The consistency of voting habits among college students.

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LITERATURE REVIEW
Currently college voters have four choices when it comes to voting, leave school in the middle of the semester to vote, go through the confusing process of absentee voting, attempt to vote at school, or not vote at all. (Ardion et al, 2015). It seems a lot of students are choosing the latter. According to U.S. Census, in the November 2018 election approximately 43.78% of citizens aged 18 to 24 did not vote. This follows the trend that voter turnout among all Virginia residents in the last four Presidential elections was, on average, 61.25%. In 308 political communities throughout the country, enrolled college students represent more than 20% of the population (Ardion et al, 2015). Teixeira (1987) suggests that voter turnout is affected by the costs (time and effort) and lack of benefits in voting. Ardion et al (2015) suggests that "unclear rules about how and where to register only adds to the confusion." Moreover, Powell (1986) suggests that voter turnout is effected by party system & institutional factors and registration laws. For example, in 2013 North Carolina attempted to pass a bill that would place a tax penalty on students' parents if they voted outside of their home district, students would be forced to register to vote at the same address as their vehicle registration, and all voters would have to present photo ID when voting. Gerber et al (2003) suggests that voting is habit forming and not voting in a person’s first election may cause them to follow this in the future. Keeping this in mind and following Albert Bendura’s Social Cognition Theory, one can assume that voting habits are one’s behavioral cognition, costs, effort, and laws are environmental cognitions and the lack of benefits of voting add to the personal cognition.

RESULTS
Majority of the respondents are registered to vote, only 4% being unregistered. Of the unregistered, only 1 does not plan to register for the 2020 Presidential election. The most prominent reason why the students are not registered is because they forgot the deadline or are not interested.

CONCLUSIONS
The results did not support the hypothesis for a variety of reasons. 1. First, a larger percentage of students are registered to vote than originally thought. 2. Second, the reasons why students are not willing to vote are more about them being out of town and less about them not being registered to vote. 3. In contrast, it was found that most students are registered to vote. Most of the students also have plans to vote in Presidential elections, while not in the primary elections. This may suggest that college students are not disenfranchised, but instead are choosing not to vote.

Further Research
To determine voting patterns of all college students, further research is needed. This study only focuses on students at one college in Virginia. Further researchers should aim to:
• expand the research to students at more colleges in Virginia or the United States. This would give more accurate data on the voting habits of college students.
• broaden the scope of the research survey by asking more questions concerning registration, “off-year” elections vs. presidential elections, on-campus voting vs. absentee voting, etc.
• conduct a similar study following the 2020 Presidential election. This would allow a follow up to the question of whether the 2020 Presidential election and allow a comparison of voting habits among primary and general elections.

Use of research
This research can be used to determine voting habits of the college students. It can also be used to improve the approach to increasing the college student vote.

REFERENCES
“Reported Voting and Registration by Age, for the United States, Regions, and Divisions: November 2018.” United States Census Bureau, Nov. 2018.