

Oregon State University Student Electoral Participation, 2006-2010

by

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Abstract

This study examines student voting at Oregon State University (OSU) – Oregon’s public, land-grant university – in state elections from 2006-2010. The *National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)*, *Oregon Senate Bill 951 (2007)*, and *Oregon House Bill 2880 (2011)* seek to increase university student voting. In particular, SB 951 requires Oregon public colleges and universities to develop civic engagement plans to increase student registrations and voting on their campuses. Significant resources are expended by Oregon higher education institutions to comply with legislation designed to increase electoral participation among their students. This study measures university student voting in five principal areas: demographic, geographic, collegiate, partisan, and electoral predictors of voting. Most importantly, the study uses a framework of college-specific variables, including university class, degree level, academic discipline, academic performance, and student voting region. The study is high in external validity because it does not rely on self-report measures of voting, which are prone to social desirability bias and often inflate voting rates. Instead, it uses quantitative data, created by merging Oregon vote history records and university student enrollment records. These data validate how many OSU students were registered to vote and actually cast ballots over a series of seven Oregon elections. To protect student identities, only aggregate data and research conclusions are presented. Most importantly, the data show that: OSU students voted 20 points below other Oregonians in nearly all elections; student voting increased with age, schooling, and advanced degree level; and students overwhelmingly elected to vote in their home region, rather than at school.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Previous Work	8
<i>Get-out-the-vote</i>	8
<i>Measuring and predicting youth voting</i>	12
<i>New participation norms</i>	17
<i>Summary and conclusions</i>	18
Research Database	19
Table 1. Elections.....	20
Table 2. Index frequencies	21
Table 3. Study population.....	23
<i>Student Privacy</i>	23
<i>Research Design</i>	24
<i>Subject Population</i>	25
<i>Variables</i>	26
Table 4. Demographic variables	26
Table 5. Geographic and partisan variables	27
Table 6. Collegiate and electoral variables	28
<i>Vote By Mail</i>	28
Results	29
Table 7. OSU students v. Oregon electorate.....	30
<i>Demographic predictors of voting</i>	31
Age cohort.....	31
Table 8. Voting by age cohort.....	32
Chart I. Voting by age cohort	33

Gender.....	33
Table 9. Voting by gender	34
Grade Point Average.....	34
Table 10. Voting by academic performance (GPA)	35
Chart II. Voting by academic performance (GPA).....	35
Academic Discipline.....	36
Table 11 a-b. Voting by academic discipline.....	37
<i>Collegiate, electoral and partisan predictors</i>	39
Class standing and election.....	39
Table 12. Voting by class standing and election.....	41
Chart III. Voting by class standing and election.....	42
Table 13. January 2010 election compared to primaries	43
Degree Program (undergraduate/graduate).....	44
Table 14. Voting by degree program	45
Chart IV. Voting by degree program	46
Party and election.....	46
Chart V. Voting by political party and election.....	47
<i>Geographic predictors</i>	47
Voting site.....	47
Table 15. Oregon regions defined.....	48
Chart VI. Voting at home or school region.....	49
Registration by county and political party	50
Table 16. OSU students v. Oregon electorate party affiliation.....	51
Table 17. Student political party registration by home region.....	52
Summary of Findings.....	53

Research Limitations	53
Policy Implications	55
List of Works Cited	60
Appendix	63

Introduction

Democracy is a political system designed to represent all people equally. However, in the U.S. voter turnout is extremely low with nearly half of citizens abstaining (Glasford). When people do not vote, their interests are not represented in policy or governance. This is especially evident for young citizens, whose depressed voter turnout and low levels of political knowledge and efficacy are particularly chronic. The 2008 presidential election mobilized young voters at record levels, and yet turnout among eligible voters under 30 lagged behind other age cohorts by 16 percent (Ulbig and Waggener). Low turnout among young citizens is a well-documented trend, but efforts to grow electoral participation within this group have yielded little lasting improvement. Reversing the tide of political apathy and abstention among young voters will yield profound, positive effects for American democracy. Despite its value, scholarly research on youth voting – and university student voting, in particular – is rare. This may be for several reasons, including the sensitivity of student education records, which are explicitly protected by federal regulations and often inaccessible to researchers.

This research seeks to confirm or refute the conventional wisdom that university students do not vote or that they post low turnout relative to other eligible voting blocs. The study offers detail on students' electoral participation relative to demographic, geographic, collegiate, partisan and electoral predictors of turnout through a case study at Oregon State University (OSU) – Oregon's public, land grant university. OSU enrolls a diverse student population that includes graduate and undergraduate students and international, domestic, and resident students from across Oregon. The study examines voting behavior of Oregon resident students. Resident students constitute the largest sector of university student enrollment, 83.2% of total enrollment in 2010 (Institutional Research). In coordination with university administration, in particular the

Offices of the Registrar and Institutional Research, this study matches university enrollment and Oregon vote history records to find the cross-section of resident, university students registered to vote and casting ballots in Oregon between 2006 and 2010. To protect students' identities, personally identifiable data are retained behind the university's firewall, and only aggregate data and research conclusions are presented. This study does not rely on surveys or other self-report measures of voting, which are often unreliable and prone to a social desirability bias where respondents give answers they believe will be viewed positively by others. The study examines university student voting in five principal areas:

- *Demographic*. Biographical predictors of voting;
- *Geographic*. Where students choose to vote;
- *Collegiate*. Effect of the 'university experience' on voting;
- *Partisan*. Student political party affiliation; and
- *Electoral*. Effect of 'election type' on voting.

This study documents student turnout trends and may also be used to inform and improve campus voter registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. Oregon Senate Bill 951 (2007) instructs Oregon public colleges and universities to develop and execute civic engagement plans to grow their student registrations and voting. Higher education institutions and other groups – including political campaigns courting the youth vote – expend extensive resources to increase registration and turnout among university students. Oregon House Bill 2880 (2011) established a National Voter Registration Compliance Council to further improve voter registration efforts in Oregon. Voter registration and education initiatives at higher education institutions are subject to legislative and executive oversight by the Oregon Legislative Assembly and the Oregon Secretary of State. A 2013 report to the state legislature chronicled existing university efforts –

including those at OSU – to comply with the *National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)* and Senate Bill 951 (Secretary of State). The NVRA, also known as the “Motor Voter Act,” expanded federal voting rights, requiring states to provide voter registration opportunities when citizens apply for or renew their driver’s license; at all offices that house state-funded and public assistance programs; and allows for voter registration by mail (US DOJ). This research may help guide and inform future university voter education and engagement efforts. It chronicles the outcome of current university strategies by cataloging the number of OSU resident students who registered and cast ballots from 2006 to 2010 – a period of five years, eight elections, and during which Senate Bill 951 was passed into law.

Previous Work

Get-out-the-vote

There is limited scholarly research on the effectiveness of student voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts at colleges and universities. This is largely due to the strict regulation of student education records, which protects students’ privacy. Ulbig and Waggener (2011) studied campus voter mobilization efforts at Sam Houston State University during the 2008 presidential election. Their research shows that student-led, partisan voter registration drives boost turnout relative to traditional, non-partisan efforts managed by non-students. Their study also shows that supplying basic information about voting and civic obligation improves turnout if messaging is accessible and engaging. To determine whether low-budget campus voter drives galvanize student voting, Ulbig and Waggener verified turnout through their county elections office rather than relying on self-reports, which often exaggerate turnout. The authors observe that most prescriptions for stimulating turnout rely on high-cost, arduous remedies, such as door-to-door

canvassing, which are idealistic but impractical. They studied low-budget, campus-based mobilization practices to determine if low-cost efforts can also boost student turnout.

Ulbig and Waggener studied whether registered students cast ballots, evaluated whether voter education improves turnout, and contrasted turnout among students registered on and off campus. In their study, they compared two distinct campus registration drives: one managed by the student-Democrats and a nonpartisan drive led by the campus Political Engagement Project (PEP). As the authors forecast, more students registered in the partisan drive cast ballots. This may be because their partisanship predisposed them to vote, though registration by student-peers may have also contributed to their elevated turnout. Ulbig and Waggener also assessed how the content and format of basic voting information affected turnout. They evaluated variance in flyer color, level of exposure to campus voting messaging (posters in residence halls, presentations at the student cinema and student union), and e-mail voting reminder content (information, information and motivation, or no reminder). There was no variation in turnout associated with e-mail messaging or on-campus voting reminders, but students who received colored voting flyers as they registered were more likely to turn out, if they lived off-campus. According to the authors, off-campus students are typically older, closer to graduating, and more engaged in current events than students living on-campus. Ulbig and Waggener conclude that the benefits of providing voting information varies by group with little impact on young students, but “small but important effects” on older students. Their prescriptions for improving campus voter mobilization include peer-to-peer, partisan registration drives that showcase a variety of political viewpoints and eye-catching voter education materials that will get and stay noticed. Ulbig and Waggener show that campuses can effectively register students and increase turnout. In 2008, students registered at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) turned out at higher rates than their

peers nationally. SHSU turnout was 76 percent compared to 48.5 percent among eligible 18-24 year olds and 62 percent for youth with some college education.

Research by Bogard, Sheinheit and Clarke (2008) shows that successful university get-out-the-vote campaigns do more than lower voting costs by making registration convenient. In their survey of students at Hofstra University in New York after the 2004 presidential election, Bogard et. al. found that students who participated in a nonpartisan, multi-issue undergraduate conference called the “Day of Dialogue” voted at statistically higher rates than other registered students on campus. Bogard et. al.’s findings show that college registration drives benefit from incorporating activities that promote students’ sense of civic and social responsibility, as well as their basic knowledge of political issues and processes.

Research by Burgess et al. (2000) capitalizes on a naturally occurring field experiment. During the 1996 presidential election, *Rock the Vote*, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that motivates and mobilizes young people in politics, executed a pledge card campaign to promote turnout among young voters. Traditional get-out-the-vote campaigns seek to lower voting costs through instruments such as DMV (“motor voter”) and Election Day registration, transportation to the polls, and early voting at polling stations or through vote-by-mail. In 1996, Rock the Vote instead sought to boost turnout by amplifying voter enthusiasm. Rock the Vote registered 80,000 young people and collected pledge cards designed to motivate newly-registered voters. Pledge cards were mailed back to voters two-weeks before the election to inspire turnout. Mid-campaign Rock the Vote modified its pledge cards. The original pledge cards had a pre-printed message that said: “I will rock the system by exercising my right to vote.” New pledge cards provided a sentence prompt instead of the generic message: “I will vote because ____.” Burgess et al. saw the

evolution of the Rock the Vote campaign as an opportunity to study whether providing personal rationale for voting improves youth voter turnout.

To this end, Burgess et al. randomly pulled 3,353 pledge cards, roughly 4 percent of the total, and mailed follow-up questionnaires to the young people registered through Rock the Vote. Fifty-seven percent of pledge cards contained the sentence prompt and 43 percent included the pre-printed motivational message. Of the 3,336 questionnaires mailed, 986 surveys were returned, a 30 percent response rate. Questionnaires included 39 questions to measure variables correlated with voting such as political interest and efficacy, political knowledge, and participation in political and civic activities, as well as traditional demographic indicators such as gender, age, ethnicity, education and partisan strength. The authors controlled for these variables in their study to determine whether the format of the pledge cards had any measurable influence on turnout. The authors measured turnout two ways: (1) through self-reporting (from the questionnaire) which excluded respondents who failed to identify where they voted (to correct for over-reporting bias); and (2) cross-checking reported turnout against official state and county voting records, though this was only possible for 29 percent of the survey respondents.

