AGF AMBASSADOR TEXTING GUIDE

vote everywhere

THE **ANDREW GOODMAN** FOUNDATION

GETTING STARTED WITH TEXTING

This guide is intended to walk you through the functionality of our platform, and provide you with some tips and best practices to implement as you initiate your text campaigns!

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HEY ANDREW GOODMAN AMBASSADORS!

Do you know anyone who doesn't own a cell phone? Think about it. Your classmates, your professors, your coworkers, your neighbors, your relatives, all most likely own one. If they don't, they are a part of only 5% of American adults that reportedly don't own a cell phone.

With 95% of American adults owning a cell phone, and 77% owning a smartphone, communicating via phone is a no brainer! Virtually all cell phones have the ability to receive basic text messages. What's even more exciting? Research shows that text messaging is a powerful way to mobilize youth voters towards activism and civic engagement.

WHY IS OUR PLATFORM SO POWERFUL?

This tool, which has been made available to the entire Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere Network, is whatever you make of it. We find that success is maximized when the messages come from you, the student Ambassadors, who are a part of the same community. Whether it's BGSU saying, "Ay Ziggy Zoomba!" or Stony Brook opening a message with, "Hey Seawolves!" the texts that inspire action are the ones that are personalized and that come from you!

THE **ANDREW GOODMAN** FOUNDATION

ANDREW GOODMAN VOTE EVERYWHERE NETWORK

Alabama A&M University · Allegheny College · Arizona State University · Bard · Bowling Green State University

Case Western Reserve University · Cornell University · Queens College · Dillard University · East Carolina University

Elon University · Fairleigh Dickinson University · Georgetown University · Georgia State University · Grand View University

Iowa State University · Kutztown University · LSU · Mesa Community College · Miami Dade College

Miami University · Midway University · Montclair State University · Pace University · Ramapo College of New Jersey

Rutgers · Simpson College · Spelman College · St. Lawrence University · Binghamton University

Geneseo · Stony Brook University · Tennessee State University · Tougaloo College · Towson University

Tufts University · The University of Alabama · University of Baltimore · Berkeley · University of Central Arkansas

The University of Chicago · University of Dayton · University of Florida · University of La Verne · University of Louisville

University of Michigan · The University of Mississippi · UNC Charlotte · Penn · University of San Francisco

University of South Carolina Upstate · The University of Utah · Wisconsin · VCU · Western Carolina University

GETTING STARTED

Selecting Your Keyword

A **keyword** is the word or phrase that individuals will text to sign up to receive your communications. Your keyword should reflect your brand and be consistent with how your peers already recognize you on campus. For some campuses, using your institution's name may be most effective. For example, Stony Brook University's keyword is *stonybrooku*. When students at Stony Brook text *stonybrooku* to 555-888, they are added to Stony Brook University's list of subscribers. Moving forward, these subscribers will receive all of the communications that Stony Brook University sends out to its list unless they opt-out.

Over at Bowling Green State University, our Andrew Goodman Ambassadors work under the name BGSUvotes. For brand consistency and recognition — and for length — this partner uses keyword *bgsuvotes*, rather than *bowlinggreenstateuniversity*.

Once you've selected your keyword, you can promote it at any time! From your social media pages to new student orientation packets, from your my.VoteEverywhere page (where we will embed a sign up form for you) to posters you hang around campus, remember to include your keyword and encourage folks to get involved. (More on this on page 12!)

List Management

At risk of stating the obvious, for a text campaign to be successful, you need contacts to send your texts to! From what we've seen, the easiest way to have folks join in is through keyword based opt-in. Whether you're telling a friend about this resource or if someone's seen it promoted on social media, texting a few characters over to a 6 digit phone number requires minimal work on the part of the new subscriber.

Your peers can also sign up through a web based form. Make sure your team is offering both keyword based opt-in and web-based opt-in. The web-based form allows you to promote across social media channels, through email, embedded on your website, etc., so that anyone interacting with any of your content will know how to subscribe to your text communications.

TEXTING BEST PRACTICES

How is text messaging different than the other communications channels we use?

