

# Stockton students to begin polling public through William J. Hughes Public Policy Center

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Stockton students to begin polling public through William J. Hughes Public Policy Center

What you'll hear

This the the introduction residents will hear when called by the Richard Stockton College Polling Institute:

“Hello. My name is ..... I am calling from Stockton College’s Polling Institute to survey likely voters in the 3rd Congressional District. This voluntary poll will only take a few minutes and you will be helping students conduct research.”

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — If a Stockton student calls next week, please don’t hang up.

That was the message Richard Stockton College officials sent Friday as they prepared to launch their first poll at the new Stockton Polling Institute on campus.

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“This enhances the voice of Stockton in South Jersey but also the voice of South Jersey on public policy issues,” Stockton President Herman J. Saatkamp said.

The first poll will concern public views of the 3rd District Congressional race between Republican incumbent Jon Runyan and challenger Shelly Adler. A second poll will address the 2nd District Congressional race between Republican incumbent U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo and Democratic challenger Cassandra Shober.

Polling will be done between 6 and 9 p.m.

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Saatkamp first proposed a polling institute in 2005 when the college contracted with Zogby International to do Stockton/Zogby polls on issues related to South Jersey. That year, the college budgeted \$40,000 for a poll on the gubernatorial race. Saatkamp said the college since has spent an average \$20,000 to \$30,000 per poll with Zogby, but can operate its own institute more efficiently with college staff and integrate the process into student learning.

The new institute will operate out of the William J. Hughes Public Policy Center at Stockton. Hughes attended the dedication of the institute Friday and said it was a natural progression for the center.

“Polling is a part of our landscape today,” Hughes said. “It’s a win/win situation to have one in-house. It’s good for the region and good for students.”

Saatkamp said by operating their own poll, the institute can start a database of information over time that will be valuable for research. He said the institute may also link to geographic information systems, or GIS, to combine polling information with census and other data.

Dan Douglas, director of the Hughes Center, said the polling institute will be available for contracted private polling starting in January. The center and will work with Stockton’s Lloyd D. Levenson Institute for Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism on related polls.

The institute will not do telemarketing or any selling of products, he said.

So far 50 students have been hired and trained to work at the 24 polling stations in the new center, located in the former Osprey’s Nest in the N-Wing. Hughes Center research associate John Froomjian will work on site supervising and monitoring the pollsters, who will earn \$8 per hour. Almost all are Stockton students, though there are a few community members who expressed interest in participating.

Jaueline Kennedy, 20, of Galloway, a native of Liberia, is a junior biology major at Stockton, but said her family wanted her to find a job that was flexible and had some research component. Pete Vaile, 22, a junior communications and broadcasting major from Florida, said he is interested in politics and wanted to get involved in a job that involved the public. Frank Loberto, 25, of Absecon is involved in local politics and also wanted to learn more about polling.

Students get at least 10 hours of training. They will read questions directly from a computer screen then log in the respondents answers. Students said they learned how to be polite, professional and persuasive to convince people to take the poll.

“You have to not show your own emotions or how you might feel about an answer,” Loberto said. “It is an objective poll.”

“Tone of voice is important,” Kennedy said. “We have to be persuasive to get people to take the poll, but you can’t sound arrogant.”

Their introduction to callers identifies pollsters as calling from Stockton College, and Saatkamp emphasized that people who take the poll will also be helping students learn about polling and research. He said the institute is available for professors to use and a statistics professor already plans bring a class in to discuss the polling process.

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