This study has high external validity. It measured voting behavior, not just attitudes about voting, and pulled from a large and diverse national sample, making its findings generalizable to other get-out-the-vote campaigns. But, because the authors utilized a naturally occurring event, their control over the study design was limited. For example, the distribution of the pledge cards was not random: young voters who joined the Rock the Vote campaign early received a pledge card with the generic message and young voters who participated later received a pledge card with the sentence prompt. If these two groups differed in significant ways, this skewed the research conclusions. As such, Burgess et al. used their questionnaires to assess whether the two

groups were similar and to control for significant differences between groups. Burgess et al. also concede it is possible that young people who joined the Rock the Vote campaign were different from young people who abstained. The authors examined the influence of the sentence prompt, but could not test the effects of the pledge card campaign on turnout.

Young voters who received pledge cards with the sentence prompt were more likely to vote. The effect was significant regardless of whether the sentence prompt was actually filled in. Burgess et al. argue that their findings align with psychological theories of attitudinal advocacy, which show that self-persuasion increases motivation and commitment for performing behaviors. In this study, personal expression of the importance of voting increased turnout at the ballot box.

Measuring and predicting youth voting

Niemi and Hanmer (2010) studied variables that specifically affect turnout among college students. They explain that traditional college students (18-24 years old) differ from the rest of the American electorate. However, theoretical and empirical frameworks do not exist that test or explain this variation. Classic models of turnout emphasize demographic predictors of voting, including age, race, gender, employment, household income, and residential stability or mobility. Research by Niemi and Hanmer showed that traditional demographic variables are weak predictors of college student voting. Their 2004 national post-election survey of full-time undergraduates, ages 18-24 at four-year, not-for-profit colleges and universities showed that gender as the only demographic variable to predict student voting. Multivariate analyses demonstrated that female students were 10 percent more likely to vote than males. Niemi and Hanmer argue that a new set of “college-specific” variables will better explain student turnout. These variables are voting site (hometown or college town), proximity to hometown

(exaggerates or diminishes voting costs) and academic major. Traditional demographic variables should also be examined in new ways to reflect college life. For example, residential mobility should be measured by school transfers because they reflect the social and political disruption that can depress turnout. Year in school (freshman-senior) is also a more appropriate variable than age in a population with little age variation.

Niemi and Hanmer also studied the psychological and motivational antecedents to voting. Classically, elevated interest in politics and strong partisan attachment are positively associated with voter turnout. This was also true for students in Niemi and Hanmer's study. A greater contingency of students with high political interest and partisanship registered and cast ballots. In addition, students who were targeted by political candidates and party mobilization efforts were more likely to vote, an outcome that also reflects classic predictive models of voter turnout.

Niemi and Hanmer argue that college student turnout is influenced by variables missing from traditional turnout models. College-specific variables include choices about where to vote and unique demographic traits ignored in conventional paradigms. Unlike other voters, college students decide where to vote: at home or in their college town. Their study shows that students predominantly registered and participated in elections where the costs were lowest. Students who registered close to home went to the polls more often. Seventy-one percent of students reported registering at home and 85 percent of students who attended school within 30 minutes of their hometown reported voting as compared to 75 percent of students who lived two or more hours away. In their study, 'distance from home' was a distinct and predictive voting cost for college students. College major is another variable absent in classic models of student turnout. In this study, students studying math, science, and engineering voted the least, at 73 percent. Niemi and

Hanmer found that students who were interested in politics, highly partisan, or who were contacted by political parties, were more likely to vote.

Niemi and Hanmer show that college students are different from other voters, including other youth, in important and overlooked ways. Classic demographic predictors of voting were largely irrelevant, but motivational variables influenced student turnout. Most influential were college-specific variables, especially students' freedom to choose where to cast their ballots – at home or at school. Students who lived closest to their hometown were most likely to vote.

Glasford (2008) contrasts three theoretical behavioral models used to predict and modify behavior to describe the causes and design interventions to address chronically low voter turnout among young adults: the theories of reasoned action (TRA), planned behavior (TPB) and information-motivation-behavioral skills (IMB). The TRA framework states that there are two antecedents to behavior: individual attitudes and social norms. TPB builds on this model adding another parameter: individual perceptions about the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior. Finally, as its name suggests, IMB theorizes that behavior is influenced by information, personal motivation, and feelings of efficacy about the skills needed to perform a behavior. Research by Glasford compares the utility of these models to predict intent to vote and turnout among young adults.

Glasford surveyed undergraduate students at a large northeastern university during the 2004 presidential election. Questionnaires assessed student attitudes toward voting, internal and external political efficacy, the influence of friends and family, and basic political knowledge. The first survey evaluated intent to vote and a second questionnaire measured turnout. The data show that IMB was the best framework for predicting voting. Limitations of this research include reliance on self-reports and an unrepresentative sample of young adults. But, the study shows

IMB's potential utility for predicting voting and for changing attitudes and behaviors to improve youth voting.

The IMB framework has been applied in the public health domain to predict and modify behavior. For example, IMB intervention techniques have succeeded in reducing risky behaviors that lead to HIV transmission. Glasford's study shows that the IMB model may also be effective for changing non-health related, social behaviors. Glasford says IMB offers several prescriptions for increasing youth voting. First, get-out-the-vote initiatives should provide basic information about how to vote, candidates, and issues; promote confidence in voting competence; and engage communities to provide social support for voting. IMB also proposes adaptable voting remedies that address specific behavioral 'deficits' in populations. For example, interventions for college students and non-college-bound-youth should be fine-tuned to address voting barriers that differ between these groups. Glasford says that voter registration drives will be minimally effective if they fail to address the range of behavioral motivators integrated into the IMB framework.

McFarland and Thomas (2006) studied the influence of youth participation in voluntary, extracurricular groups on future political activity. Their study integrates two theories of political socialization: social reproduction and social learning. Social reproduction models are deterministic and assert that attitudes, skills, experiences, and resources (wealth, education and status) are reproduced in families and social classes and are inaccessible to outsiders. Social learning models are flexible and assert that education and mentoring compensate for background deficits and nurture new ambitions and faculties.

McFarland and Thomas compared the social reproduction and social learning theories of political socialization to assess whether youth extracurricular activities promote civic learning by cultivating skills, enthusiasm, confidence, and social support for political activity, or whether

they are crude ‘sorting venues’ that attract and benefit only privileged youth already predisposed to political activity.

To catalog extracurricular activities for youth that influence adult political participation, McFarland and Thomas used data from two national surveys: the U.S. Department of Education National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), a twelve-year study tracking a cohort of young adults from age 14 to 26 (1988-2000), and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), an extensive survey of seventh graders through high school seniors (2003). NELS describes extracurricular associations available outside school and Add Health highlights school-sponsored associations. In their models, McFarland and Thomas controlled for variables that bias extracurricular activity, including background (age, gender, race, social class); school (public/private, urban/rural, privileged/underprivileged); community and social support (“peer contagion”); and individual abilities and motivations. The authors also evaluated the socializing effect of extracurricular groups by activity: student council, honors society, sports team, and an assortment of clubs, such as performance (drama, choir), academic (journalism, debate), service, vocational, and religious.

The study shows that social background influenced adult political participation patterns. But, it also shows that the net effects of social background did not account for all of the impacts youth extracurricular groups had on future political engagement. Even conservative models that controlled for most background variables showed that extracurricular groups increased adult political participation. McFarland and Thomas argue that independent of background, youth extracurricular groups “educate and imprint their members.” The data also show that not all extracurricular activities wielded the same effect on future political participation. Groups that required public service and strong member commitments had the greatest, long-term effect on

adult political participation, including student council, honors societies, service, debate, drama, music and religious groups. Sports teams did not shape adult political engagement except in gender segregated sports where membership effects were positive for boys but negative for girls.

New participation norms

Russell Dalton, founding director of the Center for the Study of Democracy and professor of political science at the University of California, Irvine, says that young Americans engage in politics in new ways that are reshaping the norms of American citizenship. In *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics* (2009), Dalton asserts that scholars must develop a broader definition of ‘what it means to be a good citizen’ that includes political actions outside the scope of elections and voting. Dalton says that there are two distinct but complementary models of citizenship: *duty-based* and *engaged citizenship*. Duty-based citizenship is grounded in traditional participation norms and behaviors, including voting in elections, respect for government authority, and patriotic allegiance. Engaged citizenship embraces alternative, unorthodox political actions such as volunteerism, social and community responsibility, and challenging political elites. Dalton explains that both norms have benefits and limitations as inputs into the democratic process.

Voting is the classic barometer of American democratic health. Voter rolls are accessible, quantifiable, and easy to understand. Non-electoral political actions are harder to measure. But, as Dalton explains, engaged norms are preferred by the young. Advanced educational attainment is also correlated with a propensity toward engaged norms. Dalton’s study shows that educated Americans more fully engage in politics across the spectrum of citizen duties and rights, but that advanced education exerts a stronger effect on use of engaged norms. This occurs despite the

correlation between high-income, high status groups favoring existing political structures and norms. Young Americans fall in the middle. As a group they are better educated. Their education increases electoral turnout but causes them to favor alternative forms of political action outside the ballot box.

Dalton's research is a valuable counterpoint to the prevailing literature on youth voting, which equates abstention at the ballot box with political apathy. Looking at youth turnout from the lens of changing citizenship norms suggests that young people also choose to participate in political life differently than older Americans. As Dalton argues, his research illustrates that:

[T]he current challenge for American democracy is not to convince young people to act like their grandparents, but for us to understand their changing values and norms and respond in ways that integrate them into the political process – and potentially change the process to better match this new electorate.

Summary and conclusions

This review of scholarly work on youth and student voting shows that research in this field is limited. There are few studies that focus exclusively on university student turnout and fewer that use quantifiable data rather than self-reports of voting. But, the research shows the utility of using verifiable data to construct studies that are meaningful and generalizable. Most important to informing this study is the value of using 'college specific' variables to measure and predict student voting. These variables include academic degree, discipline, grade level, student performance, and voting site. This study will examine general demographic predictors of voting, but focus on 'college specific' variables in its study design and reporting. The scholarly research also shows the value of considering students' political participation norms outside the ballot box. This is not a focus in this study, but the importance of connecting voting rates to extracurricular academic associations and activities is discussed as a next step for future studies. This research is

a significant first step in measuring actual ballots cast by university students within a framework of ‘college specific’ variables.

Research Database

This study examines electoral turnout among students at Oregon State University (OSU) – Oregon’s public, land grant university – in national, state and local elections from 2006-2010. Student voting behavior among college voters is examined in relation to five principal themes: demographic predictors of voting; geographic variability in voting; partisanship in voting; the influence of the collegiate experience; and turnout by election type.

To create a student voting database, the researchers merged election data from Oregon’s Secretary of State (SOS) statewide vote history list with OSU enrollment records for the relevant time periods. The vote history list is public information, available by request from the Office of the Secretary of State, Elections Division for a \$500 fee required by state statute. The vote history list is disaggregated by Oregon’s five congressional districts. It includes registration and voter participation data.

The vote history list includes individual registered Oregon voters. Registered voters are classified as either active or inactive. Oregon voters cast ballots by mail. Whereas, active voters automatically receive their ballot in the mail, inactive voters must update their registration to receive a ballot. Key data from the SOS vote history list used in this report are political party affiliation; voting county (precinct); voting status (active, inactive); and turnout per election (voted, active but no ballot cast, inactive and ineligible to vote). The SOS vote history list identifies whether an individual cast a ballot, but not how they voted.

