

## This is Our Future: Take Back the Vote

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### Project Summary

Student engagement in local, state, and national elections is far from being a constant. It has peaks and valleys, despite the many political issues that concern students deeply. This project will grow ongoing student civic engagement at UC Santa Cruz by building a cohort of students, utilizing the attention that will be generated by the upcoming general elections. We plan to build on our pilot program beginning with a kickoff event, a keynote speaker, facilitated dialogues, and workshops. The project will link on-the-ground issues that students experience in their everyday lives with national policies and platforms to inspire action and involvement. Following the kickoff event, we will establish a dynamic workgroup of student leaders that will experiment with fostering structures that support continuity in understanding and valuing democratic practices.

### Impact

Student leaders at UCSC expressed increasing fears about the political climate. They grappled with issues of free speech when controversial speakers arrive on campus and despair when witnessing attacks on our democracy. Recently, staff who work on the ground with students noted a shift from fear and despair to acceptance that their generation must play a leading role in the direction of the country. In collaboration with our Student Organization Leadership (SOL) Council, multiple campus sponsors and the VOICE Initiative, we hosted “Dream It, Build It: Organize Our Power,” which gave us an opportunity to ground ourselves in community and learn to adapt, thrive and create positive change on our campus, our county and the world around us. This project grew the interest organically, answering student inquiries by bringing in engaged community leaders and alumni to dialogue

with the student body. The impact we've heard is that our community was able to understand what it means to have their own power and how they can help alter the lives of those around them. The event was attended by over 150 individuals that included student leaders, students, staff and faculty. We are now working to establish our Student Civic Engagement workgroup that will meet this summer to continue our work on democracy.