STUDENTS WITH AGENCY

“If not us, then who? If not now, then when?”

A TOOLKIT FOR AN ENGAGED & DYNAMIC EDUCATION

SOMECA
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ
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INTRODUCTION BY TIFFANY DENA LOFTIN

“When you’ve worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity ... you do not slam it shut behind you ... you reach back, and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed.”

— First Lady, Michelle Obama

Thousands of young people can begin their life’s story the same way I started mine. I am the oldest of three siblings raised by a low-income, single Black mother who always pushed me to take my educational career seriously and never accept “no” for an answer. When I was a senior at Birmingham High School in California, a letter came to my house from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). The African/Black Student Alliance (A/BSA) at UCSC had organized an all-expenses-paid trip to campus for three days for students like me who were offered admission letters and identified as Black.

Destination Higher Education (DHE), is a student-run, student-led program that reaches out to, recruits and retains Black students at UCSC. My higher education began with that program letter and, because I participated in that program, my transition into college was really easy. The Black students in A/BSA who led and volunteered for DHE were creative leaders empowered to provide prospective students with an introduction to the most important learning experiences of their life, college.

In my first year at UCSC, I immediately connected with students from DHE. They became my community and at the end of my first year I campaigned for and won campus student body elections for vice president before being elected president. I mobilized students across campus to fight against budget cuts and tuition increases to protect academic programs and save faculty and staff of color. It was through my membership in student-led organizations that I found my voice, talents, and created everlasting change on campus that inspired the future students on campus.

At UCSC, students practice active listening, critical thinking, and time management more often in student organizations than in any space. The Student Organization Advising and Resources (SOAR), Student Media, and Cultural Arts and Diversity (SOMeCA) is a transformative learning environment vital to the educational mission of the University. SOMeCA offers students practical opportunities to engage as leaders and to make a difference. SOAR staff advisors use a “Student Agency Model” which has self-agency at its core value. Students are individually provided the opportunity to govern themselves and the community around them without being told what or how they should navigate that community. The Student Agency Model truly supports diversity because it respects and encourages all students to find their voice and to contribute their unique experience. Student agency has been practiced for over 27 years and is a critical tool to help our country not only care about a student’s performance in a classroom, but their civic participation in the real world. Through alumni experiences, trainings, one-on-one advising and practical skill workshops, students feel prepared and confident to create and navigate their life in college.

I would have never been prepared to run a national non-profit advocacy organization two weeks after graduation without the Student Agency Model practiced by SOMeCA staff. After graduation I was elected vice president and then president of the United States Student Association, the country’s oldest and largest student association. At the United States Student Association, we trained thousands of student leaders, registered over 130,000 students for the 2012 presidential election and fought back against tuition increases and increasing student debt interest rates. I spent months organizing with members of the Dream Defenders in Florida, I co-founded the Freedom Side network that convened leaders of color in seven different cities.
to fight for racial and economic justice and organized 8,000 young activists at a national environmental justice conference called PowerShift in Pittsburgh. I went on to serve the American Federation of Teachers as a digital strategist for the human rights and higher education department and then moved to the Civil Rights Department at the American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Organizations.

In every work environment I am always underestimated and questioned because I am usually the youngest in the room. I have extensive experience with building a democratic process, sustaining organizations, power building, electoral politics, event management, and goal setting. I have those skills and am confident in my ability to deliver and solve big problems because the Student Agency Model was intentional in preparing me.

Tiffany Dena Loftin  
Commissioner of the White House Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans
Student organizations, media, and government offer students the opportunity to bring life experiences, academic work, and hopes for the future to programs, productions, and events that build community and campus-wide discourse.

At UC Santa Cruz, the Student Agency Model used by SOAR/Student Media/Cultural Arts and Diversity (SOMeCA) has been successful in helping students learn to engage as leaders. Students helping students navigate the pathways of adulthood helps us retain a diverse student body and nurture the next generation of leaders.

Based on our experiences at UC Santa Cruz, I am delighted to endorse the Student Agency Model toolkit. I am proud of the work our students have accomplished to provide a more accessible and quality college experience for their peers. The Student Agency Model has been successful for 27 years and I am confident its success will continue for many more years by encouraging the development of effective student leaders.

I want to thank Commissioner Tiffany Dena Loftin for her idea of producing the toolkit and promoting its benefits and outcomes for students across the country.

Sincerely,

George Blumenthal
Chancellor
University of California, Santa Cruz

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.
Student leaders chose to begin this toolkit with the words of John Lewis. His words resonated, matching their own genuine sense of responsibility to a world in crisis. As students, they observe and internalize the current rise of racism and hate crimes, the defunding of education, the devastation of global warming, and attacks on the spirit of democracy. Yet these students do not fall into cynicism or fear. Instead they choose to draw inspiration and examples from positive change leaders who have courage, strength, and a vision of a humane and just world.

Colleges and universities play a critical role in how new generations understand and engage with the world around them and the future they will occupy. At the University of California, Santa Cruz, we continually build on a tradition of innovation and public service in order to contribute solutions to the world’s most critical challenges.

In the early years of UCSC, a traditional Campus Activities Office managed student programs. In 1988, the university took a bold step. A new director renamed the office Student Organization Advising and Resources (SOAR) and introduced an innovative model that put students in the driver’s seat. Staff refrained from deciding or directing programs. Instead, they offered space and resources for students to come up with ideas to try, fail, and succeed.

The concepts and tools in this “kit” are the results of students, staff, and alumni experimenting with this model of student agency for twenty-seven years. Thousands of people contributed. Each new event, organization, or production posed new questions to be solved: how to work together democratically, how to be fiscally sustainable, how to resolve conflicts, how to hold each other accountable. Because students were in charge of these projects, they were determined to find answers. Year after year, with staff and alumni, they reviewed literature and reflected on their day-to-day actions. They stayed over Spring Break and pulled all-nighters. They pushed past their own prejudice and they listened as never before.

It is transformative to honor students — or any community — as leaders who can contribute knowledge to the questions we face as a society. It demonstrates a level of trust and mutual respect that is not commonly experienced. This opens the doors to full participation by all. In this respect, the Student Agency Model is particularly important for institutions serving students from communities that have been historically excluded.

Today, UCSC students, staff, and alumni have an array of tools to choose from and they have built impressive student-initiated, student-run programs. One student organization named Engaging Education designs and produces 3-day events that welcomes high school students from underrepresented communities and encourages them to attend the university. These programs achieve a 60% yield rate every year. Another student organization, Rainbow Theater, produces plays about tough social, cultural, spiritual, and community issues. They perform to sold-out audiences across the state.

Student leaders graduate from UCSC prepared to be in charge of their lives and contribute to a more democratic and just society. They return to UCSC from all over the country, traveling from Portland, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York City, Oakland, and San Francisco — invited back by current students who want to learn how the tools are applied in workplaces and communities beyond the university.

This document is offered as a resource to the larger higher education community and an invitation to students, staff, faculty, and community leaders across our country to dialogue. Together we can develop the Student Agency Model to its full potential to ensure that students receive a complete education that empowers them to finish college, find a satisfying career, and become productive participants in our democracy.

Sayo Fujioka
Director, SOMeCA
University of California, Santa Cruz
STUDENT AGENCY: THIS IS WHY WE DO IT

The Student Agency Model gives all students real-world experience to successfully navigate the global workplace and engage in effective civic participation.
WHY THE STUDENT AGENCY MODEL?

College students are graduating into a changing and complex economic and political landscape. Income inequality continues to grow and the middle class has shrunk to its smallest percentage in 40 years, affecting the stability of the economy and job market. The public’s trust in the federal government is the lowest it has been in over fifty years (Gao, 2015), at a time when the country faces crises including global warming, war, gun violence, and worsening race relations. As with previous generations, students have gone to college seeking “a path that offers a stable, secure future” (Rios-Aguilar, Eagan, & Stolzenberg, 2015). However, in this turbulent moment in America’s history, students need to be prepared to navigate and lead change in workplaces, communities, and political arenas.

Are graduates ready for this challenge? According to the Gallup-Purdue Index, only 11% of business leaders surveyed thought colleges were preparing students to be successful in the workplace (Bidwell, 2014). In a separate study, employers prioritized the skill sets needed in today’s workplace and expressed a desire for colleges to place more emphasis on critical thinking and analytic reasoning, applied knowledge in real-world settings, ethical decision-making, complex problem solving, and intercultural competence (Hart Research Associates, 2010).

A Crucible Moment, a report by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, examined how colleges and universities prepared students for effective civic participation. While acknowledging some innovative developments, many of its conclusions were discouraging. One finding indicated that “the longer the students stay in college, the wider the gap becomes between their endorsement of social responsibility as a goal of college and their assessment of whether the institution provides opportunities for growth in this area” (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 5). In other

Transformative leadership — leadership that changes the world — emerges when students are empowered with the skills to address the needs their communities face. With this toolkit, students can transform the world.
words, students are less likely to learn how to engage in the very opportunities that will help them become the leaders community, industry, and government need. *A Crucible Moment* proposed a comprehensive framework of knowledge, skills, values, and collective action to strengthen civic learning and democratic engagement. The outcomes identified were viewed as essential for effective civic participation and parallel to the complex skill sets prioritized by employers (ibid).

**THE STUDENT AGENCY MODEL**

Given the complex social and political obstacles students need to navigate, how do colleges and universities provide educational experiences that teach these important 21st century learning outcomes? This report argues that college student organizations that are guided by a strong Student Agency Model infrastructure can provide students with real-world experiences that are grounded in the knowledge, values, and skills necessary for navigating the global workplace and engaged and dynamic civic participation.

The Student Agency Model is an innovative approach to student development that fosters each student’s sense of agency or the “capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one’s life” (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014, p. 146). This essential capacity is not easily learned. Young people, in particular youth from underrepresented and underresourced communities, face pervasive societal messages, which define them as “either irrational actors who sometimes make unintentional and ill-informed choices or actors not to be trusted to make their own choices” (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014, p. 147). These messages are reinforced by the marginalization of youth and the lack of opportunities for them to participate in democratic activities that reflect and affirm their experiences, opinions, and ideas for social change.

The Student Agency Model turns these messages and experiences on their head. In this model, students are “completely responsible for student life and perform as full, equal partners with faculty and staff in these efforts” (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014, p. 145). The assumption and message of this model is that young people are conscientious, responsible agents of change. It emphasizes that students are not only leaders of the future, but also leaders today.

Students have historically shown leadership and engagement with current issues. Contrary to stereotypes of “Generation Me,” 6 out of 10 first-year students (62.5%) currently report interest in seeking out information on current social and political issues. A majority of all seniors (57.4%) surveyed nationally, and an even higher percentage of African American seniors (67.5%), report publicly communicating their opinion about a cause. Approximately one-quarter (24.5%) of all seniors report demonstrating for a cause (Rios-Aguilar, Eagan, etc., 2015). These findings, in combination with those from *A Crucible Moment*, suggest that it is important for colleges and universities to create spaces that support students’ interests in civic participation.

When a college vests students with full responsibility for campus programs, the impact is transformative. As one student organization leader describes it, “No one tells you what to do. You’re given the tools to solve the problem, but you have to figure it out and rely on yourself and your other members.” With staff offering information and advice while refraining from telling students what to do, students have full responsibility for the success, failure, and lessons learned from their actions. These experiences of empowerment motivate students to actively and critically examine their processes and circumstances in order to contribute effectively.

“The task for me is to not only comprehend the world, but to change the world. I would like to see a world where America lives up to its ideals, and resolves the contradiction between reality and principles.”

— Ronald Takaki
According to the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) national study, universities that practice this innovative model of student agency found that:

Education from a position of student agency teaches students about their rights and their responsibilities. This balance not only teaches them how to make decisions and choices that affect their lives but also fosters independence. Engaging students in their own learning by having them be active in and contribute to the campus community enables them to develop autonomy and personal responsibility (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014, p. 151).

Balancing rights and responsibilities in the context of a community is a dynamic and active endeavor that requires students to reflect and develop a critical reading of the world around them.

The Student Agency Model is particularly important for the success of underrepresented and underresourced students. Universities often utilize practices informed by retention theory which emphasizes that students assimilate into an established university culture. As other researchers have noted, this poses a dilemma for students who may not see themselves reflected in the university (Hurtado, 1999). This effectively alienates students instead of engaging and retaining them. The Student Agency Model empowers underrepresented and underresourced students to create their own programs, processes, and services, including those that initiate change to the campus. This could manifest in the creation of new organizations, cultural programs, or working to change aspects of the environment that do not promote fair treatment. Thus, students who have experienced lives of tremendous disparities and disenfranchisement gain an understanding of their experiences as a base of strength from which they can become leaders and agents of positive social change.

CASE STUDY: STUDENT AGENCY IN ORGANIZATIONS

At UC Santa Cruz, the Student Agency Model is practiced in the area of campus-wide student organizations. As intensive peer group settings, student organizations have strong potential as learning environments. As a form of involvement, a student’s peer group is the “strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective development” (Astin, 1996). Because students choose to join or create organizations based on personal interest, they are motivated to actively engage with their peers in problem solving, analysis, and reflection to achieve their group’s goals.

The following case study is one example of how the Student Agency Model was used to develop empowering educational experiences in student organizations. The study describes the responses of the student body over time and how students, staff, and alumni collaborated to develop the structures, resources, and processes that support the democratic principles essential to the success of this model.

In the 1980s, the UCSC student activities office was a traditional activities office, focused on ensuring that students followed time, place, and manner regulations. In 1988, a new director, Chareane Wimbley-Gouveia, introduced the approach of staff supporting student-initiated programs. She renamed the office Student Organization Advising and Resources (SOAR) and recruited staff with experience working in community organizations, student development, and conflict resolution. Staff were trained to be resources and facilitators, listening and drawing out the goals of organizations and providing resources for students to be able to make collective decisions on what to do and how to do it.
The change from a traditional activities office to a center for student agency and initiative matched the values of the campus and the students who chose to attend it. Compared to their peers nationally, UCSC frosh scored higher in interest in participating in community action, promoting racial understanding, influencing social values, and developing a philosophy of life (Zalamea, 1994). SOAR provided students with the space, resources, and advising needed to successfully gather with peers, explore common interests, and develop programs, processes, and services that met student needs.

Students from underrepresented communities were especially motivated by the new approach and worked to form innovative organizations. Prior to SOAR, ethnic organizations were 26% of all student organizations. Ten years after SOAR was established, ethnic organizations comprised 41% of all organizations. Organizations gave underrepresented students a home base that strengthened their sense of community, belonging, and voice on campus. The organizations also created new social, cultural, political, and educational programs, which contributed to a more diverse campus climate.

Prior to the establishment of SOAR, there were no Greek Letter Organizations (GLOs) due to a campus policy that discouraged exclusive organizations. With SOAR’s advocacy and policy of supporting all student interests, GLOs were established on campus and gradually grew, representing 13% of organizations in 2012. Student agency is also reflected in the unique character of UCSC’s Greek Life. The organizations are diverse and include numerous groups without national affiliation. Further, all GLOs work together collaboratively to develop democratic processes for self-governance and member education.

**With Power Comes Responsibility**

Using the Student Agency Model, student organizations established major annual events, theater productions, television productions, and high school recruitment projects. To make sure their work survived budget cuts, they utilized the campus ballot to ask the student body for funding. Students voted favorably, granting them governance over substantial operating and program funds. In 2005, the Office of the Chancellor agreed to match the students’ dollars two-for-one for student-initiated programs that support diversity. Based on the success of these student-initiated programs, the Chancellor has renewed this match for the last ten years.

