

Faculty Research Grant Closing Report
Indiana University South Bend Office of Research (A247)
Elizabeth A. Bennion, Department of Political Science, Principal Investigator
Project: *Voter Registration Field Experiments: Analysis and Publication*
Submitted: March 4, 2008

1. Description of grant-supported activity.

The grant allowed me to spend the summer of 2007 collecting the data required to examine the relative effectiveness of different voter registration techniques employed as part of a multi-campus, non-partisan voter registration field experiment. The goal of the study is to test and establish the efficacy of registration methods that colleges and universities can feasibly implement. This is the first scientific study testing the effectiveness of different voter registration strategies. Working with 60 campuses nationwide, I designed randomized field experiments to test the relative effectiveness of five different registration techniques: mail to home addresses, mail to campus addresses, email, classroom presentations, and on-campus registration tables. The dedicated research time allowed me to collect the multi-source data required to determine which techniques were most effective in getting students registered and in producing actual voters on Election Day.

2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.

It took a great deal of time and effort to collect the data required to analyze 26 classroom campaigns, 4 campus-mail campaigns, 3 home-mail campaigns, 23 email campaigns, and 24 tabling campaigns to register voters. I converted class rosters, campus directories, and state voter files to a uniform electronic format in order to allow for data analysis. Collecting this information from dozens of campuses and states required numerous phone calls and email messages, document audits, and follow-up phone calls in order to obtain a complete data set. Some states and campuses were reluctant to release the required data. Even willing campuses often required several follow-up messages before releasing the data. Completing the data set also required phone interviews with all campus directors to confirm the completion of each experiment, to answer remaining questions about adherence to experimental protocol, and to fully understand the context in which each experiment took place. The data collection process also required conversations with various political data vendors in order to obtain all of the required state voter files. The entire summer was spent tallying the non-experimental results of the registration drives (forms per hour per technique) and collecting the data required to analyze the randomized/experimental portions of the voter registration campaigns. I was not able to analyze the data and write-up the results for the randomized field experiments during the summer of 2007 (as planned). However, I am extremely pleased with the progress I have made since collecting the data. After taking a family leave during the fall 2007 semester, I am now on schedule to complete several papers/articles during my spring 2008 sabbatical.

3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product -- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.

This grant resulted in the completion of the non-experimental (metrics) portion of the analysis for the multi-campus voter registration campaign. Using batch sheets, campuses tracked the number of forms collected, time, location, and technique for each registration effort. I tallied all of this information and presented the results of this analysis at the annual American Democracy Project Meeting in Snow Bird, Utah.

- “AASCU and Young Voter Strategies (YVS) Electoral Voice Voter Registration Project: Preliminary Results and Advice.” American Democracy Project National Meeting, Philadelphia, June 9, 2007.

In addition, after many months of persistent requests, I have obtained the necessary data to analyze all of the registration field experiments. The basic data analysis is now complete. I have already measured the effectiveness of the classroom, mail, and email experiments on all but three campuses. This information is enough to proceed with writing up the results. However, I anticipate the final data required to analyze the effectiveness of the classroom component of the remaining three classroom-based campaigns. All three campuses have promised the data this week (March 4, 2008). I also anticipate running some more sophisticated tests and additional types of analysis as I construct articles on the various components of the experiments. I am currently scheduled to present the results of the IU South Bend classroom-based registration experiment at the March 28th annual meeting of the Indiana Political Science Association. I will also be presenting the results of the email experiment on 23 campuses nationwide. In addition, I will submit my paper on the IU South Bend classroom experiment for possible publication in the peer-reviewed Indiana Journal for Political Science. Ultimately, I plan to submit one or two additional articles in peer-review, national-level disciplinary journals. Now that the results are in, I am on schedule to submit these articles before returning to teaching full-time next fall.