

CALPIRG

Students

ACTION FOR A CHANGE

2020-2021 Annual Report



50 years ago, a majority of the student bodies joined together in calling for the creation of CALPIRG Students; an organization that could channel student's idealism into meaningful impact in the community.

Our mission: to engage and train students to make a difference on some of the most profound issues of our generation. Since 1972, students have played a key role in shaping California; from expanding solar and wind production, protecting consumers from the worst rip offs, to building support for expanded public transit. We combine the energy of students with the expertise of professional staff to educate the public, build grassroots support, lobby elected officials, and win campaigns for a better future.

Idealism in Action

In today's world, big changes are happening every day, with big decisions being made that will shape OUR future. We believe it's our right to have our say in these decisions and our responsibility to do all we can to make a difference.

That's why we run campaigns to make a difference – on issues like environmental protection, voter registration, and college affordability.



And we know that college students are critical in these efforts. Students have been at the forefront of positive social change throughout history, from civil rights, to voting rights to protecting the environment. That's because we know the world can be better and we have the drive and vision to push for a greener, healthier, and more meaningful future.

At CALPIRG Students, we're effective in pushing for the future we want because we combine the enthusiasm and vision of students with the expertise of professional staff, that train and work alongside students to educate the public, build grassroots support, and lobby decision makers to act. We teach students skills like how to recruit and train volunteers, outreach to the media, and organize big events, all while making a difference right away.

We can hire these professional staff and run effective campaigns thanks to the support of thousands of students who pledge to add the CALPIRG fee to their tuition each quarter.

Making a difference in a remote world



Our work certainly looked different this year. To say that this past year has been challenging would be an understatement, but young people continue to believe in, and fight for a better future.

We quickly adapted our program so we could continue to take action on important issues, engage with volunteers, run our internship

program, and keep our virtual campus community alive. Instead of putting on our shoes, holding signs at in-person rallies, and grabbing our clipboards, we've gotten in front of our virtual backgrounds, opened up Google Docs, and joined Zoom volunteer events so we could tackle climate change, protect our oceans, and turn out the youth vote.

And it worked! This year we engaged record numbers of volunteers and we won or made progress on a number of important issues. **2,863 students volunteered or interned at our California chapters this year.**

2020-2021 Campaigns

As students, we are faced with climate change, the rising cost of education, and threats to public health. Through our internship and volunteer program we work on a set of specific issues to address some of the most profound problems of our generation.

“It has been a fantastic experience working with CALPIRG students... I am inspired by their leadership, commitment, public imagination and tenacity. They are teaching my generation what climate action looks like!”

**-Professor Fonna Forman,
Director of the UC Center for Global Justice**

New Voters Project

This past year CALPIRG Students worked with the Secretary of State's Office, the UC Student Association, and student governments to help register and mobilize students to vote and participate in our democracy.

“COVID changed the way we do voter registration and promote voter turnout information and the CALPIRG New Voters Project went above and beyond to ensure that the nuanced details reached Tritons... and encourage a culture of Civic participation even in a virtual setting.”

- Heather Belk, Director of UC San Diego Associated Students

The full participation of young people in the political process is essential to a truly representative, vibrant democracy. Young people are now the largest and most diverse group of potential voters in the country. But we know that historically 18-24-year-olds are less likely to vote than older generations. This year we wanted to change all that.

Given the challenges of the pandemic, we knew we'd have to adapt our tactics to reach our fellow students, and engage the campus community while at home- and it worked!

Victory!

Our partners at the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) released youth voter turnout (ages 18-29) numbers and it was historic! In California, **youth voter turnout increased from [37 percent in 2016](#) to [54 percent in 2020](#)**. This is the highest in nearly 50 years, since the passage of the 26th Amendment that lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1972.



But the increase in turnout didn't happen on its own. It happened thanks to the work of young people organizing their peers around California, including hundreds of students who worked with the nonpartisan New Voters Project to engage their campus communities and help thousands of their peers register and turn out to vote!

- **85% of the young people who the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project helped to register leading up to the 2020 election turned out to vote**
- **80% of the young people contacted through our peer-to-peer GOTV program turned out to vote**



Highlights!

Our team:

- **Helped over 10,000 California college students register to vote** through one-on-one conversations, phone calls, class announcements, emails, social media reminders and texts.
- Made announcements in over **600 virtual classrooms** about registering to vote or voting safely.
- Spent thousands of hours walking their peers through the registration process over the phone.
- Worked with universities to send out 14 emails to the entire student body with a link to the CA Student Vote Project's portal castudentvote.org.
- Worked in coalition with the UC Students Association and the Cal State Students Association to run voter registration trainings across the state.
- **Partnered with the CA Secretary of State on the Ballot Bowl to promote the statewide competition.**

In September, we co-hosted the **California Youth Voter Summit**, featuring then **Secretary of State** and now **Senator Alex Padilla** as the keynote speaker. Over 600 campus administrators, student government and student organization leaders, and elected officials attended workshops to share strategies to increase youth voter engagement.



