

## Our Voice, Our Vote: Building an Informed Latina Electorate

Valerie Gomez, PhD  
University of California, San Diego

### Project Summary

The aim of this project was to develop a one-day in-person plática (talk) and networking event designed to mobilize young Latina voters in Southern California. The event featured a powerful lineup of speakers representing diverse sectors and experiences. Maria Morales, the Statewide Policy Director at HOPE (Hispanas Organized for Political Equality), brought insight into policy advocacy impacting Latina communities. Valeria Barrientos, a master's student in Biomedical Sciences at UC Riverside and an undocumented student, shared her journey navigating academia and advocacy. The panel included local elected leaders: Elizabeth Alcantar, Vice Mayor of the City of Cudahy, and Carla Fuentes, District 6 Representative for the Greater Valley Glen Council. Together, they offered wisdom, lived experience, and actionable advice for young Latinas looking to make a difference in their communities.

### Impact

This event created a powerful and affirming space for Latina students and professionals to learn, connect, and feel seen. By highlighting young Latina leaders in politics, community activism, and academia, it sparked important dialogue around civic engagement, identity, and the role Latinas play in shaping their communities. The project successfully met its objectives. The event educated attendees on relevant political issues, the power of voting, and tangible ways to get involved in their communities.

Approximately 30 Latinas attended the event, including undergraduate and graduate students as well as professionals from a wide range of age groups and fields. The audience was engaged throughout the program, participating in discussions and connecting with speakers. This event laid a strong foundation for ongoing community-building and civic engagement work among Latinas in the area. Future plans include exploring opportunities for follow-up events focused on voter registration, policy education, and mentorship.