

Vincent Munoz, Betty Friendan & Bettina Apthekar:

I think what we need to do is explain how our principles of free speech, free inquiry, will help serve the cause of justice.

The First Amendment, the constitutional freedom of speech and freedom of conscience that is the bulwark of our democracy.

There was a passion in what was being said affirming this what people consider a sacred constitutional right, freedom of speech and freedom of association.

Michelle Deutchman:

From the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, this is SpeechMatters, a podcast about expression, engagement, and democratic learning in higher education. I'm Michelle Deutchman, the center's executive director and your host.

This time of year brings excitement and energy as new and continuing students return to college and university campuses around the country. Many campus administrators, faculty, and students are approaching this year, however, with trepidation and anxiety in light of the protests and encampments which occurred last spring. Over the summer, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights opened up additional Title VI investigations concerning hostile campus climates contributing to the unease. And to top it off, this fall is only the most important presidential election of the century.

While it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the culmination of these factors, we can temper our angst by sharing resources and learning from the events of last year and the professionals who navigated them. Piya Bose, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs at UC San Diego, is one such professional. She was part of the UCSD team that weathered an encampment, the cancellation of the campus's Sun God Festival, and the occupation of a Starbucks on campus, and she's here to tell the tale. In all seriousness, we are grateful that Piya is joining us for our annual back to school episode to reflect on last year and look ahead to the coming fall.

But first class notes, a look at what's making headlines. At the end of June, the California State Legislature passed Senate Bill 108, which on top of allocating almost \$5 billion to the UC system included a provision that gates 25 million of that funding. The 25 million will only be released upon completion of campus climate notifications by each campus due to the legislature by October 1st. In response to SB 108 last month, UC President Michael Drake directed all 10 UC schools to provide, in a single document or web page, a compilation of existing policies that most commonly applied to protest and demonstration activity.

Drake emphasized how imperative it is for campus policies to not only be clear, but also to be consistently enforced in the new academic year. It specifically cites policies regulating the time, place, and manner of speech on campus, camping policies, and the use of face masks on campus. Response to the directive has varied with some arguing the merits of consistent enforcement while others allege that UC is using the First Amendment to suppress the message of the protesters.

UC is not alone in its attempt to be more transparent and consistent with policies and how they will be applied if and when they are violated. Rather, colleges and universities around the US such as the California State University system, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University, and James Madison University are clarifying and rethinking their approach to campus-free expression policies.

In other controversial news, the American Association of University professors, or AAUP, amended its policy on academic boycotts. The change which went into effect in August overrides the organization's previous categorical opposition to academic boycotts first issued in 2006. The AAUP now maintains that these boycotts do not interfere with academic freedom principles and instead can be legitimate tactics in line with the mission of higher education. There have been a flurry of dueling op-eds by academics over

this decision. AAUP has long been seen as the definitive authority on academic freedom matters. Its 1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure is widely considered the standard definition of academic freedom.

Now back to today's guest, Dr. Piya Bose serves as assistant vice chancellor of student affairs at UC San Diego. Dr. Bose has worked professionally within student affairs for over 20 years with both undergraduate and graduate students at various public institutions throughout California. Prior to her tenure at UCSD, Dr. Bose was the dean of students at Cal State University Long Beach. Dr. Bose oversees assessment, evaluation, and organizational development, student affairs case management, and the Center for Student Accountability, Growth, and Education.

Additionally, she has strategic partnerships with equity, diversity, and inclusivity, division of undergraduate education and graduate education postdoctoral affairs. She completed her BA at Vassar College. She holds a master's in education from Humboldt State University and received her PhD from Claremont Graduate University. Dr. Bose's passion for education stems from knowing that education can change lives, communities, and ultimately the world. Piya, I hope it's okay if I call you Piya.

Piya Bose:

Of course.

Michelle Deutchman:

Thank you for joining us today. We are so grateful for your time and your insights.

