

**Champaign County
Alternative Ideas**

Capstone Paper

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Certificate in Election Administration
The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs
The University of Minnesota**

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Doug Chapin, Lecturer
Type Name and Title of Capstone Instructor



Signature of Capstone Instructor



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Introduction

This project focuses on the polling locations that Champaign County, Illinois has and how effective those locations are. The current county clerk has tried to make many cases to the current county board that changes need to be made to the locations and the number of locations that the county is currently offering. The county has a variety of options to make changes to the polling locations that will allow the county to save money all while making adjustments with the ever-changing election system.

Facts:

- In Illinois, counties with population sizes over 100,000 people the county must offer multiple early voting location. (*Champaign falls under this law*)
- there are 119 precincts in Champaign County with 65 polling locations and 6 early voting locations.
- Champaign County faces budget issues maintaining equipment and budget deficiencies due to the number of state mandated poll watchers at each location.

Goal

The goal of this project is to assist the county clerk in identifying options for optimizing the election budget with evaluating polling locations during the 2018 March primary election.

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Background

The Champaign County Clerk, Gordy Hulten, has been facing budget constraints for many years trying to find the perfect balance of what is required by the state and what works well for the county. In years past, Hulten has combined polling locations to reduce the number of required poll workers on election day which has created some frustration within the community but was a must to make it through the year. Hulten has begun printing ballots in house instead of outsourcing the ballots being printed for election day which means there is a need to project the number of people that will be voting in each election. Hulten has introduced to the county board the option to move early voting locations to more utilized locations so the staff can have a steady flow of early voters opposed to having 5-10 voters per day. When the early voter turnout is low creates frustration for the staff working the offsite early voting location because this takes them away from their typical day to day work, but if the early voting location was at a high traffic location that attracted more early voters the staff workers will be properly occupied with their time.

Findings

- On March 20, 2018 Champaign County, Illinois had the highest voter turnout for a primary election in the counties history.
- Early voting locations struggled to maintain a decent turnout despite the fact early voting locations were adequately advertised and utilized media to allow the general public to know the early voting hours, locations, and dates open.

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- Hulten notified the general public via social media outlets of voter turnouts of early voting locations during the early voting period and during election day.
- Voters became frustrated if their polling location changed or if there were long lines at the polls.
- Hulten offered to the board to lower costs to close the lower turnout early voting location in future elections due to the waste of government spending on staffing the location.
- Hulten experiences resistance from the county board to change polling locations. The argument is that people do not like change and it will discourage people from voting.
- Voters experienced longer wait times during Election Day due to higher than average voter turnout for primary elections in the county.

Suggestions

Although the county may receive some push back the county should look into the alternative of offering ten polling locations throughout the county which allows the person to vote at any of those locations, but this option will require up to date poll books and equipment that is capable of being updated automatically so people can not vote in multiple locations. Clerk Hulten should shadow the neighboring state, Indiana, where this is a standard practice for election officials to have ten polling locations within the county. The county board may resist the change of cutting the polling locations down that drastically but there would be a major cut in poll workers which dramatically cuts the costs for Election Day.

One of the lowest early voting polling locations is on the University of Illinois campus, while having an early voting location there may seem like a great idea most of those students are voting via absentee ballots so they can vote in their home county. Looking at moving the location closer to the downtown Champaign vicinity would benefit everyone involved because the employees that are working

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in the businesses downtown can benefit to the option to walk to the polling location prior to election day and taking care of their right to vote without dealing with the hassle of Election Day.

Hulten should provide the county board the drastic difference between the early voting location on the University of Illinois campus opposed to the early voting locations near local companies. If the county board realizes that the amount of cost savings that combining early voting locations could have for the county could be an alternative for Hulten to use to save money. If the county board does not approve combining early voting locations to minimize the low traffic locations to save money Hulten is going to need to ask the county board for more funds for future elections due to an increase in poll workers payments.

Conclusion

There are some areas Champaign County can change or provide the county board with alternative methods to help reduce costs of the election cycle. Recognizing the services that are not being used to their full capacity allows Hulten to see what resources the community benefits from and what resources that they can do without. When those services that can be used without are removed or combined with a resource that is being used the intended way will allow the county to save money and work on purchasing updated equipment that doesn't require the costly maintenance. Overall, there are multiple alternatives for the county clerk to change to reduce costs of the election cycle and provide the utmost service to the community during the election cycle.