To construct the student voting dataset, the Oregon voter list was merged with university enrollment records using two data fields: name and birthdate. University enrollment records are perpetually in flux. Academic standing, university major, mailing address, and other data update on an ongoing basis. For this reason, it was critical to pull enrollment records from the same time period as each election. The researchers captured nine distinct enrollment ‘snapshots’ rooted in the university quarter (fall, winter, and spring) underway each election. These snapshots identify students’ academic status (enrolled, not enrolled, graduated) and level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student) at the time of each election. Table 1 shows the university terms that correspond to the elections studied in this analysis.

Table 1. Elections

Election	University term
a. November 2, 2010	Fall 2010
b. May 18, 2010	Spring 2010
c. January 26, 2010	Fall 2009
d. November 4, 2008	Fall 2008
e. May 20, 2008	Spring 2008
f. May 15, 2006	Spring 2006
g. November 7, 2006	Fall 2006

Data were uniformly coded across state and university datasets to complete the merge. In the voter file, birthdate was in string format (mm-dd-yyyy) and names were in capital letters. University enrollment records use date format and do not use all capital letters. Enrollment files were recoded to match the format of the voter file. Merging the data using name and birthdate resulted in 95,594 cases. To catch duplicates, a concatenated name (coded TestName) was created by combining last name (first four letters) and first name (first two letters) and cross-

referencing with birthdate. This created 95,553 unique results, only 41 less than the main dataset. Duplicate records were deleted.

In the voter list, each voter was assigned a unique, nine digit voter identification number; OSU students were similarly assigned random nine digit university identification numbers. These unique identifiers minimized duplicate records in the final merge. For example, there were approximately 204 university identification numbers repeated in the master merge file. Repeat cases were manually inspected. For each unique student name (last, first and middle), cases were eliminated if TestName and birthdate matched. If two names were indistinguishable, both names were eliminated.

The final merge file included 54,785 records. Names and birthdates matched perfectly for the majority of records – 33,057 (60 percent). An index was used to assess variance in the merge file and to determine whether to keep or toss imperfectly matched records. The index assigned 5 points if last name matched, 4 points if first name matched, and 1 point if middle name matched. In the index, 10 points is equivalent to a perfect match. Following are the index frequencies:

Table 2. Index frequencies

Points	Merged records	Percentage
10	33,057	60.34
9	18,845	34.40
6	944	1.72
5	1,572	2.87
4	300	0.55
1	16	0.03
0	51	0.09
Total	54,785	100.00

In the merge file, 67 cases (1.2 percent) were assigned an index value of “0” or “1,” the lowest possible matching scores. These records were manually checked for matches. Records with minor differences were kept. For example, one case included a suffix (Jr., Sr.) or there was a minor spelling variation for an uncommon name. Otherwise, low score cases were eliminated from the dataset.

Only 267 (1.4 percent) of the 18,845 records assigned an index score of “9” did not match. Most cases did not merit a perfect score because of inconsistencies across middle names. Middle name mismatches occurred across pairs due to combinations of labeling inconsistencies varying from being: left blank, identified by initial, or fully written out. Several disparities were also due to data entry errors. Combining records with high matching scores of “9” and “10” accounted for 51,902 cases (94.7 percent), the majority of records in the merge file.

Most intermediate index scores were caused by similar mismatches. For example, if first name varied across data pairs (e.g. Jeff v. Jeffrey), this would generate an index score of “6” even if all other matching indicators aligned perfectly. In other cases, a single letter discrepancy in an uncommon (foreign) last name would merit an index score of “5.” Cases with intermediate index scores were kept in the database because they were the result of negligible inconsistencies across data pairs. The index shows that the majority of cases in the merge file match, or nearly match, with inconsistencies generated by trivial discrepancies or data entry errors, not because the cases are not matches. The data were then distributed into three separate datasets to answer the primary areas of study. Population varies across the datasets due to repeat voters. However, the study cannot track individual voters over time. Table 3 shows the study population (n) for each thematic area:

Table 3. Study population (n)

Dataset	Population
a. Demographic	n= 111,468
b. Geographic	n = 35,063
c. Collegiate	n = 30,178

Student Privacy

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records and regulates how student information can be used and shared. FERPA applies to all schools receiving federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education. The law stipulates that schools can only release student ‘directory information’ to the public, including name, address, telephone, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. Other student records are protected and confidential. To use OSU student records in this study, the researchers had to show compliance with federal law and university policies that protect student privacy. OSU’s Registrar and Offices of Institutional Research and Government Relations approved the study design in a Memorandum of Understanding (appendix 1). The study was then authorized by the Institutional Review Board in OSU’s Office of Research Integrity.

To protect anonymity and confidentiality of the subject population, identifying student data was not permissible outside OSU’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR). With supervision from the research team, the OIR Director merged the voter and enrollment lists and secured all crosswalk (identifying information) files. The files provided to the research team did not include any identifying information and were re-coded with randomized, non-identifiable identification numbers.

Institutional Research provided three separate datasets to the research team to answer the areas of inquiry presented in this study. To protect student identities and privacy outside the OIR firewall, the Director verified that no data combinations could reveal student identities (either directly or indirectly). To safeguard student privacy, the Director:

- assigned random identification numbers that varied across datasets to ensure they could not be merged;
- tested the datasets within the Director's firewall protected personal directory to verify no combinations of data would generate groups of 10 students or less; and
- provided tables of all possible data combinations for each file to the OSU Registrar, who reviewed and approved the files prior to release to the research team.

The study protocols stipulate that final reports, essays, and analyses use aggregate, summary data. The study design minimizes risk to students, ensuring that identities cannot be deduced via combinations of presented data.

Research Design

Scholarly research on voting shows that young voters participate less than older cohorts. Oregon Senate Bill 951 (2007) stipulates that Oregon public colleges and universities develop civic engagement plans to grow their student registrations and voting. Universities expend substantial resources to comply with state law to improve registrations and turnout among their students.

Existing research on the voting behavior of young people relies on surveys and other self-report measures of political engagement. These methods can be unreliable and prone to a social desirability bias, where respondents give socially acceptable answers and which inflate reported

voting rates. This research is unique because it uses quantitative data, created by merging Oregon vote history files and university enrollment records. These data can validate how many university students were registered to vote and actually cast ballots over a series of seven Oregon elections.

This research is a first step in assessing the effects of university registration and get-out-the-vote efforts in Oregon. The data clarifies how many OSU resident students registered and cast ballots over a period of five years, seven elections and during which Senate Bill 951 became law. A case study of OSU electoral behavior is relevant and generalizable because OSU enrolls more full-time resident students from across than any other Oregon public university (Federal Priorities). Analyzing registration and turnout rates at OSU will offer insights about the voting behavior of university students in Oregon and create a baseline for future studies to build upon.

Subject Population

The subject population includes OSU resident undergraduate and graduate students, who were registered to vote in Oregon between 2006 and 2010. To protect minorities and student identities, the study does not examine voting behavior by ethnicity. Minorities are a small but growing segment of university enrollment. In 2013, OSU enrollment included 5,764 (21 percent) minority students and 22,161 (79 percent) white students (Institutional Research).

Emphasizing resident students in the study design is appropriate. Oregon Senate Bill 951 (2007) instructs public higher education institutions to grow their student electoral turnout. State legislators are most concerned about Oregon students, who are voting or non-voting constituents and receive educational subsidies through state government appropriations to public schools. In fiscal year 2014, OSU resident undergraduates paid \$8,322 in tuition and fees, as compared to \$23,514 for non-resident undergraduates; similarly, resident graduate students paid \$13,110 and

non-resident graduate students paid \$20,643 (Federal Priorities). Oregon resident students paid significantly less in tuition and fees because they were the recipients of state education subsidies.

Variables

The dependent variable in this analysis is voting behavior, operationalized by three possible outcomes: voted (eligible and cast ballot), abstained (eligible and no ballot cast), and ineligible (disqualified and no ballot cast).

This study tests the explanatory power of demographic variables, including traditional variables like age cohort and gender. Most importantly, it assesses ‘college-specific’ variables on student turnout, including academic coursework (discipline), year in school (degree and class), and scholastic achievement (Grade Point Average). Table 4 shows the demographic variables included in this study:

Table 4. Demographic variables

Independent variable	Categories
a. Age cohort	18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-34, 35+
b. Gender	Male, Female
c. Degree level	Undergraduate, Graduate
d. Undergraduate class	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate, Other*
e. Discipline	College, School**
f. Grade Point Average (GPA)	<2.0, 2.0-2.499, 2.5-2.999, 3.0-3.499, 3.5-4.0
* post-baccalaureate, non-degree seeking	
** for the College of Liberal Arts only	

The second area of inquiry stresses geography, or where university students vote, which has practical policy implications. Oregon’s vote-by-mail election system permits students from Oregon to choose to vote in their home or their university county. Ballots can be deposited in any

official ballot box and will be routed to the proper county for counting (Secretary of State). For university counties, an influx of university voters may meaningfully change local electoral outcomes, or abstaining student voters may cause a local ballot initiative to fail, if required voter thresholds are not met.

The second dataset also addresses student partisanship by region. Oregon's vote history list includes voters' registered party affiliation, but not how specific votes are cast. Assessing partisan affiliation can shed light on whether student registrations reflect regional partisanship patterns, or tend to cluster around a specific political party. Generally, Oregon partisanship aligns by predictable regional divisions that are rural-urban, high-low population density, red-blue, and Republican-Democratic. Oregon urban areas trend Democratic and have large populations, contributing the most citizens and voters. Oregon rural areas trend Republican and have small, declining populations, but are geographically vast.

Table 5. Geographic and partisan variables

Independent variable	Categories
a. Home region*	Eastern Oregon, Southern Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley, North Coast, Portland Suburbs, University counties, Multnomah County
b. Voting region**	Eastern Oregon, Southern Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley, North Coast, Portland Suburbs, University counties, Multnomah County
c. Political party affiliation	Democratic Party, Republican Party, Independent Party, Other***
* Oregon region on university enrollment application	
** Oregon region where student cast ballot	
*** Constitution Party, Libertarian Party, Pacific Green Party, Progressive Party, Working Families Party, Non-Affiliated Party, other	

The final sections of analysis are designed to weigh the relative impacts of the collegiate experience and election type on student turnout. The independent variable *class standing* is used to gauge the impact of one additional year of education on turnout. But, it also captures the range of extracurricular activities that contribute to the college experience. The variable *election type* is

used to assess whether student turnout varies by cyclical patterns. In general, electoral turnout spikes in presidential elections, dips in congressional mid-terms, and plummets during off-year, special elections. This study seeks to understand whether university students adhere to a similar ebb and flow in their electoral participation. Table 5 shows the variables used to assess collegiate experience and election type on voting:

Table 6. Collegiate and electoral variables

Independent variable	Categories
a. Class standing	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate, Other*
b. Election type	Presidential, Congressional, Special
* post-baccalaureate, non-degree seeking	

Pioneering Oregon: Vote by Mail

In 1981, Oregon lawmakers approved a test of all-mail elections and by 1995 the system was used for statewide elections – the first in the nation (Southwell, 2004). Controversial at first, all-mail elections are now enormously popular among Oregonians and are being transplanted to other states (Southwell, 2004). The Oregon Secretary of State boasts Oregon is a national leader in voter turnout because of the convenience of all-mail elections (Secretary of State). Research by Southwell suggests that all-mail elections stimulate participation in special elections, but that the benefits are positive, though minimal for high-participation elections, including primary and general elections (Southwell, 2009). All-mail elections tend to increase turnout among registered voters, but have not proven to attract non-voters into the electorate (Southwell, 2009). A case study of Oregon’s student voters is distinctive because of the state’s unique voting system. On one hand, vote by mail may facilitate greater participation among university students because it lowers voting costs. However, if the system does not grow the electorate, drawing in new or non-

voters, such as youth voters, then the stimulus effects of vote by mail on OSU students may be minor. Nonetheless, vote-by-mail is a variable that may affect the national applications of this research. Other studies will certainly need to replicate these findings, especially when typical in-person, ballot booth, voting systems are used. Also of note, Oregon does not offer Election Day registration (EDR) to residents, which would permit them to both register and vote on Election Day. Previous research suggests that EDR improves turnout among movers – including mobile voters like university students (McDonald, 2008).