After helping nearly 10,000 students register to vote in 2020, we held a **day long Vote-a-Thon on election day**, featuring nearly 30 speakers, including those pictured below:

Senator Hannah Beth Jackson, Senator (and CALPIRG Students Alum) Nancy Skinner, ASUCI External Vice President Alan Calderon, UCSD Vice Chancellor Alyson Satterlund and UCSC Associate Dean of Students Brian Arao.



100% Clean Energy

Burning oil, gas, and coal has polluted our air, water, and land for decades – and now it's changing the climate even faster than scientists feared it would.

We can have healthier communities right now and a livable future for ourselves and generations to come. But to get there, we must transform the way we produce and consume energy. That's got to start with a commitment to 100% clean, renewable energy.



In recent years we've worked in partnership with the University of CA to announce a commitment to 100% clean electricity, and organized at the statewide level to pass a similar policy through the legislature.

But there is more work to do. A 100% clean energy future means shifting from dirty energy to completely clean energy sources wherever and however we can and as quickly as we can. In order to make this transition fully, we concurrently need to phase out forms of dirty energy in our state – especially new projects to drill for oil.

We've seen significant progress this past year:

In February over 150 student leaders met with 70+ state legislators at our Clean Energy Lobby Day. We asked our representatives to support AB525 (D-Chiu) to increase offshore wind, SB617 (D-Wiener) the Solar Access Act, and SB 467 (D-Wiener, D-Limon) to ban fracking. We also turned in 18,000 signatures to Governor Newsom's climate advisor in support of speeding up California's transition to 100% clean electricity to the year 2030. In addition, we joined forces with Environment California, Kennebunkport Climate Initiative, the Climate Center, and 350 Action to host panels and actions throughout the day.



In April, more than 750 students and community members turned out for CALPIRG's virtual **Climate Action Summit on Earth Day!** The summit featured climate activists from 25 campuses, as well as state leaders and elected officials, to highlight past victories and call for further action on climate in California. **Key guests included San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria, Senior Advisor for the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy Sonia Aggarwal, University of California Director of Sustainability Matt St. Clair, rapper and comedian Lil' Dicky, and several state senators and assembly members.**



Victory!

After Earth Day, **Governor Newsom announced a ban on new fracking wells** by 2024 and called on our air resources agency to end oil and gas drilling by 2045. This is the beginning of the end of oil in our state and a move toward a healthier and greener future. We know that the shift to a renewable energy future is in our grasp--and Governor Newsom's action puts us one giant step closer to building the future that all Californians, and our planet, deserve.

We've been mobilizing students around this issue. **We launched the Students Against Fracking coalition** to highlight young people's opposition to fossil fuel extraction and support for a renewable energy future. Over the last 8 years, we've educated tens of thousands of students on the dangers caused by oil and gas drilling, holding panels, documentary screenings, visibility events, and even "human oil spills." At the same time, we've signed on hundreds of student leaders to call for a ban on fracking, including the heads of student governments, multicultural organizations, Greek life, and students from all political persuasions.

Plastic Free Seas

Every day, people throw away tons of plastic “stuff”—cups, plates, bags, containers, forks, knives, spoons and more. All of this waste not only clogs our landfills, trashes our parks, and litters our streets, but it also washes into our rivers and oceans, where it can harm wildlife.

The good news is that we have lots of alternatives to single-use plastic items that would prevent needless harm to the environment. We helped pass the first ever statewide ban on single-use plastic grocery bags in California, and we defended that measure at the ballot box when the plastics industry tried to repeal it.

And our universities are also leading the way towards solutions, spurred on by students organizing for change. That's why in fall of 2019 our team at CALPIRG Students launched a campaign with the goal of banning single-use plastics at the 10 University of CA campuses.

Victory!

Across the UC system CALPIRG organizers and volunteers built a movement of student support for stronger limits on plastic use on our campuses. Statewide we collected over 12,000 signatures from supportive students and passed resolutions of the student governments, met with key university stakeholders and played a big role in developing the policy with UC zero waste committee, and held public events on local beaches with legislators to highlight the problem of plastic pollution. Through these efforts we won!

In fall of 2020 we co-announced with the University of California Sustainability Office a new system-wide policy to reduce single use plastics across all campuses.



No Bees, No Food

Bees pollinate most of the food we eat - from apples to strawberries to chocolate. But beekeepers report they're losing 40% of their bee colonies each year.

That's why CALPIRG Students worked with UC Irvine to apply to be a "Bee Friendly Campus" and protect pollinators.

Victory!

This winter **UC Irvine became a Bee Friendly Certified Campus**, thanks to the work of student activists and support they've built with students, faculty, and administration. UC Irvine joins the 3 other UC schools where we worked to become Bee Friendly- UCLA, UC Davis, and UC Berkeley.



Making College More Affordable

We need robust grant programs on a state and federal level, a simpler system of student aid that actively encourages student and parental participation, and stronger safeguards for student borrowers in repayment.

This year, a CALPIRG backed bill, the CA Student Borrower Bill of Rights was signed into law. This bill will protect students from 'debt traps' or being taken advantage of by lenders.

Students also worked with the UC Advocacy Network and State Student Association to organize at their campuses and collect petitions in support of the [#DoublethePell](#) campaign to double the maximum Pell Grant.