Piya Bose:

Thank you so much. This is such a timely point in the history of higher education in our world to have this conversation. And campuses across the country have been challenged by what's really amazing, right? Student activism is so important to campus climate, to student initiatives. And at the foundation of all of this, this is what's really important to our students at this time. And so figuring out how all of our campuses support free speech, our students, and the campus community are important. And I don't want to not bring attention to, right? This is hard work and we're doing as much as we can to prepare for the new year.

Michelle Deutchman:

I'm really happy you started us off like that with some of the positives and also acknowledging what a challenge it is. Because I think a lot of people are really feeling a lot of trepidation and anxiety about the year that either has just begun or is about to begin. But before we dive a little deeper into this particular moment, I always like to start by learning about our guest's career journey. And I'm hoping you can tell us a little bit about what led you to work, not just in higher ed, but in student affairs in particular.

Piya Bose:

Like many undergraduate students, when I was in college, I had a job on campus. And my job was in the dean of students office. Now the reason I was in the dean of students' office was possibly because I was a little bit of a troublemaker. And the dean figured if I keep her close to me, I will be able to keep an eye on her and make sure she stays here and is successful. That was a successful plan. Not only did I not get into as much trouble, I was able to help my friends not get into trouble, and I found a career path just by being in that office space with a whole group of colleagues. I would ask lots of questions.

And one day one of the professional staff in my office just said, "You ask really good questions. Have you ever thought about a career in higher ed?" And I really looked at her and I said, "I can do that?" And her response to me was, "Well, what do you think I'm doing?" I found that education is really a place

where, not only do individual lives transform, but we get to be a tiny part of students going on to change the world. Every day, I work with future politicians, future scientists that are going to cure cancer, individuals who are going to bring on the next new form of technology, future Pulitzer Prize winners, Tony Award winners, and so much more. Public higher education in California really changes the world. And to be a tiny part of that is truly it's a privilege.

And then the last thing I'll share is I spent my first 13 years of my career working in student housing, and nine of those living on campus with our students across the state. And that itself was a really good opportunity because I saw students 24/7 through the great times and the challenging times, and getting to have that experience is one that I will never trade. It gave me opportunities to really understand student life on campus during the day as well as in the middle of the night. And our students, again, they're amazing. This is such a fun space to be in, challenges and all. Because again, we're a small part of future successes of incredible students.

Michelle Deutchman:

That's wonderful. And as a product of California public higher education, go Bears, I agree with you about all the possibility. And one of the reasons of course we're having you on is because of your depth of experience. And I think one of the things that sometimes people forget is that higher ed isn't just the place where you go to learn, right? It's where you live, it's where you work, it's the family away from your family. And so that's part of what I think makes the issues that happen on campus very challenging, right? Because you can't just close the office door and drive home necessarily. And there aren't even necessarily the same kinds of doors because of social media.

So let's talk about this moment. So many people have written and talked about how this past academic year was unlike anything people had seen since the 1960s, especially in terms of activism. Now, I can't ask you about necessarily the 1960s, but I can ask you about your 20 years in higher ed, and how last year differed from other years, in what ways, and was the difference really that stark from what you'd seen in the past?

Piya Bose:

That's a great question. So I wasn't alive in the '60s, so I can't speak firsthand to that. I can share that I have worked on campuses previously that have an activist culture. And having previously engaged with student activism, the groups and crowds have been smaller. They have been very specific and time-based, not it's been a one time, maybe two protests with a specific group, and then after their words have been shared, their activity has been shared, they move on to the next thing. What I've experienced in this past year, one, is that it's a larger group of students that are engaged. The second is that there's a specific point of conflict in which our students are conflict with each other. And I don't mean individuals, but communities in conflict with each other. The other part is social media has really played a big role in this past year.

And then the last thing I will share is that our students are thinking very creatively beyond a traditional protest. Across the campus, we've seen things like building takeovers and encampments. And these haven't been common forms of activism, protests, expressions of free speech, et cetera, over the last 20 years of my career. Most of my career, we've had very traditional protests. Students outside buildings during lunchtime maybe for two or three hours with posters and bullhorns and such. Now we've got activism at student government meetings, within classrooms, disrupting spaces, taking over buildings, encampments. Activities that are slightly more disruptive to the campus community than what we're used to. Social media, like I shared, is playing a really big role. And the students are using social media to organize, to communicate. And social media then also brings in the larger community to our campuses, not just our students and employees.