For the past decade student organizations have stepped up to the responsibility of governing the funds the student body and Chancellor had committed to them. They formed summer research teams and worked with staff and alumni to assess their environment and analyze lessons from their organizations. Over the next few years, they experimented with structures and processes that would support democratic decision-making, learning, and accountability. This included designing strategic planning retreats, classes and trainings on facilitation, mutual agreements on working relations between students and staff, and engaging an active network of alumni mentors.

The SOAR office was merged with the offices of Student Media and Cultural Arts and Diversity (CAD) to form SOMeCA in 2009. The three offices shared the student agency approach and the merger created a dynamic collaboration of staff and students across cultures, politics, ethnicity, academics, and mediums. Students, staff, and alumni shared organizational lessons, process designs, and role models, leading to an increase of 40 new student organizations between 2009 and 2012.

“What I treasure the most in life is being able to dream. During my most difficult moments and complex situations, I have been able to dream of a more beautiful future.”

— Rigoberta Menchú
LESSONS LEARNED

Beginning in 2012, the students, staff, and alumni of SOMeCA started a process of examining the learning that occurs in student organizations guided by student agency principles.

After consulting with alumni working in a variety of industries and fields, students elected to use an action research approach to guide their work. This action research approach helped students design focus groups, surveys, and retreats that were informed by the history, principles, and values of their organizations, student need, and issues impacting their communities. Students focused on engaging in data collection that incorporated diverse and representative perspectives, consensus building, reflection, and creating change.

The research and data collection was broken into three key stages. First, students conducted exploratory research by using social networks to connect with alumni and familiarize themselves with the ways that student agency helped students from different generations. Students first interacted with a wide array of alumni during a SOMeCA sponsored dinner. At this event, alumni panelists shared experiences and one hundred alumni met with over two hundred student leaders to provide examples and histories from their work in organizations and the workplace.

The second stage harnessed the information and commitment generated from the dinner. SOMeCA convened an Action Research Group (ARG) to analyze the learning and development that results from participation in student agency organizations. The first all-day retreat included a group of students from a representative cross-section of student organizations and a smaller cross-section of alumni and staff. Together they assessed the state of student agency at UC Santa Cruz and the benefits and challenges of student-initiated programs and organizations. Each stakeholder group subsequently met with SOMeCA staff to reflect on student agency and the role each group could play in helping facilitate a culture of student agency.

The final stage was the development of an Action Research Group class rooted in a curriculum that combined popular education, readings on pedagogy and learning theory, with discussions on how these theories could help students understand their experiences at UCSC. In addition, students designed and conducted action research needs assessments to help analyze how they could help address the needs of their fellow students.

This collaborative research project resulted in the identification of key principles, practices, and tools that support the development of dynamic learning environments in student organizations. While these findings are specific to student organizations at UCSC, they are offered as best practices for colleges and universities to consider and adapt in developing the area of student activities to support students’ active engagement in learning.
PRINCIPLES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT AGENCY

Empower students in ways many have never experienced before
In the Student Agency Model, students have full responsibility in the initiation, development, and running of programs and organizations. When trust, respect, and power is shared, students have a sense of community and belonging that supports responsibility and ethical decision-making.

Validate student experiences
The lived experiences of youth are rarely validated or treated as valuable. More often, young people are seen as inexperienced and students are seen as lacking in knowledge. Validating students’ experiences acknowledges that they have something to contribute to any enterprise and invites them to play active roles.

Stand for equity
By understanding all students’ backgrounds and experiences as valuable, the Student Agency Model gives everyone the same tools and opportunities to start with. Students who have lived through social inequality and disenfranchisement are not seen as “at-risk” individuals. Rather, they’re recognized as intentional, active, and integral agents of social change.

Value learning over production
Rather than focusing on the production of events or programs, the model values student activities in which students focus on process. In turn, students cultivate a stronger sense of independence, as well as a better understanding of how to make informed decisions that takes into consideration their own lives as well as the lives of their peers.

Encourage reflection
When students are engaged in projects they have chosen reflective of their own passions and principles, they’re motivated to practice inquiry and reflection in order to meet their goals. This is a far more demanding and rewarding educational experience than rote memorization and the application of methods.

Transform relationships of power
Although many universities include students in committees or task forces, students rarely are the majority or have final decision-making authority. Student agency organizations offer a space where students experience dialogue, debate, and decision-making amongst equals. They also experience working with staff collaboratively, each with something to contribute and each respecting the other as an equal.

Spark inquiry and critical thinking
As students take up active roles on their campuses, they interact with a broader range of administrative offices, people, and institutional processes. Through these connections, coupled with discussion, students identify and analyze the social processes and constructions that shape their lives.

Connect students to the possibilities of social change
When students have the opportunity to oversee and implement their own programs and projects, thereby changing their campus for the better, they experience the possibility of larger social change.
PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT AGENCY

Build resources that support student governance
As a group of peers, all-student governing bodies offer experience in democratic deliberation and decision-making. Students learn the potential and value of democracy and also learn to protect democratic rights by agreeing on process, governing documents, and position qualifications.

Develop action-orientation
When students have full responsibility for programming, they learn to respond and problem-solve as issues arise. This responsiveness can extend to how they relate to social issues and current events, prompting students to collaborate on what action needs to be taken to address problems on local, state, national, and international levels.

Assess before planning
Students find they can reach their goals when they assess and analyze their context collectively. Through practice, students build their ability to identify strengths and weaknesses internal to their organization, determine external opportunities and threats, and envision multi-year goals.

Dedicate time for deliberation
Consensus-building takes time. Students are able to become more invested in their organization when democratic processes, like brainstorms and small discussions, are in place. When deliberation time is built into agendas, students feel more comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas and creating opportunities to learn from one another.

Create a culture of accountability
Innovative leadership involves taking risks and accepting the consequences. Students learn to be responsible for their actions by assessing what went wrong, being accountable to their peers, and developing better practices. By creating job descriptions, personnel committees, and division of labor agreements, students are able to hold each other accountable for the organization to grow and serve its mission.

Mentor new leaders
Student organizations have turnover, and leaders transitioning because of graduation. This brings student leaders to learn the importance of developing future leaders. Leadership is learned not inherited, and when strong mentorship builds student confidence, students who may have never thought of themselves as leaders learn that they can lead.

Advance staff qualifications and training
Staff have the opportunity to step out of roles of authority and work side-by-side with students. This is a fulfilling but challenging shift from most workplace experiences. Success requires recruiting qualified staff and providing feedback and training, particularly to ensure the equal empowerment of underrepresented student communities.

Foster safe and healthy spaces
Inclusive spaces will not evolve without intentional practices. Creating a space where all students feel safe to share their experiences and ideas is done through establishing meeting agreements and sustaining fair and democratic decision-making processes. Patience is an essential component of this process, and students are able to develop this skill by actively listening to and respecting each other’s opinions.

Commit to representation
Including all voices and experiences results in decisions that benefit all. To have the benefit of each community’s voice, it is critical to have each community represented directly in discussions about common issues.

“The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.”
— Gloria Anzaldúa
Being Black while Black bodies are being murdered at an all time high does not make attending a predominately white college any easier. Coming into college as a freshman, I was used to being put in a box. I was familiar with authoritative figures defining me and the path I should take in life so the idea that I would have time to involve myself in social change and academics was terrifying to me.

I was introduced to student agency through Engaging Education ($e^2$), an organization that runs programs throughout the university that are planned and produced completely by students. Destination Higher Education (DHE) was one of those programs coordinated and planned by students to promote diversity on the campus. I had the opportunity to visit UC Santa Cruz through DHE and the experience changed my outlook on youth having power. This example of student agency in action made me think, “Why shouldn’t students be hosting programs that cater to other students? Don’t they know what’s best?” I remember imagining myself in those same positions of leadership. Throughout my first two years in college I stayed involved through a number of organizations. I even had the opportunity to plan DHE and help my community in the same way I was helped. Now in my junior year I am co-chair of an organization that stands to retain and serve Black students at UCSC, the Afrikan Black Student Alliance (A/BSA).

After a series of racist incidents led Black students at the University of Missouri to protest against their administration the nation responded in outrage. Black students from around the UC's Black student unions communicated amongst themselves and set a date to be the national day of action across their respective campuses. As co-chair of A/BSA, along with Melissa Lyken, I was eager to participate and reached out to the A/BSA community. Practicing student agency isn't familiar or easy at first, especially for communities that have been historically silenced in education. Getting our community members to trust themselves and the message we were fighting to get across took patience.

The goal of our protest was to spread awareness about the incidents at Missouri and to shed light on racist acts that have been overlooked on our own campus while also presenting a list of demands that needed to be met to make the college experience a better one for Black students. Through practicing student agency, we learned the necessary tools to discuss, plan, and execute. As student leaders and co-chairs of the organization, we looked into our school’s code of conduct and made sure our plan would not jeopardize any of our community members enrollment at the university.

Our strategy consisted of storming specific classrooms, chosen by their size and subject, and also the two most visited dining halls on our campus. For example, we choose law, math, and science classrooms more specifically because black students are underrepresented in those areas. During the march we had structured chants and the same went when occupying the classrooms. “WE STAND WITH MIZZOU!” we repeated over and over making sure our message would be understood over what some of our peers would later push aside as “chaos.” As we walked through the campus for eight hours students left their classrooms in support of our action and added to our march.

About 50 Black students participated in the planning and action. During the protest we accumulated 200 students, some identifying as Black and some allies, who wanted to stand with the students of Missouri and our small community. The amount of attention the protest attracted gave A/BSA and the Black community at-large the push it needed to talk face-to-face with the Chancellor of the university. Our confidence in our skill through practicing agency and the success of our message was a huge gain for our community. Developing a vision, engaging in critical inquiry, networking and building allies, and having the ability to develop solutions helped us to reach a new goal — being heard.
Over the course of working on this toolkit, I have collaborated with dozens of student leaders who are so admirable, whose selflessness and work ethic is highlighted by their responsibility in their student organizations. I have worked with staff who view me as their peer, not a child, and have a deep respect for student work and dedication to helping students succeed in their own goals. It’s these relationships and characteristics that are fostered by the Student Agency Model. Throughout this kit, we reference a key principle of student agency — having a shared purpose in our individual organizations. Yet SOMeCA students and staff also have a shared purpose to foster student empowerment and success through transformative learning environments.

My own experience working on the newspaper at UC Santa Cruz, City on a Hill Press, has been a transformational one. The core value of student agency — students having the full direction and power of their organization — has taught me more lessons than I can list, but most importantly that people have the ability to make change. For me, that was through journalism.

In collaboration with supportive advisers, students are in charge of the direction of journalism on our campus. When we see things in mainstream media that are offensive or perpetuate stereotypes, we conscientiously think how we can be different, and how we can produce media representative of our own student body and diverse communities. The journalism at City on a Hill Press is different than most journalism society consumes. Publications all too often perpetuate harmful and racist stereotypes, so we collectively read stories from a variety of publications to evaluate what kind of media we want to make.

We tackle big problems in media, and try to identify the systemic issues in journalism that cause them. Only 25% of African-Americans and 33% of Latina/os said the news media accurately portrayed their communities, according to a 2014 study by the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The same year, minority workforce in TV news hit the second highest level ever — at just 22.4%. The correlation between people from underrepresented communities not feeling accurately represented in media, and the people who make that media not coming from underrepresented communities is no coincidence.

Recently our editorial board discussed how white murder suspects received more sympathy in mainstream media as opposed to black people suspected of the same crime. That distinction, and different treatment, is racism perpetuated by journalists who would never be targets of hate crimes because of their race or be wrongly convicted of crimes. When Jared Michael Padgett killed a classmate and himself at school in 2014, the Fox News headline read “Oregon school shooting suspect fascinated with guns but was a devoted Mormon, his friends say,” and when Elliot Rodger killed six people at UC Santa Barbara, Whittier News wrote across its page “Santa Barbara shooting: Suspect was ‘soft-spoken, polite, a gentleman’, ex-principal says.” Yet when 19-year-old Julius B. Vaughn was gunned down in Omaha, the Omaha World Herald headlines “Shooting victim had many run-ins with law,” and later NBC headlines “Trayvon Martin was suspended three times from school.” Our conversation surrounded media dehumanization of people of color, and how society’s distrust of media directly relates to the lack of diversity in media. We challenge what media produces to critically create our own content.

When hiring new students to join the newspaper, we consider their media experience, but more importantly their understanding of mainstream media. We ask how they felt when they consumed news that was not representative of their community, and how they would strive to change that. We value how their experiences and background will shape the media they will produce. By valuing a diverse staff and recognizing our platform, we create and foster educational spaces for ourselves and our readers. As students, we find our own voice to amplify student voice. By using our personal experiences and backgrounds as tools, we strive to transform the way people think.
GET TOOLS:
THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

Here are key tools that help build successful organizations and projects: Involve, Plan, Advocate, and Transform. These tools strengthen students’ skills and abilities to navigate and change the world.
The Student Agency Model involves members and includes all voices in order to create innovative solutions and dynamic learning environments. Students from different backgrounds and with different experiences teach each other, and foster a collective founded on support and understanding. Students empower their organization by facilitating agreement and engaging members. Here are some tools that we use:

START WITH YOUR SHARED PURPOSE
Whether you’re part of a new or continuing student organization, take time to answer the questions: What is our purpose as an organization? Why have we come together? If your primary purpose isn’t clear and agreed upon, it will be hard to work as a team or to accomplish any goals.

Write a Mission Statement
A Mission Statement explains why your organization exists over time and how you are working toward your vision. To write or review a Mission Statement, begin by discussing questions about your purpose:

- Why does your organization exist?
- What does it do?
- What difference does it make?

Draft your statement and then work on it together so it is clear and concise.

DEVELOP COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS
How will members work together effectively? Agree on roles and the processes you will use, write them down and review these regularly to avoid misunderstandings.

Writing Governing Documents
A constitution documents critical processes such as how your group makes decisions, how responsibilities will be distributed, and the specific duties of each position, such as Chairperson, Treasurer, etc.

- Make sure your decision-making process is inclusive and fair. This will result in decisions that are well-informed and members will be more invested in carrying them out.
- Write job descriptions for key positions. Describe their responsibilities and the skills or qualities needed. This will help members elect people according to their potential to fulfill the duties of the positions.

Develop Principles of Unity
What principles guide your interactions? How will you ensure that diverse minds and personalities are able to work together cooperatively?

- Develop a list of principles together and keep them visible at meetings. Principles might include: not interrupting, interacting with honesty, mutual respect, carrying through on commitments, etc.

“"You teach me, I forget. You show me, I remember. You involve me, I understand.”
— Edward O. Wilson

For more information on Decision-making, see Activity Sheet 1, pg. 32.

For more information Principles of Unity, see Activity Sheet 2, pg. 33.
BUILD THE TEAM

Hold Regular Meetings
It’s critical for members to meet together regularly, face-to-face, and with enough time to get to know one another. When members understand each other, they can communicate easily and get tasks done smoothly.

- Agree on a meeting schedule and how long each meeting will last.
- Create a culture of arriving and ending on time.

Stay in Touch
A lot can happen between meetings. Staying in touch keeps projects on track. If members need help or have questions, they can get answers quickly and not wait for the next meeting.

- Agree on how to communicate: group texts, emails, etc.
- Set expectations for how quickly members should respond to messages (e.g. 24 hours, 36 hours, etc.).
- Check in with members before meetings. This ensures members know what will be discussed and provides them time to develop their ideas and participate in discussions.

INFORM MEMBERS

Students interested in joining your organization need to know upfront what it stands for and how it works so they can make an informed decision about joining. If they decide to join, an orientation process can deepen their understanding.

Hold Retreats
To build a strong foundation for your organization, offer an orientation retreat at the beginning of each year.

