

Civic Engagement Scholars Program
University of California, Santa Barbara
Final Report

Were your project's objectives met?

The Civic Engagement Scholars Program was conceived to foster ideals of active citizenship among our undergraduate and graduate students, engaging the next generation of leaders on issues that are of import to our campus and the surrounding communities of Isla Vista, Goleta, and Santa Barbara and under the belief that students need a firm foundation in the principles of engaged citizenship to become effective community leaders.

To that end, we created alliances with leaders and organizations in those communities to provide students with opportunities to develop their leadership and organizing skills and to affect measurable, positive change. Students learned about the principles of active citizenship, emphasizing free speech and civil discourse. The class also featured guest speakers who led students in conversations on related topics. Guest speakers included nationally and locally recognized experts and community leaders in student activism, mental health, basic needs, the houseless, people with different abilities, sexual assault, mentoring disaster response, and local politics.

In the Winter and Spring, students worked individually or in groups on issues of their interest, either on campus or in the community. These projects included the first annual graduation ceremony and a documentary on the Underground Scholars Program (formerly incarcerated youth); development of a first response program for the unsheltered in Isla Vista; mental health services for Latinx families in Isla Vista; the creation of content for a newsletter and social media as well as student recruitment for the Inaugural Dean's Disaster Resilience Fellows program; an awareness week with a workshop series on the incarcerated; education and resources for sexual assault survivors and allies; an initiative for the support of the Black Student Center; and a petition to bring back ASL classes for credit at UCSB, among others.

From everything mentioned above, we believe that our project's objectives were met and, in some cases, exceeded. The Civic Engagement Scholars Program provided an important avenue for furthering students' involvement in the civic life of both the campus and our local communities. We further envision that the first cohort of students in the Civic Engagement Scholars Program will serve as peer mentors to the succeeding cohort in 2022-2023. Our aim is to build on the first year's experiences, broadening the range of student activities and providing further opportunities for student participants in future years.

Who attended, listened, etc. and how many?

As described in more detail in the following question, attendees included UCSB students, staff, and faculty, as well as community members and Isla Vista youth. Attendance at these events

varied from 5 to 100 people per event. In the case of the Incarceration Education workshop series, there were 90 attendees at each of the three workshops.

What demographics did attendees represent (students, staff etc.)?

Since the Civic Engagement Scholars Program had two components, an academic course plus projects presented on campus and the community, there really were two types of audiences: the students attending the class and the audience or beneficiaries of the projects and services offered by the students. The students taking the class were all undergraduates of varied backgrounds: Latinx, White, Black, Asian, and a couple of international students from China.

For the projects and services presented, there was a good mix of students, staff, community members, and some faculty. Some attendees not commonly participating in university events were family and friends of the Underground Scholars (formerly incarcerated youth) who participated in their graduation ceremony. Underground Scholars from Santa Barbara City College and Hancock College in Santa Maria were also honored at the ceremony. The audience and presenters in the incarceration workshop series included local formerly incarcerated youth, graduate student researchers from UC Santa Barbara and other universities, and faculty from UCSB and other campuses. The participants in the social activities and workshop presented in the Hedges House of Hope included the Isla Vista unsheltered. Finally, another non-university group that attended class projects was Latinx junior high and high school residents of Isla Vista that regularly attend after-school programs and initiatives at the St. George Youth Center.

What were your actual expenses?

CESP received funding twice this year for a total of \$10,000. The fall 2021 funding was used to buy 2 of the 3 required books for the course: *Everyday People, Extraordinary Leadership* by Kouzes & Posner and *How to Have Meaningful Dialogues Despite Political Differences* by Tania Israel. The third required book, *Free Speech on Campus* by Chemerinsky and Gillman, was provided to us for free. Other items funded included the design of the program logo and promotional posters, speaker fees or gift cards for presenters, as well as parking permits. The second funding cycle was used to pay for costs of the student projects like materials, supplies, printing, paid advertising, venue rentals, speakers' fees, refreshments, and attendees' incentives/prizes.

What was challenging about completing your project?

The conception and delivery of the course were smooth in general. The teaching team quickly agreed on the bibliography, topics to cover, and guest speakers. Scheduling of the guest speakers required some adjustments and precise coordination, but we were able to include all the presenters and topics originally decided. The most challenging aspect was the supervision of eighteen projects, each quite unique in its focus and needs. This required weekly office hours with each project group in the Winter and Spring and attendance to each program when it was presented. Each project was comprised of multiple pieces, including invitation of presenters, securing a venue, the design and delivery of extensive publicity, purchasing of materials and refreshments, and coordination of payments and reimbursements. Some students had not presented a program previously, so additional training and support were needed.

Based on this first year assessment, there are changes we would like to implement to increase the longevity and impact of class projects. We observed that multi-member groups were broader in their reach and outcomes than single-member projects; therefore, in the future students will be required to collaborate with others. We will also encourage the class to either create a new project, expand on an initiative created the first year (if it is within an issue of their interest), or choose a local initiative or organization where they can contribute an added aspect/element that would significantly help advance their mission and/or programs.

What impact do you think your work had on the campus community?

The Civic Engagement Scholars Program, in its first year, has already started fostering community in at least three discrete ways. First, by allowing UC Santa Barbara students to be active participants in community projects and initiatives, we are starting to break down the artificial barrier that exists between the campus and the community and to increase trust and collaboration between them. Second, research has demonstrated that several reasons prevent students from becoming active participants in the civic life of their communities. The program addresses several of those barriers, including a common lack of understanding of pressing socio-political issues; under-developed skills of reasoning and persuasion; a scarcity of positive role models; and the increasing incivility that characterizes public life. Third, the program has empowered students to reach out to our local community to work together to solve the most pressing social issues of our time. Students have learned how to engage in civil dialogue about often sensitive or contentious topics and how to work with people from various backgrounds and of divergent viewpoints thoughtfully and constructively. This year, we emphasized the importance of working through differences across political and social divides and how to be good citizens while building consensus and cooperation in our communities.

How might the Center change the process moving forward to further support VOICE Initiative awardees' efforts?

We believe the VOICE Initiative process is very well organized and easy to navigate due to its clear instructions. The timeline established for submissions is manageable. The application form asks relevant questions that are clear and straightforward to answer. The budget section is simple and does not require complex answers or extremely detailed explanations of how the funds will be utilized. The reports requested during the duration of the project require necessary information that allows awardees to assess their on-going program and adjust as necessary. Another important aspect is the reasonable flexibility of the executive director and the manager in terms of deadlines and the use of allocated funds. We do not believe any changes are necessary.