The other last piece that I will share is that we know that there are some external mentors for our student activists that are helping to teach them how to be activists, how to participate in some of this, and maybe even guide some of their decision making. We have a lot of off-campus folks that have been participating, again nationally on campuses, in some of this activism. And so that changes the dynamics from when it's just our students, we have different protocols and practices versus off-campus community members and what are means of accountability and such. And also just cooperation. Our students are generally very cooperative. Sometimes non-affiliates have different expectations of what the campus community should be like and those can't always be met.

Michelle Deutchman:

It's well said. And I think again, being a public university, you have a responsibility in some ways to keep the space open to the public. And with that are lots of positives and with that also come challenges. And because I want to focus on the challenges, and many of the folks in student affairs that I've had a chance to hear from, I've talked about the need for connection around the country in face of a lot of the challenges and hardships. And I'm wondering if you could maybe talk a little bit about some of the challenges that you faced and how you tackled them, especially as we look forward into the next iteration of what this might be.

Piya Bose:

So the first challenge was the element of surprise. Our first or second student government meeting after October 7, 2023, we had no clue that there was going to be a large volume of students coming to be activists and support their cause at associated students meeting. And in that moment we had to have it staffed, have folks there, make sure fire codes were being met. The volume of people was so large, they didn't all fit safely in the physical room of student government. Making sure all the protocols were being followed, ensuring folks could engage in the meeting as appropriate, participate when it was their turn to speak, and things of that nature.

And the element of surprise really changed a big part of our operations because we found that we were being surprised throughout the school year, which meant that we had to be agile and flexible. Our assistants have been all year changing our schedules around, canceling meetings, rescheduling meetings, that's very honest. And then also reprioritizing our work, right? This is work that required a lot of human hours, human resource hours, to be present to make sure that free speech was being supported and our students were saying safe, and that requires human resources. People were being pulled away from other tasks and responsibilities on evenings, on weekends, and all hours of the day, which meant we had to help our teams reprioritize their work responsibilities. We had to punt a lot to the summer, which was okay. We had to also keep everyone healthy and well and not burn people out too much at the same time.

There was more emphasis on building rapport and relationships with our student leaders, in particular clubs and organizations that have been really engaged in this conversation. And some of that was informal. While we were out there, we would engage with students, make sure they knew all of our names and such. And some of it was more formal. Hey, we want to meet with your organization leaders every other week just to check in, maintain that rapport so there was cooperation during activity and programs and such as well.

And then also being an advocate both for free speech and for safety. And helping to delineate the difference between the two has become a very common part of our conversations with the campus community and external community. And I know that you're very familiar with this as part of your role at the UC Center for Free Speech. There is a difference between what is expressive activity, free speech, and what rights folks have and to behaviors. The behaviors are sometimes not supported by our First Amendment. And helping our community to understand those differences. A lot of communication explaining and such has been a really important part of providing leadership in this space.

This past year, and we'll see this in the coming year as well, has been a heightened volume of collaboration with key campus partners, and honestly different campus partners than I've generally worked with. I've always worked closely with our university police for safety and security. This year, we've also seen an increase in our utilization of our emergency operations center, our colleagues in environmental health and safety, and tapping on their expertise and experience in managing large scale emergencies and crisis has also helped us approach some of these challenges in a way that is more community driven.

Michelle Deutchman:

I appreciate your candor in talking about these challenging issues. And as you look ahead, do you think that you're going to approach things differently, sort of giving all the things that you just talked about that you learned, in addition to the fact that there is the directive from President Drake, any of that going to change the way that you and your team and the folks you collaborate with think about this fall because you all haven't started yet?

