

## Campus Dialogues

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### Project Summary

Campus Dialogues (CDG) worked over the last year to provide a democratically student-driven forum for moderated discussions about topics of personal and community importance for undergraduates on the UCSB campus. While our student team brainstormed many potential issues that students care about and would like to discuss, and surveyed peers to gauge areas of peak interest, the crisis in Gaza quickly gained traction as a primary concern for the campus in the months following October 6th. On May 23, we held our first open forum in the university center. The event was modestly attended, but nonetheless provided students with a space to discuss:

- The emotional/physiological impact of watching so much incoming footage of violence and human rights violations
- The desire to do \*something\* to help or speak out (posting, sharing, protesting...), but uncertainty about \*what\* actually helps the people who need help
- The feeling of powerlessness at being so far away, and so disconnected from actual hubs of power and influence
- Student values and ideals ~ for Gaza and the campus community ~ and which opportunities and resources on this campus might facilitate realizing some of these priorities.

### Impact

I think CDG's main impact on the campus community has been spreading the idea of open forum discussions as feasible and productive among undergraduates. We connected face-to-face with local leaders in JSP, Halal, and the protest encampment and directly invited students from these groups to come and share their experiences and insights for our first event.

We created an organized set of guidelines for conducting open dialogues that center around experience-sharing and conciliatory community discourse rather than combative debate. We had 4 students participate in planning and leading this group, and approximately 30 attendees at the event itself (the latter being mostly students, plus two staff and a faculty member). I wouldn't say our objectives were met exactly as envisioned, but this experience gave us definite ideas for how to pivot CDG's efforts to draw more student interest and community benefit in the future. Students at the end of this event suggested reaching out to organizers at the campus radio station, as well as OMBUDS and other group mediators on campus, to offer CDG as a service for large groups seeking productive and conciliatory discourse about timely issues on campus.