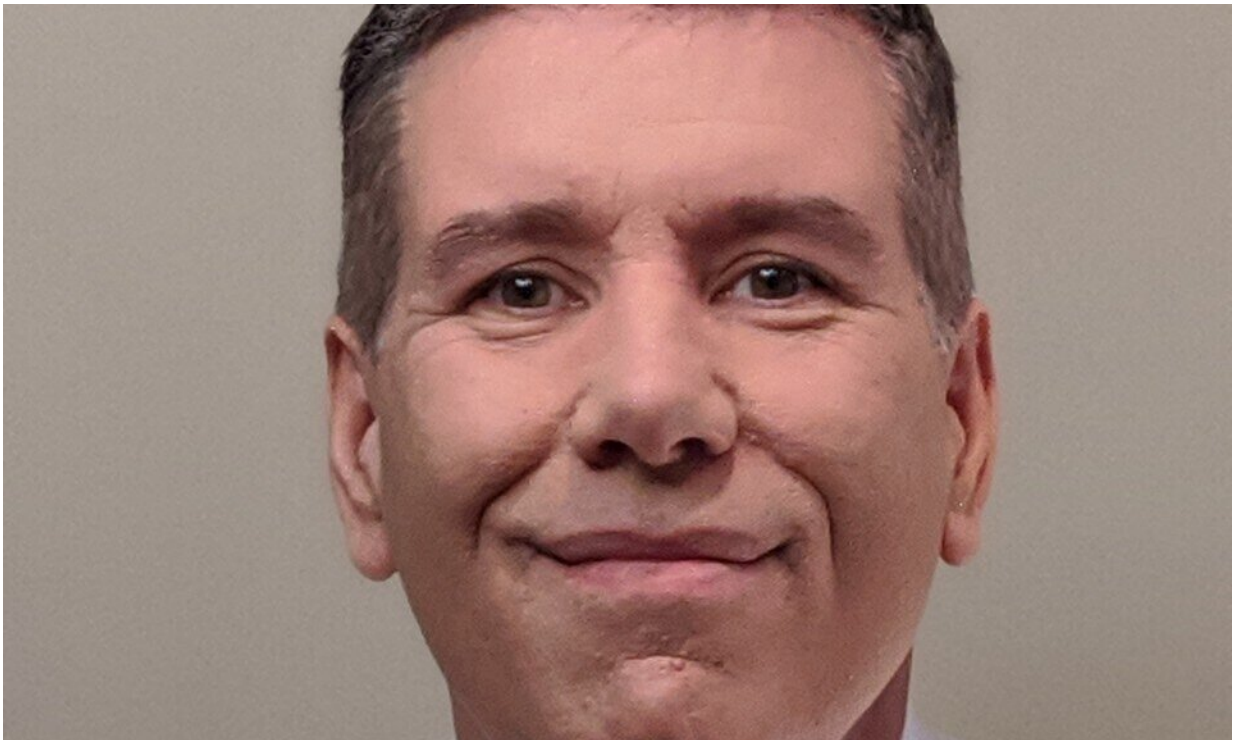


Women tend to run more sophisticated political campaigns

March 18 2020, by Angela Koenig



David Niven, a leading political researcher and associate professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati. Credit: David Niven.

Women run more sophisticated campaigns for office than men, says David Niven, a leading political researcher and associate professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati.

In research accepted for publication in the upcoming June issue of *Political Research Quarterly*, Niven analyzed 1,351 candidate responses to detailed questionnaires provided by the League of Women Voters in races across the nation in 2016. Those races ranged from local school boards and city councils all the way up to the U.S. Senate.

What he and his graduate students found was that [women](#) tend to run more sophisticated campaigns even when the odds are against them.

Niven's study reinforces the importance of pursuing research that highlights inclusion and prepares the next generation of leaders, one of the primary goals of Next Lives Here, UC's strategic direction.

According to Niven, "Women tend to take the prospect of a political campaign more seriously, and their campaigns reflect that. Even when a woman is running in a difficult district, she is likely to make a serious effort." By contrast, Niven said, "Men will run for office at the drop of a hat. In long shot circumstances, men's campaigns tend to be very amateurish."

Niven's measure of campaign sophistication is based on how many details candidates provided in their responses. Niven found that more successful candidates tended to answer questions with general, thematic responses, while less successful candidates wallowed in specifics.

As an example, Niven pointed to campaigns in Texas where one of the issues candidates faced was traffic congestion. "One woman who won her race spoke generally about her goals and the shared reality that 'we all sit in traffic together.' One unsuccessful male candidate got himself trapped in the confines of the questions and went into great detail, including discussing his hope for developing moving sidewalks like on the Jetsons."

"Overall, we found that women candidates are less likely to get caught up in details that, quite frankly, can lose votes and get in the way of the candidate's message."

Niven says it's not surprising that pundits who are reviewing Sen. Elizabeth Warren's campaign for president are saying that she ran a very smart [campaign](#), and yet she didn't win any states.

"The bottom line here is that women run more sophisticated campaigns in general, but that doesn't mean they are rewarded commensurately by the voters."

Niven is continuing his analysis of the League of Women Voter guides from the 2018 midterm elections and will also analyze the guides and outcomes from the 2020 elections. Working with Niven on this soon-to-be-published [research](#) were graduate students Alexis Straka and Anwar Mhajne.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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