Piya Bose:

So we're getting ready to welcome our students next week to move into campus, and we're about two weeks away from the start of the new quarter and classes getting underway for fall 2024. I'll share with you a few of the initiatives that we have planned for this fall. We've spent all summer planning, evaluating last year, thinking about what are the needs for the coming year, and we're doing a little bit of prediction. We don't know exactly what's going to happen. We're doing it based on what we think will happen, what our information and history has told us as well.

One major initiative we're doing is we're having a focus on dialogue across the campus. One of the ways we've started this is the campus has adopted a common read for the entire campus to engage everyone in a topic around what it means to be American. The book is called *American Like Me*, which is edited by America Ferrera, who's a famous actress, and is a series of essays from a wide range of folks who are immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants within the United States. I'm about halfway through the book and I can't stop. It's incredible. As a child of immigrants myself, I'm finding myself connecting with the story, and I know that many of our students will find themselves represented in one of these essays from this wide range of folks and their experiences. Along with this common read, we're going to be bringing some speakers to campus which will help support this initiative and continue these conversations beyond just reading the book. So that's one part that I'm really looking forward to.

To complement that on the dialogue side, we're partnering with experts around campus who have a wide range of skills, as well as a couple of external organizations, to provide specific spaces for dialogue. And these will be around major events that are happening. So we've already got one scheduled for the day after the national election. We know, regardless of the outcome of this election, folks are going to have things they want to speak about. And for some of our community, that might be utilizing our counseling and psych services. For other members of our community, having a group discussion space might be what's best. And so we're going to make sure that a variety of options are available, particularly spaces for folks to dialogue, to have conversations specifically around differences is also really important.

The next place that we're making some changes and updates to is the presence of staffing at protests and demonstration. So previously at UC San Diego, we had a group called student affairs monitors, which were primarily student affairs staff that would be present to answer student questions, sometimes uphold policies, communicate with the student leaders, and call for help if help is needed.

Now we've moved to a new model. It's a tiered response model. We've nicknamed it SAFE, Supporting Advocacy and Free Expression, and we have three levels. Our level three is really just about checking in, non-intrusive presence. And if an event is small, it's manageable, the free expression is not expanding,

there's not a ton of people, we'll check in occasionally. See if the student leaders, organizers need any resources, if they have any questions, and support their right to free speech.

Our second level is if there's a larger group of folks, if it's a little bit more heated, the conversation and such, then we'll have our SAFE team present. And again, their role will be to introduce themselves, help answer questions. If there's a student or individual who is about to violate a policy, prevent them from doing that. Give them the guidance, understand and communicate with the students, "Hey, you absolutely can do this, but that sign you're holding that's covering the door, you can't have it covering the door. That's a safety exit. And we're not allowed to have it blocking the window." Those are the things we just have to explain. History has shown our students are really cooperative. It's mostly just informing them that these are the policies. When crowds get a little larger, we're going to have more staff present, which is why we have a whole group of folks that are trained and we can all rotate out and give folks space and time. And the more people that are trained, the more we can distribute this work.

Our level one response, that's going to be the most escalated, that's going to be when there's more potential for violence or violence has already started. There's going to be a need for more support. And that's when we look to our colleagues at university police to help provide some leadership and their colleagues and law enforcement to help. Our goal is always to avoid getting to a level one, to be honest with you. Level three and level two is going to be our sweet spot for supporting advocacy, supporting students, and making sure that everyone stays safe.

As I shared earlier at the beginning, this is really important to our students, right? They are so passionate about this topic, regardless of what side of the conversation they're on. This is important to our students, and so we support our students with things that are important, and we also help them grow and develop.

One other component of our SAFE tiered response model is we were very fortunate to get some resources from our chancellor and vice chancellor for Student Affairs and Campus Life. We're going to be hiring four temporary staff for the year. They're going to be community specialists. And they're going to have slightly altered schedules, so it's closer to the times that our student body is active and around campus. They're going to have responsibilities both within Student Life and within my units. And whenever there's expressive activity, these four individuals will be the first four that will be deployed to the activity. They will take the lead on coordinating response and being present.

