Electoral College Project

You will be divided into groups of 3-5 people to complete the following project.

Each group will do the following:

- Calculate the winner of the presidential election under each proposal for each set of election data you have been given. Identify the occasions when candidates other than those selected using the Electoral College would have won the elections.
- Create a graphical presentation to show the results of each election.
- Explain which of the potential problems with the current Electoral College system each of these proposals would address and how. Be sure to include:
  - The impact of each plan on the faithless elector
  - The alignment of each proposal with the concept of "one person one vote"
  - The impact of each plan on the relative importance of various states in the process
  - The impact of each plan on the development of a multi-party system in the US
- Analyze whether the difference in outcome among the plans is statistically significant.
- Identify and explain any new problems that might arise with the adoption of each of the proposals you have been given.
- Identify the plan that you would recommend that the US adopt. Provide arguments to defend your choice.
- Each group will deliver a formal presentation summarizing their answers to the above questions. Following are the requirements for that presentation:
  - Each group will provide an outline the class period before speaking.
  - Each group will use at least one visual aid in their presentation.
  - The length of the presentation should be 15-20 minutes.
  - Each group member will need to speak for at least 5 minutes.
  - Each group's presentation will be evaluated on the basis of outline, content, visual aids, and delivery.

Descriptions of the four alternative plans for electing the president follow.

PROPORTIONAL PLAN

Under the proportional system, the position of elector would be abolished, and the principle of winner-take-all would be eliminated. Each state's electoral votes would be divided among the candidates in proportion to the popular vote each candidate received in that state. For example, in 1976 Jimmy Carter received 56.2% of the popular vote in South Carolina. Gerald Ford received 43.1%. Under the proportional plan, Carter would have received 56.2% of South Carolina's eight electoral votes, or 4.50 electoral votes. Ford would have received 43.1% of the eight votes, or 3.45. The computation of electoral votes in each state would be carried out to the nearest one-hundredth as shown in the above example. A majority of electoral votes cast nationwide would still be required for election to the presidency. If no candidate received a majority of electoral votes nationwide, a joint session of Congress would choose the president from among the top two candidates. Each member of Congress would have one vote, and a majority of these votes would be required to be elected president.

NATIONAL BONUS PLAN

Electoral votes would be retained; however, the position of elector would be eliminated. The winner of the popular vote in each state would be automatically receive all of that state's electoral votes. In addition to awarding 538 electoral votes through this process (537 in 1960), a "bonus" of 102 (100 in 1960) electoral votes would be awarded on a winner-take-all basis to the candidate who received the most popular votes nationwide. This bonus of 102 (100 in 1960) electoral votes would be added to the candidate's share of the 538 votes (537 in 1960). A majority of the total electoral votes would still be required for election to the presidency. But the new majority would be at least 321 electoral votes (a majority of 538+102=640). (A majority of electoral votes in this system in 1960 would have been 319.) If none received at least 321 (319 in 1960) electoral votes, a run-off election would be held the following week between the two candidates who received the most popular votes in the first round. The popular vote winner of the run-off would be elected president.

DIRECT ELECTION PLAN

The Electoral College system would be abolished completely. We would vote directly for the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of our choice. Popular votes would be totaled nationwide. The candidate who received the most popular votes for each office would be elected, provided that he/she received at least 40% of the total votes cast. If no one received 40% or more, a run-off election between the top two candidates would be held to determine the winner, with a majority of votes cast in the run-off required for election.

HUMPHREY PLAN

The total number of electoral votes in the country would be retained, but the position of elector would be abolished. Each state and the District of Columbia would cast two electoral votes for the candidate who received the plurality of popular votes in that state. (In 1960 the District of Columbia would not have had any votes.) This would be automatic with no elector. The remaining electoral votes would be divided among the candidates to reflect the proportion of popular votes each received nationwide. Each candidate's share of the 102 votes allotted on a state-by-state basis (100 in 1960) would be added to this to determine his/her total number of electoral votes. A majority of electoral votes would still be required for election to the presidency.

Example:

Candidate A received the plurality of popular votes in 20 states and Candidate B received it in the remaining 30 states plus the District of Columbia. Candidate A received 45% of the popular vote nationwide and Candidate B received 55% of the popular vote nationwide.

Computation of Electoral Votes:

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Electoral votes awarded on a state-by-state basis	2 X 20=40	2 X 31 = 62
Electoral votes awarded in proportion to the popular vote received nationwide	45% X 436=196.2	55% X 436=239.8
Total electoral votes received	236.2	301.8