Results

Table 7 shows broad turnout patterns and compares registered Oregonians and OSU student voters across elections. The table shows student turnout for both eligible and registered students. Many students eligible to vote during the elections in this study either did not register to vote or registered and voted outside Oregon. This study does not track voting outside the state.

Table 7. OSU students v. Oregon electorate (Source: Secretary of State)

Election	Oregon - Registered Voters (% Turnout)	OSU Student Ballots Cast	Turnout - All Students (%)	Turnout - Registered Students (%)
a. May 2006	1,965,939 (38.6)	1,344	14.2	19.6
b. November 2006	1,976,669 (70.8)	4,118	38.1	52.3
c. May 2008	2,008,957 (58.3)	3,531	33.9	43.6
d. November 2008	2,153,914 (85.7)	9,165	77.3	83.1
e. January 2010	2,044,042 (62.7)	4,386	35.4	45.1
f. May 2010	2,033,951 (41.6)	1,810	15.2	20.0
g. November 2010	2,068,798 (71.9)	5,361	43.6	51.5

The data for registered voters shows university students voted 20 points below other Oregonians in nearly all elections. In chronological order from May 2006 to November 2010, voting discrepancies follow: 19.0, 18.5, 14.7, 2.6, 17.6, and 21.6 percent. These data show that the voting gap between students and other registered voters shrunk in the 2008 presidential election. In the primary election it narrowed to 14.7 points and in the general election contracted to 2.6 points. With the exception of 2008 – a nationally high turnout election – student voting followed the same cyclical turnout patterns in Oregon with a reliable 20 point voting gap. These data mirror national trends where young college students vote less than other groups. In subsequent sections, student data are dissected via demographic, geographic, partisan, collegiate and electoral variables.

Demographic predictors of voting

Age cohort

Consistent with the general population, student participation increased with age. This research clusters students into five age cohorts: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-34, and 35+. Students < 18 were not included in the study because they were not eligible to vote. There were only 10 students excluded from the study because they were too young to vote.

Enrollment data for fall 2010 – the last term in this multi-year analysis – show that the study data mirror official university demographic data. In fall 2010, most OSU students were < 25 years old – 17,664 (74 percent) compared to 6,097 (26 percent) > 25. Undergraduate students are the source of the gap. In fall 2010, 16,508 (84 percent) of undergraduates were < 25 and 3,051 (16 percent) were > 25 years old. Among graduate students – including graduate and first professional students enrolled in OSU’s pharmacy and veterinary medicine programs – the distribution flips, with 1,156 (28 percent) of graduate students < 25 and 3,046 (72 percent) > 25 years old.

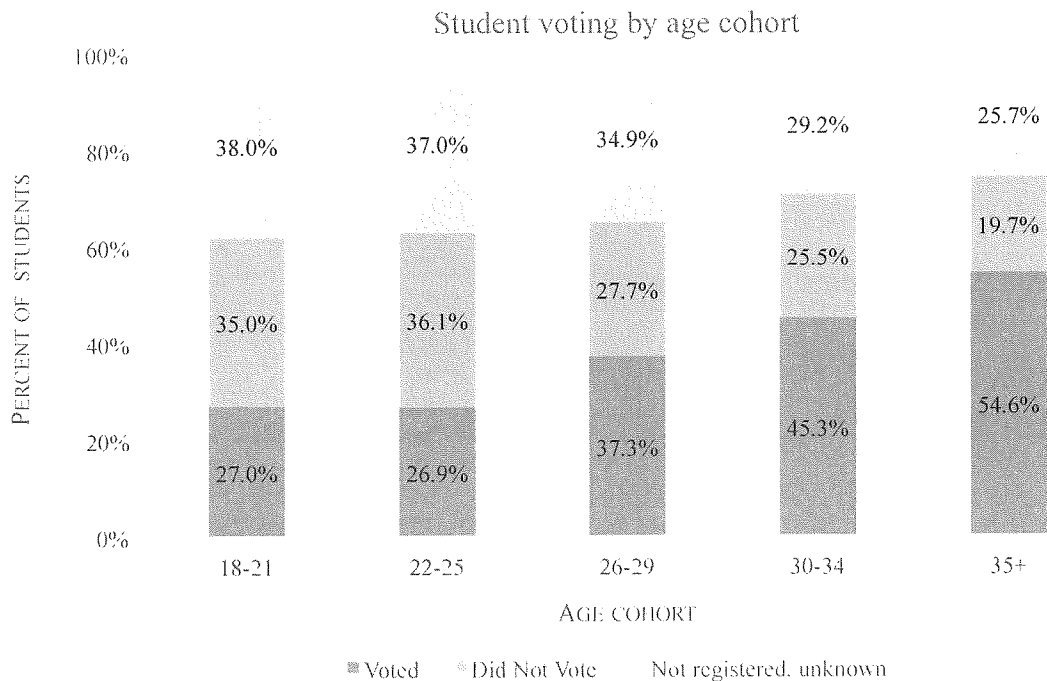
Most students in this analysis are also between the ages of 18 and 25. For the six academic years studied, 70,365 (63 percent) students were ages 18-21 and 27,992 (25 percent) were 22-25. The remaining 13,101 students (12 percent) were 26 years of age or older.

Table 8. Student voting by age cohort

Age cohort (n = 111,458)	18-21 (%)	22-25 (%)	26-29 (%)	30-34 (%)	35+ (%)
a. Voted	19,006 (27.0)	7,522 (26.9)	2,206 (37.3)	1,223 (45.3)	2,454 (54.6)
b. Did Not Vote	24,644 (35.0)	10,110 (36.1)	1,638 (27.8)	690 (25.5)	884 (19.7)
c. Other*	26,715 (38.0)	10,360 (37.0)	2,063 (34.9)	789 (29.2)	1,154 (25.7)
d. Total	70,365 (100.0)	27,992 (100.0)	5,907 (100.0)	2,702 (100.0)	4,492 (100.0)
Chi-square = 2219.512, df = 8, p = .000					
*not registered, non-Oregon voter, or unknown					

As Table 8 shows, slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) of students in the 18-25 cohort cast ballots. Turnout progressively increased across the remaining age groups, growing to 37.3, 45.3, and 54.6 percent, respectively.

Chart I. Student voting by age cohort



Gender

The voting dataset includes more male (52.4 percent) than female (47.6 percent) students. The gender gap mirrors university enrollment by gender for all years of this study. Official OSU enrollment records show a consistent gender gap – 52.5 to 47.5 (2006); 52.3 to 47.7 (2007-09); and 52.2 to 47.8 percent (2010), respectively. In this study, male students outnumbered female students, but women outvoted their male peers 30.4 to 27.9 percent. As Table 9 shows, more than one-third students were either not registered to vote or registered and voted outside Oregon. Slightly more males fell within this ‘unknown’ category – 37.3 percent of men were unregistered or unknown, compared to 36.4 percent of women.

Table 9. Student voting by gender

Gender (n= 111,468)	Female (%)	Male (%)
a. Voted	16,114 (30.4)	16,304 (27.9)
b. Did Not Vote	17,604 (33.2)	20,363 (34.8)
c. Other*	19,316 (36.4)	21,767 (37.3)
d. Total	53,034 (100.0)	58,434 (100.0)
Chi-square = 86.435, df = 2, p = .000		
*not registered, non-Oregon voter, or unknown		

Grade Point Average (GPA)

To assess the effect of scholastic performance on student voting, this study looks at the correlation between cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and electoral turnout. Students were clustered into five GPA cohorts from poorest to strongest scholastic performance: 0-1.999, 2.0-2.499, 2.5-2.999, 3.0-3.499, and 3.5-4.0. The bottom GPA group was small, probably because OSU academic policy stipulates that students with 36+ credit hours and a cumulative GPA > 2.0 will be suspended. Students with GPAs of 2.0 or greater have “good academic standing” at the university (OSU Registrar).

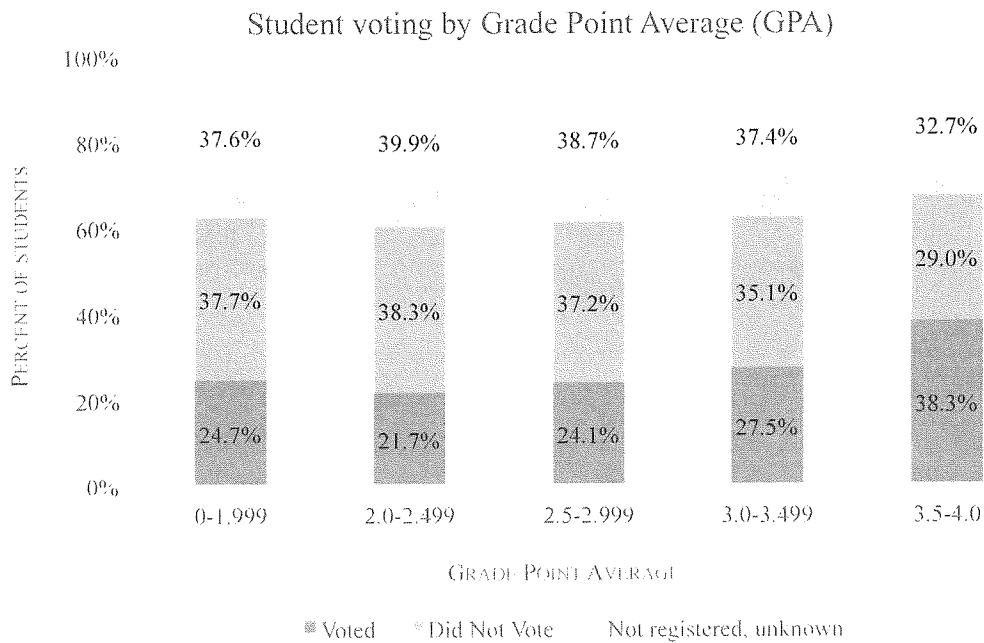
Table 10 shows that high student GPAs were related to higher voting. But, voting does not rise steadily across GPA groups. Instead, turnout was fairly stagnant across the bottom three GPA cohorts (< 2.999), under 25 percent. Turnout increased only modestly in the 3.0-3.499 group, to 27.5 percent. However, student voting spiked to 38.3 percent among high scholastic achievers – students with GPAs of 3.5 or better, which led to a statistically significant result.

Table 10. Student voting by academic performance (GPA)

GPA (n= 111,468)	0-1.999 (%)	2.0-2.499 (%)	2.5-2.999 (%)	3.0-3.499 (%)	3.5-4.0 (%)
a. Voted	471 (24.7)	2,362 (21.7)	7,283 (24.1)	9,487 (27.5)	12,805 (38.3)
b. Did Not Vote	718 (37.7)	4,167 (38.3)	11,276 (37.2)	12,098 (35.1)	9,706 (29.0)
c. Other*	716 (37.6)	4,337 (39.9)	11,717 (38.7)	12,921 (37.4)	10,928 (32.7)
d. Total	1,905 (100.0)	10,866 (100.0)	30,276 (100.0)	34,506 (100.0)	33,439 (100.0)

Chi-square = 2894.278, df = 14, p = .000

*not registered, non-Oregon voter, or unknown

Chart II. Student voting by academic performance (GPA)

Academic discipline

This study also shows the correlation between academic discipline and student voting. Students were analyzed by their primary academic college instead of academic major. Academic college sufficiently describes coursework and concentration differences among students. But, the research makes one exception. For the College of Liberal Arts, the unit of analysis was changed to ‘school’ due to the diversity of coursework offered and volume of students served. The college is comprised of four schools including language and humanities, liberal arts and interdisciplinary studies, social sciences, and visual and performing arts.