ACCESS

Almost every American adult has a cell phone, and of that population, the overwhelming majority of folks have a smartphone. This means people have the technology needed in order to receive your message with the look and feel that you intended. With email communications, you've got to consider that people may be viewing your email on a tablet, laptop, cell phone, etc.; Additionally, you've got to consider that while people have this technology, their software and/or hardware might be outdated, so they very well may not be seeing your message as you designed it. Finally, you've also got to consider that the rate of ownership for these technologies is lower than ownership for phones, so they might not even be able to view your message period.

RESULTS

If you've sent out an email to a decent-sized list of people, then you're familiar with the waiting game we play when it comes to results. Your results after one day usually don't mean anything! You're looking at your email results over a period of a few weeks to determine if your email was a success. In the end, achieving a 35% open rate for an email is considered successful. With texting, open rates are pretty instantaneous and usually end up being between 90-99%.

TURNAROUND

When something relevant bubbles to the surface, like when there's breaking news, we want to be able to inform our constituent base as accurately and quickly as possible. When our communications tool is email, a few hours is a very fast (and often stressful) turnaround for shipping out. With the standard for text length being 160 characters, and with text messages being comprised of far fewer elements than an email, we're able to deploy timely, relevant information more effectively and much more easily.

Compared to emails, texts are short and sweet. They fit better with how people are already consuming their information. The people we're trying to reach are busy and have to give their attention to so many things already. With limited attention span and limited time, a reader is much more likely to read our whole message than we see with email.

TEXTING BEST PRACTICES

What should we text about?

RAISING AWARENESS

Understanding the urgency of your cause inspires your community to take action. Use texting to keep your campus community up-to-date about registration deadlines and upcoming election dates. Always include a link to your my.VoteEverywhere page so that these individuals can access more information and resources.

SAYING THANK YOU

Thank them for attending your events. Thank them for joining. Thank them for supporting you. Thank them for caring. Whatever you deem appropriate, saying "thank you" goes a long way! It lets folks know you don't only think about communicating with them to ask for something.

PROMOTING EVENTS

Holding events builds community by facilitating dialogue, inspiring new ideas, and connecting attendees with one another. Email reminders regarding events often get buried in all the other emails that folks receive. The world of text advocacy is not nearly as saturated. Your text will stand out!

PROMOTING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Your school may already be organizing volunteer opportunities. Your team may be looking for volunteers. This is just another way to empower people to get involved.

RAPID RESPONSE

In the wake of a relevant event or breaking news, you can show your value to your constituents by keeping them updated in the moment and providing your insights.

YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Now that we've established what kind of texts you'll be sending, let's get to planning. A communications calendar can help your team identify all the communications pieces you'll need to send during the semester, whether that's an email around voter registration, a facebook post about a campus event, or a text message regarding any of the things we just laid out. Let's aim to schedule 4 texts each month. Why 4? This way you leave yourself room to send 1-2 rapid response texts that you can't necessarily plan for, without surpassing the recommended 6 monthly texts.

What should we cover?

Do we have any events coming up?
Yes? Definitely send a text in advance of the event so folks on campus can plan to attend. Be sure to include the date, time, and location of the event, as well as outline what will happen at the event.

Are there any election related dates or deadlines approaching?
Yes? Schedule a text message in advance so your subscribers can get prepared. Don't forget to include a link to your my.VoteEverywhere page so they have a resource where they can always access dates and other voting resources. Send a reminder text the day of so they don't forget.

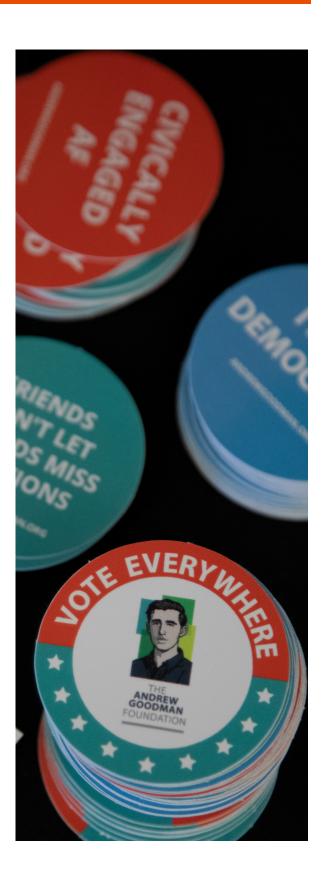**Will we need volunteers this semester?**
Yes? Get creative with the types of volunteers you look for. There might be a communications student looking for a social media volunteer opportunity or a student looking to help with voter registration efforts on campus.

