



Participatory Action Research Project

Training Scholars and Leaders to Advance Democratic Participation

As low-income, immigrant, and racially diverse communities experience multiple threats and hardships, it is critical to equip young people with the skills and tools to take civic actions that advance their collective self-determination and safeguard democratic institutions.

To this end, the California Freedom Summer (CFS) Participatory Action Research Project trains UC, community college, and high school students in research and civic engagement. Through a participatory action research model, CFS 2026 will guide at least 100 students in examining youths' multilayered concerns and conduct broad-based, nonpartisan civic action in their communities. Aiming to promote narratives that encourage civic engagement and well-being, youths' participatory action research will be attentive to evolving gender dynamics among their peers.

In partnership with university-community organizations in regions most affected by social inequities, students will serve as interns and action researchers. They will mentor young leaders, support voter education, and contribute to grassroots campaigns. By integrating academic coursework with hands-on experience, CFS equips young leaders with the skills and civic knowledge to drive change that prioritizes their communities' needs.



Program Components

Training & Coursework –Students gain instruction in data collection, participatory action research, grassroots organizing, voter outreach, and media engagement through coursework at UCLA and participating UCs and community colleges.

Paid Internships –Students work with civic organizations for 10 weeks, earning a \$7,000 stipend while gaining hands-on experience in nonpartisan, community-based organizations.

Community-Engaged Research –Interns collect and analyze data on youths' local concerns in order to inform policy discussions, narratives, and best practices.

Strengthening Community Ties –Research and programming deepen connections among UCs, community colleges, and non-partisan civic organizations.

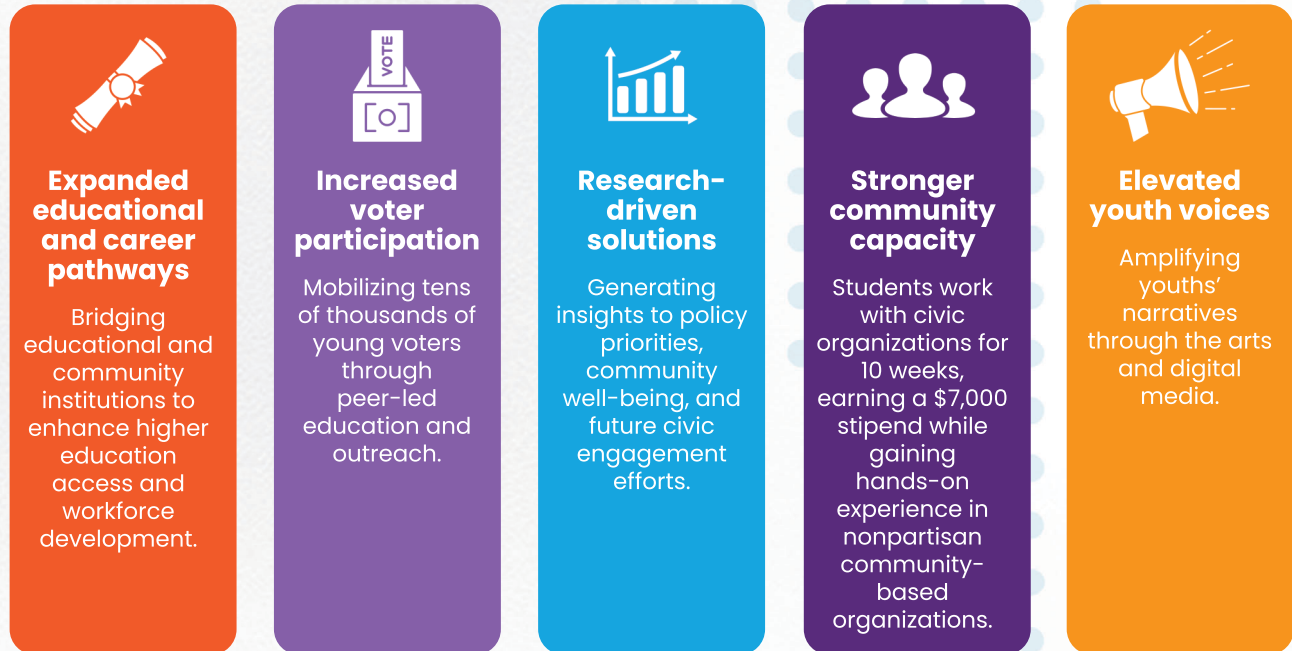
Leadership & Outreach –Students participate in a statewide CFS Leadership Institute and organize voter education events in historically under-mobilized communities.



A Model for Change

CFS builds on the initial success of the 2018 Central Valley Freedom Summer project, which contributed to a **262% increase in voter turnout among 18-24-year-olds**. Since then, the program has expanded across the entire state, fostering collaboration among postsecondary education institutions, high schools, and grassroots organizations.

Impact & Outcomes



Investing in the Future of Democracy

Inspired by the 1964 Freedom Summer, which mobilized college students in collaboration with grassroots organizers to expand Black voter registration in the South, and modeled after successful UC-based internship and research programs, CFS is an investment in the local leadership of underserved communities. By equipping students with the skills and civic knowledge to drive change, CFS ensures the next generation has the tools to define the direction of our multiracial and inclusive democracy as the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary.

Led by Veronica Terriquez, Director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, CFS involves the ethnic studies research centers at UCLA, other UC and community college faculty, and non-profit youth organizations.