50 years ago, a majority of students across eight UC campuses 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 doubling youth voter turnout, reducing single-use plastics, making college more affordable, 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. Young people should have a say in these decisions. It’s 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.

"Organizing get out the vote efforts across UCLA is made easier when partnering with CALPIRG. I have found the CALPIRG leaders to be full of energy and skill- a powerful combination which serves our student population well."

- Karen Hedges, Deputy Director, Campus Life, UCLA Student Affairs

"Working with CALPIRG Students at UC Berkeley on a Better Berkeley Bag Ban this past year has been exhilarating. They are some of the most dedicated student activists, and their effectiveness on issues ranging from the environment to college affordability, to voter registration is inspiring. This is a group that gets things done for their communities, and I’m excited to see where their work takes Berkeley and our state."

- Vice Mayor Kate Harrison, Berkeley City Council

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, who 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.
2021–2022 Campaigns

As students, we are faced with problems such as climate change, the rising cost of education, and threats to public health. Young people have been leading the way in building community and advocating for a better future.

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.

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.

There's more work to do to reach a world without harmful plastics. That's why CALPIRG Students mobilized to pass policies on the local and statewide levels to reduce plastic pollution from packaging and foodware throughout California.
Victory!

Across the UC system, CALPIRG organizers and volunteers built a movement of student support for stronger limits on plastic use in our state. We collected over 15,000 signatures in support of phasing out single-use plastics. We’ve made a lot of progress and won some local victories!

New state laws will reduce single-use plastic

We helped pass 5 new state laws to reduce plastic waste in California, including a law to make single-use foodware available on-request only, updating labeling for compostable products, and restricting producers from putting the recycling symbol on non-recyclable products.

UCLA and USC students win a county-wide limit on plastic

This year, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also approved an ordinance limiting single-use plastics at restaurants and retail establishments.

CALPIRG at UCLA and USC led the charge for the ordinance on campus over the course of this school year. Student advocates mobilized more than 1,900 of their peers to sign a petition. Fifty students wrote letters to the Board of Supervisors. Finally, student leaders worked with the Undergraduate Students Association Council to pass a resolution supporting the measure.
On Earth Day, we celebrated progress on eliminating single-use plastics by organizing public engagement events at several of our UC campuses. We organized rallies and beach clean ups to advocate for AB 2026, authored by Assemblymember Laura Friedman (D-Glendale), which aims to reduce single-use plastic packaging used in the e-commerce marketplace.

Right: UC San Diego students gather photo petitions from students in support of reducing plastics in e-commerce. Left: UCSB Students build a plastics monster out of the waste we collected in the community during Youth Earth Week.

CALPIRG Students held our state lobby day to advocate for legislation to ban-single use plastics in California. CALPIRG organizers and 75 students met with 60 offices and showed how much student support there is from young people to move #BeyondPlastics!
New Voters Project

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.

CALPIRG’s New Voters Project is the nation's oldest and largest nonpartisan youth voter mobilization effort in the country. CALPIRG's New Voters Project has run peer-to-peer student voter mobilization drives to turn out the youth vote on college campuses for more than 30 years. Our philosophy is that the full participation of young people in the political process is essential to a truly representative, vibrant democracy.

Students at UCSB and UCLA registering their peers to vote
Partnership with the Secretary of State office:

This past year CALPIRG Students worked with the Secretary of State Shirley Weber’s office and student governments to help register and mobilize students to vote and participate in our democracy. Before school even began in the fall, we hosted a Vote-A-Thon in partnership with Secretary Weber, to make sure our voices were heard.

“Our democracy is strengthened when young people get engaged early by registering, or pre-registering, to vote and showing up. As an educator, I have seen first-hand how politically engaged this state’s young people are, and I am proud to partner with organizations like CALPIRG to continue to foster a democracy more inclusive of young voices.” – Secretary of State of California, Shirley Weber
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 California 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. We need to speed up our transition to zero-emission vehicles and clean energy, and 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:

Our chapters have been calling for a clean vehicle future. Environment California, The Climate Initiative, CALPIRG Students, and ValleyCAN have teamed up to help accelerate California’s transition to zero-emission transportation. We gave public comments at county meetings and invited local elected officials to speak to students about progress towards a clean vehicle future.
Chapters across the UCs held petitioning actions, bike parades, and press conferences during #DriveElectricWeek to call for a clean transportation future. Above (right) Santa Barbara County Supervisor Joan Hartmann addresses students to discuss the county’s plans to address climate change.

Victory! LA County votes to phase out oil drilling

After a year-long campaign by CALPIRG Students and our partners, Los Angeles County voted unanimously to phase out oil drilling in LA County. Additionally, following years of advocacy from students, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a statewide rule to restrict any new oil and gas extraction sites near communities, and establish science-based 3,200-foot setbacks for oil and gas operations.
Victory! Irvine commits to 100% Clean Energy

When we heard a new utility was coming to Orange County, as a community choice energy option, it was urgent we mobilized for a cleaner future. So, this past fall we delivered hundreds of petition signatures and public comments to get the new utility to commit to 100% renewable energy. We’re excited to share that the Irvine City Council unanimously passed the resolution for 100% renewable energy when they launch the new Orange County Power Authority. That makes Irvine the largest city in Orange County to choose to receive its energy from 100% renewable sources!

CALPIRG Students at UCI hosted a clean energy rally to mobilize the community behind the effort!

