-commission-on-election-administration-launched/>.
- <sup>2</sup> R. V. Cobb, *Strategies for Success: Starting a College Poll Worker Program*, 10 J. CIVIC COMMITMENT (2006) ("This population of volunteers is declining every year. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) estimates that the average age of a poll worker is 72 years old. Without a massive nationwide mobilization of committed, well-trained election-day volunteers, election departments across the country will find themselves in dire circumstances as the aging poll worker population diminishes further with no replacements.").
- <sup>3</sup> Based on a review of the program summary information and the progress reports submitted on completion of the grant term to the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). See *Help America Vote College Program*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, (Apr. 27, 2015), [http://www.eac.gov/payments\\_and\\_grants/help\\_america\\_vote\\_college\\_program.aspx](http://www.eac.gov/payments_and_grants/help_america_vote_college_program.aspx)
- <sup>4</sup> See *Central Connecticut Help America Vote College Program Progress Report* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2013); see also *The Central Ohio College Poll Worker Recruitment Program* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2010); see also Cobb, *supra* note 2; see also A. Cotton et al., *Help America Vote College Program at the University of Baltimore* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009); see also D.M. Getachew & A. Senteno, *Project Report: 2008 Poll Worker Recruitment Program* (E. R. Project, Trans.) (2008); see also *Golden Key Performance Progress Report for the Help America Vote College Program* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009); see also *A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N (2007); see also *Heny Ford Performance Progress Report* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009); see also D. Israel et al., *Project Report: 2006 Poll Worker Recruitment Program*, CITIZENS UNION FOUNDATION (2006); see also S.M. Jones, *Report on Virginia21 College Poll Worker Program* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009); see also *New York Public Interest Research Group Fund Final Report to the Election Assistance Commission*, NYPIRG (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009); see also *Show-Me New Poll Workers: Recruiting the Next Generation Among St. Louis Community College Students* (C. N. Help America Vote College Program, Trans.) (2009).
- <sup>5</sup> This was the case for the program closest in size to ours, run in New York City by NYPIRG. See NYPIRG, *supra* note 4.
- <sup>6</sup> This was 19.5% of the total number of jurisdictions participating in the survey, but not every jurisdiction answered every question. See *The 2014 EAC Election Administration and Voting Survey Comprehensive Report: A Report to the 114th Congress*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N 253-54 (Jun. 30, 2015) [http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/Page/2014\\_EAC\\_EAVS\\_Comprehensive\\_Report\\_508\\_Compliant.pdf](http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/Page/2014_EAC_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report_508_Compliant.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 255-58.
- <sup>8</sup> Cobb, *supra* note 2.
- <sup>9</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>10</sup> E. Olson, *Changing Attitudes About Democratic Participation Through a Catalytic Experience* 1 (2015) (unpublished manuscript through Northwestern School of Law) (on file with the Owen L. Coon & James A. Rahl Senior Research Program) ("This study ultimately finds that while serving as an exit poll administrator during a Chicago Election Day may make participants believe the government to be less effective, this experience positively changes attitudes regarding future plans to volunteer with political campaigns and engage in other civic opportunities.").
- <sup>11</sup> Of the 120,000 City College students in Chicago, 72% are Black or Latino. See *Diversity*, CITY COLLS. OF CHI., <http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Diversity.aspx>. 69-92% (the variation is across the different campuses) of students are receiving some kind of financial aid, and 66-90% are getting federal Pell Grants to fund their education. See *College Navigator*, INST. OF EDUC. SCI., NAT'L CTR. FOR EDUC. STATS., <https://nces.ed.gov/colleg-enavigator/?q=city+colleges+of+chicago&s=all&fv=144157>.

- <sup>12</sup> L. Frasure & L.F. Williams, *Civic Disparities & Civic Differences* 17 (Univ. of Maryland, Civic Engagement Working Paper No. 3, 2002).
