

The Student Experience During The Trump Era

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The **UC Student Association** is the official voice of over a quarter million students from across the University of California. It is our mission to advocate on behalf of current and future students for the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the UC. Learn more about our work at www.ucsa.org.

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In the year following the presidential election of Donald Trump, the University of California Student Association conducted a series of interviews to capture first-hand experiences of underrepresented students living through the new administration. The project sought to determine if feelings of marginalization, vulnerability, and/or resiliency from underrepresented students were intensified after the 2016 election. We hope this summary of the thirteen interviews will provide a detailed, intersectional look into the student experience under a national polarizing political climate.

Methodology

UCSA called for voluntary student participants in this project via email and social media recruitment in February 2017. Thirteen students were selected for the project with the aim of providing a diversity of experience, with respect to race, income, area of academic study, documentation status, and undergraduate versus graduate experience. In Spring quarter 2017, individual interviews were recorded over the phone by a UCSA staff member, who transcribed and then summarized the responses. Three types of questions were asked: 1) personal and educational background; 2) observations of the election's impact on campus; and 3) reflections on what, if anything, participants believed the University should do to alleviate any negative impacts. Participants were permitted to redact or change their names.

Policy Recommendations

Safe, Multicultural Spaces

- Multiple students urged that the UC should do much more to protect underrepresented students. The UC should create safe spaces, fund them well, and protect students, workers and their families from being targeted or profiled by law and immigration enforcement.
- There is also overwhelming anxiety over UC's continually allowing ICE to physically enter campus. Instead, efforts should include demilitarizing campuses and ensuring UCPD is not complicit, cooperating with ICE, or releasing any personal information.

Health Insurance, Mental Health, and Guidance for Graduate Student Teaching Assistants

- Many students expressed large concerns around the future of their health insurance. The UC should educate students on the potential changes and mitigate their effects.
- It was clear that graduate students interviewees did not feel adequately trained to emotionally support the terrified students coming to them. The UC should provide extensive training for teaching assistants, but first and foremost, continue to expand mental health resources.

Clear Policies Against Hate Speech

- College campuses are becoming places for vandalism, graffiti, hate crimes, and vitriolic exchanges in the name of free exchange of ideas. The UC's new National Center on Free Speech and Civic Engagement should push the legal parameters in defining the gray area between free speech and hate speech, in order to protect vulnerable communities from attack.
- Allowing white supremacist speakers a platform is a disservice to students. It is harmful to their mental health and campus climate. The UC must call out hate and stop welcoming those who put marginalized students at risk.

Sustainable Resources for Undocumented Students

Since collecting these interviews, the UC very publicly filed a suit against DACA elimination. UC should support the undocumented student community in the way that they are asking to be supported, which includes advocating for all undocumented students, not just DREAMers, and letting the UC Undocumented Coalition direct UC Office of the President's advocacy efforts. After consultation with this coalition, we recommend the UC protect and expand Undocu services by:

- Providing on-campus attorneys available to both students and families, designated mental health professionals, and academic and financial counselors for graduate and undergraduate students.
- Allocating and funding physical spaces and professional staff based on undocumented student recommendations
- Finding creative ways within existing law to provide stipends and paid internship opportunities for professional development regardless of immigration status and work authorization.
- Making emergency funds (housing, food insecurity, and medical bills) accessible to all undergraduate undocumented students, regardless of whether student has exhausted loans
- Ensuring funds for both DACA and non-AB540 undocumented graduate and undergraduate students
- Not discriminating against graduate school applications based on immigration status.
- Implementing extensive training programs, including UC's sanctuary status and provisions, reporting and investigation of incidents, Undocu-Ally resources, etc.
- Helping the UC Undocumented Student Coalition build community by funding system-wide meetings where student representatives from every campus can strategize together, including ensuring that the Undocumented Student Summit is funded and implemented annually.

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Cuauhtémoc Peranda, UC Riverside

Cuauhtémoc is a second year Critical Dance Studies PhD student at UC Riverside researching the history of voguing in the US and internationally. Cuauhtémoc is a first generation college student, who joined UC Riverside in the Fall of 2015 after receiving their B.A. from Stanford and their Masters degree from Mills College in the East Bay.

Cuauhtémoc grew up mostly in Santa Cruz, CA where they had their first introduction to theater and dance in middle school. Unlike living in Arizona, where Cuauhtémoc remembers them and their mother experiencing racial slurs and hostility, Santa Cruz felt like a diverse and welcoming community that was supportive of the arts. Working as a professional dancer in the bay area, Cuauhtémoc decided to pursue a PhD at UC Riverside, which offers one of the top critical dance studies programs in the nation.

As the first person in their family to enroll in a doctoral program, Cuauhtémoc found it challenging at first to navigate a PhD program while also navigating UCR as a grad student. UCR is one of the most diverse UC campuses, but figuring out what resources were available to grad students was still difficult. For many students like Cuauhtémoc, before even thinking about the election of Donald Trump, getting their basic needs met in the UC was priority.

After a stunning election, Cuauhtémoc describes a campus rampant with fear and anger. ***“I noticed a lot of folks felt unsafe...having raids in Rubidoux, which is very close to Riverside, and being like oh my god, ICE is right there.”***

“What I’ve seen is two things: those who are aligned with President Trump’s political affiliation feel empowered to spread their racism, which is a joyful expression of hatred and those who are not in alliance with that kind of political expression are now banning together to find ways to support each other.”

