



**HART Program
Houston Action Research Team
Engaged Research Opportunity
Spring 2022**

Preparing poll workers to run safe, accessible, and fair elections

Poll workers are essential to the operations of elections. In recent election cycles, election administrators have faced new challenges in recruiting, preparing, and sustaining sufficient numbers of trained poll workers to staff polling places and meet the needs of voters. Concerns about personal health and safety due to COVID-19 and the polarized and often contentious political climate has resulted in a declining pool of experienced poll workers, the majority of whom are over 65. The introduction of new voting technologies, enhanced ADA accommodations, and new laws in Texas that expand the access and permissible activities of partisan poll watchers at in-person polling locations while limiting the ability of poll workers to regulate those activities, pose challenges for both new and experienced poll workers. Additionally, the Texas Secretary of State's Office will be releasing new guidelines for poll worker training in early 2022. The Harris County Elections Administrator's Office seeks to better understand the experiences, opinions, and motivations of poll workers so that they can prepare and support a sufficient and well-trained poll worker population in preparation for the 2022 midterm elections and beyond. Toward that end, Rice University political science faculty and CCL staff have collaborated with the Harris County Elections Administrator's Office to design and field a fall 2021 survey of poll workers who worked at the polls at least once between 2018 and 2021.

During Spring of 2022, this HART (Houston Action Research Team) will:

- Review relevant literature and materials related to poll worker roles, responsibilities, trainings, and experiences
- Analyze the results from the fall 2021 survey of Harris County poll workers
- Collaborate with the Election Administrator's Office to review and evaluate current and new poll worker guidelines and training in light of the findings from the survey of poll workers
- Complete a written report and oral presentation of findings and recommendations for the Harris County Elections Administrator's Office

This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Spring of 2022. An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important, skills, knowledge, and experiences, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 10 hours per week on this project between January 13th and May 6th under the guidance of Dr. Bob Stein (Political Science) and CCL staff and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and must coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from **all fields of study** with interests and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

Voting, elections, political science, research design, data analysis, public policy, statistics, professional writing, public presentations, teamwork, community engagement

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Wednesday, January 5th, 2022 at 11:59pm

To inquire or apply contact Dr. Jessica Khalaf, jkhalaf@rice.edu
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>