- <sup>13</sup> *Unequal Opportunities in Civic Participation: Race Matters Collection*, ANNIE E. CASEY FOUND. (2006) ("Individuals who are asked to participate in political activities are more likely to do so. Yet, people of color are less likely to be asked to participate by politicians and activists: 56% of Whites, 40% of African Americans, and only 25% of Latinos report being recruited.") (citing H.E. BRADY ET AL., *VOICE AND EQUALITY: CIVIC VOLUNTARISM IN AMERICAN POLITICS* (1995)).
- <sup>14</sup> This is slightly higher than the average age of four-year college students, which can be explained by the emphasis on recruiting from the City Colleges, which tend to have an older population. Across the City Colleges, the median percentage of students over 25 is 55% (at Olive-Harvey College), with the lowest at 31% (Harold Washington College) and the highest at 66% (Truman College).
- <sup>15</sup> National Louis University, East-West University, North Park University, Loyola University College of Law, Illinois State, Walden University, Wheaton College, Capella University, Computer System Institute, Moraine Valley, U of C Law School, Adler School Of Professional Psychology, BIR Training, University Of Phoenix, YCCS, Morton East, Southern Illinois University, St. Augustine College, Triton College, Trinity International, University Of Arkansas, University Of Denver, University Of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, American Intercontinental, Ashford University, Ashworth, Bronzeville Military, Chicago Community Learning Center, Clark Atlanta University, Concordia University, Cooking Hospitality School, Cornell University, Cortiva Institute, Culver Stockton College, Dominican University, Elgin Community, Joliet Junior College, John Logan College, Lewis University, SAE Institute, U.S. Career Institute, Ultimate Medical Academy, Vandercook College.
- <sup>16</sup> See *A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, *supra* note 4 at 47. The same claim is made also, for example, by the *Central Ohio College Poll Worker Recruitment Program*, *supra* note 4; see also *Central Ohio: Franklin County Board of Elections* 9 ("By far the most effective method for recruiting poll workers was in-person via the tables or peer to peer."); see also *Golden Key Performance Progress Report for the Help America Vote College Program*, *supra* note 4 ("Research has proven that peer-to-peer motivation is an excellent means of motivating college students to action."); see also *Show-Me New Poll Workers: Recruiting the Next Generation Among St. Louis Community College Students*, *supra* note 4 ("Personal Recruitment... face-to-face contact is the most effective and successful recruitment method.").
- <sup>17</sup> See, e.g., D. McAdam, *Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer*, 92 AM. J. SOC 1, 64-90 (1986); see also A. Schussman & S. Soule, *Process and Protest: Accounting for Individual Protest Participation*, 84 SOCIAL FORCES 2, 1083-1108 (2005) ("We find that being asked to protest is the strongest predictor of participating in protest."). Schussman & Soule also review a number of studies in the literature all making similar claims about the role of social networks in political participation.
- <sup>18</sup> Although we didn't survey for this in particular, a survey by Citizens' Union in New York asked students what their motivation for serving was, and many said that the cash was the biggest factor. See D. Israel et al., *supra* note 4 ("Monetary compensation was the number one factor that motivated the 18-24 year old age group to sign up to be a poll worker.").
- <sup>19</sup> There are some side benefits that make cultivating relationships with professors appealing for the organizations running the recruitment. Through that process, CLCCRUL connected with a professor (Christina Rivers, DePaul University, Dept. of Political Science) whose work aligned with our other organizational priorities and with whom we partnered.
- <sup>20</sup> See *College Navigator*, *supra* note 11.
- <sup>21</sup> *Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students: Promising Models and a Call to Action*, EXEC. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT (2014), [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/white\\_house\\_report\\_on\\_increasing\\_college\\_opportunity\\_for\\_low-income\\_students.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/white_house_report_on_increasing_college_opportunity_for_low-income_students.pdf) ("While the overall time to degree has increased, this increase is concentrated at less-selective public institutions where resources have declined, resulting in higher costs and reduced services for students. At less-resourced colleges, students have to work more hours in order to pay for school and make ends meet, and they get less in return through resources spent on student instruction or other services.").