Under a national polarizing climate, the election of Donald Trump seeped into the everyday experiences of many graduate students like Cuauhtémoc, who suddenly found themselves providing emotional support to many terrified students. ***“It’s been difficult just to get tasks done and then also counsel students who seek us...we can do that for them and yes we are there, but we’re not professors, we are very much students who don’t have many resources and trying to get through school ourselves while also teaching, so it’s a lot of weight.”*** With only two social workers on campus and impacted counseling services,



Teaching Assistants are supplementing the need for more mental health services.

Cuauhtémoc is also worried how this new administration will impact their health care. The looming stress that federal funding for health care could be cut at any moment is a fear faced by many students. ***“I worry if I’m going to be able to survive in a few years without the required medical care that I need.”*** When asked how the University could help support students undergoing negative experiences due to this new administration, Cuauhtémoc stressed the importance of basic resources as the foundation for support. With something as miniscule as parking, which they explained has been burdened by a daily fee, followed by a long walk through unsafe areas, underrepresented students are weary of the possibility of attacks of violence. ***“With the increase of classes occurring at UC Riverside...and spaces being taken away, there’s almost no place to feel safe on campus and it starts at parking.”***

When thinking about the future of students like themselves, Cuauhtémoc is optimistic that more students will use this moment to create, embody and spread inclusive strategies and rhetoric. ***“It’s going to take an army of people in order to change minds, so I’m just hoping that I’m enabling an army to get rid of this poison that is racism, that is sexism, that is homophobia, all of them...if [our ancestors] can survive some of the greatest genocides of the world and extinctions, then we can too. Though this seems very intense and difficult, the people will keep on dancing and we will keep singing our stories...and that’s a beautiful thing to remember.”***

Veronica Barron Villegas, UC Berkeley

Veronica is a third year student at UC Berkeley studying political economy with a concentration in socioeconomic inequality amongst Latinos in the U.S. She is the second person in her family to attend a UC, and she knew from a very young age that she wanted to attend college. Following in her older sister's footsteps, Veronica joined UC Berkeley in the Fall of 2014.

Veronica was born and raised in Anaheim, CA, in a predominantly a working class, low-income Latino neighborhood. While her parents were always dedicated to her pursuit for higher education, they didn't have the experience with college themselves, which made her sister's influence and her prior exposure to a UC a huge factor in her decision to apply to the UC and stay within California.

Being politically active was not Veronica's first instinct when coming to campus. Many students like her first focus on how to make the most of their academic experience while balancing work, school, and their basic needs.

As a Latina student navigating the UC, Veronica was very aware that there were differences between her and her peers. ***"I feel like money is always on my mind and I feel like I definitely notice that that's not the case for everybody. It's probably the most glaring aspect for me in regards to feel like underrepresented on this campus. Like students who struggle with money, I don't know if they're always as represented."***

After the election, Veronica faced the frightening implications that this presidency would have on her and her family. ***"I think there was a lot of fear in me, and my family, and my community. And that fear forces you to think much different and it forces you to look at life differently...the reality is it kind of puts you in survival mode and I can't just focus on only being student, like maybe other students can, anymore."***

For many working students like Veronica who are financially helping their families, there was suddenly more weight and urgency on completing their degree. ***"I think before the election I had more room for a little bit of dreaming. It makes it harder [to be a student] when you have to think about the very real reality of taking care of the people you love, reading a chapter from your book is not important."***

Veronica described how on a campus like UC Berkeley that is notorious for its political activism and engagement, the tensions amongst students quickly unraveled. ***"I feel like I've encountered a lot of people who I didn't realize thought so differently than myself regarding***



immigration and what I consider to be human rights. You think of Berkeley specifically as so liberal and so open-minded but that's not always really the case. I just feel really disconnected from a lot of people...because of their silence. The silence is also telling."

When asked if she had been personally affected by this new administration, Veronica mentioned overwhelming stress and anxiety about her family's stability. ***"If the government takes away all these benefits from my family, possibly even me, and if we don't have health care anymore, if I don't have health care, then what happens to us? ...I've made plans for the possibility that people I know get deported. I started to think about, 'Am I going to have to graduate early [or] somewhere else back home, so I can return and take care of any of the kids that get left behind?'"*** As a woman, Veronica is also nervous about what ramifications this new administration could have on her health care and access to contraceptives.

Veronica believes the university should alleviate the financial and emotional burdens that a lot of students are facing post-election. ***"The school needs to be prioritizing [those] affected by various parts of their intersectional identities...I think it's important for them to be funding the multicultural center and other spaces so that students have a little bit more peace of mind [and find] community."***

When thinking about the future for students like herself, Veronica expressed how worried she was for the future of higher education. ***"...it's already hard enough for me, I don't know what it's gonna be like when [my nephews] try to go to college. I think it's gonna be financially less accessible. I think it's gonna be even more mentally straining. I think the value of our education is going to go down because our government is doing that themselves; they don't value education."***

Anonymous (name redacted by request), UC Merced

Anonymous is a first generation third year student at UC Merced studying business management and economics with a minor in creative writing. As the first person in his family to attend college, he was not fully aware of all the criteria necessary in applying to the UC but was inspired by the women in his life to pursue higher education. Anonymous successfully appealed his way through the bureaucratic admissions process and was accepted to his dream campus, UC Merced in 2014.