- Include enough time for members to relax, talk things through and get to know one another.
- Find a location that gets members away from distractions and out of their usual routines.
- Create a retreat space that feels comfortable and supportive for everyone.

Distribute Key Documents
Give your Mission Statement, community agreements, and foundational information to new members as soon as they show interest in joining. Discuss and answer their questions.

INCLUDE ALL VOICES

In high-functioning meetings, members share their opinions and ideas, and the group creates new programs and solutions collectively. Because this doesn’t happen automatically, meetings need to be facilitated so all voices are heard and everyone’s time is respected.

Design Agendas
What needs to be discussed or agreed on? For each meeting, list possible topics and how much discussion time each topic needs. Decide if a topic requires a decision or if it’s just informational. Post the agenda where everyone participating can see it and ask for additions.

- Avoid having too much to talk about in one meeting. This will rush discussions and limit participation. Prioritize or postpone discussions that can wait.
INCLUDE ALL VOICES, CONT.

Listen
Facilitators don’t dominate discussions with their own opinions. They ask questions, listen, and coordinate what is said so everyone is heard and the group stays on point. Find members who are skilled in listening and engaging others to serve as facilitators. Mentor others to develop these skills.

Encourage Participation
How do you get everyone to participate in the meetings? If there’s a pattern of certain people dominating and others being silent, ask to hear opinions or ideas from people who haven’t contributed yet. Alternatively, after the meeting, talk with the dominating people and ask them to help you encourage others to speak. You can also talk with the silent people and ask for their views on upcoming topics and encourage them to share their views at the next meeting.

Pause
If people do not speak up in the meeting, don’t fill the silence too quickly. Suggest participants pause and make room for members who find it hard to break into constant discussion.

MENTOR

Inspire
Take an active interest in others and validate their efforts. Find out what they’re interested in or passionate about, and identify roles or tasks where they can explore their interests. Remind them that they make a difference. Recognize their contributions as a group.

Reach Out and Inquire
Talk with members one-on-one. Ask them what they think during meeting breaks or afterward. Give them a call between meetings to see what questions or suggestions they have.

Learn From Everyone
Everyone has an opinion, an idea, or a concern. Ask and listen with your full attention. Follow up and ask them to say more. Approach each person with the intention of learning from them.

Connect People
Find out what other members are interested in and connect them with people, projects, tasks, and meetings that match their interests.

Be Supportive and Honest
Support others in expressing their views. If they fall into destructive patterns (e.g. gossiping, being individualistic, dominating, etc.), speak with them honestly about the negative effect they are having. Inquire into what is going on for them personally and organizationally.

“The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.”

— Ralph Nader
At UCSC, student organizations involved in media meet together as the Student Media Council. This includes groups with different interests and mediums, from the campus weekly newspaper to literary journals to live television productions.

For years, the Student Media Council met twice or three times annually and discussions consisted of organizations advocating for their own budgets. Although the organizations worked in the same facilities they were more competitive than collaborative. There was little interest or commitment to the council.

When the Student Media Council became a part of SOMeCA, students were encouraged to think of the council differently. The Student Agency Model was introduced by their advisor who suggested that Student Media was theirs to govern, but to do so would require time and attention. Each organization was asked to attend six meetings a year, more than doubling the time commitment. The idea of governing was interesting enough that the organizations agreed.

A committee of student representatives and their advisor prepared agendas. The council set aside time for members to get to know each other and to discuss goals and issues. Through a series of meetings a Mission Statement was written to clarify the purpose of the Council.

Council members worked together on a few projects before designing their first strategic planning retreat. It was a one-day retreat that trained members on planning tools, such as developing an assessment of their environment and their own strengths and weaknesses. Over the next two years, the council’s strategic planning sessions grew to overnight retreats with educational workshops and visioning exercises facilitated by alumni.

Today, the involvement and interest in governing and planning the future of Student Media is strong. Members work collaboratively on events and help each other with projects. The council meets regularly and members show up for three hour discussions on a Friday afternoon, long after staff and peers have gone home for the day.

“When I joined the Student Media Council and helped organize a workshop on diversity, I felt like I was contributing to something bigger: The work that I put forward, in my publication and through the workshops, can genuinely shape how people see themselves and the world around them.”

— Riane Briones, former Student Media Council Representative for Alay Journal
Developing an effective program or organization requires intentional, collective planning. Through the Student Agency Model students find that when they collaborate to assess their context and develop democratic decision-making processes, they’re more equipped to reach their goals. As they work together, students learn to identify the resources needed to support their objectives and how to delegate tasks in a way that’s fair to all participants involved. Here are key tools that help groups develop effective plans and stay balanced:

**ESTABLISH DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES**

Organizations are comprised of different people. Each person has a unique experience and something unique to contribute: an opinion, a talent, a skill, a question, a relationship. Democratic processes, such as establishing decision-making procedures, creating governing documents, and developing role responsibilities, invite members to contribute to discussions, decisions, and plans. Such processes are essential components of student organizing. To support democratic processes:

*Create Meeting Agreements*

Ask how members would like to interact in order to feel comfortable speaking. Develop a list that everyone agrees on. This could include agreements such as not interrupting others, asking questions to clarify, using gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. "you all" instead of "you guys"), etc.

*Brainstorm*

This process helps generate ideas from everyone. Make sure the topic or project is clear, then ask for ideas and reactions. Write each one down so each comment is visible to everyone. Ask members to hold off on questioning each other so all ideas can be considered. After all ideas have been recorded, the group can discuss the results and/or vote to prioritize.

*Use Round Robins and Dyads*

If members aren’t talking or a discussion is dominated by a few voices, change the dynamic so everyone can be heard. “Round Robin” is simple: state the topic or question under discussion and ask everyone to respond, going around the room one-by-one. In “dyads,” state the topic or question then ask everyone to find one other person to discuss it with. Each person takes a turn to speak for a specific amount of time (e.g. three minutes). Announce when it is time to switch to the next person. When everyone has spoken, bring the group back together and have each pair share what was discussed.

**KEEPING IT REAL**

Members can bring bad habits into meetings, such as individualism and egoism. They may hold up decisions or try divide-and-conquer tactics of talking with select members outside of meetings. This undermines the democratic process by creating pockets of power within the group instead of discussing differences in an open and fair manner. It is critical to address this dynamic directly and resolve the situation, bringing the group back to its shared purpose.

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“For more information on Brainstorming, see Activity Sheet 4, pg. 35.”
KNOW YOUR ENVIRONMENT
If your group is active, its work will intersect with people, offices, or organizations beyond the group’s membership. For example, the facilities, funds, or services you need to access are usually managed or performed by other people. How can you access resources effectively if you don’t know what is available and who to contact?

Research Services and Deadlines
List the services your group accesses for projects (e.g. granting funds, processing financial transactions, reserving facilities) and put a face to the service. Who are the people working behind the scenes? What are the deadlines they have in order to meet requests from multiple groups?

Be Aware of Duplication
Your group may choose a project or issue that another organization or office is working on. If so, contact them and find out what they are doing or planning. Your group can take this into consideration in deciding if it wants to focus on a unique approach or element, coordinate with others, or do something else.

Assess Opportunities and Threats
When non-profits or institutions do strategic planning, they review their environment and agree on elements that could pose an opportunity or threat to their work. An example of an opportunity could be a new source of funding that supports the work of your group. A threat could be a decision to raise student fees which impacts members negatively. Understanding these as a group opens up possibilities and grounds you in reality.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS
Many organizations have long lists of projects that they want to do. Organizations with a social justice focus are especially driven to do more, given the urgency of the issues our society faces. Deciding what to do and not to do is challenging. It’s even harder when a few members are passionate about an idea and the group doesn’t want to turn them down. But to be effective and achieve goals, groups need to make choices. First, ask if the proposed project supports the purpose of the organization. If it does, the next step is to ask what resources will be needed. Analyzing your resources helps the group choose projects it can complete successfully.

Identify Essential Elements
Every project is different. Brainstorm the essential elements of the project, e.g. printing, technology, facilities, electricity, sound, performers, food, volunteers, etc. Estimate the cost and availability of each.

Determine Costs
Estimate a budget. If the group doesn’t have sufficient funds, make a list of fund sources that might give funding to the project and develop appropriate proposals for each source.

Draw up a Timeline
Do a “backward timeline” start with the date of your event or when your project is due. Work backward from that date, figuring out each task that needs to be done before then. Include the deadlines of the fund sources or offices you need to interact with.

For a sample Backward Timeline, See Activity Sheet 5, pg. 36.
RESOURCE ANALYSIS, CONT.

Evaluate Your Capacity and Bandwidth
Go through the list of elements and ask who can be responsible for each one. Ask members to keep in mind other things they have to do (e.g. finals and midterms). Ask volunteers if they have experience doing the task or if they will need help.

MAP OUT A DIVISION OF LABOR
A high functioning organization uses the talents, time, and interests of all members. Not only does this get things done efficiently, but all members are encouraged to contribute and to explore their interests. Broad participation strengthens organizations.

Identify the Tasks
Brainstorm a list of all the tasks the group can think of. Get it down to the smallest detail. If there are a lot of tasks, group them together. For example, group together all tasks related to food.

Delegate
Ask for volunteers to take responsibility for a task or a group of tasks. If someone takes a group of tasks, this person can head a committee or delegate to others.

Clarify Who Decides What
It’s important for volunteers to know if the group has given them the authority to make changes to their tasks. For example, can the person or committee responsible for the food change menu items or do they need to check with the group first?

KEEPING IT REAL
Some members think they know the best way to do everything and therefore should be in charge or involved in everything. Talk with them and explain that new members will gain motivation if they are trusted with responsibilities and encouraged to take charge.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Meade
Every spring quarter for over 10 years, a student-designed and student-facilitated class is held at UC Santa Cruz that attracts over 100 students. Speakers come from around the world to share how communities are taking action to save the environment through innovations in technology and new philosophies of sustainability. Students engage with visiting speakers and work in teams to develop projects to make the campus more sustainable.

The success of this innovative class is due to an inclusive and thorough planning process designed by a student organization, Education for Sustainable Living Program (ESLP). Each step in the process invites student ideas and input and decisions are made democratically by students. Each year, students evaluate the class and make changes to keep it relevant and current with environmental issues.

The ESLP students who organized the first class assessed the need for a class that would engage students in action-oriented research. They collectively developed a syllabus and a structure of Action Research Teams which would actively gather knowledge and design projects based on their research. ESLP met with faculty to refine their plans and make sure the class would meet academic standards. They also reached out to staff and worked with them to understand the process for enrolling students and setting up a class.

One of ESLP’s goals was to encourage students to come up with new syllabi and hands-on projects. To achieve this goal they invited students to propose and facilitate projects for the class to work on. This posed a challenge for ESLP: they assessed that the students selected did not always have facilitation skills and it would be vital for the class to be facilitated in a way that was interactive and engaging. To solve this challenge, ESLP students designed a separate quarter-long class for the student facilitators to learn how to present, facilitate, and mentor student project teams.

With projects and trained student facilitators in place, ESLP empowered the student body to make an informed choice about whether to enroll in the class. They hosted a lunch to welcome interested students to meet the facilitators and hear them present the class projects. Students who signed up for the class were invited to choose the projects they wanted to work on.

This inclusive planning process keeps the class new and successful, with students participating actively in project teams and learning about sustainability movements worldwide. Each year, the class wraps up with an event in which the student teams present their projects. Students, staff, and faculty who attend are inspired by the energy and innovative ideas that students developed for the campus.

“Every year we receive bold proposals for class topics — students want to cover taboo subjects like psychedelics or ecosexuality. Sometimes we hesitate to accept these proposals, but we make our decision after much deliberation. I’ve learned that exploring taboo subjects and having difficult conversations is part of being democratic, and being democratic builds our program and student agency.”

— Madeleine Turner, former Education for Sustainable Living Program (ESLP) Organizer
LISTEN TO MEMBERS
Stay in touch with members and listen to what they are going through. If they are experiencing or witnessing unfair treatment or inequities, ask them to describe exactly what is going on and help them imagine several opportunities to fix the problem so they can identify the best way to address the issue.

Establish Direct Knowledge
Help members separate out what they know through direct experience from what they’ve heard through the grapevine. Listen, encourage them in what they have to say, and support them in deciding if they want to address the situation.

Research
If a policy, procedure, or institution is involved, read any documented information that is available. Review relevant articles, videos, or photos. If it involves a facility or area, visit the site.

KEEPING IT REAL
Members sometimes mix in speculation or add drama to a situation. If this is the case, respect and make room for their feelings, but let them know that it’s important to be accurate if the goal is to develop real solutions. The group can also discuss how gossip hurts the reputation of the group.

DISCUSS AS A GROUP
If the issue or situation involves the organization or its purpose, present the information and research to the organization.

Seek Input
Invite members to raise questions or suggestions. Identify questions that require more research before the group can make any decisions or commitments to address the issue. If the issue directly affects other communities make sure to begin by communicating with them. How do they see this situation and possible solutions? How might they experience your group’s involvement? Respect their privacy and honor their knowledge and leadership in understanding the situation.

Develop Agreements
If there is enough information, the group can decide if it has a collective opinion on the issue or wants to work on developing a solution. If so, agree on specific language or do a “Resource Analysis” and “Plan” next steps.

ADVOCATE
Organizations that support student agency provide safe spaces for students to talk about their experiences with their peers, knowing that they will be heard and validated. Having a safe and supportive space is important for students particularly if they experience discrimination or unfair treatment. Through dialogue, students can check perceptions, analyze their surrounding, and think through solutions. This combination of support and critical thinking helps students find their voice and discover they can make a difference.

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”
— Albert Einstein
ASSESS
To be successful advocates for change, organizations need to understand the environment they are interacting with. It’s damaging for members to work hard on an issue only to fail because the group didn’t understand its surroundings or the powers they had to interact with.

Understand Interests
What are the interests of the people, offices, or institutions involved in the situation? What might they agree with? What might they consider to be important or non-negotiable? Discuss and research what you don’t know collectively.

Reach Out to Allies
Are there other groups or individuals that share the same problems or concerns? Ask them what their views are and how they might support you.

Connect the Dots: Power Mapping
Look into who has the power or authority to make the type of changes your group wants to see. Who are the people involved and how are they connected? How might they influence each other?

DEVELOP SOLUTIONS
After assessing the situation, the group may decide to develop its own solution to the problem. For example, the problem may be a lack of campus programs that represent the interests of the group. The group could ask the campus to produce the programs and/or could produce programs itself.

Set Goals
Clarify what the issue or problem is that the group wants to address. “Brainstorm” solutions that the group could design and carry out. Decide which solutions are viable. If the group makes a commitment to one or more solutions, meet again to do a “Resource Analysis” and “Plan”

Evaluate
Responsible advocacy requires honest evaluations of the results. What are the affects of the solutions you designed and produced? How is the group gathering feedback or data to know the affects? If the group is working on a complex issue (e.g. improving diversity on campus) it’s important to gather data over time.

GAIN SUPPORT
The group may decide to pursue a change that depends on the consideration and decision of a person, office, or institution. Gaining the support of decision makers is a project that requires research and planning.

Prepare
Make a list of possible solutions and sort out which would be optimal outcomes and what would represent minimal progress for the group. Develop your presentation. Include your research, reasons, and the support you have. Decide who will speak for the group.


For an example of a group developing comprehensive solutions, see “Advocate: A Case Study,” pg. 27.
GAIN SUPPORT, CONT.
Be Flexible
The first round of negotiations usually gives all parties a better understanding of each other’s interests or goals. Be open to new possibilities. Actively listen and explore all options.

Be Accountable
Bring information and proposals back to the organization and others you represent. Discuss and decide on a response as a group rather than deciding on your own.