Table 11 shows that student voting exceeded 30 percent in five disciplines: education (49.4 percent), forestry (36.5 percent), veterinary medicine (34.2 percent), agricultural sciences (32.3 percent), and science (30.8 percent). Undeclared majors also outvoted many disciplines, at 31.5 percent. Students in four additional disciplines voted in the high twenties: liberal arts and interdisciplinary studies (29.7 percent), language and humanities (29.6 percent), engineering (29.5 percent), and social sciences (28.9 percent). The colleges of pharmacy (27.4 percent) and public health and human sciences (26.6 percent) followed. Students in business and visual and performing arts each voted the least at 23.2 percent.

Table 11a. Student voting by academic discipline – *highest voting disciplines*

Academic Discipline (n= 111,468)	Education (%)	Forestry (%)	Veterinary Medicine (%)	Agricultural Sciences (%)	Undeclared (%)	Science (%)	Liberal Arts/ Interdisciplinary (%)
a. Voted	1,012 (49.4)	746 (36.5)	295 (34.2)	2,138 (32.3)	1,868 (31.5)	6,304 (30.8)	545 (29.7)
b. Did Not Vote	475 (23.2)	628 (30.7)	300 (34.8)	2,123 (32.0)	1,822 (30.8)	6,731 (32.9)	624 (34.0)
c. Other*	560 (27.4)	669 (32.8)	268 (31.0)	2,366 (35.7)	2,234 (37.7)	7,436 (36.3)	667 (36.3)
d. Total	2,047 (100.0)	2,043 (100.0)	863 (100.0)	6,627 (100.0)	5,924 (100.0)	20,471 (100.0)	1,836 (100.0)

Table 11b. Student voting by academic discipline – *lowest voting disciplines*

Academic Discipline (n= 111,468)	Language/ Humanities (%)	Engineering (%)	Social Science (%)	Pharmacy (%)	Public Health (%)	Business (%)	Visual/ Performing Arts (%)
a. Voted	1,097 (29.6)	6,991 (29.5)	2,292 (28.9)	480 (27.4)	5,019 (26.6)	3,269 (23.2)	362 (23.1)
b. Did Not Vote	1,240 (33.4)	8,167 (34.4)	2,815 (35.4)	574 (32.7)	6,681 (35.4)	5,231 (37.2)	556 (35.6)
c. Other*	1,375 (37.0)	8,573 (36.1)	2,832 (35.7)	700 (39.9)	7,191 (38.0)	5,567 (39.6)	645 (41.3)
d. Total	3,712 (100.0)	23,731 (100.0)	7,939 (100.0)	1,754 (100.0)	18,891 (100.0)	14,067 (100.0)	1,563 (100.0)

Chi-square = 920.819, df = 26, p = .000

*not registered, non-Oregon voter, or unknown

The delta between the highest voting discipline (education) and the lowest voting disciplines (business and visual/performing arts) was 26.2 points, nearly double. Four of the highest voting disciplines were in science fields, including natural sciences (forestry and agricultural sciences), general science, and veterinary medicine. OSU's top three voting disciplines (education, forestry, and veterinary medicine) mostly enroll graduate students, who are typically older than undergraduate students. It is possible that the effects of academic discipline on voting may have been caused by age instead of students' field of study. However, pharmacy – a graduate program – ranked eleventh (of fourteen) in turnout, at 27.4 percent. Students studying the social sciences, including political science and public policy, were also among the lowest voting disciplines – voting at 28.9 percent. This was surprising given that political science and public policy majors have an interest in politics and presumably also have greater political and information efficacy, which has been shown to increase youth voting (Kaid, McKinney and Tedesco, 2007).

Student enrollment varied across disciplines, ranging from 23,731 in engineering to 863 in veterinary medicine. Only four of the fourteen academic programs boasted more than 10,000 students: engineering (23,731), science (20,471) public health and human sciences (18,891), and business (14,067). At the other end of the spectrum, four academic programs enrolled fewer than 2,000 students: liberal arts and interdisciplinary studies (1,836), pharmacy (1,754), visual and performing arts (1,563), and veterinary medicine (863) – the only university program with fewer than 1,000 students.

Assessing total votes contributed rather than the proportion of student voting changes the OSU story. Four academic disciplines contributed 21,583 votes, or two-thirds of all ballots cast by OSU students: engineering (6,991), science (6,304), public health and human sciences (5,019) and business (3,269).

Collegiate, electoral, and partisan predictors of voting

Class standing and election

This study also assesses the influence of the collegiate experience and election type on student turnout. ‘Collegiate experience’ is meant to incorporate both academic studies and extracurricular university activities, and is approximated by isolating the effects of one additional year of schooling (class standing). ‘Election type’ reflects the cyclical nature of electoral turnout. Classically, turnout spikes in presidential elections, lags in mid-term elections, and plummets in off-year, special elections. This study seeks to understand university student voting in the context of each unique election.

A limitation of the research is that it does not isolate or track individual students over time. The study looks at aggregate trends in order to protect student identities and privacy. Many students will appear in the population throughout the study, but many others will have graduated, dropped, or transferred out of the student body. The study population was in flux, evolving over the seven academic years analyzed. Nonetheless, important patterns emerge in the aggregate findings. For example, across all elections students in advanced grades voted more – with freshmen voting least and graduate students voting most often. Table 12 shows that there are three instances where this pattern did not hold. In these cases, voting flipped between adjacent grades and by no more than 1 percent – juniors outvoted seniors by 0.6 percent in November 2008; sophomores outvoted juniors by 0.6 percent in May 2010; and freshmen outvoted sophomores by 1 percent in November 2010.

Students classified as ‘other’ were a distinct cohort that included both post-baccalaureate students pursuing an additional certificate or credential for their completed bachelor’s degree and

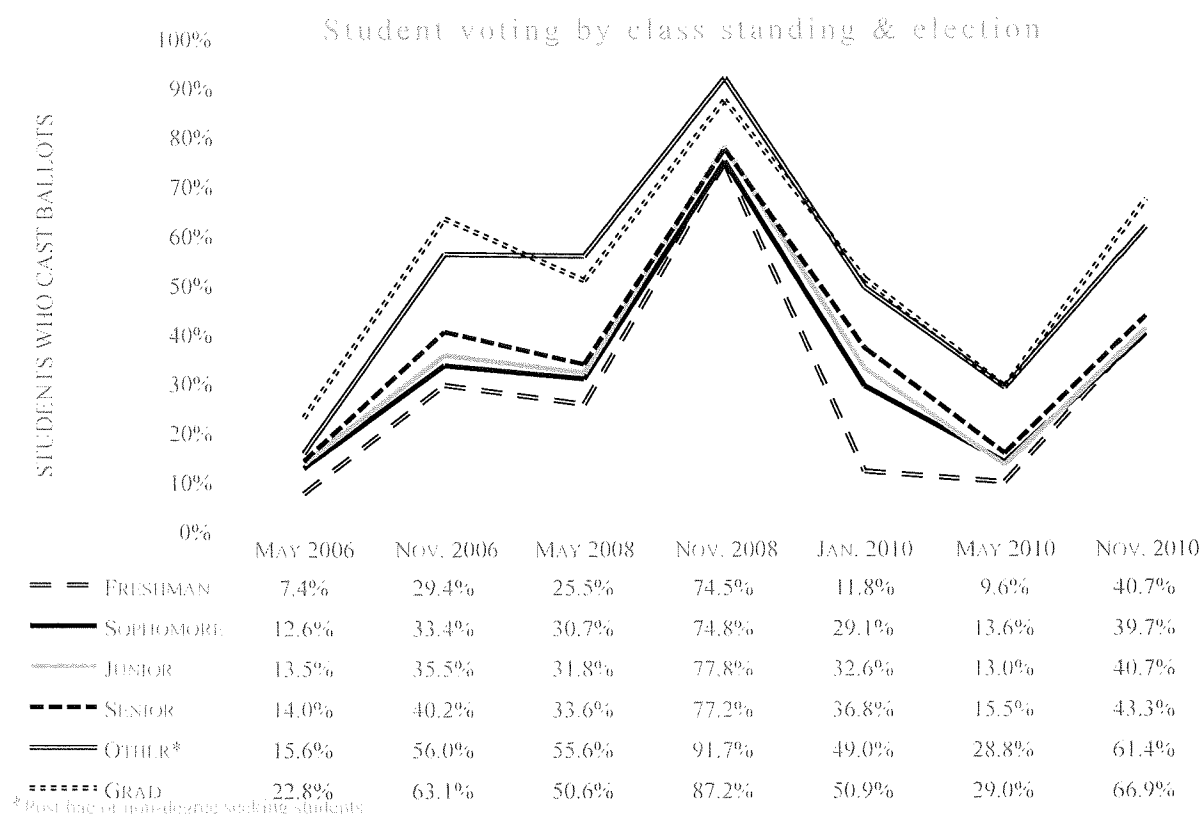
non-degree seeking students enrolled in courses but not pursuing a university degree. In most cases, post-bac, non-degree seeking students outvoted seniors, but participated less than graduate students. Only one election bucked this trend. In November 2008, post-bacs outvoted graduate students by 4.5 percent, with a 91.7 percent turnout rate.

Chart III shows that student turnout was cyclical based on election type. Student voting spiked during the historic 2008 presidential election when President Barack Obama was elected and the electorate surged with youth and first-time voters. Turnout was also reliably higher in the mid-term general elections (November 2006 and 2010), followed by the May 2008 presidential primary.

Table 12. Student voting by class standing and election

Election (n = 30,178)	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Other* (%)	Grad (%)
a. May 2006	45 (7.4)	198 (12.6)	249 (13.5)	565 (14.0)	19 (15.6)	361 (22.8)
<i>Chi-square = 579.439, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
b. November 2006	500 (29.4)	539 (33.4)	721 (35.5)	1,382 (40.2)	70 (56.0)	1,143 (63.1)
<i>Chi-square = 708.067, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
c. May 2008	219 (25.5)	534 (30.7)	503 (31.8)	1,265 (33.6)	15 (55.6)	713 (50.6)
<i>Chi-square = 234.631, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
d. November 2008	1,744 (74.5)	1,648 (74.8)	1,559 (77.8)	2,423 (77.2)	77 (91.7)	1,418 (87.2)
<i>Chi-square = 171.770, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
e. January 2010	216 (11.8)	719 (29.1)	932 (32.6)	1,531 (36.8)	103 (49.0)	810 (50.9)
<i>Chi-square = 464.095, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
f. May 2010	85 (9.6)	309 (13.6)	321 (13.0)	700 (15.5)	44 (28.8)	446 (29.0)
<i>Chi-square = 339.359, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
g. November 2010	743 (40.7)	980 (39.7)	1,161 (40.7)	1,799 (43.3)	129 (61.4)	1,065 (66.9)
<i>Chi-square = 672.736, df = 10, p = .000</i>						
* post bac or non-degree seeking students						

Chart III. Student voting by class standing and election (percentage ballots cast)



In January 2010 – an off-year, state special election – student voting was surprisingly high. Measures 66 and 67 were on the Oregon ballot, which proposed to raise state revenues for public services – including higher education – by increasing taxes on high-income individuals and businesses (Secretary of State). Turnout is usually low in off-year, ‘low-stimulus’ special elections (Southwell). However, student voting in January 2010 beat turnout in both the 2006 and 2010 mid-term primary elections. In fact, student participation in January was comparable to the highly competitive May 2008 presidential primary election when Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama faced off on the Democratic ticket. Table 13 shows that turnout in January 2010 surpassed turnout in May 2008 for half of the class cohorts, namely for upper division students: juniors (+ 0.8), seniors (+ 3.2), and graduate students (+ 0.3). Lower division cohorts behaved as expected, casting more ballots in the primary: freshman (- 13.7), sophomores (- 1.6), and post-

bac, non-degree seeking students (- 6.6). But, in total OSU students cast more ballots in January 2010 – 4,386 ballots compared to 3,531 ballots in May 2008, a net increase of 855 ballots.