At CALPIRG's annual National Higher Education Lobby Day student leaders (virtually) went to the Capitol to get Congress to better support students and double Pell Grant funding. In meetings we delivered the petition signatures we collected to legislators and their staff and shared personal

stories that illustrated the immediate impact Congressional reinvestments in the Pell Grant financial aid program would have. In all, we met with over 75 offices.

Pictured below, UCLA Chapter Chair Prab Rai also represented CALPIRG Students in a **meeting with the US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona** about the new administration's plans to assist students in need.



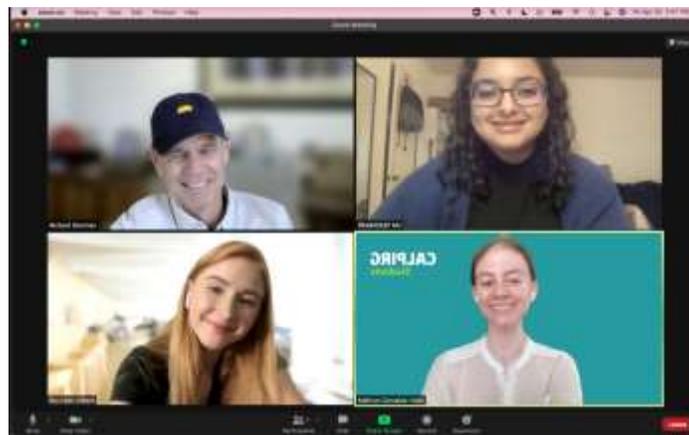
Affordable, Open Textbooks

According to the College Board, the average undergraduate student should budget between \$1,200 and \$1,300 for textbooks and supplies each year. That's as much as 40% of tuition at a two-year community college and 13% at a four-year public institution.

For many students and families already struggling to afford a college degree, that is simply too much and means more debt, working longer hours, or making choices that undermine academic success.

For more than a decade, CALPIRG Students has led the way in exposing publisher's practices that rip off students, championing cost-saving textbook options like used books and rental programs, and advocating for open textbooks as a long-term solution.

We can save students a ton of money, and put the heat on publishers to make textbooks affordable.



This year, we released the 3rd edition of our report on the broken textbooks market. We found that students continue to skip buying assigned textbooks despite concerns doing so will impact their grades, and we found that the pandemic only made this more difficult for the most impacted students.

Our goal is to strengthen our open educational resource (OER) programs at the UCs and ensure they are well-used. We are working to show student support, get faculty to pledge to give preference to cheaper course materials, educate faculty and librarians about how they can use OER, and work with administrators to institutionalize OER.

This year student leaders organized support around the state for a stronger OER program at the UC's. We worked with the State Student Association to pass a support resolution and passed resolutions locally at UC Merced and UC San Diego. We also mobilized professors and got the issue in the news by hosting panels and events during annual Open Education Week.

Volunteer and Internship Program

Every year we run a large volunteer and internship program to give students the opportunity to take action on important issues they care about, and the skills to do so. Every term, we start with an intensive campus outreach effort designed to educate the campus about pressing social issues, and also recruit new volunteers and interns. **Through those efforts, each year we educate thousands of students through class presentations and many more through campus events, articles in the news, and email or social media outreach.**

This year alone we've engaged over 2,800 volunteers, and 1,500 students participated in our internship program. CALPIRG Students interns learn skills like how to organize an event, recruit and train volunteers, work with the media, and lobby elected officials.

"Getting involved in CALPIRG put me in a community surrounded by people who have constantly supported me and who see a better world that they're not afraid to work towards. It's taught me skills I never thought I would be good at, has let me advocate and WIN for students on the level of policy, and most importantly has helped me become a version of myself that I never thought I could be.



Prabhdeep Rai
UCLA Class of 2021
CALPIRG Chapter Chair

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"I joined CALPIRG to make a difference and learn skills I could use for my career at the same time. I got to organize my peers, grow in my own leadership, and make a difference by registering hundreds of students to vote and fight climate change.



Ori Liwanag
UCR, Class of 2021
Campaign Coordinator

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Awards

In 2020, CALPIRG Students was recognized for the tangible change our student leadership program has made toward a cleaner and more meaningful future. We were nominated for the **American Climate Leadership Award** alongside organizations like the Sunrise Movement and the Future Coalition. **And WE WON!** We were recognized for not only building a large movement of climate activists across the UC system, but for winning our campaign and committing the UC System to 100% clean purchased electricity. We are honored by such an award, and grateful to our partners at the UC for working with us to make this 100% clean energy vision a reality.



Student Directed, Student Funded

CALPIRG Students is directed by a forty-member all-student board with representatives elected from each chapter.

We are funded through the support of thousands of students that pay the CALPIRG voluntary fee on their tuition bill. This gives us the resources to hire professional staff that work with students to research problems and solutions, run grassroots campaigns, and make our voices heard with elected officials in Sacramento and Washington, DC.

Visit calpirgstudents.org to stay up to date on our campaigns
Questions? Contact us as info@calpirgstudents.org