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CALPIRG partners with UCSB to break voter registration record

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After registering more voters than any other college campus in the nation in 2008, UCSB has set out to break its own record for student voter registration before November elections, representatives said.

The California Public Interest Group (CALPIRG), a student nonprofit, joined with the UCSB campus to launch a voter registration drive at UCSB on Tuesday, which was National Voter Registration Day. The drive is intended to help more than 10,000 students register to vote.

"Young people have been voting in record numbers since 2004," said Nadim Houssain, the external vice president of statewide affairs with UCSB Associated Students, at the event.

“We hope to continue that legacy this year by again registering 10,000 students to vote in the election, matching our 2008 first place results," he said.

“We’re going to break the record,” said Jonathan Abboud, president of the UCSB Residence Halls Association. He noted that of the 5,700 campus residents who moved in recently for the new school year, more than 3,000 are already registered to vote.

CALPIRG has worked closely with the Secretary of State’s office as well as student groups to create California StudentVote.org, an online voting resource for students.

“We are particularly excited that this year, for the first time ever, students will be able to register to vote online,” said Kat Lockwood, CALPIRG representative and campus organizer. She demonstrated the five-step online registration process at Tuesday’s event.

The easy access to registration will come in handy for students that put it off to the last minute.

"The online registration will help especially as the deadline gets closer," noted Ms. Lockwood. "There will definitely be those students sitting in their dorms realizing 'I need to register to vote.'"

The online tool syncs with the Secretary of State’s website to allow students to register to vote online, according to Ms. Lockwood.

"Online voter registration is a no-brainer — it will make it easier for Californians to participate in our elections, while saving our election officials time and money," she said.

UCSB students are already politically-minded and enjoy voting, according to Mr. Abboud. He noted that 41 percent of UCSB students turned out for the school’s last student government elections, and the percentage has gone up each year.

"I guess we just like voting here a lot," the third-year student said with a laugh. UCSB students take elections seriously, and the student government election season features political parties and debates "like a presidential election," he said.

The UC Student Association.

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