KEEPING IT REAL
Some members may be attached to unrealistic demands because they are self-interested or untrained as organizers. Others may be against speaking up at all because they fear conflict or disapproval. It’s important for the group to sort out the egos and bring the focus back to the goals of the organization and what it collectively finds to be just.

SUM IT UP
Some things can be changed easily. Larger social or institutional changes can be more challenging and usually take more than one attempt. Whatever the outcome, members can feel accomplished if they sum up their efforts and gain a better understanding of the situation and know what they want to do next.

Debrief
Gather everyone involved and go over what happened. Discuss what lessons can be learned from the experience, including what the group or members could do differently next time.

Document
Write down the descriptions and lessons that the group agrees on. Keep the information in the organization’s files where the members can access it easily.

Celebrate
Celebrating and appreciating your members is crucial to retention. After debriefing and documenting for future members, make sure you appreciate those who did the work, and acknowledge those who learned something new and helped the group.

“For every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.”

— Malcolm X
Rainbow Theater and the African American Theater Arts Troupe (AATAT) at UC Santa Cruz produce plays, spoken word performances, dance, and musical ensembles for the campus, the local community, and high schools across the state, filling theaters and inspiring audiences. It surprises people to find out that most of the writers, performers, and directors are not majoring in Theater Arts, but students majoring in the sciences, humanities, arts, and engineering. What makes their productions unique is the full expression by students: Rainbow and AATAT are student organizations that offer students the space to explore their experiences and express them creatively. A guiding principle of the groups is, “If it comes from the heart, it goes to the heart.”

From the moment these groups were formed, the word spread and hundreds of students wanted to get involved and to see the performances. But funding for Rainbow and AATAT was scarce for many years. The groups wrote proposals and received support from the Division of Student Affairs. But the funding did not match the creativity and vision of the student groups. Lacking funds, students and the staff advisor spent hours hunting through bargain stores to put together costumes and props.

With state budget cuts on the horizon, students, staff, and alumni met to figure out how to keep Rainbow and AATAT as a vital resources for students. They analyzed the campus and assessed campus funding sources. As a last option, they discussed running a ballot measure, which would ask the student body to tax itself to support the programs. No one wanted to increase student fees, but the decision was made to let the student body weigh in on the situation.

The groups reached out to the student body, meeting with other student organizations, presenting the ballot measure in classes, tabling and talking with students as they walked through the central plaza. They talked with thousands of students to explain the situation and ask for support.

Their outreach paid off: the student body voted to tax themselves each quarter in order to support Rainbow, AATAT, and their home office, Cultural Arts and Diversity (CAD). It was a clear and informed choice by the student body: the CAD measure was the only ballot measure to increase student fees that passed that year.

Celebrating their victory, the students made a commitment to continue their campaign to reach out to the student body and build student participation in Rainbow and AATAT productions. They stayed through summer break, working with their staff advisor to develop governing documents and establish an all-student Board of Directors to oversee the budget and make decisions on the plays that are produced and the theater equipment that is purchased.

“I’ve learned more in this space about leadership, how to manage a team, and how to communicate a lot more effectively than I’ll ever learn outside of this space — this is what our education is supposed to look like.”

— Eron Lake, The Kadence Keys Co-Director, Rainbow Theater
In groups that practice student agency, students have the opportunity to develop new projects and to challenge existing conditions. This can be an event that’s never been done before or a new service that helps students graduate. To imagine something new and succeed in making it happen requires student organization members to work together collaboratively. This is a transformative experience for many students who are used to a more passive role or accepting the status quo. This last section offers tools for innovative thinking and developing synergy in organizations.

**DIALOGUE**

A dialogue is an exchange in which participants listen to each other to look at the world through the perspective of others. In a dialogue, each person grows in understanding and the groups’ agreements are stronger. To increase dialogues in your group:

**Practice Active Listening**

Distractions, stress, prejudices, and assumptions get in the way of listening and understanding others. Groups can increase members’ active listening skills by giving each person attention and sufficient time to speak. Develop meeting agreements to support this, for example setting cell phones aside during discussions.

**Model Openness to Change**

Senior members can increase members’ ability to dialogue by role modeling listening to others and showing they can change their minds as a result of hearing a new or different opinion.

**Address Disagreements**

High functioning organizations address disagreements with respect and take time to work on the situation until it is resolved. This shows members that the group cares about their ideas and opinions and that conflicts can be resolved.

**COLLABORATE**

Coordination is two or more people doing different things and adding the results together. For example: You order food and I buy paper goods and decorations for a dinner event. Collaboration is two or more people integrating their efforts together. For example: You and I discuss the goals of a dinner event and develop the menu, decorations, and logistics together. Collaboration produces better results as well as growth for those involved.

**Develop Mutual Respect**

Similar to dialogues, collaboration requires that members have a real interest and respect for each other. Senior members can serve as role models by taking time to ask questions and include others in discussions and decisions.

**Balance Individuals and Tasks**

Each member has unique experiences and knowledge. Encourage each member to contribute ideas or skills to projects and the organization. Collaborative work focuses on the members, not just the tasks that have to be done.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

— Albert Einstein

For more information on Active Listening, see Activity Sheet 9, pg. 41.
BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Organizations can grow into healthy communities supported by multiple generations, diverse types and talents, and a sense of lasting commitment to each other. If members feel safe to be who they are and free to make mistakes and learn from them, the seeds of community are there. Here are three tools which help make communities last:

Set a Transition Plan
Student organizations lose leaders and members each year at graduation. Without a transition plan, groups have to start over again and again. Elect new leaders a few months before the end of the year and make sure they are oriented and trained. Begin each year with review of the past year to understanding the lessons and achievements.

Document and Pass History On
If members know their organization’s history they can value it more. They can also understand their role, find a place in that history, and be motivated to add to the organization’s legacy.

TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER

Many students get stressed, distracted, tired, and lack sleep and nutrition. Organizations can help members develop strategies to stay in balance. Members benefit individually and the group benefits because members that are rested and calm are more likely to participate creatively and with an open-mind.

Offer Workshops for Members
No matter how busy the group is, take time to find out how everyone is doing. Share life strategies. Reserve one meeting each quarter to focus on member self-care. Have a speaker offer tips on time management, etc.

Educate
There are many studies that show how nutrition, exercise, sleep, and meditation benefit student success. Distribute information and check in with members if they seem overly stressed.

Reflect
Most groups finish a project and move on; they don’t take time to discuss and learn from what happened. In fact, many groups actively avoid facing their mistakes because they think it will be too stressful. Over time, the group loses out because it misses valuable lessons that can help it and its members improve.

Hold Sum-Up Meetings
Set aside time for this discussion and agree to not pin blame on anyone. Reassure members that the goal is to identify what happened so the group can improve its work in the future.

Create a Culture of Accountability
It’s important for members to be honest about what they did (or didn’t do), to account for their actions, and reflect on what they can change. To do this successfully, the group has to avoid harsh accusations or blame. If the process is supportive, members gain self-understanding and the group gains a spirit of mutual respect and trust.

For more information on Self-Care, see Activity Sheet 10, pg. 42.
BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY, CONT.

Honor Each Other

A healthy community is intentional about honoring each member. Establish traditions of recognition so members are valued for who they are as well as what they do. Record the names of members so that after they graduate the group can invite them back to share their experiences and serve as mentors.

“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”

— Marian Wright Edelman
One of UC Santa Cruz’s lead student organizations is Engaging Education (e²), a student-initiated and student-run center that works to increase the diversity of the student population. It is a creative space where students develop new and effective programs.

e² hires students to do critical tasks, such as producing campus-wide programs. For a few years, e² faced the challenge of student staff showing up late, not completing tasks, or spending work time socializing instead of working. It was hard for peers to confront peers about their actions. Students were afraid of upsetting their friends or making unfair judgments about others. But everyone agreed that the effectiveness of the center was being impacted and something had to be done.

e² developed a process and structure that would support students speaking up and holding each other accountable. Their all-student Board of Directors and staff advisor formed a Personnel Committee to review student staff’s work and to hear comments or complaints. They elected students who showed fairness in their interactions with others and who represented different areas of the organization. Committee members were oriented to their roles and the importance of careful and fair reviews. They met regularly and members developed good working relations.

If there was a problem with a student staff’s work, the committee members looked at the situation from the point of view of the student staff. They considered what the staff was going through and reviewed how the staff had been communicated with. They identified with how hard it would be to hear criticism so they prepared what to say and role-played with each other to avoid sounding aggressive or defensive.

The committee was able to approach student staff in the spirit of inquiry. They listened to the student staff’s perspective and the student staff listened to the group’s feedback. From the discussion agreements were made to change the situation. If the problem continued, there was another meeting and another until there was resolution. So far there has been only one instance of the committee deciding to recommend that a student leave a position.

Since the e² Personnel Committee was formed three years ago, the process has built a culture of accountability in the organization and increased respect between members. It has also built students’ skills in speaking directly and with skill and confidence when they see something that is not right.

“Through e²’s personnel committee, I learned that we have to be aware of what is at stake for our communities and hold each other accountable. I also realized how democratic processes can strengthen communication, making it possible to give each other feedback in a way that encourages growth as opposed to fear.”

— Adlemy Garcia, former co-chair of Engaging Education (e²)
ACTIVITY SHEET 1: DECISION-MAKING
How to make sustainable decisions

When an organization makes a decision, it represents agreement among members. But too often, decisions are made but not carried out. There are many reasons this happens, including:

- Members agree because they feel tired of the discussion or feel pressured and give in.
- Members are confused about decision-making processes.
- Members have different interpretations of the decision.

Here are a few things you can do to help your organization make decisions that have solid support.

DEFINE AND AGREE ON HOW DECISIONS WILL BE MADE

- What is your organization’s “Decision Rule”?
  - Consensus, majority rule, autocratic, etc.
- Who decides what?
  - Does the core or officers decide everything? Do committees decide certain things?
- What is the basis for making decisions?
  - Do members understand the organization’s purpose?

SET THE TONE

- It’s okay to disagree.
  - Don’t take disagreements or challenges personally.
  - Check-in with those who disagree
- It’s okay to make mistakes.
  - If the group makes a decision that results in errors, the group can discuss what happened and learn from it together.
- Be open-minded.
  - Remember that it’s a group decision. Welcome new ideas. Try new ways.
- It’s not life or death.
  - Even if you know you’re right, it is not worth fighting over.

KEY STEPS IN DECIDING

- Summarize the main points of the discussion.
- Clarify the decision being made.
- Check decisions for full-investment
  - Draw out remaining questions
- If it doesn’t seem like a clear consensus:
  - Poll the group.
  - Have more discussion.
  - Try adjusting the proposal and look for a compromise.
  - Discuss the option of postponing the decision.
- Use your organization’s “Decision Rule” to reach a decision.
- Record it!

This Activity Sheet was written by staff and student leaders of SOMeCA. The concepts and tips have been developed through application and reflection.
ACTIVITY SHEET 2: PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

Principles of unity are collectively documented values and agreements for how membership chooses to work together. Principles clarify what is expected of all members. To develop principles of unity, have the group reflect on the work accomplished so far, and brainstorm agreements that support participation by all. After the brainstorm, vote and document the list. Post the list so it is visible at meetings. Remember that principles are meant to help members interact in new and positive ways. It can be challenging, but working to uphold principles creates a safer, healthier, and more productive space.

Below is a sample of principles of unity developed by the students of Engaging Education (e²), a student organization at UC Santa Cruz. (Note: the comments on each principle were not written by e².)

**Be willing to constructively challenge, check and grow**
This principle encourages members to take responsibility and voice opinions, even when it challenges others’ ideas. It also reminds members to not assume they are right and to grow through dialogue.

**Be honest**
Honesty is not always easy, but it’s essential for members to be honest if an organization is to benefit from hearing all ideas and resolving differences.

**Invest and take ownership**
It can be easy to stand aside and criticize. Being fully engaged and responsible offers a more rewarding experience for members and keeps the organization constructive.

**Actively work to build trust**
In a society that promotes individualism and competition, members can sometimes be at odds. It takes attention and effort to work through differences and misunderstandings.

**Avoid judging**
Members can make snap judgments that are superficial and inaccurate. This leads to miscommunication and mistakes. Judgments can also make others feel objectified, less valued, and less open to participating fully.

**Respect yourself and each other**
Growing up in a society that does not empower young people can undermine self-confidence and the ability to work with others as equals. Self-respect and mutual respect is regained through working with others democratically.

**Act out of love**
This principle defines love as grounded in respect, understanding, and a wish for others to grow and find their own way of being healthy, happy, and fulfilled.

**Be patient with yourself and others**
All organizations make mistakes and have internal disagreements. This can be valuable experience if members take time to reflect and learn rather than react or draw conclusions too quickly.

**Be forgiving**
Mistakes are opportunities for individuals and groups to learn, not reasons for blame and punishment.

**Be solution-based.**
Members can focus on developing solutions and move through problems if the group keeps the goals of the organization in mind.
ACTIVITY SHEET 3: ELEMENTS OF MEETINGS

LOGISTICS
• Reserve an accessible meeting location.
• Get materials (if needed): chart paper, markers, refreshments, etc.
• Agree upon time and length of time (accessible to majority).
• Give enough advance notice.

THE AGENDA
• Agree upon agenda items.
• Limit to a realistic number of topics/discussions.
  - Approximate the time per topic.
• Define the goals of each item (informational, announcement, decision, etc.)
• Leave room for announcements/new topics.
• Announce the topics in advance.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
• Make sure the process is clear and agreed upon.
  - How are decisions made?
  - Who makes what decisions?
• Inform members about the decision process, especially as new people join.

DOCUMENTATION
• Have a note-taker.
  - Record brief summaries of discussions
  - Record clear definition of decisions.
• Store notes where they are accessible to more than one person.
• History: make notes accessible to future membership.

OUTREACH
• Reach out and talk with people.
• Inform people so everyone feels prepared to contribute.
  - Encourage people who don’t talk as much.
  - Don’t lobby (inform, give opinion, but don’t pressure).
• Find out if other topics need to be discussed.
• Do research if a topic is unclear or needs more info.
• Make copies of information for everyone if needed.

FOLLOW UP BETWEEN MEETINGS
• Check-in/update members who weren’t at meetings.
• Do assigned tasks from the meeting.
• Check-in with members who have assigned tasks.
Brainstorming is a way to generate new ideas and to encourage all members to contribute to the direction of the group. It’s a process that builds members’ investment and participation in the organization. The key to successful brainstorming is to suspend judgment when gathering ideas. All ideas are welcomed and recorded. No questioning or criticism takes place. Once all ideas are gathered, the group can discuss, prioritize, and consider taking action.

**GATHERING IDEAS**
- The group agrees on a question or topic that would benefit from everyone’s input. It could be, “What kind of Fall Reception do we want to have?” or “What is our assessment of the campus climate?”
- Write the question or topic on the board or chart paper so it’s visible to everyone.
- A facilitator invites everybody to voice their opinions.
- As each idea is spoken, the facilitator writes it on the board/paper. The response should be written to match the person’s words as closely as possible.
- If necessary, the facilitator can ask questions to clarify, but without any judgment.
- If someone else makes a discouraging remark or questions the idea, the facilitator can remind the group that in this round there are no critiques.
- The facilitator keeps encouraging and inviting each person to participate. When the group agrees that all ideas have been spoken, the list is closed.

**DISCUSSION**
- The group is invited to read over the list.
- The facilitator encourages members to ask questions of any idea that is not clear to them so that the group can vote on the list.

**VOTING**
- The facilitator lets the group know what if some are not chosen or prioritized, they may be considered in the future. (The list should be kept in the group’s minutes).
- The ideas are counted and each member gets a certain number of votes. A good formula is to take the total number of ideas and divide it by three (If there are 30 ideas, each member gets 10 votes). This formula was developed by a non-profit; see *The Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-making* on the “References” page.