What time of day should we send our texts?

Time of day matters when you're sending out texts. It's important to consider what type of message you're sending when deciding what time of day it should go out. Your message may contain information that's valuable to see at the beginning of the day. For example, if your message notifies your peers that there are shuttles leaving campus throughout the day to bring them to their polling place, aim to send your text between 8AM and 12PM. If your text prompts the recipient to take an action, like clicking a link and watching a video, you may have more success sending your text between 5PM and 9PM.

Industry data shows that noon is the most popular time to deploy text messages. So, if you're having trouble deciding what time is the best time, noon is a good place to start. Take into consideration the schedules of your peers. As much as you can, avoid deploying your text messages during a major campus event or while students are busy in class.
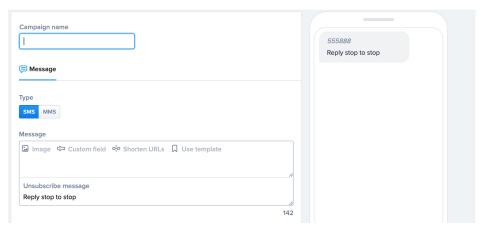
Industry data also shows that Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the most popular days for text messaging, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try alternate days. You won't know what time and day work best for your audience until you try out different time slots.

SIMPLETEXTING

At this point, you should have a foundational understanding of how to draft text messages that are relevant and timely to your campus community. The last step in sending your text messages is scheduling them in SimpleTexting, which is the platform that AGF uses for texting. When your team selects its keyword, simply send an email to mariah.ross@andrewgoodman.org letting Mariah, The Andrew Goodman Foundation's Digital Marketing Manager, know what your keyword will be. She will respond with your login information for SimpleTexting.

Once logged in, you'll be able to view Campaigns, Autoresponders, and Keywords:

Campaigns

The **campaigns** section of the SimpleTexting platform allows you to schedule a text message. 'Campaign name' is only visible internally, and helps your team organize your texts. If you're going to send three text messages about an event on campus, you might label the texts 'Dialogue Series 1,' 'Dialogue Series 2,' and 'Dialogue Series 3.'

Under 'Type,' you can select SMS or MMS. SMS stands for Short Message Service and refers to text messaging. MMS stands for Multimedia Messaging Service. SMS texts can reach 160 characters. Why then are there only 142 characters left in the screenshot above? Because each text message you send includes the unsubscribe message to be in compliance with federal laws and regulations. If your text message is longer than 142 characters, it will simply be sent as an extended SMS. This means your text now costs slightly more to send. It's also worth mentioning that non-iPhone users may receive the text in two separate message blocks.

MMS allows you to send media files, including images, audio, and video, in your messages. It also allows you to send text messages up to 1,600 characters, including a title — that's far more than a traditional text message, which is limited to 160 characters. As you enter your text message in the message field, the phone to the right (as illustrated in the screenshot above) will start to populate so you can preview what your text will look like on a cell phone.

Autoresponders

Autoresponders are messages automatically sent to new subscribers. They help by giving you the efficiency of creating a series of messages without having to launch campaigns manually. Only new subscribers to your list receive autoresponders. These messages can be scheduled to be received a certain amount of time after an individual has joined your list. For example, you can schedule a welcome message to go out to them immediately after joining your list. You can then schedule a text for them to receive 48 hours later in which you share your my.VoteEverywhere page.

Keywords

Here you're able to review your **keyword** and see how many people have subscribed to receive your texts. From this page, clicking on your list will show you each individual phone number, and all corresponding data you have for that number. This data includes the date they joined your list, their opt-in method (text versus web sign up), and can include more if you've collected more data!

The SimpleTexting App

SimpleTexting offers a free app on both iOS and Android so that you can manage your text campaigns when you're on the go. The app is designed to look and feel just like SImpleTexting's website. From our experience, the largest value add of the app is that you'll be notified whenever a subscriber replies to one of your messages. This allows your team to respond as soon as possible.

