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Obama And Guiliani Take Top Spots In UNH Wildcats Vote

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DURHAM, N.H. - Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Rudy Guiliani were the top winners in the first ever University of New Hampshire student mock presidential primary, Wildcats Vote.

Obama received a whopping 55 percent of the Democratic votes cast in the Wildcats Vote, and Guiliani received 29 percent of the Republican votes.

"Typically, candidates look to college students as a source of volunteers. But Obama seems to have struck a chord among UNH students. Now the challenge for his campaign is to get them to the polls on primary day," said Andrew Smith, associate professor of political science and director of the UNH Survey Center.

Sponsored by the University of New Hampshire Discovery Program and Department of Residential Life, Wildcats Vote was the university's first ever large-scale, simulated presidential primary for students. The campuswide political exercise was designed to educate students about the presidential primary process and underscore New Hampshire's role as the first-in-the-nation primary state.

More than 2,400 UNH students went to the polls Dec. 11-13, including the residents of Jessie Doe Hall who voted at midnight Dec. 11 in the spirit of New Hampshire's famed early risers at Dixville Notch.

"I was particularly impressed with the residents of Jessie Doe. You can't be too apathetic if you're willing to vote at midnight," said Taras Ferencevych, an organizer of Wildcats Vote and director of Smith Hall.

After the first day of voting, Obama was the clear leader among Democratic Wildcats voters, gaining 56 percent of the vote, with Hillary Clinton a distant second with 16 percent, and Edwards in third place with 14 percent. The Republican race was tighter with Guiliani in the lead with 31 percent of the votes, followed by Ron Paul with 21 percent, and Mitt Romney with 19 percent.

By the end of voting on day two, Obama still had a commanding lead with 53 percent of Democratic Wildcats primary voters supporting him. Clinton and Edwards remained far behind, at 17 percent and 14 percent respectively. On the Republican side, the race had tightened slightly by the end of the second day of voting, with Guiliani receiving 29 percent, and Paul in second with 21 percent. John McCain surged into third place on day two with 18

percent of the vote, usurping Romney, who dropped to fourth place with 17 percent.

At the end of the third day, the final tally showed Obama was the clear choice of Democratic Wildcats voters with 55 percent. Clinton came in a distant second with 17 percent of the total vote, and Edwards was third with 13 percent of the vote.

Guiliani was the choice of Republican Wildcats voters with 29 percent of the vote. McCain moved ahead to second place with 20 percent of the vote, followed closely by Paul with 19 percent and Romney with 17 percent. Mike Huckabee was a distant fifth with 9 percent.

"Wildcats Vote has been very successful. I hope it will serve as encouragement and a reminder to students to vote in the real New Hampshire Primary on Jan. 8, 2008," said Michele Holt-Shannon, assistant director of the UNH Discovery Program.

For a complete listing of the Wildcats Vote totals, visit <http://www.unh.edu/academic-affairs/discovery/dialogue/2007/wildcats-vote.html>.

Prior to the voting, students took part in a Primary Primer issue forum to inform students of four major issues facing their generation in the upcoming presidential election: the environment, U.S. foreign policy, education and healthcare. They also had an opportunity to meet with representatives of all of the presidential campaigns to discuss their concerns.