Anonymous and his family immigrated from Mexico when he was eight years old to a small town in Orange County, called Garden Grove. The transition to a new country was needless to say a difficult one. Having to learn a new language, adjust to a new neighborhood, and adapt to a new environment, Anonymous felt he had to prove himself. With full support from his family, he knew pursuing a higher education would be instrumental in his success and opening the doors for others like himself.

As a first generation undocumented student in the UC, Anonymous finds sometimes he still holds onto that feeling of having to prove his place in this institution. ***“Everyday, I have to continue to prove myself to my professors, my peers, those who know I’m undocumented. Even at work, I feel like I have to. I have that sense that I have to prove that I belong here. It’s a continued struggle that I find myself experiencing now, which reminds me of when I first got here.”***

As student who embraces his identity as an undocumented working class student, Anonymous finds it difficult to grapple with his underrepresented identity while being a frequent point of debate during a contentious political climate. ***“The most difficult part was having to hear people talk about the undocumented student narratives when these people were not including [them]. For months, I felt like my job was just to stay quiet, that my voice didn’t matter. I didn’t want to feel like that. I actually started voicing how I felt to people that actually had the chance to go and [vote]...reclaiming the narrative.”***

After the election results, even as a student leader on his campus, Anonymous felt a new overwhelming sense of uncertainty. ***“Before the election, people on campus, people around me knew that I was undocumented. As soon as the election came, I had a label on my forehead. It was very difficult when I had undocumented students coming to me and asking ‘What’s going to happen to us?’ I myself didn’t even know what was going to happen to me. Where would I ever find the strength?”***

Like many students, outside of campus, Anonymous also felt the looming threat of living and navigating through the central valley, a very openly republican community. The escalating anxiety of his family’s well-being began to take a toll on his mental health. ***“I think that’s what affected me the most. Not being able to go back home and be there for my family during these troubling times. All of my family experiences this, and has experienced it. During that time, everywhere you went, it was toxic.”***

As one of the most diverse UC campuses, Anonymous describes UC Merced as a campus rampant with fear with few resources and little support from its administration or faculty. This leaves many students like himself reliant on an attitude of resilience as a means of support for one another. ***“I began to understand it wasn’t just me that had this fear, but also this want to fight to continue to be here. Especially since our campus doesn’t have a resource center for undocumented students. We were able to tell the administration, now, more than ever, you need to protect us, as the students that are here.”***

This divisive political climate pushed many students to actively seek support and many of them realized the severe scarcity of resources at Merced. ***“UC Merced is really lacking in offering resources for this diversity that exists within our campus. Just recently, we were offered a room that we call our multi-cultural center, but it’s just a room that fits 10 people. The administration will say they’re going to uplift us, but it’s just all in an email, there’s no actions to those emails. What else can you offer for these students who cannot feel safe on our campus?”***

When asked what he thought about the future for students like himself, Anonymous remains optimistic and looks to the resilience he witnessed as a source of power. ***“I see the future. I see possibilities for students. If you continue to oppress undocumented students and other marginalized communities, then we’re going to change the system and make sure that there’s a seat at the table for us. I hope that I can really give back more to people who come from those marginalized communities and uplift them. They’re not alone, and if we stand together, who can stand against us?”***

Vereniz Ortiz, UC Berkeley

Vereniz is a third year student at UC Berkeley studying legal studies. As a first generation student from a low-income, single-parent Latino family, Vereniz had dreams of pursuing higher education to someday have a career she was passionate about.

Vereniz grew up in the small town of Fairfield, CA, near an air force base. Growing up in a working class neighborhood with a predominant elderly population, Vereniz heavily relied on the support from her best friend to make their dreams about going to college a reality. She pushed herself to explore options outside of community college and joined the UC in the Fall of 2014.

As the first person in her family to attend a University, Vereniz realizes how her upbringing and the challenges she overcame sets her apart. ***“I was very disadvantaged in comparison to a lot of my peers. I just had a really hard time wrapping my head around how my background affected me...I worked two jobs in high school, I had to outsource a lot.”***

Before even thinking about the national political climate, for many first generation students like Vereniz, one of the biggest hurdles of navigating the UC was overcoming imposter syndrome and reassuring herself that she did, in fact, belong. ***“...the self-doubt that is ingrained into you, you’re just expected to some degree fail, to not be as good. I just struggled with that. Even to this day, I think my biggest challenge was myself and the way I saw myself as inferior to everyone here.”***

Vereniz describes how the election results overcame her with a fear that was new to her. Suddenly some of her peers were viewed as a threat. ***“I felt like Donald Trump was perpetuating this [idea] of superior whiteness. Even looking at my white peers kind of triggered that emotion in me, like, I don’t want to be near you. You’re a danger to me. Obviously, after the whole shock went down, I [realized] Donald Trump does not encompass all white people. It was definitely a weird moment to look at my white peers in a way that I hadn’t really thought of them before, that was the initial impact.”***

In contrast, Vereniz also describes a simultaneous powerful moment of solidarity that emerged amongst communities of color on campus. ***“The day that Donald Trump got elected I went into this trance, I almost felt disconnected to the world. You would look at other students and everyone had that compassion in their eyes, like, I feel what you’re feeling. This person just hugged me, they embraced me and I was just like, wow, we shared that***



moment of pain and suffering, of not knowing what’s going to happen.”

