

UC Irvine Student Activism: Eras Tour

Alexis Karakas, Ashley Scering, Colin Bailey,
Roger Becker, Yoo Mi Choi – UC Irvine

Project Summary

UCI Eras Tour: A Journey Through Student Activism was a project that aimed to highlight the accomplishments and legacy of student-led advocacy throughout the university's history. By working with various archival sources, we were able to provide a multimodal gallery experience where students, staff, faculty and UCI guests were able to engage with and digest information at their own pace. From the establishment of the first Cross Cultural Center in the UC system in the 1970's, to film and magazines produced by students in response to political topics, and even the push to create the Department of Asian American Studies, the legacy of change and advocacy championed by the students was put on display. A kickoff reception event was hosted, with invitations extended to the campus community at-large. Subsequently, the gallery was open for several days following the reception. This event was specifically hosted prior to the election to encourage students to register to vote and to bolster the project's message that civic engagement can be powerful. Ultimately, this project allowed for often overlooked areas of UCI's history to be put on display for all members of the campus community.

Impact

Our proposed objectives:

1. Connecting Advocacy and Free Speech: Focusing on UCI-specific changes and developments driven by student advocacy, illustrating the local impact of national movements.
2. Diverse Free Speech Expressions: Showcasing different methods of free speech, from traditional protests to digital activism, to inspire varied forms of participation.
3. Highlighting Student Impact: Demonstrating how student actions have historically influenced campus policies and societal norms.

4. Promoting Voter Registration: Emphasizing the importance of voting as a key component of civic engagement and providing resources to facilitate registration. We will collaborate with ASUCI to register voters and organize a “get out the vote” campaign.
5. Planting Seeds for the Future: Encouraging students to realize that their efforts today may not yield immediate results but are essential in shaping long-term change.

We believe we met our objectives in sharing the rich history of diverse student activism at UCI. We specifically illustrated the connection between that very activism and the voices of students with the campus resources and offices that were borne from them. Through the displays, we aimed to specifically highlight the activism of students of color and other marginalized groups throughout UCI history. By having the event open to students, faculty, staff, and guests of UCI, it allowed for campus senior leadership, campus partners, and other administrative staff to learn new information *alongside* our students. While it proved challenging to complete the project in a short period of time, it threaded the opportunity to engage with students regarding voter registration. We created additional learning opportunities beyond the displays by shedding light to the campus resources. 178 individuals attended our project.

This project also gave the planning team an opportunity to further develop and showcase the skills and experiences it takes to create learning opportunities for a wide audience. While we are incredibly proud of this project and have the ability to store its curated materials, we do not have the resources to continue it in the future.