

## VOICE Grant

### Bridge UCLA

Bridge USA at UCLA is an organization working to combat political polarization through dialogue, ideological diversity, and solution-oriented politics. We aim to build empathy and understanding across party lines by hosting civil political discussions. By creating this safe space we encourage students to become more engaged in politics. We host biweekly meetings where we discuss various political topics like COVID regulations, Voting Reforms, Voting Rights, and more. We also host social hangs for our members to encourage a strong community with students who may not always think alike. We also partner with our organizations on campus to host events to help benefit our members.

Bridge UCLA will use the VOICE grant to help incorporate creative elements in our political discussions. We find many students are apathetic to discussing politics in such a polarizing political climate. So we decided to host more events that not only include political discussions but also creative elements. An example of this would be our plants and politics event where students painted their mini plant pots while discussing political topics. They also received free mini succulents with their pot. Paint and politics was another event where students painted on mini canvases while discussing political topics in small groups of 3 or 4. Then we would reconvene together and discuss the differing perspectives on the topics. We had about 10-15 people for each of these events! Game night was another event we used to gain more members when we were a new organization and was hosted online. All of the students were undergraduates who attended UCLA.

For the upcoming academic year, we plan to have more plants and politics, paint and politics, tote bag-making night, and more events where we can discuss politics in a healthy and calming environment! We will use the supplies purchased through the VOICE grant to carry out these events. We also purchased a spinning wheel to help us table more successfully. By using engaging political or philosophical questions on our spinning wheel we can try to gain more members, this can also be used for our game nights as well. We also purchased a whiteboard for students to write their responses to political questions like “Where do you stand on student loan forgiveness?” questions while we are tabling to gain more members.

We found attendance was higher at events that included creative elements and so we used the grant money to purchase paint, plant pots, canvases, and more to help create more creative events to encourage students to discuss politics. Students tend to be burnt out from the rigor of academics leaving them with little energy left over for extracurricular. Our objective is to increase attendance and interest in politics by attracting students through creative outlets.