**PRIORITIZING**
- The votes are counted and marked with the number of votes received.
- The group now has a list of ideas in order of importance or preference by the group.
- The next step is to discuss the ideas with the most votes and whether or not the group wants to take action on any of the ideas.
ACTIVITY SHEET 5: BACKWARD TIMELINE

Create a planning timeline by working backward from the date of the event to plan when each task needs to be completed. Set a date by which each task must be completed. Here is a sample of a backward timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKS BEFORE EVENT</th>
<th>TASKS TO BE COMPLETED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| As soon as possible| **Assess the interests of your organization and community.**  
It’s a new year! Poll members of your community. What are their interests? What are the goals of your organization? What kind of program would help move toward those goals? |
| As soon as possible| **Brainstorm and choose.**  
Open it up to your members. Ask for all possible ideas. Discuss each one and find out what sparks interest. The test: if members aren’t motivated to work on the event, you’ll most likely lack volunteers and an audience. |
| As soon as possible| **Meet with your staff adviser.**  
Meet with your adviser early and often. They can let you know the resources and the red-tape that can make an event run smoothly or hit a brick wall. |
| As soon as possible| **Research.**  
Check the calendar for other events, holidays, mid-terms, etc. Make a list of everything to be done. Figure out when each task needs to be done by and who will do each task. Note hard deadlines that can’t be missed. |
| See funding deadlines| **Create a budget and fundraise or request funds.**  
Make a list of all the expenses involved in the event. Research the costs. Fundraise or research fund sources and their deadlines. Turn in proposals on time. |
| 6 weeks| **Secure the funds.**  
Hear back from fund sources or complete fundraising. Assess if you need to adjust your event expenses. |
| 6 weeks| **Reserve a space.**  
Look for a facility as soon as possible. Popular spaces may get booked early, so have a couple back-up choices. Make sure to confirm your reservation in writing. |
| 4-6 weeks| **Request payments for food and performers/speakers.**  
Performers or speakers need contracts done in advance in order to be paid. Large purchases or food can also take time. Meet with your adviser to make sure you know the deadlines. |
| 4 weeks| **Request all services.**  
Meet with your adviser 4 weeks in advance to request any needed services.  
- Sound/media equipment  
- Parking/signage  
- Trash/recycling containers |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKS BEFORE EVENT</th>
<th>TASKS TO BE COMPLETED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 weeks            | Design publicity and publicize.  
                      You’ve worked hard on the event. Make sure people know it’s happening! Design advertisement and distribute at least 2 weeks before the event. |
| 1 week             | Confirm volunteers, performers and speakers.  
                      Don’t assume everyone will remember! Make reminder calls 1 week before the event. |
| 1 week             | Request “Purchase Orders” for all other purchases.  
                      Arrange for any remaining purchases. Check in with members to make sure they are completing tasks. |
| Date of event      | Hold the event!  
                      Set up, have a great time, clean up, and celebrate! |
| 1 week after event | Evaluate how the event went.  
                      Each event offers valuable lessons. Ask members for honest feedback and record it so it’s not forgotten. Thank everybody for their contributions. |

This Activity Sheet was written by staff and student leaders of SOMeCA. The concepts and tips have been developed through application and reflection.
ACTIVITY SHEET 6: RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Resource Analysis in Action is a tool that helps organizations decide whether or not to do a proposed event or project. Many groups commit to an event or project without analyzing if they have resources to carry it out. Sometimes members vote “yes” because the idea is exciting or important. Sometimes it’s because someone pushes hard for the idea and everyone goes along. But if the group does not have enough resources, the result can be member burn out, stress, resentment, sacrifices (academic or personal), and/or an unsuccessful event or project.

Resource Analysis in Action supports informed and collective decisions. Each step can build a common understanding of the purpose and what’s required of the organization and its members. When every member has equal knowledge, every member has equal knowledge, every member feels more empowered to speak and to vote.

Below is a set of steps to establishing informed and collective decisions. There are four discussion points to this process:

DOES THIS IDEA MATCH OUR MISSION?
• What is the goal/purpose of this idea?
• How does the goal/purpose support our mission and current work?
• Do we know if our communities/audience support this idea? (Can we find out?)
• What is the goal/purpose of this idea and does it match our mission:
  - Strongly matched? Somewhat matched? Slightly matched? Not matched?

WHAT IS NEEDED?
• Do we collectively have experience doing this?
• What is the budget?
• How much time is needed? (Are there deadlines coming up?)
• Are there other events or projects that conflict?
• What tasks need to be done? (Make a list of all main tasks).
• How much people power is needed?
  - Coordinators: how much time is needed?
  - Volunteers: how much time is needed?

WHAT DO WE HAVE? DO WE HAVE:
• The experience or can we access it?
• The funds or access to the funds?
• The time?
• The people power?
  - Coordinators: who wants to and can?
  - Volunteers: who wants to and can?

WHAT IS OUR DECISION?
• When we look at what is needed and what we have, are they:
  - Strongly matched? Somewhat matched? Slightly matched? Not matched?
• Discuss and weigh the information.
• Do an opinion poll before the vote if helpful:
  - Strongly matched? Somewhat matched? Slightly matched? Not matched?
• Final vote, using your organizations decision-making process.

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ACTIVITY SHEET 7: DELEGATION

The key to successful delegation is to have people participate in developing goals and plans, before tasks are defined and assigned. Including members in these discussions and decisions can result in a sense of ownership and responsibility. It helps everyone grow and it is more likely everyone will complete their tasks.

After you’ve included members in goal setting and planning, keep the momentum going. Keep including their ideas. Keep encouraging their creativity.

Delegation is not just a skill to use to get tasks done. It is an opportunity to mentor someone. When you delegate, you offer a member a role to play. You offer them a sense of accomplishment and empowerment. If you delegate successfully, you will encourage everyone’s best thinking and build a stronger, lasting organization.

PREPARE

• Break tasks down into do-able parts.
• Calculate how much time each task will take.
• Do a timeline and set deadlines for each task.

ASSESS AND ASSIGN

• Remind members of the “big picture.” Why is the project important?
• Encourage initiative and questions.
• Help members think through their time commitments.
• Try to match members’ interests with the tasks; but also give people variety.
• Give critical tasks to someone reliable or experienced.
• Give clear and specific directions and confirm that they understand and agree.
• Agree on dates that tasks are due.
• Tell them you will follow-up and when.
• Be ready to scale back or cancel if you find the project requires more people power than you have.

FOLLOW-UP

• Check-in in a timely way (not right before tasks are due).
• Offer assistance.
• Problem-solve with them.
• Let go: let them develop their own way of doing things. Encourage creativity.
• If people make mistakes, don’t lose your patience. Discuss what happened and everyone can learn from it.

FOLLOW THROUGH

• Use all contributions in some way.
• Always thank people.
• Give constructive feedback.
• Ask people for feedback on your delegating process.
• Recognize contributions publicly or within the organization.
ACTIVITY SHEET 8: SUMMATION

Each project that you complete offers valuable lessons. However, members and leaders may feel defensive and nervous about the organization reviewing what they did or did not do. Here is an approach and some questions to use that will help structure a summation process and keep it focused on lessons instead of blame.

AGREE ON THE PROCESS

- Discuss the importance of organizations summing up their work on a regular basis. The organization and each member will gain from each experience and grow stronger over time.
- Agree that the group and its members are experimenting and learning. Mistakes and miscommunications are likely to happen. Mistakes provide valuable lessons to the group and to the individuals that make them.
- Agree that the summation process will not involve blaming people. Actions should be described and discussed and criticized when appropriate, but no one should be subject to negative assumptions or judgments.

REVIEW THE GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- List all of the goals the group had in initiating the project.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

- Give members a few minutes to reflect and write down their ideas on how the project went as well as how they feel about their own participation.

DISCUSS: HOW WELL DID WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

- What were the main reasons for achieving or not achieving each goal?
- What can we learn from this experience?
- What might we do differently next time?

DISCUSS: HOW WELL DID EACH OF US COMPLETE WHAT WE AGREED TO DO?

- What were the main reasons for achieving or not achieving each goal?
- If tasks were not completed well, what was the impact to the group or the project?
- What can the group and/or individual member learn from this experience?
- What might the group and/or individual member do differently next time?
- Encourage members to give each other constructive feedback, including specific, observable examples.

AGREE ON THE MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Document these lessons and file them where they are accessible to members.
Think about when someone gave you their full attention and listened to what you had to say. Active listening is encouraging. It builds trust, deepens understanding, and de-escalates anger and tension.

Listening is a skill that takes practice. When it is done well, agreements are stronger, plans are better developed, and organizations are higher functioning.

Here are five things to practice and keep in mind the next time someone is speaking:

**GIVE YOUR FULL ATTENTION**
- Avoid distractions. Close your laptop, turn your cell phone on silent, and set aside tasks.
- Set aside your own worries, deadlines, and preoccupations so you can focus on the other person.

**RESERVE JUDGMENT**
- Avoid jumping to conclusions or sharing your opinion about what is said. Set aside the impulse to agree, disagree, or give advice.
- Simply listen and focus on understanding what the speaker is thinking and how they are feeling.

**BE AWARE OF BODY LANGUAGE**
- Show your attention by facing the person and maintaining eye contact.
- Avoid expressions that can be interpreted as defensive, disinterested, or aggressive (e.g. crossed arms, looking away, frowning).

**GIVE THE SPEAKER TIME**
- Let the speaker finish their thoughts completely. Be careful to never interrupt.
- Don’t rush the speaker. Allow enough time to hear them out. If necessary, apologize and schedule another meeting.

**INQUIRE TO UNDERSTAND**
- Ask questions respectfully and not aggressively. Listen to the answers.
- Show you want a complete understanding of what the speaker has to say.

““The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention.””

— Thich Nhat Hanh
EAT
• Eating regular, healthy meals will help keep you focused, in a good mood, and will also keep you healthier and feeling better overall. Skipping meals robs you of the energy to cope.
• Eating healthy carbohydrates such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits will help keep your energy levels stable throughout the day because they break down into a slow stream of sugar in your blood. Conversely, eating mostly refined carbohydrates such as candy, French fries, and white bread will lead to spikes and dips in your blood sugar, which can cause you to go through mood swings and have trouble focusing on daily tasks. livestrong.com

SLEEP
• Getting enough sleep is essential to your overall wellness and mood. Sleep is also critical to anyone who is studying and learning. Most people know that it’s more difficult to take in new information if you don’t sleep well the night before. What’s surprising is that it’s just as important to get a good night’s sleep after learning something new: a good night’s sleep allows you to process and retain information that has been learned. healthysleep.med.harvard.edu

MEDITATE
• M.R.I. brain scans taken before and after participants meditated for 30 minutes for eight days found increased gray matter in the hippocampus, an area important for learning and memory. The images also showed a reduction of gray matter in the amygdala, a region connected to anxiety and stress. A control group that did not practice meditation showed no such changes. well.blogs.nytimes.com

EXERCISE
• Physical activity is great for your body and great for your mind. Exercise has been proven to increase the release of stress related hormones and it has been proven to fight off illnesses. Exercise is also great for helping to improve your overall mood.
• Exercise can reduce your risk of depression and may help you sleep better. Research has shown that doing aerobic, or a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, three to five times a week for 30 to 60 minutes can give you these mental health benefits. Some scientific evidence has also shown that even lower levels of physical activity can be beneficial. cdc.gov
• Exercise increases the level of brain chemicals called growth factors, which help make new brain cells and establish new connections between brain cells to help us learn. Interestingly, complicated activities, like playing tennis or taking a dance class, provide the biggest brain boost. health.usnews.com

MAINTAINING A BALANCE
• Maintaining balance in your life between school, work, family, friends and other areas of importance is key in preserving your overall quality of life. Take time to reflect on what is important to you. What are your priorities? Once you remind yourself of these, check how you use your time: how much time are you spending on your priorities?

“What we need to do is find the wellspring that keeps us going, that gives us the strength and patience to keep up this struggle for a long time.”
— Winona LaDuke
GET INSPIRED:
PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Find inspiration in stories of people who developed agency and leadership through serving their campus and communities.
Dexter Henderson is from Long Beach, California. He has been involved with the Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center (CAD), an office that serves the UC Santa Cruz community by providing student-run theater productions that address contemporary and sociopolitical issues, for the entirety of his undergraduate career. Currently, he serves as the Chancellor’s Undergraduate Intern for CAD. For Dexter, theater is a road for social change. After graduating, he hopes to pursue his M.F.A. in arts leadership.
He steals souls and everything,” Dexter said. “It was funny because I grew up in the church and here I was on stage playing the devil and my mom was gasping in the audience. It was fun, there was such a dynamic feel to it.”

Dexter discovered theater when he was a senior at Compton High School and needed a visual and performing arts class his last semester to graduate. The final season of his competitive swimming career, which dominated most of his extracurricular hours since the time he was five years old, had ended and he made the dive from the pool to the stage.

He continued to find a sense of family and community on the stage, but this time 300 miles up the coast from his hometown of Long Beach, California through UC Santa Cruz’s Rainbow Theater — the only multicultural student-led and student-initiated theater troupe in the University of California system. Rainbow Theater, along with the African American Theater Arts Troupe (AATAT), is housed under the Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center (CAD).

Dexter says through CAD, students band together to tell their stories — stories that aren’t picked for them, but deeply resonate with them. In CAD, students decide what performances to put on, and agree on how that production fits into the mission and vision of the troupes. Dexter said deciding what stories to tell and how they want to tell them is crucial in sustaining the organization’s mission for current and future students.

“The choice [of what plays we produce] is the choice of the students, and it’s part of the mission that we control,”
“The choice [of what plays we put on] is the choice of the students, and it’s part of the mission that we control. It’s not like with my major where staff sit in a room deciding what show we do, and students show up to audition.”

Dexter said. “It’s not like with my major where staff sit in a room deciding what shows are produced, and students show up to audition.”

This year he will serve as an alternate on the CAD Board of Directors, which is comprised of seven undergraduates who make collective decisions for the CAD resource center and two theater troupes. These students “believe in the heart, the mission and the vision” of their organization, Dexter said, and commit to countless hours of volunteered time, not because they’re asked to or they have to, but because they want to.

CAD is also an outlet for students to enrich cultural dialogue on campus, and increase student input and awareness of cultural and historical theater productions. “CAD is really unique in that it opened my eyes to world theater,” Dexter said. “I was so well versed in typical western theater — Shakespeare, Ibsen, but who’s writing about me? The first play I was in through CAD was ‘The Colored Museum’ by George C. Wolfe, and it was snapshots of the black experience.”

He said a play like “The Colored Museum,” which is drenched in satire by Wolfe, an African American playwright, was a difficult piece to grasp because of the combination of reinforced stereotypes, themes and identities of African-American culture.

“It was just hard to perform, period. It was hard to read, it was hard to be in it,” Dexter said.

Through his role in “The Colored Museum” the first quarter of his freshman year, Dexter met Jessica Jones, the director of the play. With peer-to-peer collaboration on and off the stage, she developed into one of his closest mentors, and friends.

“To this day I credit Jessica with every experience I’ve had, everything I have, and everything I will do in the future,” Dexter said, pointing to a larger sense of gratitude he developed through CAD.

He remembers Jessica checking in on him throughout the play’s run, and after the curtain dropped, the calls didn’t stop. The motto Dexter picked up from CAD director Don Williams and uses as a guiding principle is “count it all joy,” and he strives to embody it everyday. It’s about looking for the minute details that can lead to happiness in a seemingly overwhelming situation. It’s something that Dexter says doesn’t come naturally to him, but a quality that his mentors, whether staff members or students, have empowered him to have.