Vereniz has undocumented family members. The looming threat to her family’s safety induced anxiety overshadowing her ability to concentrate. ***“My family is my foundation and they propel me forward and they keep me here, so with Donald Trump constantly threatening the wellbeing of my family and of my community, it’s unsettling. As a student, I feel like to some degree I have my hands tied...I’m here on campus overwhelmed with work, trying to keep up with my studies, trying to work so I can pay for my rent - then I question, what am I really doing to help my family directly?”***

Vereniz describes finding solace in students coming together at the multicultural center and in community healing. Vereniz advocates for more safe spaces. ***“I feel it’s not fair that the university’s not providing [undocumented students] the platform to feel protected as students. I feel like the school needs to go outward and say, we’re going to protect our students, no matter [if they are] documented [or] undocumented, we’re going to protect you all the same. I feel like bringing in Milo [Yiannopoulos] did the opposite; it felt like a threat, even though the Chancellor didn’t think of it in that way.”*** Although the Chancellor is not responsible for inviting controversial speakers like Yiannopoulos, the impact of these events on campus climate matters.

When asked what Vereniz thought about the future for students like herself, she described finding hope in the resiliency that she has witnessed. ***“I feel like the only thing we can do is to use that innate strength. Our people have been through genocide and we’re still here. They fought for us and we’re going to fight for ourselves and for the future generations. For me, I feel like it starts by getting our degrees and being conscious about the issues and speaking out [and] not letting this presidency stop us from [our] goals.”***

Alex (name changed by request), UC Los Angeles

Alex is a first year student at UC Los Angeles studying Spanish and Mathematics. Born and raised in Burbank, CA, the entertainment hub of Southern California, Alex was exposed to a quality public education at an early age and knew she wanted to attend one of the many prestigious public universities in California.

Alex joined the UC in the Fall of 2016. Although always supportive of her decision to pursue higher education, as the first person in her family to attend a UC, Alex's family was not equipped to help her navigate her first quarter. ***"I felt like I had absolutely no guidance just because of my family background...something as simple as choosing housing [felt] like I just had no idea what I was doing and no one there to help me or tell me what was best for me."*** Before thinking about politics, for many first generation students like Alex, acclimating to a new institution entirely on their own with little support from family is the most challenging aspect.

As a first year student still adjusting and figuring out what she wanted to study, Alex describes how the stunning election results completely shifted her academic focus. ***"[The election] changed me probably a lot more than other students academically. Just because I was political science my first quarter and when he was elected, I just feel it changed the way I view politics. I lost a lot of my faith in my major and I'm a woman, so it just felt like why am I even doing this? I just feel like politics probably isn't the place for me as a woman."***

After the initial shock and overwhelming discouragement, Alex describes a contentious climate on campus that felt very polarized. ***"It's caused kind of a weird vibe across campus in general, it feels like one side doesn't understand the other."*** She recalls a very specific instance jarred in her memory at a sporting event. ***"I was at a basketball game with some friends and the guy in front of us was talking to his friend about why he felt Trump wasn't that bad and he said something like, well he's not like lynching people so it's not really that big of a deal. I think that just shocked me because if that's the standard for a good person, someone who doesn't lynch people, like I don't know, I'm just shocked."*** In that moment, her peers' low threshold for racism was made clear. For many students like Alex, overt violence isn't necessary to create an unsafe environment.

Alex also has personal anxiety that these executive orders will affect her family's well being, since her father is not a US citizen. ***"I feel like people who did vote for Trump kind of feel uncomfortable with the fact that my dad's just***

living here, not a citizen and obviously there's a weird underlying fear everyday that like maybe my dad's going to have to leave."

As a student who also sustained a spinal injury, Alex constantly worries how this new administration might affect her access to healthcare. ***"I have health problems that I've had my whole life, so that's kind of scary because I'm not sure how that's going to change...There's just so much fear in my life, I'm not sure what's going to happen in the future but as of now, I've just been scared that things are going to happen."***

When asked how she sees the University playing a role in supporting students who have been affected by the election, Alex describes the need for tangible statements of support. ***"[The University] came out saying like, 'We protect undocumented students' and stuff like that, but I just feel like those are just buzzwords, it doesn't even really do anything, so I feel like the university needs to do something that we can actually see."***

When thinking about the future for students like herself, Alex expressed an overall concern with public higher education being affected for the worst with most of its students having to simultaneously juggle their personal anxieties. ***"It's not even just like the education side where we're not sure about money and funding and all of that; it's [that] everyone has a part of their life that is being affected by this...If you're worried about something else all the time and if you're having to take time away to do other things... that affects your education obviously."***

Marbella Avalos, UC Los Angeles

Marbella is a first generation third year student at UC Los Angeles studying Political Science and Human Biology. Marbella is originally from the rural town of Bakersfield, CA but spent some of her childhood living in a small town in Mexico before starting school.

As a student from a working class, low-income Mexican family, Marbella is seen as her family's prodigy. Although encouraged by her family to pursue higher education, Marbella has struggled to navigate a higher education system foreign to her parents. Acknowledging how much her family sacrificed for her and her brother to aspire to a better education is what drove her to join the UC in July 2014.

