

# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Prep the polls

Punch a card. Pull a lever. Touch a screen.

Although the act of casting a ballot in America has not changed much over the years, the technology behind the nation's voting systems has been transformed. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 required that each state update its voting systems, leaving in its wake staffing challenges due to complicated new processes and volunteer shortages. MU's Truman School of Public Affairs received a grant to help Boone County, Mo. — home to Columbia and the university — recruit a new, technology-savvy generation of poll workers just in time for the 2008 elections.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission awarded \$25,705 to the Institute of Public Policy at the Truman school. With the funds, Emily Johnson, coordinator and policy analyst for the institute, says, "We will work to recruit students from MU, Stephens College and Columbia College to volunteer as computer support judges and regular poll workers." In addition, the experience will "give students a different, more active look at voting," says David Valentine, research associate professor and senior policy analyst at the institute. Because so many students are already involved in the upcoming election, "We think this is a good year to get started," Valentine says.



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