MARKETING

How do we grow our lists?

Growing your list may take some time, but that's okay! Make sure you always dedicate a moment at each event to let attendees know that your Vote Everywhere team is texting, what the texts are about, and provide instructions on how to subscribe. When you're tabling, have a sign on your table that promotes your keyword and the shortcode. Definitely include this information on your marketing materials, social media, and your website (don't worry, we will update your my.VoteEverywhere page once we learn your keyword).

Upon receiving your keyword, AGF will order and send you some swag that will help promote your keyword to your campus community. You can also use part of your activities budget to order other materials to help you market your texting program.

ANALYTICS

How do we grow our lists?

On a regular basis, AGF's Digital Marketing Manager will be sharing your analytics with you and help you make sense of the data. This will include the success rate, response total, and opt-out amount for each text message you send.

Success rate indicates how many people from your list received your text messages. If a number is no longer in use or if the service is disconnected, your text may not be received.

Responses indicate the number of responses you received per text message. Depending on the text message you sent, your expectations for this metric may fluctuate. For instance, if your text asks a question, then you would expect a larger response rate. Make sure you actively monitor your inbox, which is where you will see any texts you received that you may want to respond to directly.

Opt-out amount tells you how many subscribers removed themselves from your text communications. It is normal to receive a small amount of opt-outs per text message. A larger amount of opt-outs per text message will indicate that perhaps the message you sent may not have been relevant to your list or the message was sent at an inconvenient time. Our Digital Marketing Manager will help you disseminate the data and determine what likely occurred.

APPENDIX

MEET AGF'S COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

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SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGES

Below are some sample text messages to help you get started this semester and beyond. Replace the language within the brackets to customize these texts for your community.

> ❝ *Are you ready to vote? Tomorrow is Election Day! Polls are open from 6:30am-7:30pm. Find out where your polling place is here [link]!* ❞

Campus Events
- Hey [Falcons]! Want to learn more about [the obstacles Americans face in voting]? Join us for our [Dialogue Series: Voting in America] on [October 9th] in [the Student Union].
- [Gators], Student Government Elections are happening this week! Voting is happening completely online. Look out for SGA's email this week to get the link to cast your vote for the students you want to represent YOU!

Voting
- Voting Date: The [Kentucky] primary election is on [March 16th]. These elections determine candidates for all of the political parties on the ballot, and often include issue-based voting. Make sure you're registered before [February 1st]! [link to my.VoteEverywhere]

Continued

- Candidate Information: Election day is just [8] days away! Still deciding who you're voting for? Head over to our my.VoteEverywhere page to get your candidate list! [link]
- Polling Place: [Cardinals], are you ready to vote? Tomorrow is Election Day! Polls are open from 6:30am-7:30pm. Find out where your polling place is here: [link]

Register to Vote

- Deadline Message 1: The [Colorado] voter registration deadline is one month away! Register to vote by [May 4th]. Need help registering? Check out our my.VoteEverywhere page, your one-stop-shop to voting in this year's election!
- Deadline Message 2: Hey [Pirates]! There's only two weeks left to register to vote. Check out our website to get registered quickly. [link] Need help? Reply to this text and our team will assist you as best as we can!
- Deadline Message 3: Hey [Bears], today is the day! It's the deadline to register to vote or update your address so your registration remains accurate and active. Head over to our site to check if you're registered! [link]

Early Voting

- [Ay Ziggy Zoomba]! Do you know how you're going to vote this year? Early voting, which starts on [April 11th], is the easiest way to make sure your voice is heard! Click here to learn how you can vote early this year. [link]

Autoresponder

- Thanks for opting in to receive messages from [Spelman's] Vote Everywhere team! We'll keep you up-to-date on all things election and civic engagement. Visit us at [link] to get registered to vote, learn about events on campus, and more!

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Two partners from the Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere Network, Bowling Green State University and Binghamton University, have shared their communications plans from last year to help other teams get started.