If additional folks are necessary, that's when the rest of our individuals that are trained in the SAFE tiered model will respond. And this will help take the burden off our folks who are here all the time. It'll help us keep the rest of the university and our operations moving forward without as many disruptions. And there will be a dedicated group of folks that can build a rapport with our student leaders. So student leaders always know, hey, there's so and so, I know they can answer my question around XYZ, and they'll know the resources. They're going to know all the policies inside out, or know where to reference it, to answer students' questions and ensure that spaces stay safe. These are just a few of the things we're doing to prepare for activism, for disruptions. And again, our goals are to support our students in expressing their right to free speech. We just want to keep everyone in the campus safe in the process of that.

Michelle Deutchman:

Well, my hope is that every UC campus and every campus around the country is being as deliberate and intentional and thoughtful, and also transparent about the things that you're doing and how you're trying to address things that have happened. I'm just going to give a quick shout out for America Ferrera. I didn't just become a fan with Barbie. I was a major Ugly Betty fan, for those of you that watch that show, and I plan to buy that book.

And I think it's great that the things that you're doing, they are at all different levels. It's not just the focus on the protests and/or disruption. But trying to then build in the kinds of things that you want in an institution of learning, which is what UCSD is. I feel like we spent a lot of time focusing on some of the things that were hard, but I do want to give you a chance to share anything positive that came out of last

year that you want to share with people. Because I feel like I don't want to assume that it was all sort of negative.

Piya Bose:

I think the number one thing is we saw students who care. As we've all been navigating this past year, we were speaking with colleagues on other campuses for brainstorming for tips and tricks, and occasionally I'd have a colleague from a different campus that would say, "Oh, we're so lucky that we're not dealing with this." But really what I was thinking in my head was at least our students care. We have students who are civically engaged. They are really passionate about something that is so important to their lived experience, their identities, their families, their histories, and their standing up for what they believe in. And I just have an immense amount of respect for that. They know that they're taking risks at time and they're willing to do that for something they believe in so passionately. They're bringing attention to an issue that's very important to them.

And our students are doing this from multiple sides of the conversation. This isn't a one-sided conversation. We're having multiple perspectives from students and the community that are being shared. And I think that that's where the hope for me for this coming year is that we have more dialogue and engagement between various perspectives and communities. And we're getting there. I'm hopeful about that part for the coming year.

Another place of hope is that student government was really engaged in campus conversations, and there was a lot of opportunity for leadership growth with our student government leaders. Student government leaders were faced with new questions and challenges that previous years of student government leaders haven't been. They were forced more to think critically about various perspectives on different topics. And I have no doubt in my mind that we have student leaders that developed extensive leadership skills last year in a way that other years haven't presented that opportunity.

And then the last piece that I have found very helpful and positive is that, like I shared earlier, there was a lot of collaboration around campus. We had folks from academic affairs, from environmental health and safety, from student affairs, and many other parts of campus that are working together. This experience reminded me a little bit of the early days of COVID where all of a sudden folks on campuses who had never worked together came together to solve a problem and manage a campus through a really difficult pandemic.

Michelle Deutchman:

You're breaking out of and breaking down the silos that I think sometimes we're in in sort of doing an intersection of different people's roles. I like that. I like that you were able to use the word hopeful. I think before I move a little more to election, I think the last thing I want to ask is, you've talked a lot about wanting to ensure safety, but also make sure that students are able to raise their voices and express themselves because that's an important part of, not just activism, but being civically engaged and a member of a democracy. But how are you showing or giving support to those students who might feel impacted or harmed or hurt by the expressive activity that is protected and allowed but is still happening regularly? And can you speak to that? Because I think that is also a significant challenge, or it seems to me it would be.

Piya Bose:

Oh, it absolutely is. Free speech, as you all know, free speech is one component of all of this. And there are absolutely harmful and hurtful things that are being said that are impacting individuals, again, from multiple perspectives on this conversation. It's not one-sided. There are a variety of types of sayings and chants and activities and visual representations that are causing harm to impacted communities on a very regular basis.