Even before the frenzy of the Presidential Elections, balancing being a full-time student while trying to make ends meet was the biggest challenge for many first generation students like Marbella. **"...getting the money for tuition, having to work, and find time for school, balancing that out - being a student and also having a job. I work usually anywhere from 11 to 20 hours a week."**

After the emotional results, Marbella describes feeling isolated on a campus she called her home. **"I felt like I didn't belong. I felt like I had a target on my back...I felt my community was targeted. The day he got elected I cried because it was really emotional to see how someone with such harsh words and such negative views on other people can be running [one of] the biggest countries."** Marbella, like many students, were appalled to suddenly see instances of hate speech surface more frequently on campus. **"There were chalk writings on our campus that said, 'Immigrants don't belong here' or negative comments about Muslim people...it was just kind of shocking that although we're a blue state here in California, those things could exist."**

Disillusioned with this new reality, Marbella found it challenging to find silver linings in her day to day. **"It really affected my ability to be a student on campus. I had trouble keeping up with my school work. My head was not in school and my everyday activities."** Marbella felt the lower energy, lower enthusiasm, and the shift that had occurred on campus. She describes feeling a sense of hope when one her professors completely switched his lecture to address the low morale. **"It was really refreshing that a professor actually took the time to address the students' emotions and he postponed our essay date because he just realized that it was such a shock to everyone."**

On a personal level, for many students like Marbella, there was an immediate fear and anxiety for the safety

of their closest friends and loved ones. **"One of my close friends is undocumented and when Trump got elected I got really scared because she told me that she had to come up with an emergency plan to move and flee the country. It was heartbreaking to have someone you love and someone you have been friends with since the start of college torn apart, worried for her family's safety and not be able to go through her everyday routine... because now she had to worry about her citizenship status."** Marbella also fears she could be torn apart from her boyfriend of three years who is also undocumented. **"Thinking of losing him makes me tear up because we're the same [but we're not] just because he doesn't have a piece of paper, a passport that says, 'You're allowed to stay here.'"**

Aside from the overwhelming emotional stress, Marbella is concerned how this new administration will affect her health care. There is an underlying worry that she won't have access to quality care or birth control after leaving UCLA. **"I was really shocked when I visited my healthcare provider and we were talking about options, and she mentioned a really quick side note and was like, 'Oh, it's really great that you're doing this now because we don't know what's gonna happen with our healthcare and our health-care plans.'"**

When asked how the University could support its students during this strenuous time, Marbella described the urgency for administration to provide safe spaces while being vocal about their ongoing support. **"The Chancellor and professors who students really look up to and see as their guides in the world are really crucial to speaking out and having a space for discussion and inclusion of everyone, even though we may have separate beliefs or separate ideologies, that respect is really crucial, especially in a public school."**

Ana Vega Bucardo, UC Riverside

Ana is a first generation freshman at UC Riverside studying philosophy and psychology. Ana was born and raised in Mexico City until she was thirteen years old, when her family decided to immigrate to the United States seeking opportunities for her in higher education.

Growing up in Mexico City, Ana recalls the close knit sense of community and belonging she felt in her hometown. Although motivated to continue her studies, the thought of pursuing higher education in Mexico felt unattainable. Ana remembers her and her family coming to San Diego full of excitement and hope, because she knew her dream of attending a UC was a suddenly a possibility. Ana was admitted to UC Riverside in the Fall of 2016.

Although there is a strong Latino community presence on her campus, Ana still feels the student immigrant community is underrepresented. ***“Sometimes people don’t acknowledge the actual immigrants. When people think of Mexicans or Latin Americans, they think of the people that have been here forever, and their families, but they don’t acknowledge that we just moved here, we’re not born and raised here, we’re learning a new language, living in a new country.”***

As the presidential elections ensued, many students like Ana, who were new to US politics, found it difficult to understand the political process and be civically engaged. ***“I think the difficult part was actually understanding how the system worked here, how elections work. Because you’re new to this, somehow you get a sense of not belonging to this election. I feel that sometimes makes you feel like you have do not an opinion or a voice.”***

After the initial shock of the election results, Ana describes a campus emerging with student protests, a supportive response from her student government, and students of color coming together across identities. ***“I feel like the community has become closer, because right now in this country we’re seeing a switch between minorities becoming majorities. The outcome of the election, mostly the response from [students] has been a common idea against discrimination. I think one of the things I’ve seen is that sense of getting together and seeing how it affects each other, not only us individually, but each other, because at the end of the day we’re one school.”***

When asked if she had been affected personally by this new administration, Ana described the fear and uncertainty of her future constantly invading her thoughts, making it difficult to concentrate on her studies. ***“I don’t think I’ve been personally affected, but I feel like my ideas***



have been affected...You start thinking with all these [executive] orders, what’s going to happen if one day [he] decides to not issues citizenship anymore or cancel permanent residencies? I feel that sometimes I have this fear of all the effort I’ve put in, all the sacrifice my parents have made, is just going to waste. [I fear] in the future not being able to have a successful career because my plans were interrupted or banished by someone else.”

Ana sees this administration as a major hurdle for students like herself, but a temporary one that can be overcome. ***“I feel like this is only a challenge for our generation, to make us grow, to make us think, to be conscious and aware. I think that, overall, in the big picture, if we stay together, this will be more of a learning experience rather than something that defines us or hurts us.”***

Eunchong Moses Park, UC Los Angeles

Eunchong is a fourth year student studying political science at UCLA. Eunchong originally grew up in South Korea before immigrating to the United States in 2007. After his first year at UCLA, Eunchong felt a responsibility to return to Korea for two years to serve in the military before returning as a student in 2013.