“That’s the spirit [my mentors] have about themselves, always happy, always willing to help out, always willing to be a listening ear,” he said.

Don created AATAT out of a need vocalized by students. In collaboration with students, he worked to create a space for students of color to participate in theater that explored their own stories.

Jessica and Don, empowered Dexter to become a mentor himself — something he never imagined would happen four years ago as a freshman.

“They have huge hearts,” Dexter said of Jessica and Don. “Hearts that can hold oceans. As I’ve grown into a leadership role, there are people who have come up to me and told me I’m a good person, a decent person, and they like me for who I am and want to learn from me. The more I connect and mentor, the easier it gets. My heart’s becoming larger, it can probably hold a lake, a small lake, a one-boat lake.”

Along with his work ethic, which earned him a spot on the Dean’s Honor List last year, Dexter’s sense of humor follows him wherever he goes. A biology major turned theater arts student, Dexter is preparing for a career off the screen with his eyes on a M.F.A. in arts leadership.

“When it’s all over, after it’s all said and done, and the curtain has dropped and the smoke is cleared, I want to have been a producer of theater. I don’t like being on stage, I like watching theater happen, and making sure it can happen,” he said, “and I love what it can do.”

“That’s the spirit [my mentors] have about themselves — always happy, always willing to help out, always willing to be a listening ear.”
Kalwis Lo serves as the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Scholarship America. In his role he represents the voice of the private sector in improving higher education opportunities for students in high need communities. Kalwis earned a B.A. in politics and a minor in education at UC Santa Cruz. Throughout his undergraduate career he was involved in a variety of campus organizations and also served two years as student body president.
Kalwis had already come so far. He was the first in his family to go to college. It had been his parents’ dream — though, like many working class, immigrant parents, they didn’t have the ability to actively support him academically. They worked long hours in sewing factories to pay bills and put food on the table for their children. But they encouraged Kalwis and the values they taught him gave him courage. With the support of high school teachers and counselors Kalwis was able to find out about waivers for things his family could not afford and deadlines for federal student aid.

Not only did Kalwis make it to college, he became student body president for UC Santa Cruz. It was another dream come true. As a child, Kalwis would listen to his grandfather talk about his life as a community leader and mayor in Vietnam. Kalwis dreamt of becoming leader like his grandfather, but the reality was he could hardly speak up in his grade school classes. “I thought of myself as shy and timid. It didn’t help that I never saw public figures or even actors that looked like me. Subconsciously it made me believe I wasn’t good enough for anything or deserved the things I wanted.”

Kalwis had arrived at UC Santa Cruz, focused on academics and personal growth. Walking by a student...
“I’m really motivated by my life experiences to do the best I can to create pathways for others to succeed.”

government table, he was recruited to help register students to vote. Kalwis figured it was a good way to contribute and learn new skills without getting too involved. But his peers encouraged him to be an intern and he began learning about issues of college access and affordability. He found himself working alongside inspiring student organizers in the UC Student Association (UCSA) and U.S. Student Association (USSA), lobbying state and federal officials.

When one of his peer mentors asked Kalwis to run for student body president, he could not imagine being in such a high profile position. But student government meetings were getting contentious and other students encouraged him to run so Kalwis decided to take the challenge. “I knew I had good mentors at SOMeCA who would be honest with me and work with me day-to-day. Looking back, I can’t imagine what life would be like for me if I had turned down this role. I would not be effective as a professional if it weren’t for the skills I learned working through the challenges of student government. It changed my life.”

Kalwis ran as a Progressive Student candidate and won the presidency. As the chair for student government meetings, he felt a particular responsibility to bring students together in order to fight for access and affordability. “I made it a priority to listen to what others had to say even if I disagreed with them. I worked at becoming a better facilitator and public speaker and worked in collaboration with other student leaders.” Kalwis became known for his optimism, inclusive leadership, and ability to build consensus. He gained the respect of students across the campus and easily won re-election the following year.

Back home, lying in bed and watching the news to keep up with politics, Kalwis saw the House of Representatives take action to undo the Affordable Care Act (ACA). He remembered mobilizing UCSC student in 2010 to urge California’s senators to support the higher education component of the legislation. As he researched the ACA further, he discovered California had contracted with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide medical coverage to individuals with pre-existing conditions. Kalwis had found a way to obtain health insurance, which ultimately saved his life.

His battle with cancer and insurance companies made Kalwis even more determined to work for access and equity. “My ability to obtain health coverage and complete chemotherapy treatments was no accident. First, it was due to thousands of people who made sure the ACA became a reality. Second, it was due to my getting an education. Too many low-income families lack access to education and to vital information and resources. I know from personal experience: a college education can save your life.”

Although still regaining his strength, Kalwis was determined to do something meaningful for students across the country. He left home to accept the position of USSA Legislative Director in Washington, DC. Kalwis brought energy and collaborative skills to his work on important legislation. He represented students in negotiating the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act (passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama) and played key roles in regulatory processes through the U.S. Department of Education. For Kalwis, his work in the capitol has been another dream.

“Who would’ve thought that someone like me would have the opportunity to shape laws and regulations that directly affect millions of students?”

Kalwis now serves as the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Scholarship America, where he is responsible for running the operations of its Washington, D.C. office and advancing its public policy agenda. This includes working with the White House on key education initiatives around federal student aid and college affordability and with Members of Congress to address the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

“My parents often tell me that it’s incredible that they went from almost losing me to witnessing all the work I’m doing now. It hasn’t been easy, but I’m really motivated by my life experiences to do the best I can to create pathways for others to succeed.”

“I made it a priority to listen to what others had to say even if I disagreed with them. I worked at becoming a better facilitator and public speaker and worked in collaboration with other student leaders.”
Rafael López graduated from UC Santa Cruz as a first-generation college student in 1994 and was deeply involved as a student organizer. Upon graduation, he found politics as an effective platform to advocate for issues with which his own family struggled. His work serving underrepresented children and families in under-resourced communities brought him to the White House, and now to his current presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed role as Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
Rafael shared personal details of his family’s struggle — from his mother’s journey from Mexico to Watsonville, California to become a migrant farmworker and cannery worker, to surviving domestic violence. He wanted the Senators to have a glimpse of the life experiences that shaped his career in human services and which drive him to work for social justice.

Rafael spoke about his life not to garner sympathy. He spoke as a leader who stays intently rooted in his family and community while tackling the politics, policies, and legislation that affect their lives.

“When I am in a meeting and I’m talking about rules and regulations and policy related to domestic violence, I don’t approach the work from an abstract perspective. I absolutely can recite to you the data and the statistics and the theoretical context in which families struggle. That’s all important. But when I step back, it’s my lived experience in addition to my academic and professional training that grounds and shapes my understanding of the world and the work,” Rafael said.

Rafael is the eldest of four children. As early as elementary school, he worked hard to buy school supplies, clothes for himself and helped take care of his siblings. He was a newspaper boy, a gardener, an apple-sorter on a local farm and worked many roles in restaurants. “My whole life I was surrounded by people who worked very hard and struggled to make ends meet, and that’s what I did too,” Rafael said.

Rafael continued to build his skills and sense of agency, becoming the first in his family to graduate from high school and go to college. He excelled academically and was selected as a teaching assistant for American Studies and

Testifying before the United States Senate Finance Committee on April 23, 2015, Rafael López shared a part of his family’s story. It was a courageous presentation. The Senate was considering Rafael's nomination by President Obama to serve as the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. How would the Senators receive his testimony?

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Community Studies classes, all while serving as a student organizer of educational campaigns, cultural festivals, and academic recognition ceremonies.

“I learned it, I did it, and sometimes I failed at it. Then I taught it in informal ways, simply spreading the word or supporting my friends and peers by saying ‘we can do this, it’s possible,’” Rafael said.

Rafael brought these lessons and organizing skills to his volunteer work for congressional and state assembly electoral campaigns. At first it was intimidating to walk up to strangers’ doors, and get a door quite literally slammed in his face. But Rafael soon found that he had an ability to connect with his neighbors and to encourage many low-income and Spanish-speaking citizens to vote even though they had never been contacted by a political campaign before. In 1999, a grassroots campaign elected Rafael to the City Council of Watsonville, California. He walked the neighborhoods and met with residents, working day-to-day to include their voices in the decisions of the city.

While on the City Council, Rafael also served as the founding Executive Director of the non-profit, First Five Santa Cruz County. He worked tirelessly to ensure that health and education were prioritized in the first five years of life for all children. His team helped launch a first-ever universal health care program, serving all children in the county. Rafael’s drive and dedication was well-known throughout the region.

“I was once a client of programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,” Rafael said in his testimony to the Senate. “While no one program is perfect, I know they change futures, because they changed my family’s.”

In 2004, Rafael left his native Watsonville to attend graduate school at Harvard University, after which he returned to California to serve in government executive roles in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In 2009, Rafael moved east to serve as the President and CEO of The Family League of Baltimore City. There, he worked with community organizations, local and state government to launch new initiatives to reduce infant mortality, expand after school programs and reengage juvenile justice involved youth in school and work. He helped parents connect to substance abuse treatment, mental health services and supportive housing so that they could safely reconnect with their children who had been removed by the court and placed in foster care. He was recruited to serve as an Associate Director for the Annie E. Casey Foundation which focuses nationally on children at risk of poor educational, economic, social and health outcomes.

Rafael’s work in Watsonville, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Baltimore brought him to the attention of the White House. Soon after, Rafael had the opportunity to escort his mother through the West Wing. An underlying focus on public service and justice drives Rafael to make a difference — and to give back to young people who have similar lived experiences and want to make a difference in the world. He wants young people to be propelled by their own passion, to use their own struggle as a platform to take a stand and bring about the change they seek.

“There’s so much room and opportunity to bring about change through active engagement. To not be engaged would be a shame in terms of your total education experience,” Rafael said. “The learning is happening on multiple levels — inside the classroom, outside the classroom, in the dorms, in the apartments, in the community — all driven by your interests, passion, and energy. You can begin to make a difference in the areas you care about.”

Growing up, Rafael was always taught “to work hard no matter what you do.” Rafael embodies a pride in his family and his community that sparks real change.

“I have a responsibility to help others, especially young people, understand that they are powerful,” he said. “To say to others, ‘I’m just like you. You, too, can do this. You have in you the power and potential to do extraordinary things. How can I help you get there? How can I help you understand that you, too, can work at the White House? You, too, can be nominated by the President of the United States and be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. It’s possible.’”
Michael Mott graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a literature degree in 2013, headed for Columbia University to study journalism. He took the leadership skills he developed as Editor-in-Chief of his undergraduate newspaper across the coast and continues to give back to every community he is a part of. Michael currently works as a reporter in Northern California, where his coverage focuses on building community interest in journalism.
At the end of Michael Mott’s last all-staff meeting as Editor-in-Chief of UC Santa Cruz’s weekly newspaper, *City on a Hill Press* (CHP), he had all 50 staff members gather in a circle and hold hands.

“What are you grateful for from this experience?” he asked, and one by one students went around and shared how being on the student-led, student-driven newspaper changed them — in whatever way felt closest to their hearts.

Michael wanted to leave the staff on notes of kindness and gratitude — two things that he learned to value, but sometimes through periods of sadness in his life. “Readers remember your last word, and staffs remember your last word,” he said. When his father passed away Michael’s second year away from home at Santa Cruz, he reflected on his father’s virtue of kindness, and how he could embody that trait going forward.

“Gratitude is a way through for a lot of pain and suffering, if we think back to what we’re grateful for, it reminds us how lucky we are,” Michael said.

He prioritized fostering a safe space within CHP, where students felt they could contribute and have their voices heard. Whether students were brand new to the field of journalism, or from an underrepresented community at UCSC, Michael valued direct peer-to-peer communication in his leadership style.

“So often people don’t get an opportunity to try new things,” Michael said. “They haven’t gotten a chance to try because public education weeds out uncertainty and curiosity, and I think those are the people who want to change the world and are going to change the world.”

Michael graduated from UCSC with a B.A. in modern literature in 2013, and left the beach town a couple of months later for New York City after being accepted to...
“Through the Student Agency Model I feel a lot more awake in the world. I pay a lot more attention to how cultures are developed in workplaces and how things get done.”

one of the top-ranked journalism graduate programs in the nation — Columbia University. There, he focused on data journalism and gaining experience in coding, which he hadn’t studied before.

He carried his experience taking an active role in his education at UCSC to Columbia, and when he saw something in the program that he thought wasn’t right, he sought to change it.

“Through the Student Agency Model I feel a lot more awake in the world,” Michael said. “I pay a lot more attention to how cultures are developed in workplaces and how things get done. My experience with student agency allowed me to question authority. At Columbia, I questioned how the school was doing things digitally, but instead of just sitting in my room and complaining about it, I emailed the top people and asked to talk to them about it.”

Michael was frustrated that students, like himself, who entered the university with little to no coding experience, didn’t have a clear introductory path into the field. He wrote a report on how news organizations are being more innovative in creating new forms of storytelling for journalists with varying levels of web and writing experience.

“Standing up for his values is a quality Michael engaged with throughout his undergraduate career. When he became a leader of CHP, he heard stories of times the newspaper had been insensitive in its coverage — or lack thereof — of underrepresented communities on campus. Michael took the initiative to reach out to the leaders of Cultural Arts and Diversity resource center (CAD) to bridge the gap between Student Media and identity-based organizations.

With his guiding principle of kindness in mind, Michael approached ethnic organizations from a place of genuine inquiry — a desire to learn more about different organizations’ programming and represent their stories sensitively and accurately. As he always says, “At end of the day what matters most is what we do for each other.” The connections he made taught other students the value of understanding each other and each other’s work.

“Michael’s the first one to offer help when students are explaining a project they’re working on, or give advice if they are problem solving a situation. He gives back because he’s a person who holds his values close to his heart — and the personal transformation he experienced through student agency is something he is reminded of everyday. “Having agency allows you the opportunity to be something,” Michael said. “It’s other people giving you a chance when you might not have had a chance before.”

“So often people don’t get an opportunity to try new things. They haven’t gotten a chance to try because public education weeds out uncertainty and curiosity, and I think those are the people who want to change the world and are going to change the world.”
Lauren Porter left her hometown of Irvine, California to go to UC Santa Cruz and pursue two degrees in biochemistry and environmental studies. Along with her demanding academic course load, she’s served as a student leader in multiple spaces, including Kappa Kappa Gamma, Inter-Greek Council, Greek-Letter Expansion Council, and the women’s club soccer team. Lauren currently works at a biotech company, where she hopes to use her knowledge to improve environmental conditions for people around the world.
Instead, Lauren embraces the Student Agency Model, where asking questions is encouraged, and reevaluation solves problems and strengthens programs. Through multiple organizations, Lauren has fostered spaces where students are encouraged to speak up and suggest new things, or question old ones.

She realized the potential of student voice through her participation in the UCSC Greek-Letter community which practices student agency to unite organizations with widely varying ideas, opinions, and missions. The Greek-Letter Expansion Council, which consists of five students and two advisors all with equal voting power, was considering a proposal to expand Greek Life with new organizations. The vote to approve the expansion came down to 5-2 — it just happened the two opposed were the two staff advisors on the board.

The students expected the decision to be overturned. They figured that when it came down to the final policy,
“You have to work really hard in any space you’re in. You can’t just sit back and think that something is going to come to me really easily. You have to be more than just on top of your work, but willing to put in extra effort — you have to take initiative.”

those in authority would decide what is so. When the staff supported the democratic process and upheld the decision, the students realized they truly were in charge of their programs. Their opinions and decisions mattered. It changed the way Lauren thought about her role as a leader, and the power students have to direct their programs — but not without dedication and collaboration.

