

The top spots

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It's never too early to become politically active. For many American youth, an excellent time to leap into the fray is during college, when the majority of teens get their first taste of life away from home and the political beliefs of their parents. Many also are eligible to vote for the first time.

Young adherents from the two major parties, Democrats and Republicans, operate chapters on college campuses across the country. The College Republican National Committee opened its first chapter in 1892 at the University of Michigan; the group now has almost 1,000. In 1932, the College Democrats of America was formed to support Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidential campaign. A spokeswoman for the CDA said it does not give out specific numbers.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

C & E asked both organizations to select their favorite chapters. Below are their choices and reasons why.

Top College Republican Chapters:

University of Maine at Farmington <http://studentorgs.umf.maine.edu/~umfcrs/>

"If you're not right, you're wrong!" proclaims the University of Maine at Farmington GOP chapter's home page. This chapter has been at the forefront of the College Republicans' statewide efforts to promote conservative values on college campuses in Maine. In fact, the CRNC named this group "Best State Federation" in 2004 because of the members' stellar efforts in President Bush's re-election campaign.

During this academic year, the UMF College Republican chapter has consistently carried the banner for conservative values on their campus. As a result, the weekly chapter meetings have become a crossroads for leading Pine State Republicans eager to benefit from the dedicated activism and energies of college students.

Valdosta State University College Republicans, Valdosta, Ga.

www.valdosta.edu/republicans

Valdosta's College Republicans have registered more new voters on their campus than any other chapter in Georgia. The group is pretty active on the social front as well. VCR sponsored a speaker from the Valdosta Pregnancy Support Center who discussed abortion alternatives and brought Ralph Reed to a campus forum so students, faculty and locals could learn more about the gubernatorial candidate.

University of Colorado--Boulder

www.cugop.org

This group made headlines last year for its crusade against a professor who compared some of the people who died in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 to Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichman. Boulder GOP members said Ward Churchill's comments demonstrated a liberal bias that exists among the university's teachers.

Capital University, Columbus, Ohio

Web site: www.capitalcr.com

What better way to attract hungry, eternally poor college students than a waffle breakfast? That's what Capital University's Republican chapter figured when it had the John Kerry Flip-Flop and Waffle Breakfast in 2004.

Some of the more ambitious chapter members are already working in the industry with part-time jobs or internships for the Ken Blackwell for Governor and Betty Montgomery for Attorney General campaigns, the Ohio House of Representatives, the Republican National Committee and various political consulting groups.

George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

www.ou.edu/oucr

The College Republican National Committee named the GW chapter "Best State Federation" at the committee's national board meeting in December. State Federation Chairman Mike Inganamort said the Washington, D.C., college's Republicans quality and quantity of programming was "second to none."

Included in the list of past speakers are U.S. Rep. Tom Coburn (Oklahoma) and George Allen (Virginia), former U.S. Sen. and presidential contender Jack Kemp, and conservative writer Ann Coulter.

Top College Democrat Chapters:

Brown University, Providence, R.I.

www.browndemocrats.org

Co-founded by the late John F. Kennedy Jr., the Brown Democrats have proven to be a potent force on campus and in the city of Providence. During the last election, Brown Democrats traveled more than a dozen times to swing states to campaign for John Kerry. Also last year the Brown Democrats hosted a conference for College Democrats in the Northeast that featured former President Bill Clinton.

University of Michigan--Ann Arbor

www.umich.edu/~umdems/index.htm

Always one of the largest and most active chapters, the University of Michigan's Democrats registered and turned out thousands during the 2004 election.

George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

www.gwcollegedems.com

Taking advantage of their location, the GW College Democrats are a reliable source of volunteers and activists for the Democratic National Committee and progressive organizations throughout the city. During the 2004 general elections and the 2005 Virginia's governor's race, hundreds of members traveled to campaign on behalf of Democratic candidates.

Madison College Democrats, University of Wisconsin--Madison

www.student.virginia.edu/~uvadems/home.htm

This powerhouse registered and turned out more than 15,000 students to vote during the last election--and that was only on campus. They also traveled widely throughout the state to support the state party with volunteers and spent nearly every weekend knocking doors throughout the state.

University of Buffalo, New York

<http://ubcollegedems.cjb.cc/>

The University of Buffalo Democrats are involved in every local election in the area from city council all the way up to the U.S. Senate and governor. Some members lent a hand beyond the Empire State's borders when they traveled to battleground states in 2004.

With more than 1,000 members, the group is a major force within the campus community and throws several issue forums each year. The Buffalo Dems have organized several similar chapters at colleges and high schools nearby.

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Americans spend about the same amount each year on chewing gum that they do on campaigns.

There are 14 U.S. Protectorates:

Under U.S. Jurisdiction (14)

American Samoa

Baker Island

Guam

Howland Island

Jarvis Island

Johnston Atoll

Kingman Reef

Midway Islands

Navassa Island

Northern Mariana Islands

Palmyra Atoll

Puerto Rico

Virgin Islands

Wake Island

--Source: the World Factbook 2005

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