As a first-generation international student, Eunchong had dreams of pursuing higher education in the United States because of the quality of education. ***“I knew that the UCLA and UC in general provides the best education... that was really the best motivation for me to apply to UCLA.”***

For many international students like Eunchong, there is an initial culture shock superseding national and campus politics. He found it difficult to find other students like himself represented on campus. ***“...all these changes were very traumatic, yeah they were very different... because I’m international...I believe that there have not been many places [for us] in student government up until this point. I read Daily Bruin and there was one that was recently published that actually showed that there was [only] one person who was representing the international students.”***

After the election, Eunchong describes an attitude shift towards international students and worries about how this could affect his job security in the future. ***“I was in shock. He really wants to bring jobs back to the American citizens, meaning that there is less opportunity for international students. It just became more competitive, it was competitive before but it became more competitive.”***

As a resident assistant in campus housing, Eunchong also describes the deep fear he has witnessed among his residents, particularly with undocumented students. ***“Whenever I talk to them I can really feel the fear of being deported because they have to give up their friendship, their family, all they have, not only...their education.”***

Also in his experience as a resident assistant, Eunchong interacted with conservative residents who voted for Trump who feared being criticized or unpopular among their peers for their ideas. ***“What I think is the most frustrating to me is that either side fear each other. I think the fear for the liberals and the democrat students is a fear of racism, white supremacy. The republicans or most conservatives...their fear is, fear of being judged, fear of being judged for their ideas.”*** This hostile campus climate has proven divisive, but with unequal stakes. Progressive students and targeted communities face a real risk of physical harm versus conservative students who face a social backlash for having hateful ideas and sentiments.



When asked what the university could be doing to support affected students, Eunchong stressed the need for safe spaces and political education. ***“Fear is real and I think the problem is very real. I think the first thing the school, UCLA, needs to do is make sure that students feels safe and [provide] environments to pursue their education. What I’m hoping for is that in [a] way we can help our students make better decisions...for [the] next election.”***

Eunchong wants to remain optimistic for the future of international students like himself, but worries that this new administration will only make it harder for international students to find work and the ability to stay in the U.S.. ***“I really hope that he will change, he will realize that that’s not the best way to boost the economy, [there is] a better way to help U.S economy to grow. I hope that Trump will realize that and change his policy so that...I have a more opportunity here in the United States.”***

Melina Tessier, UC Davis

Melina is a fourth year student at UC Davis studying Global Disease Biology. As a first-generation student from a single-parent household, Melina had dreams of finding opportunities for higher education in California.

Melina grew up out-of-state in Reno, Nevada, where she experienced little to no diversity in her hometown and private high school. ***“That definitely impacted my high school experience especially because it was just like you are growing up in this super white town and then you’re going to an even whiter high school.”*** When visiting schools in California her sophomore year of high school, Melina was quickly drawn to Davis’s charm and biology programs.

As the first person to attend a UC, and her mom also putting her brother through college, Melina knew she wanted to make the best of this opportunity. ***“My mom had immigrated from Azerbaijan...[and] raised me as a single mom. She actually is a foreign doctor, so I’ve [inherited] all of her strength to keep going and make the best of what you have.”***

Before the elections, Melina wanted to explore incorporating aspects of public health policy into her biology studies, particularly advocating for women’s health and education. However, since the election Donald Trump, Melina began to re-evaluate what kind of impact her major could have post graduation. ***“Now that the administration has changed and everything, it’s just kind of made me concerned if my degree still has worth or the worth that I imagined it to be. It’s actually made me want to go a lot more into legislation. I feel like seeing the way that the administration hasn’t gone the way that I want it to has pushed me to be like, ‘Well, go out and do it yourself.’”***

Since the election, Melina has noticed an impact on her campus and peers, particularly around students, now more than ever, demanding police reform. ***“...it’s difficult because us students, we don’t really get the option to choose who’s going to be chief of staff of the police department. We just get a recommendation. It feels like students are fairly powerless, and so I feel like it’s resonated the entire campus that students aren’t given that much priority.”***

When asked if she had been personally affected by this new administration, Melina mentioned how her reprioritizing her advocacy efforts has taken a toll on her academics. ***“I’ve been pushing my academics aside, especially because I’m realizing how much I want to catch up on and how I really want to get involved in something to make a difference. After Election Day, I skipped like three or four days of classes just so I could get out and go to Sacramento***



and actually protest.”

Melina also described how the university could be doing more on its part to ensure students feel a sense of safety on campus by supporting resources that students actually use. ***“I know about the Women’s Resource Center, the LGBTQRC, the Student Retention Center, the Cross-Cultural Center. There’s so many resources on campus that are kind of almost niche spaces that don’t get publicized as much. I think it’s just really important to be able to fund these places because they’ve provided so many people a safe space when they don’t feel like there’s any.”***

Melina realizes it will only continue to prove to be harder to be a student for future students like herself, who are also working two jobs while taking out loans. ***“With fees going up and more restrictions, it’s just going to be even harder to make it work.”*** She worries that students will not have access to the same vital resources and community at other campuses.

Tommaso M., UC Riverside

Tommaso is a first year Mechanical Engineering PhD International student at UC Riverside. As a first generation college student, who is also the first in his family to pursue higher education in the United States, Tommaso joined UCR in the Fall of 2015 to continue his research in engineering. Tommaso is originally from a small town in the northern part of Italy where he gained both his Bachelors and Masters degrees in engineering.

As an international student adjusting to a new education system, a new language, and lifestyle Tommaso made a choice to study in California, specifically sunny Southern California, and felt fortunate to be in a state surrounded by folks who were more open-minded. Although there are very few Italian graduate students at UC Riverside, Tommaso felt comforted by the diversity on his campus and a sense of belonging amongst other students who identified as immigrants.

