

## Creating Citizens Speaker Series

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### Project Summary

The Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC) Vote Coalition and Office of the External Affairs Vice President launched the Creating Citizens Speaker Series during the 2022-23 school year. Our first year of the speaker series saw incredible success with three separate speaker events that drew hundreds of students and community members to campus. Our first event, titled "Your Vote, Your Voice," hosted CA Attorney General Rob Bonta, former CA Republican Party Chair Duf Sundheim, and UC Berkeley Vice Provost of Graduate Studies Lisa García Bedolla. Our second event, titled "Passing the Torch," hosted California Democratic Party Vice-Chair Betty Yee, former Mayor of Oakland Libby Schaaf, and two incredible student activists. Our third event, titled "A Conversation with Justin Jones," hosted Tennessee State Representative Justin Jones of "The Tennessee Three" in conversation with PolicyLink Founder Angela Glover Blackwell. These panels emphasized the importance of having difficult conversations with people you disagree with and entering those conversations with the goal of learning from others rather than just changing minds.

Over the course of the three events, we hosted over 800 students, faculty, and community members in conversation. Ranging from local Bay Area high school students to our own State Senator Nancy Skinner, our attendees brought their enthusiasm and questions to the events. Additionally, through our social media outreach, we have reached thousands of other students and community members, and even more through the Commonwealth Club of California's YouTube channel, podcast platforms, and radio affiliates. Since our project was a partnership with the Commonwealth Club of California and fiscally supported by the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, we were fortunate to be able to extend our programming beyond what we ever imagined. The Commonwealth Club covered the production costs by providing an A/V team and technological setup for the event and handling the creation of the YouTube video and podcast content afterward. Additionally, they provided tables, chairs, and other equipment needed for the event to happen. Our team

# 2023 VOICE Report



National Center  
for Free Speech and  
Civic Engagement

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was able to use the grant funding for advertising, food and other incentives, and to create better materials for civic education at the events.

## Impacts

Our program is incredible and deeply necessary, as it provides an open space for students and other campus stakeholders to learn about civic engagement and engage in nonpartisan dialogue about the ways in which we can rebuild our divides as a campus. Countless students came up to me after listening to our events to share how inspiring it was to hear about the individual struggle behind these accomplished politicians and community leaders. Humanizing civic engagement is essential to inspiring students to become civically engaged. We even saw a direct impact in multiple students getting internships from the community leaders in attendance and others joining the organizing work on campus as a result of their participation. Overall, the UC Center was an incredible resource for our campus and we ran into no issues in administering the funds or engaging with the center community throughout the process.