- <sup>22</sup> L. DeSipio, *Immigrant Incorporation in an Era of Weak Civic Institutions: Immigrant Civic and Political Participation in the United States*, 55 AM. BEHAV. SCI., 1189-213 (2011) ("[Immigrants] have come of political age in an era of low civic engagement, so community organizational resources that previously existed to incorporate at least some immigrants have atrophied.").
- <sup>23</sup> The Election Administration and Volunteer Survey (EAVS) notes that jurisdictions in California, Nebraska, Texas, and Arizona made specific mention of their difficulty in finding an adequate number of bilingual workers. See *The 2014 EAC Election Administration and Voting Survey Comprehensive Report: A Report to the 114th Congress*, *supra* note 6, at 255-58.
- <sup>24</sup> Details in Appendix 2.3.

- <sup>25</sup> The difference in the percentages of the bilingual, non-Spanish students (calculated as in the bottom row of Figure 5) and all others was -7.4% for serving 1+ times, +1.8% for being highly engaged. The percentage difference could not be meaningfully calculated in the case of the “Serve Three Times” measure because only eighteen bilingual, non-Spanish students were even eligible to serve three times.
- <sup>26</sup> Students were only eligible to serve three times, due to Board of Elections procedure, if they were originally contacted in November and then actually served in the February election.
- <sup>27</sup> Details in Appendix 2.3.
- <sup>28</sup> DeSipio, *supra* note 22, at 1189-213.
- <sup>29</sup> The same model as in Appendix 2.1 was run, restricting the sample for each election. The p-value for the Spanish-speaking variable was 0.016 in the General Election, 0.207 in the Municipal Election, and 0.291 in the Runoff Election.
- <sup>30</sup> Only a dummy variable indicating community vs. non-community college was included in the regression, so robust standard errors were clustered by the 30-60 (depending on the model) individual colleges. The full list of colleges is available in the introduction and associated endnote.
- <sup>31</sup>  $P > 0.5$  for all other variables.
- <sup>32</sup> For both GPA and political party affiliation,  $p > 0.10$  (usually much greater) when either variable was added in to the regressions, and they had a negligible effect on the coefficients of the rest of the variables.
- <sup>33</sup> Cobb, *supra* note 2 (“As elections are becoming increasingly technology-driven, election officials must find poll workers who possess high comfort levels with computers and other new technologies. Young people are an excellent resource.”).
- <sup>34</sup> *Judge of Election/Polling Place Administrator Handbook*, CHI. BD. OF ELECTION COMM’RS (2014), [http://app.chicagoelections.com/documents/general/document\\_555.pdf](http://app.chicagoelections.com/documents/general/document_555.pdf).
- <sup>35</sup> Email interview with Jim Allen, Communications Director, Chicago Board of Elections (Aug. 2, 2015).
- <sup>36</sup> Although for technical reasons, not every precinct was eligible for inclusion in the model. But the data were missing at random and so didn’t affect the results. See Appendix 3 for further discussion.
- <sup>37</sup> The exact numbers were 9.1 and 28.8: rounding for the sake of making the numbers easy on the eyes accounts for the slight seeming discrepancy here.
- <sup>38</sup> See the table in App. 3.
- <sup>39</sup> Bureaucracy is also a barrier: poll workers in Chicago are confirmed by the courts to serve in their particular precinct, and moving to a new precinct requires them to resign and be re-confirmed, which can be a hassle and cannot be done on short notice.
- <sup>40</sup> The Board of Elections was concerned about maintaining security and thought online forms were less secure than email. But the fillable PDF system required the program managers to receive the PDFs as emails then forward them to the election authorities as attachments. This produced a lot of unnecessary labor. That labor introduced error, which is partially responsible for the 4% email bounce rate. In addition, the Board of Election’s email servers (like many) are not designed to handle hundreds of forwarded emails with attachments, sometimes coming in bunches of dozens within seconds. During one three-day period of particularly high volume, almost every application failed to deliver (dozens in total).
- <sup>41</sup> The existing system at the Board of Elections involved a baroque sequence of paper letters mailed to poll workers with a randomly chosen training time, phone calls to reschedule, and additional paper letters re-sent with the re-scheduled time, all without keeping track of who is in which class or exactly how many slots are free in each.