Bowling Green State University- Fall 2018

Subject	Message	Date
Welcome	Thank you for signing up to receive messages from BGSU Votes about the upcoming election! In the 2012 General Election only 11.9% of BGSU students voted. Stay tuned for more information, and click below to make sure you're registered! [link]	When a new person signs up
Constitution Day	Today is Constitution Day! Come see BGSU Votes in the Student Union from 11-3 to celebrate with us and register to vote! We're always looking for great volunteers, too! Visit our website for more information [link]. Roll Along, Falcons!	9/17
National Voter Registration Day	Ay Ziggy Zoomba, Happy National Voter Registration Day! Come see BGSU Votes in the Student Union on the Education Building steps to celebrate!! Register to vote and encourage your friends to register, too. Visit [link] to learn more.	9/25
Voter registration deadline	Tell your friends! This Tuesday, October 9 is the deadline to register to vote! Click below to check if you're registered. [link] Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website [link]	Mon 10/8
Early Voting	Hey Falcons! Do you know your method of voting in this upcoming election? Absentee ballot and early voting are the best way to avoid crowds, and early voting starts October 10th! Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website. [link]	10/10 and 10/17
Absentee ballot request deadline	The deadline to submit your absentee ballot request is one week away! Get it in early to make sure you get your ballot in time. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or give us a call at 419-372-9865. [link]	Mon 10/22
Candidate information	Election day is only 12 days away! Not sure who is on the ballot? Check [link] to find nonpartisan candidate info and be an informed voter. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or give us a call at 419-372-9865. [link]	10/25
Election Day Eve	Falcons, are you ready to vote? Tomorrow, Tuesday November 6 is Election Day! Polls are open from 6:30am-7:30pm. Where is my polling place? Click the link below to find out! Or stop by 100 University Hall for help! [link]	Mon 11/6
Election Day	Today is Election Day! Tell your friends to get out and vote! Still not sure of the candidates? Check out https://www.ballotready.org/ for nonpartisan information. See you at the polls!	November 6

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Bowling Green State University- Spring 2019

Subject	Message	Date of event	Time and date
Primary Election 1	Ay Ziggy Zoomba! Primary and Special Elections are May 7th in Ohio. These elections determine candidates for various political parties but also may include issues or special elections. Click below to make sure you're registered before the deadline of April 8th and prepared to vote! [link]	N/A	10:00am 2/15
Community Dialogue Series 1	Hey Falcons! Do you find it difficult to engage in discussions about different viewpoints on certain topics? Attend the Community Dialogue Series to learn strategies to develop active listening skills and skills for civil discourse about controversial topics. First workshop is 2/22. Register at [link].	2/22	10:00am 2/18
Role of Power, Equity & Design	Interested in learning more about equity-centered community design? Come to the Power, Equity & Design lecture by Antionette Carroll, February 28 in BTSU 206 from 6:00-7:30 pm.	2/28	11:00 am 2/25
Primary Election 2	Ay Ziggy Zoomba! Primary and Special Elections are May 7th in Ohio. These elections determine candidates for various political parties but also may include issues or special elections. Click below to make sure you're registered before the deadline of April 8th and prepared to vote! [link]	N/A	12:00pm 3/5
Community Dialogue Series 2	Hey Falcons! Have you ever wanted to learn more about how to keep conversations civil when discussing difficult topics? Come to the Community Dialogue Series on 3/29 with Revive Civility Ohio! Register at [link].	3/29	10:00am 3/25
First Amendment Workshop	Want to learn more about first amendment rights and challenges at a public university? BGSU is hosting Saunie Schuster for a First Amendment Workshop tonight! BTSU Ballroom from 6:30-8:30. Click OrgSync link to see full description [link].	4/1	10:00am 4/1

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Bowling Green State University- Spring 2019 Continued