Table 13. January 2010 special election compared to primary elections

	Jan. 2010 (%)	May 2008 (%)	Delta*	May 2006 (%)	Delta**	May 2010 (%)	Delta***
a. Freshman	11.8	25.5	- 13.7	7.4	+ 4.4	9.6	+2.2
b. Sophomore	29.1	30.7	- 1.6	12.6	+ 16.5	13.6	+ 15.5
c. Junior	32.6	31.8	+ 0.8	13.5	+ 19.1	13.0	+ 19.6
d. Senior	36.8	33.6	+ 3.2	14.0	+ 22.8	15.5	+ 21.3
e. Other	49.0	55.6	- 6.6	15.6	+ 33.4	28.8	+ 20.2
f. Graduate	50.9	50.6	+ 0.3	22.8	+ 28.1	29.0	+ 21.9
* Jan. 2010 relative to May 2008 ** Jan. 2020 relative to May 2006 *** Jan. 2010 relative to May 2010							

Oregon voters approved ballot measures 66 and 67 by a margin of 54 to 46. Measure 66 passed by 108,980 votes and measure 67 passed by 91,532 votes (Secretary of State). The 4,386 ballots cast by OSU students constituted less than 1 percent of total ballot returns, but were nearly 5 percent of the deciding votes. The university launched a rigorous get-out-the-vote campaign in support of the ballot measures. If the measures were rejected by Oregon voters, OSU and other public universities would have faced significant budget shortfalls. The university's education and get-out-the-vote efforts – appeals to students' self-interest – may have contributed to the high student turnout during this off-season election.

January 2010 was also the first election post the 2008 presidential election. Students who joined the electorate in 2008 – a year of unprecedented participation among young voters – may have felt the residual effects of their first electoral foray and participated with unusual gusto the

following election. That said, the special election was one year after the 2008 campaign ended and less than six months later in the May 2010 primary student voting dropped precipitously. As Table 13 shows, turnout in January 2010 ranged from 2.2 to 21.9 percent higher than turnout in May 2010. The turnout spread was roughly +20 points across four of the six grade levels. In May 2010, students cast 1,810 ballots, a net decrease of 2,576 ballots from January 2010. These data suggest that students can be motivated by self-interest, in this case potential economic effects to their university.

Degree program (undergraduate/graduate)

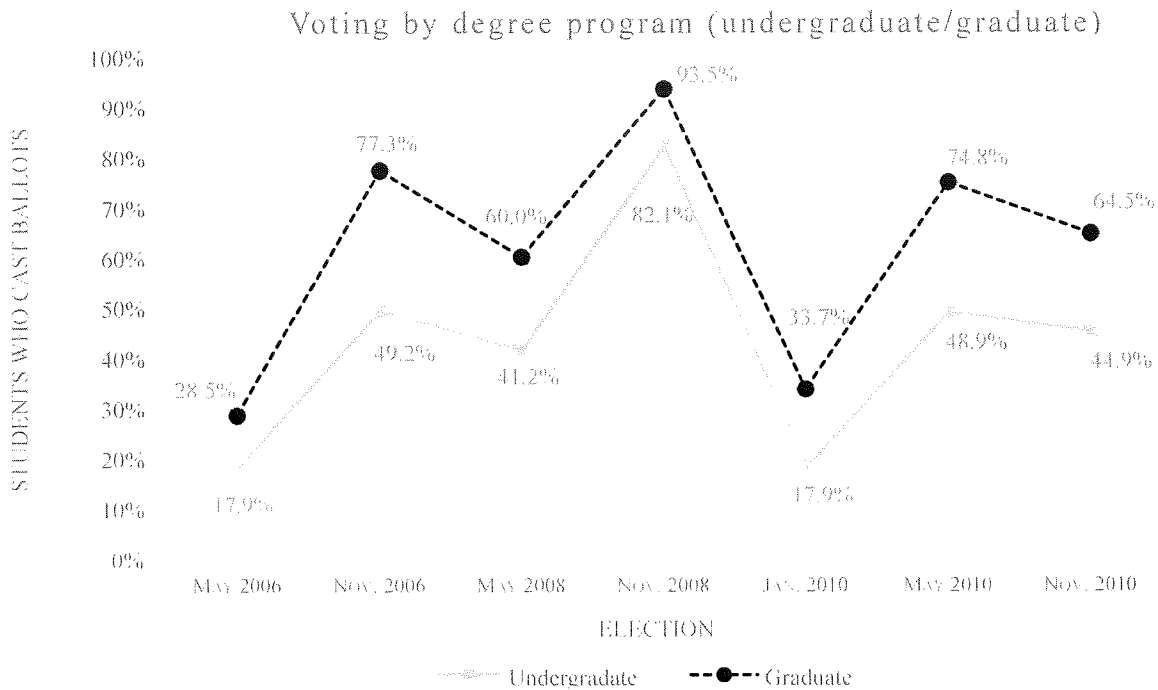
Student voting was also examined by degree program. The study groups students into two categories based on their current program of study – undergraduate (bachelor’s degree) and graduate (master’s, first professional, and doctorate). Undergraduates cast more ballots because their share of the student body was much larger. In 2010, OSU enrolled 19,559 undergraduates (82.3 percent) and 4,202 graduate and first professional students (17.7 percent). In this study, 94,928 undergraduates (85.2 percent) and 16,540 graduate students (14.8 percent) were eligible to vote – mirroring the student population. Table 14 shows that 25,475 undergrads (26.8 percent) and 6,943 graduate students (42 percent) voted in Oregon. So, while undergraduates cast more ballots, a higher proportion of graduate students voted.

Table 14. Student voting by degree program

Degree Program (n = 111,468)	Undergraduate (%)	Graduate (%)
a. Voted	25,475 (26.8)	6,943 (42.0)
b. Did Not Vote	33,935 (35.8)	4,032 (24.4)
c. Other*	35,518 (37.4)	5,565 (33.6)
d. Total	94,928 (100.0)	16,540 (100.0)
Chi-square = 1699.338, df = 2, p = .000		
*not registered, non-Oregon voter, or unknown		

Chart IV illustrates student turnout by degree and election. Using data from Table 12, it groups undergraduate students (freshman-senior) to contrast their aggregate turnout to graduate students. Chart IV shows that that graduate students outvoted their undergraduate peers across all elections. The biggest gaps were in November 2006 (28.1 percent) and May 2010 (26.0 percent). Turnout was closest in May 2006 (10.7 percent) and November 2008 (11.5 percent). The voting gap narrowed in these elections for different reasons. In May 2006, it was because graduate student turnout was at its lowest. In November 2008, it was because undergraduate turnout was at its apex, 32.9 points above their next best turnout election (November 2006). In January 2010, undergraduate turnout was very low at 17.9 percent, tying with May 2006 for their lowest voting election. So, while upper division undergraduates (juniors and seniors) voted more than expected in January 2010, lower division undergraduates dragged down overall turnout for the cohort.

Chart IV. Student voting by degree program



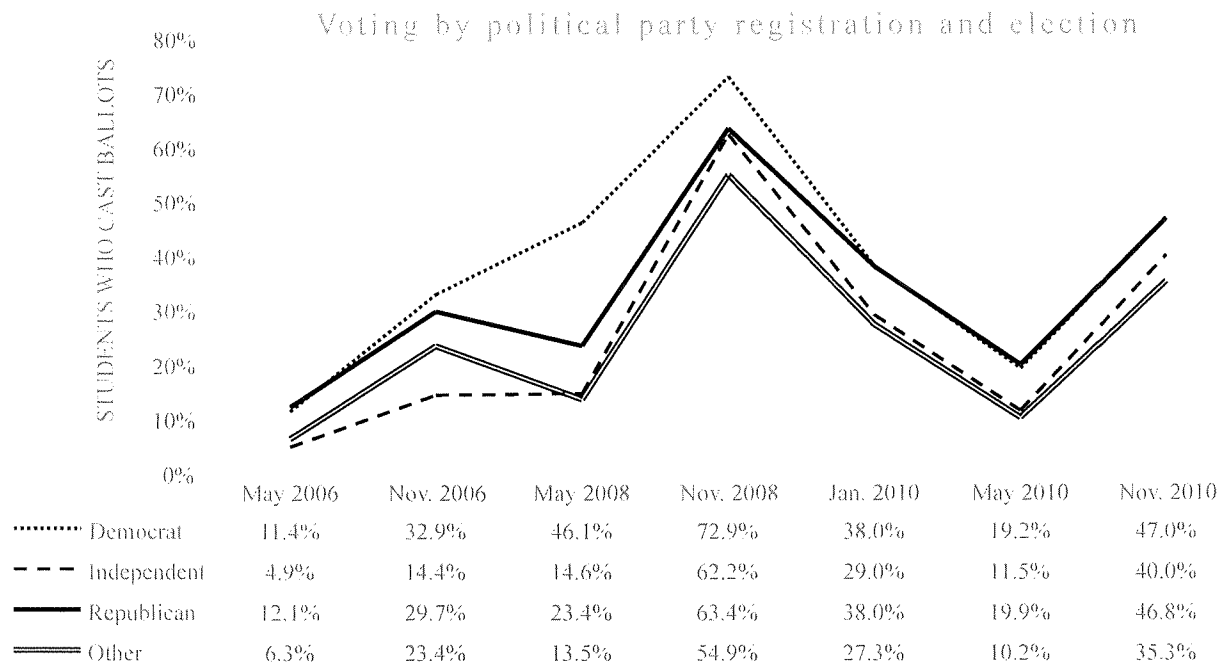
Party and election

This study also assesses student voting by political party and election. Oregon voter rolls do not indicate how an individual votes, but do include registered political party affiliation. The data reveal several important trends. The number of student voters in all political parties steadily grew over time, ballooning in November 2008 – a high participation presidential election year in Oregon and nationwide. Student voting declined after 2008, but improved again in November 2010. Post-2008, turnout never receded to 2006 levels. In other words, students voted more in similar elections, especially in subsequent primary elections.

Chart V shows that registered student Democrats outvoted registered student Republicans during the 2008 election. The voting gap between registered student Democrats and Republicans was virtually non-existent in the 2006 and 2010 elections. The 2008 election was a high turnout election for Democrats nationally and OSU student participation mirrored that trend. In 2008,

student Democrats outvoted their Republican classmates by 22.7 points in the Oregon May primary election and by 9.5 points in the general election.

Chart V. Student voting by political party registration and election



Geographic predictors of voting

Voting site

Originally, this study evaluated where students choose to vote – at home or at school – by Oregon county. But, county as the unit of analysis yielded cell counts too small to be statistically significant. This was especially true in Eastern Oregon counties. For example, two eastern counties contributed fewer than ten OSU student voters to the elections in this study. To ensure our findings were statistically significant and generalizable, the unit of analysis was changed to Oregon region. Oregon’s 36 counties were grouped according to the regions identified in *Toward One Oregon* and are outlined in Table 15. These groupings reflect significant rural-urban and

political divisions in Oregon (Clucas, Henkels, Steel). In 2010, Oregon boasted 3.83 million residents, over 3.1 million (81 percent) lived in urban areas and 726,692 (19 percent) lived in rural areas (U.S. Census). However, geographically Oregon is largely rural.