And to your point, there's free speech, and free speech and academic freedom are the foundation of higher education. We don't silence folks. We don't silence individuals in the classroom, and we're not going to silence them in any space that's not disrupting university operations. So giving our students who are being impacted by these activities a heads up when we know, hey, we know this is going to be happening here. If you want to avoid the space, you're welcome to. If you want to go through it and counter protest, you can.

Giving students options I find is really important. We've been doing a Know your Rights campaign, so this is what you're allowed to do, this is what you're not allowed to do. Really promoting that the best reaction to free speech is more free speech. And what does that look like? Showing students these are appropriate ways to respond, to participate, and to be activists yourself. Other times, it's also providing the health and well being resources. Finding community space to provide time with either a non-clinical or clinical facilitator to engage students in their feelings, their emotions, their experiences.

The other place that we've been working closely around this divisive topic is supporting our students through programs and events that are planned. So we have speakers that are coming to campus, and sometimes some of them are controversial. So we're working closely with our student leaders, as well as faculty and staff across campus, that are hosting speakers and events to ensure and offer opportunities and recommendations for safety practices and things of that nature so the event goes on, it happens successfully, and everyone stays safe in the process. So sometimes that can look like ticketing processes. Sometimes that can look like having extra security on hand, whatever that looks like. But showing our student leaders we're here to support and ensure that the students themselves and their guests, their speakers, all have the right to free speech and the space to express their thoughts, opinions, ideas, and so forth.

The last thing that I will share on this topic is also just the general education around hate speech and what its role is and how it fits into the conversation of free speech. Engaging our students in conversations around subjectivity and censorship and things like that really helps our students to understand why hate speech is protected speech and helping them, again, to redirect that energy into ways that they can use their own voice and their own platforms to engage communities in activism.

Michelle Deutchman:

That last part there, you're singing my song.

Piya Bose:

Because I learned from you.

Michelle Deutchman:

Oh, well that's very nice. But not just that, hey, hateful speech is protected, but what's the value of that? And that's a really hard and sort of unnatural thing to contend with because it's easy to support speech we like and much, much harder to support speech that is insulting or harmful or rude or mean. And sadly, there's an overwhelming amount of that, not just on campuses, but in society writ large.

And I think that kind of goes to the election piece and how polarized we are and how do all of these things fit together. You've been on campuses after elections, and you already are planning for the day after this election. And I'm wondering if there're just any other thoughts or guidance that you can share with the listeners about what people might think about preparing for, not just in this run-up to the election, but really in the part following the election, and then even following inauguration. And this whole year is really a transition. And I'm curious to hear your insights.

Piya Bose:

It is all of our roles as employees of the university to support all students, regardless of whether or not we agree with them. We don't just get to support the students that we agree with. I don't get to say, "Oh, you vote like me, so I got your back. You didn't vote like me, I don't have your..." That's not the way this works. We're here to support all students in their success holistically in a student-centered way. And I think that that's a really important part to start.

In preparing for the elections, we've got actually an entire group that's working on this. We're working on voter engagement is really our focus. In the past, UC San Diego may have been the leaders in the nation around the number of students that we have had register to vote. We're hoping to maintain that title, and be the number one university in the nation with the most students registered to vote. We're working on ensuring that students are aware of all the initiatives and ballot measures that are on the ballot, so it's not just focused on one election. There's so much more that's happening in this election than the presidential election.

So helping our communities understand this is where you can read up more about ballot measures and the candidates running for other positions in your local community. This is where also refocusing some of the energy on the importance of local elections is really important. Because the folks in the counties and cities and all of those folks, they're impacting our lives in our immediate space where we live in and where we work. We also have to pay attention to those elections.

We're ensuring that our student organizations that are related to political activity, political parties, and such, they're getting regular check-ins with our teams in our Center for Student Involvement. So they know what their roles and responsibilities are, and also empowering them to engage communities on campus, both in voter engagement, but also ensuring that they know all of the policies and such to bring activities, programs, speakers to campus around their political views.