Voter Registration Deadline	The Ohio voter registration deadline is one week away! Update your address or register to vote by Tuesday, April 8. Click below to check if you're registered. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website. [link]	N/A	12:00 4/2
Voter registration deadline 2	Hey Falcons! Tell your friends! Today is the deadline to update your address or register to vote! Click below to check if you're registered. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website. [link]	4/8	10:00am 4/8
Early Voting	Hey Falcons! Do you know how you're going to vote in this ▾ upcoming election? Early voting is the best way to avoid crowds, and early voting starts April 9th! Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website. [link]	4/9	10:00am 4/9
USG elections debate	Roll Along Falcons! Undergraduate Student Government elections are soon. Hear your peers discuss why they should be the next USG President at tonight's debate. Learn more about the candidates and who you will vote for! Located in BTSU Theater, 7:30-9:00 pm. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website [link]	4/10	10:00am 4/10
USG election reminder	Falcons, USG Election Week starts today! Check your BGSU email for the link to cast your vote for which of your peers represents YOU in Undergraduate Student Government. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website [link]	4/15	10:00am 4/15
USG election reminder 2	Today is the last day to cast your vote in the USG elections! Check your BGSU email for the link to vote, and stop by the Union tomorrow to hear the election results announced! Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website www.bgsu.edu/bgsuvotes	4/18	10:00am 4/18

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Bowling Green State University- Spring 2019 Continued

Absentee ballot request deadline	The deadline to submit your absentee ballot request is next week! Get it in early to make sure you receive your ballot in time. Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or give us a call at 419-372-9865. [link]	4/22	12:00pm 4/22
Candidate information	Election day is only 12 days away! Not sure who is on the ballot? Check with your Board of Elections to find your candidate list and be an informed voter. Need help? Stop by the Center for Civic Engagement in 100 University Hall or check out the BGSU Votes website. [link]	4/25	12:00 pm 4/25
Community Dialogue Series 3	Hey Falcons! Join the Community Dialogue Series for a community dinner. Guests will enjoy a warm meal, but also engage in conversation about the opportunities and challenges that the community faces regarding the opioid crisis. Register at [link].	4/28	12:00pm 4/24
Election Day	BGSU Votes! Are you ready to vote? Tomorrow, Tuesday May 7, is Election Day! Polls are open from 6:30am-7:30pm. Where is my polling place? Click the link below to find out! Or stop by 100 University Hall for help! [link	5/6	12:00pm 5/6
Election Day 2	Today is Election Day! Tell your friends to get out and vote! Still not sure of the candidates? Check with your Board of Elections for candidate information. See you at the polls!Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall or visit our website [link]	5/7	10:00am 5/7
Change address before move-out	Hey Falcons! The end of the semester is almost here, but don't leave without updating your voter registration address! It only takes a few moments. Visit the BGSU Votes webpage to update your address[link] Need help? Reach out to BGSU Votes in 100 University Hall.	5/13	10:00am 5/13

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

Binghmaton University, 2018-2019 Academic Year

Subject	Message	Date
Primary Election Day	Excited to vote tomorrow? Thurs. Sept. 13 is state/local primary Election Day! Polls are open Noon-9pm in Broome County. Find your polling place: [link] Don't forget to remind your friends! Need help? Come to the Center for Civic Engagement in UU-137 or give us a call at 607-777-4287. [link]	Wednesday, September 12
Voter registration deadline	The deadline to register to vote is this Friday, Oct. 12! Check your registration status: [link] Don't forget to remind your friends! Need help? Come to the Center for Civic Engagement in UU-137 or give us a call at 607-777-4287. [link]	Monday 10/8
Absentee ballot request deadline	One week left to submit your absentee ballot request! Your request must be postmarked by Oct. 30 but get it in early to make sure you get your ballot in time. Need help? Come to the Center for Civic Engagement in UU-137 or give us a call at 607-777-4287. [link]	Monday 10/22
Candidate information	Election Day is a week away! Make sure you are an informed voter by visiting our nonpartisan candidate info page! [link] Need help? Come to the Center for Civic Engagement in UU-137 or give us a call at 607-777-4287. [link]	Monday, October 29
Election Day	Ready to vote? Tomorrow, Tues. Nov. 6 is Election Day! Polls are open 6am-9pm. Find your polling place: [link] Find candidate information: [link] Don't forget to remind your friends! Need help? Come to the Center for Civic Engagement in UU-137 or give us a call at 607-777-4287. [link]	Monday, November 5

SAMPLE PROMOTIONAL FLYER

Binghamton University's team printed out these small flyers to hand out, put on tables, anywhere they thought someone might come across it. During our pilot, Binghamton had great success growing their lists because of promotional efforts like this.

Binghmaton University, 2018-2019 Academic Year

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