CBS poll paints Ohio State blue

Ohio State undergraduates back Obama by wide margin

By Donnie Clark

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A majority of Ohio State students prefer Sen. Barack Obama over Sen. John McCain in the Nov. 4 election, according to a poll by CBS News, UWIRE and the Chronicle of Higher Education and conducted by the Survey Research Institute at Cornell University.

The self-administered online poll ran from Oct. 6 through Oct. 19 at nearly 50 colleges across political battlegrounds in Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Colorado.

In total, about 137,919 students were invited to take the poll, and nearly 25,000 students responded.

Likely voters at Ohio State's Columbus campus favored the Democratic ticket, with 63 percent supporting Obama-Biden and 33.2 backing the Republican ticket.

McCain's numbers at OSU-Newark were higher, but students still favored Obama.

A "likely voter" is defined as someone who has voted in the past and says he or she will vote in the coming election.

In comparison to the other three states polled, students registered to vote in Ohio showed the least support for Obama. Students in Pennsylvania showed the most with 67 percent. OSU students leaned toward the Democratic ticket slightly more than the rest of Ohio.

Obama scored better in perceived ability to bring about real change, improve the respondent's life and improve America's image in the world. Students are also more likely to say they relate to Obama and believe he cares about people like them. McCain scored higher on perceived ability to be an effective commander-in-chief.

A majority of registered student voters said Obama is different than other Democrats, while most agreed that McCain is a typical Republican.

At OSU, more McCain supporters had reservations about their support for the candidate. More than half of Obama supporters said they enthusiastically supported him, while 29 percent of McCain supports said the same about their candidate. These differences were even larger across all of Ohio and the other three states.

"This data indicates that Obama's support among students is more solid, less likely to change before the election and higher enthusiasm also means Obama supporters are more likely to turn out and vote than McCain supporters," said Erik Nisbet, an assistant professor of communication and liaison for the study.
Four out of five Ohio students who support McCain say both their parents will also be voting for McCain, while 56 percent of Obama supporters have the same views as their parents.

Regardless which party people identify with, Roberts said, Obama has been able to address the concerns of the people and present them in a way that tells the American public he has their positions in mind.

Students in the four states are paying almost as much attention to the election as adult voters, according to the poll. Roughly half of the students polled said they are paying a lot of attention to the election, compared to 65 percent of adults.

More than 90 percent of students said they were registered to vote, with more than 80 percent saying they will definitely vote in the election. Ohio had the lowest percentage of students, 82, to report they were definitely going to vote. Colorado had the most with 91 percent.

From OSU's Columbus campus, 499 students responded, resulting in a margin of error of 4.3 percent. At Newark, 273 students replied, resulting in a margin of error of 5.5 percent. Data across all of Ohio had a 1.4 percent margin of error.

A Gallup Daily Tracking Poll performed during the same time period as the CBS poll showed people 18 to 29 years old preferring Obama 62 percent to 35 percent.

"Barack's message of inclusion and his populist stance on issues clearly resonate with our generation over those views of Sen. McCain," said Zach Roberts, the president of the Ohio State University College Democrats and political science major, in an e-mail.

The Ohio State University College Republicans could not be reached for comment.

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