This action comes after we mobilized over 100 influential California decision-makers and gathered over 14,000 signatures statewide on the campaign and had 21,000 one-on-one conversations to build support for this clean energy future.
Progress: Legislation introduced to ban offshore drilling and cease oil production in California waters following Huntington Beach Oil Spill

Early Saturday morning in October 2021, an oil spill was discovered about 5 miles off the coast of Huntington Beach, California. The leak originated from a pipeline now owned by the Houston-based oil and gas company Amplify Energy, but was formerly owned by Shell Oil. The spill reached the Santa Ana River Trail, the Talbert Marshlands, and Crystal Cove, and impacted birds and fish have been seen washing up on the coast. Our team in Orange County took action to rally the community to call for an end to offshore oil drilling and engage local representatives on the issue.

UC Irvine CALPIRG chapter chair, Tabitha Turner, speaks at the Fall Rally in Aldrich Park to call for an end to offshore oil drilling.
Making College More Affordable

According to the College Board, the average undergraduate student should budget between $1,200 and $1,300 for textbooks and supplies each year. 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, 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.

UC Santa Barbara students campaigning for affordable textbooks
Progress at the statewide and national level:

This year, we advocated for a bill for more cost transparency in textbooks and have brought solutions to the UC Office of the President to work on ways to address the rising prices of textbooks that companies are charging students. On a federal level, we won the inclusion of $14 million for the Open Textbook Pilot Program in the Senate Appropriations Committee's Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill!

CALPIRG @ UCLA Chapter Chair, Radha Patel, met with other student leaders at UCLA with UC President Michael Drake to speak on issues affecting students. She advocated for a UC wide open textbooks grant program that would save students millions of dollars.

Radha also testified on the behalf of students in Sacramento in support of course material price transparency on the class schedule, and the bill passed the Higher Education Committee unanimously.
30x30: More Nature in California

From mass extinctions to super storms and melting ice caps, the world is in the midst of interlocking crises of climate change and loss of biodiversity. Experts around the world concluded that preserving 30% of land and the ocean is necessary to prevent the collapse of the environment.

Last year, Governor Newsom signed an executive order committing the state to reach 30% conservation of the state’s land and coastal waters by 2030, a significant first step towards protecting our state’s biodiversity, helping to address the climate crisis, and enshrining open spaces for Californians to enjoy and commune with nature. But there is more work to do to put this commitment into action.

Progress: 1,000 public comments on the California Natural Resources Agency Final Pathways Strategy Plan

This year, CALPIRG Students engaged our campuses in efforts to ensure California has a comprehensive 30x30 plan that considers the long-term impacts of climate change: One that promotes carbon neutrality and climate resilience, including protecting our state’s special places from unnecessary development we don’t need, and striving for 30% highly to fully protected ocean areas that limit most or all taking of natural resources.
Benise Limon, a UC Santa Barbara student with CALPIRG, hosts an education panel with Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat Jennifer Norris and Deputy Secretary for Ocean Protection Mark Gold.

Students at UC Riverside host a hike in the local UCR Botanic Garden to engage and educate students about California’s efforts to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030.
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 we 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 49,000 students at the UCs through class presentations and many more through campus events and email or social media outreach.

This year alone we've engaged over 1,227 volunteers, and 200 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.

"It is a pleasure working with CALPIRG student volunteers. Not only do they do amazing work to improve our community, but they are also smart, passionate, and dedicated to making a difference."
-Katya Armistead, Assistant Vice Chancellor & Dean of Student Life

“CALPIRG has taught me how to organize with fellow students to make a real difference on issues that are important to me. I gained grassroots skills, leadership skills, and an understanding of how to advocate for change and win! I even got to see that happen from start to finish when we got the LA County Board of Supervisors to pass an ordinance limiting single-use plastics! Looking back, I can see the tangible difference I made on fighting for a brighter future.
-Clara Castronovo, Beyond Plastics Campaign Coordinator, CALPIRG @ UCLA

“Since joining CALPIRG, I've enjoyed working with other students who are determined and passionate about making a difference in our community and advocating for the future we want to see. My work on the New Voter's Project allowed me to engage with students about the importance of using their voices and being heard.
-Izabel Martinez, Chapter Chair, Campaign Coordinator, CALPIRG @ UCSB
Statewide Student Leader Highlights

Students across the state are leading the way on social change issues, and we’re excited to highlight some top activists from the year!

Lance Esquillo, UC Riverside
Lance Esquillo is a first year student at UC Riverside who joined CALPIRG in winter quarter 2022. During spring quarter, Lance wrote a resolution for the student government to endorse the Plastic Waste Reduction Act, which passed unanimously.

Tabitha Turner, UC Irvine
Tabitha Turner is the Chapter Chair at UC Irvine and the Coordinator of her chapter's 100% Clean Energy campaign. In Fall Tabi and her team turned their kickoff meeting into a big rally to end offshore oil drilling, following the devastating oil spill in Huntington Beach. With a short turnaround, we had Senator Min as a speaker and 2 reporters covering the event, and 54 attendees.

Sean McArthur, UC Santa Barbara
Sean McArthur is a senior Environmental Studies major and the Chapter Chair of the CALPIRG chapter at UC Santa Barbara. Sean joined CALPIRG and quickly took on leadership, running the 100% Renewable Energy campaign. He organized a rally advocating for 100% clean transportation where we got covered on the local TV station.

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