After the shocking elections, Tommaso describes the overwhelming anxiety and fear of being an international student under an administration that is openly anti-immigrant. ***“I feel like every week something could happen and there’s this feeling that I cannot make go away, there’s this kind of bad feeling I feel every morning when I wake up, like I’m an immigrant and all these new regulations are getting between me and the work.”***

Tommaso believes the University can play a more active role in alleviating some of this anxiety and fear by providing regular updates to students through town halls, teach-ins, or briefings to keep international students informed of any new changes that might affect them. It’s evident to students like Tommaso that campus felt different after the elections, international students felt the changes, and are apprehensive of only more drastic executive orders to come. ***“I’m just a first year, I feel like there hasn’t been any tangible consequences on me, yet; the YET is what scares me.”***

The ongoing student rallies on campus reassure Tommaso that his fellow peers are involved and care about the international student population but is not sure he can say the same for other Universities in other states. As a European international student, Tommaso acknowledges the privilege his identity holds compared to some of his colleagues and foresees repercussions in California trying to recruit future international students to join the UC.

“A new student from Iran was supposed to come next year in my department but he rejected the offer because of what’s going on. As a person from a middle eastern country, one



of the countries that are affected by the travel ban, I understand. I would never come here knowing that for 4 years [!] could be be stuck here or even worse, kicked out of the country, so I think if this is the trend, there will be a huge loss for the United States.”

Angela, UC Davis

Angela is a second year graduate student at UC Davis studying electrical engineering. Angela continued onto the graduate program Fall 2015 after completing her undergraduate studies, also at UC Davis.

Angela was born in Santa Barbara and raised a little further up the coast in a predominantly middle class neighborhood. Angela knew early on she wanted to attend college in California and follow in her parents footsteps, who both attended San Diego State University.

Before the whirl of elections, Angela quickly realized the pressure that came with navigating a primarily male dominated space, especially as an Asian American woman pursuing engineering. ***“I am a woman in tech which they say it’s about 15%...just because I’m a woman, I really need to perform well so that I represent my group well...I feel like sometimes if I do poorly, then people might see that as all women will do poorly in tech.”***

Angela describes the initial shock that set it in and residual effects the election had on her social life. ***“It definitely felt like right around the election day...I didn’t go outside for like two days after that. I definitely stayed home more. I don’t think I really went out to a show or anything more than dinner for the next two months or so. I don’t know. I just wasn’t in the mood for a long time.”***

As a graduate teaching assistant, Angela not only noticed the impact the results had on campus climate, but also on the individual lives of students she works with. ***“I used to think that the whole of Davis was so liberal and blue. I just felt like I didn’t know who was around me anymore...I didn’t feel like I was in a place of such like-mindedness as I thought I was when I first started. As a grad student, I’m a TA also so it’s kind of like, okay...this is affecting [my students] more than I can understand, how can I be a good TA for them?”***

UC Davis was one of the campuses that experienced targeted hate acts on campus after the election. Angela describes the demoralizing toll it had on campus. ***“There were those emails of the bacon on the Islamic center door handle [and] police reports of just flat out hate crimes. [That] was just really disheartening. I used to think everyone in Davis [wanted] civil rights for everybody...I wasn’t sure about that anymore.”***

When asked how the university could help support students directly affected by this administration, Angela expressed how excited she was to welcome a new chancellor who was a person of color who was also into tech.



“He’s African-American which as much as I don’t want to say I don’t want a white person to be in leadership, I do think that there are just some things that someone, like any kind of person of color, will just understand certain issues better than a white person can, even if the white person is totally supportive and wants to help.”

In regards to the UC’s overall response, Angela was unimpressed with the business-like, robotic emails that were sent. ***“It’s hard to get the human feeling from the emails that the UC president sends out. The best I can do is kind of just believe that they do condemn hate and stuff like that. Because otherwise, what else am I going to do?”***

Wendy Sanchez, UC Riverside

Wendy is a fourth year first-generation student at UC Riverside studying political science. Wendy grew up in a small inner city in Los Angeles called Huntington Park. As the oldest sibling in a low-income single-parent household, Wendy witnessed first-hand how much her mother endured to provide for her and her siblings. Her biggest motivation for pursuing higher education was to make her mother proud, alleviate her hard work and provide a pathway to higher education for her younger siblings.

“My mother used to leave very early in the morning and I would not see her until bedtime. It was difficult to see that your only parent was not there for the most of the day, but she made that sacrifice because we needed an income. [So] for me it’s like a thank you gift. It’s to tell my mom, I can’t thank you enough. And that’s why I want to bring her to the Latinos [graduation] ceremony that we have here on campus, because that’s something...’You deserve to walk with me, to receive this [with me], we both deserve it, not just me.”

