

Understanding the U.S. Elections As an International Student

Are you a U-M International Student? Interested in taking part in the U.S. elections this year? Then read on!

2020 is a presidential election year. On November 3rd, U.S. voters will determine who will be president for the next four years. On the same day, hundreds of other elections will select candidates at the state and local level.

While international students, like other non-U.S. citizens, cannot vote in U.S. elections, you can participate in other ways. The University of Michigan **International Center** and [English Language Institute](#) [1] have a few ideas for ways that international students can get engaged in this electoral season:

- 1. Educate Yourself:** Learn about the U.S. election systems and why voting is a fundamental part of the U.S. democracy. In a presidential election year, understand the difference between the primaries, in which the major political parties select their candidates, and the general election, which happens every four years on the first Tuesday in November.
 - Participate in our 2020 Mock Election once you know who is your favorite candidate! [View Mock Election Results Here](#) [2]
 - View the recording of our [Understanding the U.S. Presidential Election](#) [3] to learn more. [Click here to view the slides](#) [4].
 - Check out [U-M Democracy Cafe Canvas Course](#) [5]
- 2. Be Curious:** Ask your American classmates and friends about their views on the candidates who they find most appealing and the issues that they find most important.
- 3. Attend an Event:** Keep an eye out for debate and election result watching parties hosted by campus organizations on the University Calendar. These events could include the Primary Elections in Michigan (March 10), the Democratic Convention (July 13-16), the Republican Convention (August 24-27), and the Presidential Election (November 3).
- 4. Vet Your Sources:** Seek legitimate, non-partisan news sources. Be sure that you are looking at the factual news- not just opinions or social media posts.
- 5. Think Local:** Get to know the candidates in Michigan and the ballot issues at the candidate websites and general sites including these:
 - [VoteSmart](#) [6]
 - [MLive](#) [7]
 - [Campus Select](#) [8]
- 6. Remind Your Friends to Vote:** This election is too important for those who can vote to stay at home. College students have busy schedules, so it is important that they make a plan to vote. Remind

your friends to schedule a time to vote!

7. **Familiarize Yourself with Campus-based Initiatives:** Check out U-M's [Ginsberg Center's website](#) [9] for more information on campus-based voting efforts including the Big Ten Voting Challenge.
8. **Run for Campus Office:** There are plenty of elected positions within student organizations, including U-M's [Central Student Government](#) [10] and [Rackham Student Government](#) [11], where you can influence the activities, policies, and climate at the University. Run for office – and vote in student elections!
9. **Keep Things in Perspective:** If you don't understand something, that's OK. It takes time to fully understand the history, current events, and politics of another country. What's important is deepening your understanding of life in the U.S. and connecting with other students, faculty, and staff around issues that are important to them -- and to *you*!

Additional Online Resources:

- [FEC Information for Foreign Nationals on Elections](#) [12]
- [U-M Public Affairs Key Issues: U.S. Elections](#) [13]
- Cornell University: Ballots and Borders: Election 2020 What's at Stake for International Students
 - [Video Recording](#) [14]
 - [Box Drive](#) [15] (Slides and Resources)
- 10/29/20 Chronicle of Higher Education Article: [International Students Can't Vote. But the Stakes Are Personal](#) [16]



Are you a U-M International Student? Interested in learning more about this year's U.S. elections?

While international students can't vote in U.S. elections, you can participate in other ways:



Get Educated

Learning about the issues, the candidates, and the outcomes can help deepen your understanding of U.S. culture and politics.



Get Connected

Talk with other students, faculty, and staff about issues that are important to them—and to you!



Get Engaged

Visit lsa.umich.edu/eli or internationalcenter.umich.edu for more ideas for ways to get involved!

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Links

- [1] <https://lsa.umich.edu/eli>
- [2] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/2020_International_Center_Mock_Election_Results.pdf
- [3] https://youtu.be/VFgS2tH_c3c
- [4] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Electoral_College_2020.pdf
- [5] <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/403640>
- [6] <https://votesmart.org/>
- [7] <https://www.mlive.com/>
- [8] <https://campuselect.org/>
- [9] <https://ginsberg.umich.edu/B1G-voting-challenge>
- [10] <https://csg.umich.edu/2018/04/25/get-involved/>
- [11] <https://rsg.umich.edu/>
- [12] <https://www.fec.gov/updates/foreign-nationals/>
- [13] <https://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/key-issues/guidelines-for-political-campaigns-and-ballot-initiatives/frequently-asked-questions/>
- [14] https://youtu.be/W3ewi_0Ph8w
- [15] <https://cornell.app.box.com/s/l50bpe6ucairpky1l2rp1qtshj0wygey/file/731742408418>
- [16] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/International_Students_Cant_Vote_But_the_Stakes_Are_Personal.pdf