“You have to work really hard in any space you’re in,” Lauren said. “You can’t just sit back and think that something is going to come to me really easily. You have to be more than just on top of your work, but willing to put in extra effort — you have to take initiative.”

Following Expansion Council’s decision, Lauren was voted in as the council’s president, and the same year was also the women’s club soccer team’s president. Whether they were organization advisors, women on the team and in her sorority, or her parents, Lauren relied on mentors to learn from and grow into her leadership roles while balancing a demanding academic course load.

“Inspiring others has always been the principle of student agency that I’ve identified with the most,” Lauren said. “You need to support the people after you because no one gets where they are just by themselves. They all have had help along the way.”

When Lauren sat down for her interview at Santa Cruz Biotechnology, she knew her academics were strong, but that they wouldn’t stand out from other applicants of a competitive laboratory job. A biochemistry and environmental studies major, Lauren chose a different emphasis for her interview — her experience through student agency and leadership gained through a vast array of extracurricular activities.

When fielding interview questions for her dream job at a local research facility, she spoke about what was closest to her heart — collective vision.

“We had a talk about mentorship, about my time with the soccer team and how I’ve been building up my organization so that it could continue on,” Lauren said. “I’ve learned you can’t just do something and let it drop and fall away. He was really impressed that I had these views already in mind coming into a business.”

Lauren has worked at the biotech company for almost two years now, and continues to suggest new ideas or processes when she sees room for improvement. She balances efficiency and effectiveness, never losing sight of the people she works with and what their input on a situation is.

“It’s the confidence that people have like given me throughout my college experience that has led me to be a leader,” Lauren said. “I love sitting and talking with people and throwing out the ideas and combining them with other people’s ideas to come up with innovative programs.”

“Inspiring others has always been the principle of student agency that I’ve identified with the most. You need to support the people after you because no one gets where they are just by themselves. They all have had help along the way.”
Saoimanu Sope is from Long Beach, California. While at UC Santa Cruz, she has served as a student leader for Oakes, one of the campus’ 10 residential colleges, interned under the Chancellor’s Undergraduate Internship Program, and was a member of Engaging Education’s Board of Directors for her work in academic retention and student-initiated outreach. Aside from making her family and church proud, Saoimanu strives to use her skill set in storytelling through film to effectively represent and respond to the needs of her Pacific Islander community.
Saoimanu “Saoi” Sope and her two best friends were inseparable during the first term of their freshman year at UC Santa Cruz. They were three of 31 Pacific Islander students at a university of over 15,000 undergraduates in 2011. They did everything together, and Saoi related more to them because of a shared ethnic identity.

“We felt like we were in this huge ocean, and we were the three fish in a school of all kinds of fish,” Saoi said. “I wouldn’t have to explain myself so much. With my other friends who I met I was refrained from saying certain things, or thinking a certain way because I felt like it could be interpreted as me not being smart. With them, I was at ease about saying whatever was on my mind without having to monitor or police myself.”

Just a few months into their first year, Saoi’s best friends left the university. One dropped out after being placed on academic probation, and the other decided to transfer to another university.

Three years later, Saoi experienced the same sense of loss when two underclassmen interns for the Community Unified Student Network (CUSN) — a peer retention program dedicated to the Asian American/Pacific Islander community — dropped out of the university due to financial struggles. The program is housed under Engaging Education (e²), UCSC’s Student-Initiated Outreach and Retention Center for student engagement and academic excellence.

CUSN was Saoi’s way to give back to her community. As a first-generation college student, and one of 12 siblings, Saoi saw needs in her community — ranging from accessing higher education, navigating financial aid, and graduating college. She continually works to strengthen programs at UCSC to address those needs.

Saoi kept in mind something e²’s staff advisor, Marienne
“The work doesn’t stop when you get admitted to college. It doesn’t stop when you get an acceptance letter and you move into your dorm.”

“Yenyen” Cuisón, told her many times before — this wasn’t about two CUSN interns dropping out, it’s a much larger issue their community is facing. It’s about people of color being pushed out of the university in different ways and forms, and on a system-wide level.

“I cried,” Saoi said. “It was very hard for me because I was seeing my people come and finish their first year, and then maybe they got further than their first year, and I would be so excited, and then their second or third year, they get pushed out.”

But it’s instances where Saoi sees her people and her friends come so far in their educational pursuit, and then not graduate that keeps her dedicated to her work in retention. When her friends left the university first year, she realized that retention is a different challenge for Pacific Islander students and other students of color. She said using the Student Agency Model, “students create and maintain change despite any outside forces that may going against them.”

Saoi says getting into school is one thing, but graduating from school is an entirely different story. She compares it to “how we maintain ourselves while running a race — it’s about how long we can last, not about if you get a chance to run the race, but if we get to the finish line.”

“The work doesn’t stop when you get admitted to college,” Saoi said. “It doesn’t stop when you get an acceptance letter and you move into your dorm. The work continues on, and not that it stops, but we know that we reach our goal when our people get their degrees and actually walk across the stage.”

Saoi’s dedication to education is a value she’s held from a young age, but something she didn’t know how to share with peers until she became involved in CUSN. In middle school, even though Saoi went to a diverse school in Long Beach, California, she felt like an outsider. The majority of her friends were Samoan, but they didn’t take school as seriously as she did. Saoi enjoyed being in class and turning in her homework on time, unlike most of her friends.

“I came from family where they prioritized taking care of each other instead of furthering their education, and I have respect for being able to do that,” Saoi said. “My ability to be in a position where I can financially go to college even though I’m taking out loans and on financial aid is allowing my experience to be lived through my family. I actually like the idea that I’m doing all these things that my family never got to do because they don’t want me to do the things they do. They want me to do more, and that definitely keeps me grounded but it also allows me to stay hungry and stay positive and motivated.”

She made an intentional decision to go to a high school with few to no Pacific Islanders, because she said she didn’t want to continuously be discouraged for her academic rigor. She soon became the first Samoan to graduate Port of Los Angeles High School.

But after transitioning to UCSC — where she rarely saw Pacific Islanders on campus — her choice to separate herself from her community in high school was a decision she began to look back on with regret. “In college was when it really sank in that I went from intentionally going to a high school where there were no Pacific Islanders to actually going to a university where I had expected more of my people to be present at and they just weren’t,” Saoi said.

Her work for e² has also inspired her goals beyond graduation. Saoi aims to start her own non-profit organization similar to e² to address issues surrounding retention and academic excellence, and to increase AA/PI representation in higher education. She plans to use film as a platform for social change, and to engage diverse communities.

“My main goal is to leave my position as a student organizer and feel comfortable,” Saoi said. “I want to leave knowing that everything is completely in good hands, and I feel that way now, but I want to feel even better about it before I leave.”

“My ability to be in a position where I can financially go to college even though I’m taking out loans and on financial aid is allowing my experience to be lived through my family.”
Don Williams brings over 35 years of experience in theater production, performance, and mentorship to his role as Artistic Director of the Cultural Arts and Diversity resource center (CAD). He is the founder, producer, and director of the African American Theater Arts Troupe and Rainbow Theater, which offer diverse, empowering theater performances to the campus and to underresourced high schools throughout California. He earned his B.A. in theater arts with a minor in telecommunications at Michigan State University and studied directing and theater history at the University of Southern California.
Since then, Don has developed a knack for moving past the barriers and disregards. When he was in high school, his counselor told him he wasn’t “college material.” His response: attending Michigan State for his B.A. in theater, followed by the University of Southern California for his M.F.A. in directing.

Don kept hearing the words “I can’t” or “you’re not,” but he wouldn’t let the words affect him. It was a similar circumstance that led him to theater. “You can’t stop me from acting, because I’m going to act. You can’t stop me from allowing other people to act, because I’m going to make it happen.”

Don didn’t come to UC Santa Cruz with the intent of starting African American and multicultural theater troupes. But in 1991, the African American Theater Arts Troupe (AATAT), was established out of a simple, but
“If you want to be truly blessed, learn to uplift someone higher than yourself.”

significant request. “I had these students, African American students, coming to me saying: ‘We want to act too. Can you help us, Mr. Williams?’” Don explained, “It was a calling. It was a straight out calling.”

Their frustration was familiar to Don. “It was like deja vu for me being at Michigan State,” where Don started his own theater troupe because, on a campus of nearly 50,000 students, there wasn’t a single theater program focused on supporting performers of color.

“There were plenty of stories to choose from, but folks were more comfortable doing plays they were familiar with — from their own background, their own history,” he said.

“They really wanted this in their heart, they wanted this in their soul, to be able to express themselves, to learn about each other, and to have the opportunities to showcase materials done by their own communities.”

Productions by and for African American students were simply “not happening,” so the students and Don sacrificed whatever spare time they had — neither received pay or credit at the time. Together, they were resourceful. Rehearsals were held wherever space was available — dorms, lounges or during unreserved time at the college event center. The troupe scoured the campus for anything available that could prove useful for a performance — lighting, props, costumes, setting — because they didn’t have a budget.

“When we first started with Rainbow and AATAT, we charged a small entrance fee,” but that money went straight to bringing in professional shows performed by actors and actresses of color. “We needed to let folks on this campus know that the arts of color mean something and that we have value and that we’re professionals. If you don’t know it, you need to see it because I’m seeing it.”

The productions provided students of color a chance to see people they could identify with in professional theater and hear stories about their histories, as well as an educational opportunity for the campus. After their 1993 production of the "Amen Corner," a play by James Baldwin that focuses on the trials endured by a single mother who finds her calling as a pastor in a Pentecostal church, more students — Asian American, Pacific Islander and Chicano/Latino students — approached Don, wanting to do something similar.

Don’s ability to recognize talent, and empower students to tighten their skills and enrich their college experience is what has fostered the deep sense of belonging students feel at Cultural Arts and Diversity resource center (CAD). Whether through performances, academic credit, or scholarships, Don and the CAD student leaders work together to serve their community and provide a creative outlet.

“There’s an inward drive to me to make sure that talents are put to flight,” Don said. “It’s not about money. It’s just about the belief of the mind that I can do it. If you’re determined in your heart and soul, and you come out trying to serve, somebody’s going to put something in your hand.”

His compassion for students is one that can’t be missed. Whether it’s asking a student if they need to talk, or encouraging a student to pursue their passion for acting, Don remembers what his coach told him decades ago — “you can do it.” Like Don often says to his students, “If you want to be truly blessed, learn to uplift someone higher than yourself.”

“You can’t stop me from acting, because I’m going to act. You can’t stop me from allowing other people to act, because I’m going to make it happen.”
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was developed through countless dialogues among students, staff, faculty, and alumni of UC Santa Cruz. It is based on the groundwork of thousands of students who participated in UCSC’s student organizations with generosity and dedication.

Special thanks are due to Kalwis Lo and Commissioner Tiffany Dena Loftin. These two alumni of UCSC have served as advocates and visionaries for the Student Agency Model of SOMeCA, nurturing its growth and value to our society. Even though they each have busy schedules and responsibilities in national organizations, they continue to find time to listen to each student and staff member. They are our role models of true leaders that never lose their humility, courage, and compassion.

Special thanks to Chancellor George Blumenthal and Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor Alison Galloway for their support for student-initiated projects and student leadership. The Chancellor’s support for Engaging Education — a leading student organization — has promoted student agency in the design of programs that promote diversity and retention.

This toolkit project would not be possible without the generous support of faculty, including Dr. Rodney Ogawa who encouraged our research and sponsored the first Action Research Group class, in which students and staff studied elements of student agency. UCSC faculty and alumni faculty that contributed to the review and development of this document are included at the conclusion of this document.

The work team that gathered feedback from students, staff, and alumni are owed special appreciation. This group wrote and rewrote, designed and redesigned based on suggestions and critiques. They remained open and inclusive throughout the collective process. Many thanks to Keiera Bradley, Cory Fong, Sayo Fujioka, Alexa Lomberg, Arlan Mendiola, videographer Scott Leiserson, and consulting alumna Dr. Belinda Lum.

Two other teams made key contributions to the development of the content and design. SOMeCA’s Student Organization Leadership Body is made up of a dedicated group of student leaders who met through the summer, coming to campus after full days of classes and work. The SOMeCA Alumni Advisory Board represents alumni from the 1990s to the recent graduates of 2015. For the past three years, its members have driven and flown back to UCSC from throughout the country for retreats and meetings to discuss the Student Agency Model. Their dedication to mentoring students and sustaining the services of the SOMeCA office has been invaluable. The names of those serving on the Student Organization Leadership Body and the SOMeCA Alumni Advisory Board are included at the conclusion of this document.

In the spirit of the Student Agency Model, this toolkit is the product of a truly collaborative and intergenerational effort.
CONTRIBUTORS

STUDENT ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP BODY

Keiera Bradley is a native of South Central Los Angeles and a third-year at UCSC studying psychology and feminist studies. She has coordinated an outreach program, Destination Higher Education and is the 2015-16 co-chair of the Afrikan Black Student Alliance. Her interests include breaking down stigmas in the black community, specifically around mental health and within higher education, as well as the admittance and retention of Afrikan/Black/Caribbean students in spaces catered to a predominately white population through the creation of cultural spaces and events.

Jabari Brown is a fifth-year studying psychology and is the current Vice President of Internal Affairs for the Student Union Assembly. In this role, he oversees student life to ensure that students are participating in campus-wide committees, boards, and task forces. He is motivated by the success of others and wants to contribute as much of himself in projects that further the success of other students. Jabari firmly believes that the work that he does is not only for himself, but for the generations that will come after him.

Guillermo Carrillo is a fifth-year history major with a minor in education from Oakland, California. He was involved in Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán (MEChA) as student-initiated outreach coordinator and currently serves as a co-chair for Engaging Education (e2), a student-run and student-initiated outreach and retention center. He is interested in learning about people from varying backgrounds and experiences and building community.

Adlemy Garcia grew up in Guadalajara Jalisco, Mexico. At the age of 12, she immigrated to the U.S. and has lived in Compton, the Mission district and other parts of California. Through her experience in dealing with issues surrounding underresourced communities she saw higher education as a way of gaining knowledge to serve her communities. As an undergraduate, Adlemy was part of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán and was Engaging Education’s co-chair. She received a B.A. in Feminist studies with a concentration in law, politics and social change and psychology.

Dexter Henderson is a fourth-year theater arts major from Long Beach, California. He has been involved with the Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center (CAD) for the entirety of his undergraduate career. He currently serves as the Chancellor’s Undergraduate Intern for the CAD. For Dexter, theater is a road for social change. Dexter hopes to pursue his M.F.A. in arts leadership upon completion of his degree at UCSC.

Olivia Johansen is an art and film double major interested in pursuing fashion photography. She loves capturing people’s personalities and stories through the photographs she takes. Olivia views photography not only as an outlet to express opinions and thoughts, but to also express what’s happening in the communities that she’s a part of. She is an active member of Student Media, having been a leader for an on-campus live comedy television organization called On The Spot, as well as working on the equipment team that serves all Student Media members.

Alexa Lomberg is the co-Editor-in-Chief of UCSC’s student-run weekly newspaper, City on a Hill Press. She has been involved with SOMeCA through Student Media since her freshman year, also as a designer for the Third World and Native American Student Collective Press, and a member of Media Council’s Diversity and Media subcommittee. She is passionate about sensitively and fairly representing the communities and people she writes about. Alexa is a fourth-year literature major who hopes to pursue a career in journalism after graduation.

Rahul Patel is the Business Assistant at UCSC’s student-and-staff-run Student Organization Advising and Resources office on campus. There, he has held several positions and advocates for the practice of student leadership in the workplace. He is a third-year computer science major and is involved in the Indian Student Association. His interests include promoting student-staff interaction in the office, event programming, and exercising outdoors. After graduation Rahul hopes to find a software engineering job where he can apply leadership concepts he has learned in SOMeCA.

