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### Kean Students Are Ballot Bowl Champs

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# Fall 2021 Semester

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# Kean Students Are Ballot Bowl Champs

Nov 05, 2020



*Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., center, with members of Kean's voter registration team.*

Kean University student voter registration efforts were among the most successful in the state this year. The University won top honors in the New Jersey Secretary of State's 2020 Ballot Bowl.

Kean took first place in Conference Two of the annual statewide non-partisan voter registration competition, led by students and for students, registering more than 1,000 students from the start of the semester through the end of the competition period on October 14. It is the third year of the Ballot Bowl and the first win for Kean.

"I am tremendously proud of the effort to register voters on campus," said Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D. "Our students are civic-minded and engaged in their communities. They want to be heard and recognize that voting gives them a powerful voice in our democracy."

Students from the Kean chapters of The National Council for Negro Women and the United Nations Association, the Center for Leadership and Service and the Human Rights Institute's Voting Squad worked together with the goal of registering every eligible member of the campus community.

Jason Pleitez, student trustee on the Kean Board of Trustees and a business management major from Middlesex, hosted online virtual events on voter education through the Kean Center for Leadership and Service.

"I came across one student from an immigrant family who said he would be the first in his family to vote in the United States," Pleitez said. "He shared that he will be voting on behalf of himself and for both of his parents and younger brothers because he knows voting not only affects his life but affects the lives of his loved ones as well."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the required safety protocols, this year's voter registration efforts relied heavily on online outreach and virtual voter registration events, and included some in-person events.

"National Voter Registration Day, one of our most pivotal dates to get the word out, was such a challenging in-person activity. Adapting from being a primarily physical engagement to reinventing how to reach out to students has been a lesson in adaptability for all," said Susan Figueroa, Kean's managing assistant director of community service and civic engagement.

Chelsea Leon, a political science major from Perth Amboy who plans to study human rights and diplomacy in graduate school, is a member of Kean's Voting Squad, The National Council of Negro Women and the United Nations Association.

"Kean students are eager to vote. Our students come from a range of backgrounds, understand the importance of the elections and are willing to learn as much as possible to cast their ballot. Also, we have a supportive faculty that took the initiative to spare their class time to play a non-partisan role where students were able to talk about the election in a respectful manner," she said.

Jenell Boykins, a senior finance student from Trenton and a member of Kean's Voting Squad and the Kean chapter of The National Council of Negro Women, said she knew the voter registration campaign was having a significant impact.

"I realized that so many people are not aware of how to vote and where to check their status if they register to vote, or even about the 2020 Census," Boykins said. "I had so many people tell me 'Thank You' for providing this information, and it makes me feel great. But just imagine how many other people in the United States might not know this information as well. It is a proud moment for me knowing that I could be a part of something that is important."

Kean's voter registration efforts run throughout the year. Last November, Kean won the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for having the most improved rate of student voting in the nation for a public university its size.

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**Kean University**

1000 Morris Avenue  
Union, New Jersey 07083

**908-737-KEAN (5326)**

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