Although Wendy recognizes that many students look like her on campus, she has a nuanced idea about how her identity fits into that landscape. ***“UCR is a very diverse campus [but] Latinos, even Central American students, are [under] one umbrella.”***

Despite UCR’s acclaimed diversity, for many first-generation students like Wendy, finding resources and navigating the institution is still very challenging. Last fall, many students were struggling to meet their basic needs, not focusing on election buzz. ***“I was trying to see how I can get my insurance here in school, and how I was going to pay for it...Do I need to take an extra loan out, would they allow me to take an extra loan out...I just remember struggling so much to get support [and] behind all of this, was the political air that was going on, I was just like, ‘Are you kidding me, here?’”***

After the results, Wendy describes the disbelief among her family and friends accompanied by a deep sense of fear and uncertainty. ***“I couldn’t believe my eyes. I just went back to my room and started crying, and I called my mom and I told her, ‘I’m really sorry he got elected. I don’t want you to live in fear.’”*** Many students with undocumented parents felt a direct attack on their family’s well-being and safety. ***“How can there be so much hatred here in this country for undocumented people?”***

Wendy also describes the anxiety that ensued amongst her peers that started to take extra precautions traveling to and from campus. ***“Even for me...just based on the***



color of my skin. They were stopping people on the freeway here, close to Riverside. [Students] were putting Facebook posts like, ‘Oh be careful. If they stop you just bring out your passport.’” Wendy describes a conversation with her roommate about carrying their passports. ***“My roommate said, ‘but can you believe it?...we’re going backwards in time to the moment that we will have to show who we are and what’s our place here.’”***

In just the first few weeks of the new administration, Wendy depicts fear that turned to protest. ***“It was very powerful to see [protests to the travel ban]. There was a chain of people, linked to one another, so all of the people in the middle could actually do their prayers and feel safe about doing their prayer. We’re trying to get an education, we’re trying to move forward and help our community in different ways. But [students are afraid] while we’re trying to get our degree. It’s just not fair.”***

Many students turned to the counseling center for extra support during this time. Wendy describes the comfort of having staff reach out to students who were having a hard time coping. ***“I just see a lot of students, if they ever need help, reach out to staff that they might see on campus and go to them directly and talk to them, because they know that they will be heard out.”*** Now more than ever, there is a dire need for fully resourced CAPS centers.

Wendy is hopeful for stronger generation of students who would not give up on their dreams. ***“Incoming students will just have that edge to keep fighting, and keep moving forward...it will be a challenge, but we’re willing to take it, because we’re not giving up. They’re going to be stronger than us, keep going on and telling their stories.”***

Rachel Weber, UC San Diego

Rachel is a first year student at UC San Diego studying clinical psychology and ethnic studies. As a student from an Asian American family in Chula Vista, Rachel was originally drawn to UCSD because of their prestigious engineering program and its proximity to home.

Although API students make up a large majority at UCSD, Rachel describes the ethnic nuances that exist within her community that are often overlooked. ***“UCSD [is] about 50% Asian and that includes a lot of Asian identities...I guess I don’t seem underrepresented [but] a lot of the Asian students are international students. Not that I don’t see them as part of the community but I usually don’t know them. I don’t see them in clubs or when I attend stuff it’s like...they’re part of a very different culture.”***

For many incoming first-years like Rachel, carving out your place on campus includes navigating financial aid, housing, and enrolling in classes, all aspects of college she expected to encounter. She did not expect a tumultuous election. ***“If the election had happened at a different time, I think my schooling might’ve been very different because it is my first year at college, so I expected to be a little bit less worried about politics or the policies that happened. I realized the next few years at college are probably going to be very different.”***

After the results, Rachel describes a campus responding with an outcry of emotion. ***“That night I remember, it was midnight and there was a lot of yelling. I remember looking outside my dorm and there was a bunch of people going outside the rooms and starting a march. I think it was on the news; they were on the freeway. It was pretty rough because I know a lot of my friends were crying about this... because honestly none of us expected it to happen.”***

For many new to campus, the results surfaced the divide amongst communities on campus that predated the election; the impact on campus climate was evident. ***“There has been increased police presence on campus. It’s kind of divided because before the election there was some chalkings on campus [that] were pro-Trump chalkings: Deport all Mexicans, Trump for President. It was a lot of stuff about deportation that was clearly in support of Trump. I think that showed that our campus is pretty conservative and there’s definitely people here to support that kind of stuff and to support his policies and what he stands for. At the same time we do have resistance on campus. There are people who organize against this, who do speak out.”***

Rachel describes feeling suddenly overwhelmed about her safety on campus and confronted with the harsh



reality that some of her peers were not allies in fostering her safety. ***“There’s just this moment of I really have to watch out for my [and] my friend’s safety. It’s a very heart-breaking moment...seeing what your friends really believe in because when they say they voted for him it’s not just ‘oh they support this candidate’, it’s like ‘they looked at his policies, they looked at what he wanted to do, they looked at what he stands for.’”*** She describes losing trust as she recognized peers’ lack of support for human rights. ***“It came at this moment where I realized there’s definitely a clear line between opinion and white supremacy.”***

When asked what the University could be doing to repair campus climate and support students affected by this new administration, Rachel described the urgency for safe spaces rooted in action. ***“I think that the UC can honestly support us by first making campus a sanctuary or safe space because that’s really the best thing that students need at this point. They need to know that this campus really is safe, not just we support you in an email and don’t do anything. There’s a point you can’t say stuff anymore, you have to actually do things.”***

Looking forward for students like herself, Rachel finds hope and inspiration in the student resistance. ***“It [will] be a tough four years...a lot can happen in four years but I also think it’s a time to really show resistance and really show solidarity with others. When I got here I really didn’t think I’d be doing too much organizing but then after seeing what’s happening, I [feel like I] should really take part in this and do something. I’ve been doing some organizing on campus, resistance can be something like daily life. It’s gonna be tough but there’s people looking out for you, there’s people who want to be in solidarity with you, there’s people who are going to have your back in these times. You’re definitely not alone.”***