Lauren Porter has pursued many interests at UCSC: from being outdoors and playing on the school’s club soccer team to participating in the chemistry club and pursuing her degrees in biochemistry and environmental studies. When she joined Kappa Kappa Gamma during her sophomore year, Lauren became aware of the power student’s hold in making the most of their college
experience. Since then, Lauren has been involved in organizations and programs school-wide that offer the skills that she believes are necessary in making a difference in the world.

Heer Purewal is the 2015-2016 Inter-Greek Council President and 2015-2016 Fundraiser for Kappa Gamma Delta. She is a neuroscience major currently working on disease ecology research and aspires to become a surgeon. Heer is motivated by the promotion of Greek Letter Organization unity as well as the expansion of Greek Letter Organizations. She encourages student leadership, believing that GLOs are prime examples of students managing, funding, and utilizing their own interests through the Student Agency Model.

Madeleine Turner grew up in La Verne, California. As a kid, she loved nature and catching critters. Eventually this love translated into a passion for environmentalism. She is motivated by having a sense of responsibility to her community and fellow humans. Madeleine has been an organizer with Education for Sustainable Living Program since fall 2012. Currently she is helping compile the 2016-2017 Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus. She hopes that her peers will use the Student Agency Model to address sustainability issues on-campus and beyond.

Nazareth Velazco grew up in Moreno Valley, California and is first generation college student. She is currently a third-year at UCSC, seeking to major in community studies and economics. She has been active with the Education for Sustainable Living Program and Student Alliance of North American Indians. Nazareth finds it necessary to be a part of the environmental and social justice movements, as these movements intersect with one another. Her biggest motivations are her family and friends, as well as contributing to better her community.

SOMeCA STAFF
Kari Bauer has served as a leader and manager for both non-profit and private businesses, departments, office operations, budgets and human resources. Kari enjoys building teams and making improvements wherever she works, from Peet’s to California Polytechnic State University to Bugaboo Mountain Sports. At UCSC, Kari’s energy and creativity resulted in streamlined processes for students and lightened workloads for staff. Kari earned her B.A. in foreign languages at Lewis and Clark College where she helped found an outreach program for Russian immigrant youth aspiring to enter college.

Katherine Canales grew up in Hollywood, California. As an undergraduate, she helped organize statewide conferences and film festivals while earning her B.A. in international politics at UCSC. In 2002, Katherine was caught in a devastating earthquake while visiting El Salvador. She put her organizing talent to work and developed effective community-based disaster relief programs. Katherine returned home to serve as a mentor for low-income, first generation college students for the Upward Bound/TRIO Program at the University of Southern California.

Yenyen Cuison is the Organizing Director for Engaging Education. During a field study in San Francisco, Yenyen was inspired to become active in her community. She worked for Public Allies, helping to found the Anakbayan Silicon Valley youth organization, and traveled to the Philippines. Yenyen served as coordinator for student-initiated retention programs while earning her B.A. in community studies at UCSC. Yenyen stays connected to the Bay Area Filipino community, most recently organizing typhoon relief and support for the immigrant community.

Cory Fong was born and raised in Sacramento, California. Before joining SOMeCA as a Program Manager, he pursued a B.A. in literature while serving as an editor and reporter for five years in various collegiate publications, including UCSC’s student-run newspaper, City on a Hill Press. As a student mediamaker, Cory focused on developing practices that promote critical-thinking and collaboration within a newsroom, building relationships with campus communities, and challenging himself and his peers to research and write about underrepresented communities in ways that confront stereotypes prevalent in mainstream media.

Sayo Fujioka has deep roots in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas and UCSC, where she earned a degree in sociology. Before serving as SOMeCA Director, Sayo managed successful electoral campaigns. She was recruited to UCSC to design leadership trainings, then served as a student organization adviser. Sayo attributes her love of collaborative, fast-paced environments to 10 years in the Bay Area restaurant industry, including serving as a Field Representative for the hotel and restaurant union. Currently Sayo also works with a non-profit producing citywide cultural festivals in Watsonville.

Francisco Galvan was a Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholar and a Rotary International leader in his hometown of Hawthorne, California. He served as a Bilingual Instructional Technician for English Language Learners while simultaneously building his financial and management skills in a retail
corporation. Through his work, Francisco developed a keen appreciation for fiscal processes and the creativity involved in increasing financial efficiencies. Francisco earned his degree in literature at UCSC and served as a mentor for his Greek Letter Organization.

Angela Harris joined SOMeCA in 2013 after serving as Outreach and Development Manager at a non-profit organization in New Mexico, which empowers youth to develop socially just and environmentally sustainable communities. Angela also served as Volunteer Coordinator for a domestic violence shelter in the Santa Fe, addressing the presence of violence in the community. As an undergraduate, Angela was an organizer for the Student Environmental Center and the Campus Sustainability Council at UCSC, where she received her B.A. in environmental studies and biology.

Scott Leiserson serves as Student Media Assistant Director and Broadcast Advisor, teaching and advising students in key technical, organizational, and legal aspects of broadcast production. As a longtime leader for sports teams and youth groups, Scott trained and mentored hundreds of young people to gain the skills of collaboration, delegation, and responsibility, qualities Scott finds essential to successful filmmaking. As a student, Scott served as President of the Film Production Coalition and earned his degree in film and digital media at UCSC.

Arlan Mendiola joined SOMeCA in June 2015 as a Program Manager. He is a first generation college graduate, having earned an M.Ed. in postsecondary administration and student affairs from the USC Rossier School of Education as well as a B.S. in molecular biology from UCSC. Before returning to UCSC, Arlan worked in various aspects of education including college preparatory programs, career services, academic advising, and alumni engagement. His passion to serve in higher education stems from his undergraduate involvement with the Filipino and Asian/Pacific Islander communities.

Susan Watrous is both a UCSC lecturer and a SOMeCA Program Manager, advising Student Media’s print organizations. She has a degree in American studies and over 20 years of experience as an editor, writer, and project manager for magazine, book, academic, and multimedia projects, including companies that produce hardware and software to power the high-tech world. Susan is passionate about teaching and about empowering the next generation of media makers. She is a recipient of a UCSC Excellence in Teaching Award.

Donald Williams brings over 35 years of theater production, performance, and mentorship to his role as Artistic Director of Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center(CAD). Donald is the founder, producer, and director of the African American Theater Arts Troupe and Rainbow Theater, which offer diverse and empowering theater performances to the campus and to underresourced high schools throughout California. He earned his B.A. in theater arts with a minor in telecommunications at Michigan State University and studied directing and theater history at the University of Southern California.

SOMECA ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD

Ray J. Austin is a Staff Attorney at the Homeless Action Center in Oakland. They provide public benefits advocacy for the homeless and mentally ill population in Alameda County. At UCSC, Raymond was a member of the Filipino Student Association and Engaging Education. He was also an organizer for the Practical Activism Conference and served two years as an officer in the Student Union Assembly. He was the Internal Vice Chair for the first year and Chair for the second. Raymond earned his B.A. in sociology at UCSC and his J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston.

Niketa Calame-Harris is a Los Angeles native working as a project ambassador for the American Diabetes Association and an actress who has performed in numerous productions, including the role of Young Nala in Disney’s “The Lion King,” and Squeak in “The Color Purple,” which won a 2012 Ovation Award for “Best Ensemble Cast.” Niketa earned her B.A. at UCSC and her M.F.A. at The New School for Drama in New York. She was a Chancellor’s Undergraduate Internship Program intern, co-chair of the Ethnic Student Organization Council and Black Sisters United, and an organizer for Destination Higher Education.

Joshua Fisher has nearly a decade of experience with youth leadership development work. With a M.A. in higher education concentrating in diversity and social justice from the University of Michigan, Joshua has been able to advance his practice in working with students to identify and meet their life goals. Formally the Assistant Director of Leadership in student activities at the University of California Santa Cruz, he now serves as the Project Director of Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL), a high school youth organizing focused organization in his hometown of Oakland, California.
Dr. Meda Higa is an assistant professor of biology at York College of Pennsylvania. She is also a member of SACNAS, a society of scientists dedicated to fostering the success of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in science. While at UCSC as a Regents Scholar, Dr. Higa earned a B.A. in molecular, cellular, and developmental biology. Subsequently, she earned a Ph.D. in oncological sciences from the University of Utah. Dr. Higa was also a member of the Filipino Student Association, Pagkakaisa Dance Troupe, and Alpha Kappa Delta Phi.

Eden Silva Jequinto recently graduated from UCLA with an M.A. in urban planning and is now at the UCLA School of Law as a member of both the public interest and critical race studies programs. Previously, Eden was at the EastSide Arts Alliance in Oakland, where she established its Guerilla Theatre and Youth Leadership programs. At UCSC, Eden earned a B.A. in American studies while being a member of the Filipino Student Association, Rainbow Theater, Third World and Native American Student Collective Press, KZSC radio station, Ethnic Student Organization Council, Colors in Action, Student Union Assembly, and Educational Opportunity Program.

Kalwis Lo serves as the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Scholarship America. In his role he represents the voice of the private sector in improving higher education opportunities for students in high need communities. Kalwis began his career in Washington by advocating for legislative and regulatory improvements in the federal student aid system for those who faced challenges with accessing and completing postsecondary degrees. Prior to joining Scholarship America, Kalwis spent over a year shedding light on the lack of federal regulatory protections that adversely affected poultry farmers across the country — particularly minority populations. Kalwis was affiliated with Stevenson College where he earned a B.A. in politics and a minor in education. Throughout his undergraduate career he was involved in a variety of campus organizations and also served two years as student body president. He holds a life-long commitment to SOMeCA and Engaging Education.

Tiffany Dena Loftin is a Los Angeles native currently working as a Program Coordinator for the AFL-CIO Civil, Human and Women’s Rights Department in Washington, DC. Tiffany has also worked with the American Federation of Teachers, Energy Action Coalition and served as President of the United States Student Association. Tiffany works to ensure that communities of color and young people are empowered in relational networks to deconstruct and build a more fair and free world for all. She is a proud 2011 graduate of UCSC where she served as President of the Student Union Assembly, was a member of Rainbow Theater, Destination Higher Education, and African American Theater Arts Troupe while earning a B.A. in politics and American studies.

Dr. Belinda Lum works as an Assistant Professor of sociology in the Behavioral and Social Science Division at Sacramento City College. She is also a consultant that specializes community-based action research, strategic planning, consensus building, facilitation, and civic engagement. She earned her M.A and Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Southern California. At UCSC, she earned a B.A. in sociology, and was a member of the Third World and Native American Student Collective Press, the Chinese Student Association, and the Multicultural Festival Organizing Committee.

Lee Maranto is a Southern California native, but has called Northern California his home since coming to UCSC in 1997. He majored in community studies and politics and co-founded the student organization: Challenging, Learning about and Undermining Heterosexism. Lee served as a Chancellor’s Undergraduate Intern for SOAR and later returned as a Program Manager. He earned a law degree from Golden Gate University School of Law and currently works at UC Berkeley as the Independent Hearing Officer. He attributes his legal education and SOAR experience as critical to being hired at UC Berkeley.

Angel Martinez is a Los Angeles native and recent graduate of the Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medicine Certificate Program at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science (CDU). He serves as the Administrative Coordinator for Life Sciences Institute at CDU supporting the university’s efforts to improve the health of underserved communities through research. Outside of work he teaches CrossFit classes as a CrossFit Level-1 instructor. At UCSC, Angel earned a B.A. in community studies while being a member of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan, Chicanos in Health Education, Rainbow, Ethnic Student Organization Council, Engaging Education, and the Academic Excellence Program.

Matthew Palm is a Ph.D. candidate in geography at UC Davis. His research focuses on environmental justice and developing smart housing and transportation policies for working class communities. Matthew’s currently studying the benefits of free bike loan programs for working families and documenting the obstacles to affordable housing construction in the San
Francisco Bay Area. At UCSC, Matt earned a B.A. in history while organizing with The Network (now Queer Student Union) and Student Union Assembly. Afterward, he earned an M.P.P. at Oregon State University.

Justin Resuello is Director at First Republic Private Wealth Management and manages fixed income research for $21 Billion in bank and ultra high-net-worth investment portfolios. Justin earned a B.A. in business management economics at UCSC, and a M.P.A. from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, where he was a graduate fellow. As an Oakes undergraduate, he was a chairman of Engaging Education, a coordinator of the Filipino Student Association’s A Step Forward, a volunteer with the Kuya/Ate Mentorship Program, and a Board of Director of Engaging Education in its first year.

Leisette Rodriguez earned her J.D. from City University of New York School of Law and currently serves as a union representative for teachers in Los Angeles. At UCSC, she studied sociology, politics and education. She was co-chair of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán and an active member in Student Alliance of North American Indians, Third World and Native American Student Collective Press, Ethnic Student Organization Council, Multicultural Festival, Lesbians of Color Alliance, City on a Hill Press, Students Support United Farm Workers, and a student member of the Santa Cruz Indian Council. Leisette was also member on the Chancellor’s Exploratory Commission for an Ethnic Studies general education requirement.

Darrick Smith is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of San Francisco and a consultant for colleges and school districts addressing equity concerns in the areas of policy, pedagogy, and leadership. Dr. Smith’s research interests include: culturally responsive discipline practices; equity in community colleges; critical pedagogy; transformative leadership, and education for social justice. He has served as an educator, school leader, and consultant within secondary, post-secondary, and non-profit spaces for 18 years. Dr. Smith previously served as the Co-Principal at the June Jordan School for Equity in San Francisco, as well as founder of the TryUMF (pronounced “triumph”) program for adolescents, teaching students fundamental principles in sociology, feminism, and critical theory. He was awarded the University of California’s Fannie Lou Hamer Award for his commitment to social change and a commendation from the California State Senate for his work in violence prevention and youth development.

Brian Sniegowski is Director of Innovation and Development at Farmers Insurance Group, the third largest US property and casualty insurance company. Brian earned a B.A. in politics and business economics at UCSC and a M.B.A from the USC Marshall School of Business. He has been chair of the UCSC Multicultural Festival and president of the Southern California Hapa Issues Forum. Currently, Brian is an elected board member of the UCSC Alumni Council, board member of Coro, a public policy non-profit, and ensemble member of Cold Tofu, an Asian American improv troupe.

Kenneth Songco is the Director of Federal Student Services Grants at Mission College. He also oversees its Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution programs, endeavoring to improve the transition, progression, transfer, and graduation rates of Asian American and Pacific Islander students. Ken earned his B.A. in psychology from UCSC and his M.P.A. at San Francisco State University. He was a member of the Filipino Student Association, the first Chancellor’s Undergraduate Internship Program retention intern, and a founding member of the Ethnic Student Organization Council and Rainbow Theater’s Poet’s Corner.

Dr. Claradina Soto (Navajo/Pueblo) is an Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California Keck School Of Medicine in the Institute for Prevention Research. She earned her Ph.D. and M.P.H. at USC, with her research interest in tobacco control to improve the health of American Indian populations and other diverse populations through education, prevention, and cessation efforts. As an undergraduate at UCSC, Dr. Soto was a member of the Student Alliance of North American Indians, the Bridge program, and SOAR.

GusTavo Guerra Vásquez was born in Guatemala and immigrated without documents to Los Angeles at the age of eight. As a Human Services Administrator for Los Angeles County’s Human Relations Branch of the Community and Senior Services Department, GusTavo leads their youth initiative and Hate Violence prevention, documentation, and intervention work. A multi-disciplinary artist, he has performed and toured with spoken word groups promoting equity and social justice. GusTavo received his B.A. in Spanish literature from UCSC and an M.A. from the Comparative Ethnic Studies Graduate Group at UC Berkeley.
REFERENCES


