



November 12, 2019

Dear Students:

As the presidents and chancellors of the Big Ten Conference, we are pleased to once again join together for the second Big Ten Voting Challenge, a competition that seeks to increase voter registration and turnout among students on all of our campuses.

Our first challenge, launched in 2017, focused on increasing student voting for the 2018 midterm elections. Through a collaborative effort we achieved significant results.

An estimated 7.5 million students across the country voted in 2018 midterms, according to data from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Student Engagement at Tufts University.

The average student voting rate across the Big Ten Conference spiked to 43 percent, surpassing the national average student voting rate of 40 percent, and more than double the national student voting rate of 19 percent in 2014. Voting rates for college students increased 21 percentage points between 2014 and 2018; higher than the 13.6 percentage point increase for the general population.

The University of Minnesota led the conference with the greatest overall turnout of student voters at 59 percent, up 29 percentage points from nearly 30 percent in 2014. Rutgers University achieved the most improved student voter turnout between 2014 and 2018 with a 31 percentage point increase to 43 percent in 2018, up from 12 percent in 2014.

Both winners were presented trophies for their efforts at the “ALL IN Challenge Awards Ceremony,” in Washington, D.C., which honors outstanding contributions to improving college democratic engagement.

This is an incredible example of the power of our students to increase student representation at the polls and use their voice to help shape our collective future.

As shared when kicking off the first challenge, one of the most important values we teach at our universities is the importance of civic engagement. Voting in elections gives our students a voice in the democratic process and in the decisions that affect local, state, and national issues. The Big Ten Voting Challenge is a nonpartisan initiative to encourage students to exercise their right to vote, which is among the most fundamental opportunities to be an active and engaged citizen.

The Big Ten Voting Challenge will help to mobilize registration and turnout efforts at all 14 of our universities. After the 2020 election, trophies will go to two universities – the one with the highest eligible voter turnout and the one with the most improved turnout compared to 2016. We hope you will join this effort by getting involved, getting registered, voting, and encouraging others to do the same!

Existing registration and voting initiatives on each of our campuses can partner with the Big Ten Voting Challenge – and all of our get-out-the-vote efforts will count toward awarding the trophies. Our shared goal is activating full participation in our democracy, and supporting habits of robust civic engagement.

Throughout the history of the Big Ten Conference, we have seen that competition brings out the best in our students. Thank you, and may the most civically engaged campuses win!

Sincerely,

Robert Barchi
President
Rutgers University

Eric J. Barron
President
Penn State University

Rebecca M. Blank
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Mitchell E. Daniels Jr.
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