Table 15. Oregon regions defined

Oregon region	Oregon counties	Rural/Urban*
a. Eastern Oregon	Baker, Crook, <i>Deschutes</i> , Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, Wheeler	Rural
b. Southern Oregon	Coos, Curry, Douglas, <i>Jackson</i> , Josephine	Rural
c. Mid-Willamette Valley	<i>Linn</i> , Marion, Polk, Yamhill	Urban
d. The North Coast	Clatsop, <i>Columbia</i> , Lincoln, Tillamook	Rural
e. Portland Suburbs	Clackamas, Washington	Urban
f. University counties	Benton, Lane	Urban
g. Multnomah County	Multnomah	Urban
*rural definition based on Office of Management and Budget (USDA, ERS) <i>italicized</i> = outlier rural/urban county in the region		

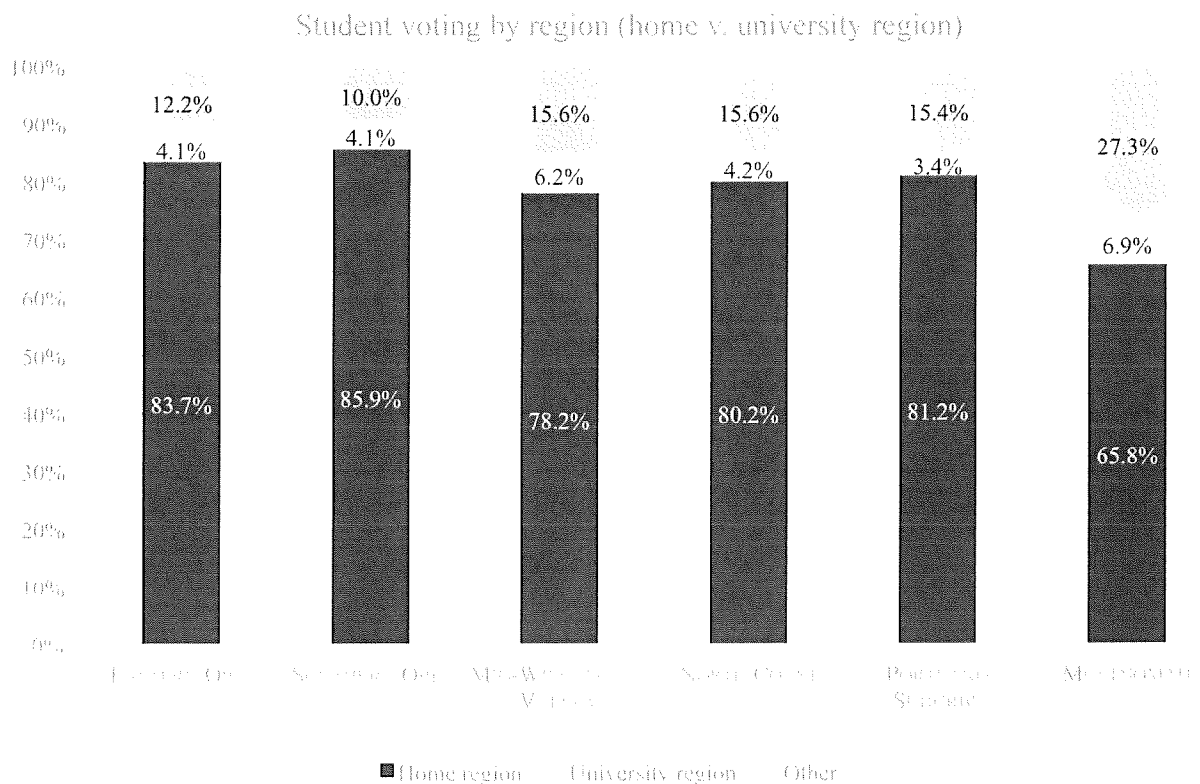
Urban regions contributed the most OSU student voters from 2006-2010. Most student voters hailed from the Portland suburbs (8,085), university counties (6,191), and the Mid-Willamette Valley (5,768). But, Eastern Oregon, a rural and geographically large region, contributed slightly more student voters overall (3,911) than Multnomah County (3,645), home to Portland, the state's most populous urban-metro center.

Toward One Oregon groups Benton and Lane counties, each home to the state's largest public universities. OSU's main campus is in Benton County and rival institution, the University

of Oregon (UO), is in Lane County. Of the 6,191 student voters from university counties, 3,639 hailed from Benton and 2,552 were from Lane.

Chart VI shows that the majority of OSU resident students elected to vote at home not at school. Regionally, voting at home peaks in Southern Oregon (85.9 percent) and is lowest in Multnomah County (65.8 percent). More students actually voted away from home, but in other Oregon regions, than voted at school. School voter registrations range from 6.9 percent (Multnomah) to 4.1 percent (Eastern and Southern Oregon).

Chart VI. Student voting at home or school region (excluding university counties)



These findings are important because local ballot measures, including property tax levies for public schools, often require that a threshold of registered voters (at least xx percent) cast

ballots for a measure to pass. A substantial inflow of registered university students who fail to turn out could cause a measure to fail. Moreover, if student voters have high turnout, they could sway election outcomes. These data show that OSU student voters overwhelmingly elected to vote at home, rather than at school.

Registration by county and political party

This study also shows student political party affiliation by home region. The conventional wisdom is that young college voters migrate to the Democratic Party. Partisanship is determined by students' registered political party rather than ballots cast. How voters cast ballots is not public information but party affiliation is public record. We rely on students' home rather than voting region to draw our conclusions.

Table 16 compares the registered political party affiliation of OSU student voters and other Oregon voters. Fewer OSU students register as Democrats and Republicans as compared to registered Oregon voters. But, the registration gap is smaller for Democrats. OSU students instead identify with other political parties or are non-affiliated, by a margin of 11.3 percent.

Table 16. OSU student v. Oregon registered party affiliation (Source: Oregon Secretary of State)

Political Party	OSU students (%)	Oregon registrations (%)	Delta (%)
a. Democratic Party	38.2	41.6	OSU -3.4
b. Republican Party	25.5	33.4	OSU -7.9
c. Other*	36.3	25.0	OSU +11.3
*Independent Party, Constitution Party, Libertarian Party, Pacific Green Party, Progressive Party, Working Families Party, Non-Affiliated Party, and other			

Table 17 shows that more OSU student voters registered as Democrats across all Oregon regions. But, variation in the size of the Democratic registration edge still hints at the lingering influence of regional politics from home. Students who hailed from rural, conservative regions (Eastern and Southern Oregon) almost equally split their registrations. Democrats had a registration edge of just 1.1 and 0.4 percent, respectively. Students from the Mid-Willamette Valley, a ‘purple’ battleground region in the state, also only slightly favored the Democratic Party, by 1.3 percent. But, the registration edge for Democrats widened in regions adjacent to Portland. Student Democratic registrations by region grew as follows: North Coast (+15.3), Portland Suburbs (+13.3), University counties (+23.3) and Multnomah (+36.2). A significant number of students also identified as Independents or with minor parties. Combined, student registrations outside the two dominant political parties accounted for approximately one-third of registrations. Independent and ‘other’ registrations were as follows: 34.5 (Eastern), 32.6 (Southern), 33.0 (Willamette), 37.1 (North Coast), 34.5 (Portland suburbs), 32.3 (university counties), and 32.6 percent (Multnomah). On average, students registered outside the dominant political parties 11.3 percent more than other Oregon voters.

Table 17. Student party registration by home Oregon region

Political Party (n = 35,063)	Eastern Oregon (%)	Southern Oregon (%)	Mid-Willamette Valley (%)	North Coast (%)	Portland Suburbs (%)	University Counties (%)	Multnomah County (%)
a. Democratic Party	1,303 (33.3)	869 (33.9)	1,972 (34.2)	440 (39.1)	3,183 (39.4)	2,817 (45.5)	1,889 (51.8)
b. Republican Party	1,258 (32.2)	859 (33.5)	1,895 (32.9)	268 (23.8)	2,113 (26.1)	1,374 (22.2)	568 (15.6)
c. Independent Party	270 (6.9)	149 (5.8)	325 (5.6)	64 (5.7)	485 (6.0)	303 (4.9)	184 (5.0)
d. Other*	1,080 (27.6)	688 (26.8)	1,576 (27.3)	353 (31.4)	2,304 (28.5)	1,697 (27.4)	1,004 (27.5)
Chi-square = 993.258, df = 21, p = .000							
*Independent Party, Constitution Party, Libertarian Party, Pacific Green Party, Progressive Party, Working Families Party, Non-Affiliated Party, and other							

True North: Oregon Values and Beliefs (2013), a recent public opinion survey and report, shows that there are fewer Oregon Republicans, but that those voters are more partisan than their Democratic counterparts. Forty-one percent of survey respondents identified their political party as Democratic, 33 percent as Independent, and 26 percent as Republican. Nearly 25 percent of respondents from Eastern Oregon identified as ‘very conservative’ on social and economic issues. In contrast, 19 percent of respondents from the Portland-metropolitan area (Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties) identified as ‘very liberal’ on social issues and this fell to 11 percent on economic issues.

The voting data seem to confirm the conventional narrative that college students trend Democratic. But as the *True North* survey suggests, the voting data do not reveal the strength of students’ partisanship. Regional variation in Democratic registrations hints that regional politics

overlaid student political engagement. More OSU student voters also identified with minor parties or were non-affiliated relative to other Oregon voters.

Summary of Findings

In summary, this study provides the following data about OSU student electoral behavior:

- Student voting increased with age, schooling, and advanced degree level;
- Female students outvoted males;
- High academic performers (3.5+ GPAs) outvoted other students;
- Students studying education, forestry, veterinary medicine, agricultural sciences, and science voted more than other academic disciplines, although these disciplines tend to serve graduate students, so age may be a contributing factor;
- Student turnout was highest in presidential and general elections, but also swelled in an off-year special election with high stakes for the university and its students;
- Students overwhelmingly elected to vote at home instead of at school;
- Democrats had a registration edge among students from all Oregon regions; and
- Registered student Democrats outvoted their Republicans classmates in the 2008 election, but the partisan voting gap was virtually non-existent in 2006 and 2010.

Research Limitations

This study is unique because it uses verifiable data, rather than self-reports of voting. But, to comply with important privacy regulations that protect students, the data had to be formed into three, separate datasets. This limited the kinds of cross-analyses available for study. It may be expedient to understand how demographic and partisan variables interact. But, because the data were divided we cannot, for example, report on the relationship between academic discipline and

political party. Students studying natural resource fields, like agricultural sciences and forestry, may prefer the Republican Party or largely hail from Eastern and Southern Oregon, where local economies depend on natural resources. It would be beneficial to determine whether a correlation between discipline and party or region and party is stronger, or if a correlation even appears. But, because these data were reported separately these relationships are not available for study. The study also cannot address the interactions between demographics and geography or election. For example, we cannot determine whether women and men prefer different voting sites. It would be interesting to know whether a gender gap emerges among students who elect to vote at home and at school. A larger study encompassing a longer period of time would generate enough records to prevent combinations of data fewer than 10 students and allow for these multi-layered analyses.