And then the last part of all of this is empowering people to vote. We're really fortunate at UC San Diego that we're one of the busiest voting centers in the entire County of San Diego, which is amazing. So it's not just students here that are voting on campus. We have the community members, employees, folks from the surrounding cities are coming to our campus to vote. So there is a spirit of engagement on election day in this campus atmosphere that is really just energetic.

So our focus is going to be on voter engagement, spaces for dialogue, and then for the day after the election, as I shared earlier, we've got some dialogue spaces already set up in preparation. And I think we're going to need the conversation space regardless of the outcome of the election. Campuses are a microcosm of society and democracy. And this is great opportunity for learning, for engagement, for dialogue. This is an important time in our nation's history for everyone at the table and everyone has a voice and a say who is eligible to vote. And everyone listening, if you can vote, make sure you're registered, and make sure you vote and influence everyone in your circles to do the same.

Michelle Deutchman:

So you've told us and shared so much with us. I just want to give you an opportunity to either add anything else. You've already answered the last question, which was like if you could tell everybody that's listening one thing to do, you said definitely they should register to vote. But outside of that, is there anything else that you'd like to share with our largely higher ed colleagues in light of this conversation, one takeaway, something that people can either think about that they can do moving forward into the fall?

Piya Bose:

I think the level of activity and the type of expressive activity that's been occurring on our campuses in this past year has caused some professionals to have sense of fear around this type of activity. It's really loud. The language can be more aggressive. The tactics are like things we've never seen before. And these are still university students, and they have many other priorities. They have classes, our students have jobs, they have families, they have friends, and they are putting so much energy into this.

Please remember how important it is to our students to make this a big part of their lives and their priorities amongst everything else they're juggling. And please remind our student activists that they have to take care of themselves. They need to be eating and sleeping, going to class. Please don't tank all your classes because you're out there being an activist. Ensuring that our student leaders, our student activists, are prioritizing their basic needs, their academic responsibilities amongst all of this is important as staff.

Those are opportunities for us to engage and transform our students in meaningful ways. Because if our student activists spend too much time in this space, they're not going to be students anymore. And we don't want that. The goal of being a student is to graduate. That is success is graduating. And that's all of our responsibilities in these large institutions. And so that happens by building relationship and rapport with our student activists.

I know that the interactions and some of the language have been more aggressive, have caused fear for some of our folks. Our students have the ability to be cooperative. And part of that is building a rapport and relationship with our student leaders. So get to know the students who are on the front line. Having that rapport will help all of our campus leadership be able to have folks to say, "Hey, I know you. You know me. Let's work on this together with respect," rather than I'm a stranger telling you not to do something. There's a very different interpersonal rapport when there's an established relationship, when folks know names. And I know this is going to sound really simple, but when I'm out there, I'm not wearing a suit. I try to wear UC San Diego gear. I love school spirit. But show them I'm not just a suit. I'm here to support the university, to support our students' success, and ensure that folks stay safe.

Michelle Deutchman:

I think that a lot of the things that you're saying are not just lessons for this moment in student affairs, but life lessons about building rapport, having personal relationships and interactions. I think that is one of the ways that we break down polarization. So I think it's great that you're working on all of these fronts. And for those of you that cannot see Piya, which I can, she's wearing a great UCSD t-shirt. So she's kind of with the school spirit today.

Listen, thank you so much. Obviously you have so many things you could be doing with your time, but the fact that you're willing to come and share your experiences, again, I'm really grateful. And maybe we'll have you back a year from now and we can talk about, reflect on what is about to happen, and see where we're at.

Piya Bose:

Thank you so much for the invitation. This has been really fun.

Michelle Deutchman:

Yeah, it has been. That's a wrap. As Piya emphasized, with the election less than two months away, now is the time to register to vote and encourage others to do the same. Check out the center's updated voter engagement resource page for help engaging, crafting, and executing effective voter engagement strategies for the upcoming election. And if you haven't already done so, please take a look through the amazing work of our latest class of fellows. All of this is live on our website, freespeechcenter.universityofcalifornia.edu. Tune in next month for a conversation about the role of expression in teaching and practicing medicine with Catherine Lucey, executive vice chancellor and provost at UCSF. Talk to you then.