- <sup>42</sup> Israel, *supra* note 4.
- <sup>43</sup> In personal correspondence, we learned that Cook County experiences an attrition rate similar to ours, and that the EAC confirms a similar experience in Los Angeles County and in Grand Rapids, Michigan. See *A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers*, *supra* note 4, at 47.
- <sup>44</sup> The total cost of the Chicago Program was around \$40,000. Programs similar in size with publicly reported budgets from the EAC reported spending \$20,000-80,000. Various program summaries and budgets are available at *Help America Vote College Program*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM’N, [http://www.eac.gov/payments\\_and\\_grants/help\\_america\\_vote\\_college\\_program.aspx](http://www.eac.gov/payments_and_grants/help_america_vote_college_program.aspx).
- <sup>45</sup> H.E. BRADY ET AL., *VOICE AND EQUALITY: CIVIC VOLUNTARISM IN AMERICAN POLITICS* (1995).
- <sup>46</sup> A. Davila & M. Mora, *An Assessment of Civic Engagement and Educational Attainment: Fact Sheet*, CTR. FOR INFO. & RES. ON CIVIC LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT (2007), [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_Mora.Davila.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Mora.Davila.pdf) (“Civic engagement might also promote educational attainment: civically-engaged teenagers make greater scholastic progress during high school and subsequently acquire higher levels of education than their otherwise similar peers”).
- <sup>47</sup> A.B. 817, Regular Sess. (Ca. 2013), [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB817](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB817) (“This bill would additionally authorize an elections official to appoint a person who is lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States, as specified, and who is otherwise eligible to register to vote, except for his or her lack of United States citizenship, to serve as a precinct board member.”).
- <sup>48</sup> 10 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/14-1 (“Students appointed as election judges under this subsection shall not be counted as absent from school on the day they serve as judges.”).

- <sup>49</sup> A study like this has been done before, but it has not tracked college students in particular. See Douglas Spencer, *Long Lines at Polling Stations? Observations from an Election Day Field Study*, 9 ELECTION L. J. (2010).
- <sup>50</sup> ILL. CONST., art. XIV (West, Westlaw through Nov. 2014 amendments); see also 10 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/14-1 ("An election authority may establish a program to permit a person who is not entitled to vote in that precinct or county to be appointed as an election judge if, as of the date of the election at which the person serves as a judge, he or she... (2) is currently enrolled in a community college, as defined in the Public Community College Act, or a public or private Illinois university or college; (3) has a cumulative grade point average equivalent to at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.").
- <sup>51</sup> *A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, *supra* note 4.
- <sup>52</sup> The p-value for GPA was 0.849 and changed the other coefficients by 0.013 or less. Similarly with being party-unaffiliated ( $p=0.474$ ) and being republican vs. democrat ( $p=0.921$ ). Thus, they could be excluded without too much reduction in the explanatory power of the model.
- <sup>53</sup> J. ANGRIST & S. PISCHKE, *MOSTLY HARMLESS ECONOMETRICS: AN EMPIRICISTS' COMPANION* 107 (2008) ("The upshot of this discussion is that while a nonlinear model may fit the CEF for LDVs more closely than a linear model, when it comes to marginal effects this probably matters little. This optimistic conclusion is not a theorem, but as in the empirical example here, it seems to be fairly robustly true.").
- <sup>54</sup> Regressing a dummy variable for whether the precinct had to be excluded from analysis on the predictor variables of interest did not turn up any statistically significant relationship, suggesting that the data is missing due to random machine malfunction and other random causes.
- <sup>55</sup> J. Simmons et al, *False-Positive Psychology: Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant*, ASSOC. PSYCH. SCI. (2011). ("It is common (and accepted practice) for researchers to explore various analytic alternatives, to search for a combination that yields "statistical significance," and to then report only what "worked." The problem, of course, is that the likelihood of at least one (of many) analyses producing a falsely positive finding at the 5% level is necessarily greater than 5%")