Updated 8.26.14

**Memorandum of Agreement
Capstone Workshop
University of Minnesota
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs**

Date 1/29/18

Project: Polling Place Locations

Clients: Champaign County Clerk

Primary Client Contact: Gordy Hulten
Email: ghulten@co.champaign.il.us

Student Consultants: Samantha Murray

Primary Student Contact: Samantha Murray
Email: sjmurray627@gmail.com or murr869@umn.edu

Instructor: Doug Chapin
Humphrey School of Public Affairs
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241 Humphrey Center
301 19th Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
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THIS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (this Agreement) is made by and among the Client referred to above and the Student Consultants. The Regents of the University of Minnesota (the University) is not a party to this Agreement and shall have no obligation to perform the services called for under the Project.

Project Goals & Purpose:

- -Identify the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of early voting locations
- evaluate signage for polling locations
- Find alternative early voting locations

Updated 8.26.14

Project Start Date: 2/5/18

Project End Date: 4/30/18

Deliverables:

Alternative voting locations and/ or different messaging to bring more voters' into low turnout voting locations.

Client Responsibilities:

By participating in the program, the Client agrees to:

- Designate Gordy Hulten as the primary client contact
- Provide clear instructions for and expectations of the students.
- Provide students with any needed information on an agreed upon schedule.
- Attend meetings with students as needed, including one meeting with the instructor in attendance.
- Be as flexible as possible with your schedule to accommodate the students' scheduling needs.
- Willingly share organizational information with the students; the more open and honest you are the better results you will receive.
- Reimburse students for any out-of-pockets for printing, copying, required materials, mailings, etc.
- Attend final presentation on (date) at (location), being sure to include key organizational leaders.
- Complete an Evaluation Form, including the Client's evaluation of processes, deliverables and project presentation and deliver to (instructor's name and email) no later than (date). A copy of the form is attached and marked as Exhibit A

Consultant (student) Responsibilities:

The Student Consultants collectively agree to:

- Designate Samantha Murray as the primary student contact

Updated 8.26.14

- Provide client with deliverables as described (in both paper and electronic form)
- Present findings to client in the form of an oral presentation (and provide the client with the presentation in both paper and electronic form)
- Provide the client with a project update at least every two weeks.
- Ask specific questions of the client to make sure you are on track with expectations.

Joint Responsibilities

- Return all e-mail messages or phone calls from the client within two (2) days.
- Be on time for all Project meetings.
- Be professional: the clients will treat the students as professionals; the students too will treat the project as a professional business engagement.
- Use the final product without prior approval.

Use of Project Materials

The Instructor has the right to review and approve the delivery to the Client of all written reports and other deliverables under this Agreement.

Unless the Student Consultants and the Client otherwise agree in writing:

- (i) the Client has permission to use the materials prepared under the Project in its business activities and to reproduce or publicly display (e.g., post on the internet) the materials in connection with such activities;
- (ii) the Student Consultants shall jointly own the intellectual property rights, including copyright, in the materials and any other intellectual property developed as part of the Project, subject to the policies of the University.

General Terms

The term of this Agreement commences on the Project Start Date and, unless terminated earlier, expires on the Project End Date. The Client may terminate this Agreement at any time by delivering to the Primary Student Consultant and the Instructor a written notice of termination at least ten (10) business days prior to the date of termination. The Student Consultants collectively may terminate this Agreement at any time – after consultation with the instructor - by delivering to the Client, with a copy to the Instructor, a written notice of termination at least ten (10)

business days prior to the date of termination. A Single Consultant, acting without the approval of the other Student Consultants, may not terminate this Agreement.

The Client acknowledges its understanding that the services and materials to be provided under this Agreement are provided by post-secondary students in connection with their fulfilling a course requirement. **THE STUDENT CONSULTANTS AND THE UNIVERSITY EXPRESSLY DISCLAIM ALL EXPRESS AND IMPLIED WARRANTIES CONCERNING THOSE SERVICES AND MATERIALS, INCLUDING THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OR MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND NON-INFRINGEMENT. THE CLIENT ACCEPTS SUCH SERVICES AND MATERIALS AS IS, WITH ALL DEFECTS.**

THE CLIENT RELEASES THE STUDENTS CONSULTANTS AND THE UNIVERSITY FROM ALL SUITS, CLAIMS, LIABILITIES, OR CAUSES OF ACTION, OF WHATEVER NATURE, IN CONTRACT OR TORT, ARISING OUT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SUCH SERVICES AND THE PREPARATION AND USE OF SUCH MATERIALS. Exceptions to this policy may be negotiated between the students and the client, subject to the approval of the instructor and the associate dean. Or In rare circumstances, with the concurrence of the instructor and the associate dean, the students and the client may agree that rights to publish may be established."

Acceptance

By signing below, the following individuals agree to the terms of this Agreement:

Students: Samash Murray

1/29/18
Date

Date

Date

Client(s) Dog Tetter

1/56/18
Date

Date