Future studies should also consider integrating additional variables that approximate the collegiate experience. College is a medley of opportunities and experiences – both academic and extracurricular. Each experience is different and the respective benefits vary by student inputs and engagement. This study approximates the collegiate experience using year in school. Future studies should expand this definition to directly incorporate extracurricular activities. This could be accomplished by integrating existing national surveys that measure student engagement, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an annual survey administered to OSU sophomores and seniors. Student club rosters and independent campus surveys could also be used to gauge participation in student government, clubs, organizations, campus Greek Life, etc. For example, it would be useful to know whether students in the Greek community vote more than their classmates and whether there are differences between Greek and non-Greek students. This avenue of inquiry would have practical applications for universities, who may consider closer collaboration with sororities and fraternities in their campus voter registration and get-out-

the-vote activities. Incorporating student extracurricular activities could also open the door for analyses of students' use of 'engaged' forms of political activity, as Dalton recommends. College students may participate in diverse political activities but abstain from the ballot box, or strong campus extracurricular activity may improve their turnout.

Creating a comprehensive database is a significant obstacle for pursuing a more nuanced look at student turnout by collegiate engagement. This would involve merging additional sets of records or surveys with state voter rolls and university enrollment records. Simply merging the voter and university datasets in a meaningful way that assured student privacy was a major hurdle for this research. It would be even more challenging to add another layer of records and complexity to that process.

Policy Implications

The *National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)*, also known as the "Motor Voter Act," expanded federal voting rights, making it easier for Americans to register to vote and maintain their voter status. The NVRA requires states to provide registration opportunities when citizens apply for or renew their driver's license; at all offices that house state-funded and public assistance programs; and allows for voter registration by mail (US DOJ). The NVRA requires states to keep their voter rolls current and accurate. The Act also provides safeguards that limit opportunities for states to remove registered voters from their voter rolls and protects disenfranchised groups, including racial minorities (US EAC). The NVRA was designed to "lower the barriers to participating in elections for low-income Americans, the elderly, people with disabilities, and young voters" (Oregon SOS). The NVRA enables the U.S. Department of Justice to bring civil actions in federal court to enforce state compliance (US DOJ). In Oregon,

public universities and community colleges (listed in ORS 352.002) are designated as NVRA agencies (Oregon SOS).

Oregon Senate Bill 951 (2007) requires public universities to develop civic engagement plans with their student governments to increase student voter registration and turnout. Universities must provide basic information on voting (where to vote, deadlines, etc.) and lower voting costs by distributing and collecting voter registration cards in high traffic areas on campus (SB 951). Oregon House Bill 2880 (2011) established the National Voter Registration State Compliance Council in the Oregon executive branch to ensure state compliance with the NVRA and to identify barriers and opportunities to improve voter registration processes at state agencies, including public universities (HB 2880). The law tasked the Council to submit a report with its findings and recommendations to the Oregon Legislative Assembly. That report, the *National Voter Registration State Compliance Council report on the National Voter Registration Act of 1993*, was delivered to the Oregon Legislative Assembly in February 2013 (Oregon SOS). The appendix of the report listed the specific efforts of each Oregon public university and community college to comply with state and federal voter registration legislation (Oregon SOS). OSU's efforts to improve campus student voter registration and turnout are outlined in a detailed timeline and include:

- Student government voter education activities, including “class raps” in the 100 largest university classes and visits to Greek Life organizations and Cultural Resource Centers;
- Non-partisan ballot information, voter registration cards, and secure ballot drop boxes available in residence halls and across campus;
- Campus voter registration goals (e.g. “register xx students”) to ensure accountability;

- Coordination with the Oregon Secretary of State and Benton County Elections Office; and
- Campus publicity on voting through the student newspaper, OSU homepage, and official presidential communications to campus (Oregon SOS).

This student voting study provides real data to help OSU refine and improve its existing voter education, registration, and GOTV efforts. The data can help the university strategically target and manage its efforts to comply with state and federal voting legislation.

At the macro-level, this study shows that OSU student participation mirrored classic, cyclical participation norms by election. Student voting spiked in presidential elections and dropped off in the midterms. But, students cast a larger share of ballots in the January 2010 special election than the midterm primaries, which was a surprise. January 2010 boasted high turnout for all Oregonians. Student turnout mirrored this surge in the electorate. Actually, OSU student voting mirrored Oregon turnout patterns in every election. Students reliably voted 20 points below the rest of the Oregon electorate, except in 2008 when the gap contracted dramatically. These macro-level trends and the consistent 20-point student voting deficit suggest that Oregon universities can do even more to encourage student voting and more fully integrate their students into the Oregon electorate.

University voter education and engagement efforts seek to both bring new student voters into the electorate and to motivate their continued electoral participation over time. This study shows that age – measured by birth year, year in school, and degree level – is strongly correlated with higher voter participation. The data on age show that future university efforts should emphasize targeted engagement with young students and first-time eligible voters, who lag behind other students in their participation. To address this, OSU could direct more of its voter

education and engagement efforts to young students. For example, additional “class raps” could be scheduled in lower division courses, which primarily enroll freshmen and sophomores. Or, civic engagement could be incorporated into the university’s First Year Experience Courses, also called U-Engage classes. U-Engage classes allow first-year students to explore an academic area of interest, while also learning about the university, campus resources, and the skills of successful students. It may be beneficial to integrate civic education and engagement into these classes, as well (OSU U-Engage).

Legislation designed to increase student registrations and voting in Oregon continues to be introduced and this study can help inform those discussions and good public policy. Oregon Senate Bill 1581 (2014) proposed to expand the duties of public higher education institutions to increase voter registration access and information on their campuses. SB 1581 would have required schools to link to the Oregon Secretary of State’s online voter registration tool on their websites and expand opportunities for their student governments to provide voter registration services, including at campus orientation and welcome events, residence life programs, and in any non-reserved public spaces on campus (SB 1581). Ultimately, SB 1581 did not pass. But, it sparked important conversations, reflective of national voter rights discussions. For example, at an Oregon Senate Rules committee hearing on SB 1581, a Republican legislator suggested that efforts to make voting access easier for college students could increase voter fraud (Senate Rules). Specifically, the legislator suggested that if students are able to register to vote at school, they may vote both at school and at home – illegally double-voting. This study clarifies that the overwhelming majority of OSU students, from all Oregon counties, elected to vote at home not at school – and did not double-vote.

This case study of OSU student electoral behavior is an important first step in using election returns rather than self-reports to measure university student voting. Its emphasis on college-specific variables is useful and innovative. The study is constrained by its methodology, which protects student identities at the expense of multivariate analyses. However, the bivariate data are still descriptive and useful. These data help measure and quantify the effects of existing state and federal legislation aimed at increasing youth and university student voting (NVRA, SB 951, and HB 2880) and university efforts at compliance. The study data can also help inform and refine future voter registration and GOTV policies on campus, as well as ongoing state government policy discussions and any new legislation introduced to increase student electoral participation.

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Appendix: Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY'S OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, AND OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

AGREEMENT. The Office of Government Relations shall obtain voter files from the Oregon Secretary of State and provide the files to the Office of Institutional Research. Institutional Research shall merge the voter files with student enrollment records and maintain the merged files and any crosswalk (identifying information) files within the firewall protected personal directory of the Director of Institutional Research. Institutional Research shall provide files with randomized, non-identifiable identification numbers and data (listed below) that have been verified to prevent the determination of identity via combinations of presented data. The Office of Government Relations shall use the data results to evaluate the effectiveness of its voter registration programs. Heather Bené, in the Office of Government Relations, shall also be allowed to use the data results in her Master's of Public Policy essay.

PURPOSE. The Office of Government Relations will use these data to analyze student voting behavior, especially among "youth voters" ages 18-34. Analyses will focus on four key themes:

- (1) Demographic predictors of student voting behavior;
- (2) Where students vote and the implications for local elections;
- (3) How the "university experience" influences voting behavior; and
- (4) How student voting behavior differs by election cycle.

DATA. The Office of Institutional Research will create three separate data files with the fields and specific content listed below, and forward to the Office of Government Relations:

- (1) Demographic variables:
 - a. Age (18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-34, 35+)
 - b. Gender (M, F)
 - c. Degree (Bachelor's, Master's, First Professional)
 - d. Undergraduate class (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)
 - e. Discipline (College *and for CLA only* School)
 - f. GPA (4.0-3.6, 3.5-3.1, 3.0-2.6, 2.5-2.1, <2.0)
 - g. Number of eligible elections as a student (one, two, three, four or more)
 - h. Voting frequency (one election, two elections, three elections, four or more elections, no elections)
 - i. Identification number #1 (randomly generated – no connection to identifying information)

(2) Variables to assess voting site:

- a. Oregon county (county of origin on enrollment application)
- b. OSU campus (Corvallis, OSU-Cascades, E-Campus)
- c. Oregon precinct (Benton County, Deschutes County, Oregon other)
- d. Party (Democrat, Republican, Other)
- e. Identification number #2 (randomly generated – no connection to identifying information)

(3) Variables to assess influence of university experience and election on voting:

- a. Voting behavior (Yes, No, Ineligible)
- b. Academic year (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11)
- c. Enrollment status (Enrolled, Not enrolled, Graduated)
- d. Undergraduate class (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)
- e. Election type (Primary Congressional, General Congressional, Primary Presidential, General Presidential, Special)
- f. Identification number #3 (randomly generated – no connection to identifying information)

BACKGROUND. This research will examine the voting behavior of students at Oregon State University, Oregon's public land-grant university. Literature on voting behavior indicates that young people vote at rates lower than older citizens and that college-bound youth vote at higher rates than their non-college bound peers. Senate Bill 951, passed into law in 2007, stipulates that public universities must develop civic engagement plans to increase student registration and voting. Significant resources are expended by higher education institutions, as well as political campaigns seeking to court the youth vote, to increase registration and turnout among college students. Findings from this research will help illuminate the outcomes of these efforts in Oregon, identifying how many in-state students at OSU registered and cast ballots over a period of five years and eight elections and during which Senate Bill 951 was passed into law. This research does not rely on surveys or other self-reported measures of voting behavior, which can be unreliable and prone to a social desirability bias, in which respondents provide answers that will be viewed positively by others. Aggregate data and research conclusions will be the basis of campus presentations, as well as a Master's of Public Policy graduate essay.

PRIVACY. To safeguard student identities and privacy, only non-identifiable data will be provided to the researcher and presented in the research analysis. The Director of Institutional Research will provide three unique datasets to answer the four research themes of the analysis. These data will be safeguarded by strictly limiting access to individually identifiable data through a series of security layers:

- (1) **Original voting history and student enrollment databases** will be stored on the Director's university computer account, which is protected by the Oregon University System firewall and is only accessible to the Director and Community Network staff;
- (2) **Merged databases with individually identifiable data** will also be secured on the Director's university computer account and protected by the firewall;

(3) **To protect student identities outside the firewall**, the Director will:

- a. Assign unique numerical identifiers to each student voting profile. These random identifiers will be different across datasets to ensure that the three datasets cannot be merged;
- b. Test the datasets inside the firewall to ensure that no combination of data will yield groups of 10 students or less – a table of unique data combinations for each file demonstrating the cell size will be provided to the Registrar prior to release of data files;

(4) **Merged databases that present no individually identifiable student data** will be provided to the Government Relations Office for analysis. The researcher is FERPA certified and has extensive experience complying with federal student privacy policies and guidelines.

(5) **All final reports, essays, analyses (published or unpublished) will report only aggregated, summary data or data analysis results. Individual data sets will not be released, except as provided for by law.**

Kent Kuo
Registrar

Date _____

Salvador Castillo
Director of Institutional Research

Date _____

Jock Mills
Director of Government Relations

Date _____

Heather Bené
Government Relations Associate

Date _____