



FUTURE LEADERS OF AMERICA

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF YOUTH ACTIVISM IN CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITIES

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Adolescents and young adults have the potential to overcome socioeconomic challenges and become an influential voice in their communities, especially when they receive training, support, and guidance from experienced peers and caring adults. Since 1982, Future Leaders of America (FLA) has been an institutional resource for educational mobility and democratic participation for students in California's Central Coast cities. FLA is a non-profit organization that supports the academic achievement and civic engagement of Latinx youths who are from low-income backgrounds and whose parents work primarily in agriculture and other low-wage industries. The organization was founded by community leaders who sought to address the high dropout rates, substance abuse, and gang activity in the Latinx community.¹ Today, the organization also prepares its predominantly Latinx members to exercise their voices and collectively advocate for equitable policies that address the needs of their communities.

This report focuses on FLA's achievements between November 2016 and February 2022. The first section provides an overview of FLA's programming. The second section draws on survey results to provide a profile of FLA membership that includes demographic characteristics, members' involvement in FLA activities, and how members have benefited from the program. The third section summarizes grassroots campaign victories, and a fourth shares findings from an experiment on voter

turnout that demonstrate the success of FLA's outreach efforts. The report concludes by discussing the lasting implications of FLA's work for young people, their families, and their communities. We hope that this report offers insights into FLA's programming and informs other efforts to advance academic achievement and informed civic action among youths from low-income and immigrant communities of color.

FLA'S PROGRAM

FLA has a multipronged program that seeks to provide ongoing support for adolescent members. The organization offers weekly youth programming in which members participate in workshops and activities that focus on health, education, and leadership. The membership is made up of high school students plus college-age students who are invited to participate in most activities as youth leaders. There are six key elements of the program.

- **Summer Youth Leadership Conference (YLC).** Incoming ninth and tenth graders are invited to a week-long, youth-led summer leadership camp where they work on their public speaking, assertiveness, and self-esteem. In addition, participants are also introduced to the college application process by learning about financial aid and the A-G course requirements for University of California and California State University admission and

by interacting with peer mentors who are enrolled in a two- or four-year college or university. Paid adult staff and YLC alumni (including college students) lead workshops on the history and culture of their communities, healing and self-care practices, and strategies for high school success. In addition, participants are introduced to local campaign issues. The conference gives students opportunities to meet peers from other schools and develop their networking skills.

■ **Future Leaders of America Master Achievers (FLAMA).**

The follow-up to YLC is FLAMA, FLA's year-long program. Students who participate in the YLC are invited to stay involved in FLA activities throughout the school year. Typically, twenty-five to thirty students between the ages of fourteen and seventeen participate in biweekly meetings at each chapter. Participants brainstorm, strategize, and create a plan of action to address social disparities, including education- and health-related inequities, through grassroots organizing. They mobilize around an issue, using tactics that include petitioning, media advocacy, and meeting with decision makers. Students who are new to FLAMA have an active role in running the meetings while those with more experience provide support and guidance. FLAMA members participate in coalitions with other local organizations, giving them opportunities to establish

ties with a diverse set of adult and youth leaders in their communities and beyond.

FLAMA members also participate in programming that supports healthy development through wellness and self-care practices. Members regularly take part in cultural and arts activities that celebrate their Latinx heritage and challenge negative stereotypes about their communities. They also receive significant encouragement and information that helps them prepare for college or pursue a viable career.

■ **Facilitator Training.** The peer-to-peer model is central to FLA's programming. Leading up to the annual YLC, FLA offers five facilitator training sessions of seven hours each to high school members. Training sessions prepare them to lead workshops that focus on public speaking, assertiveness, and goal setting; enhances their team building skills; and prepares them to lead a "FLAmilia"—a cohort of ten YLC participants—during the conference. The training also prepares them to address situations that may arise during YLC, including those that require mandatory reporting. Leadership training has three levels. At the first level are A-team members, who help with conference logistics. Peer facilitators, the next level, co-lead a FLAmilia. The most experienced students are facilitators, who lead their own FLAmilia.

Facilitator training also provides team-building exercises to help youths engage with their peers from different regions. This experience prepares members to play an active role in training new recruits, building the leadership of peers, and running campaigns. After students have completed all five training sessions, they help lead a YLC.

- **Family Leadership Conference.** The Family Leadership Conference is a yearly event for the parents and siblings of FLA members. The goal of the three-day weekend event, which is conducted in Spanish, is to enhance parents' capacities to support their children's development in the areas of physical and mental health, leadership, and academic success. Much like the structure of a YLC, the family conference is run by a group of high school and college students who have been trained, in Spanish, to be facilitators for this program. These young leaders engage parents in conversations about the college-going process, advocacy for their children, and positive and effective communication strategies. FLA staff and guest speakers offer workshops on topics such as mental health, civic engagement, and college access. This culturally relevant program promotes the active participation of monolingual Spanish-speaking parents in their children's education, and it also involves them in local cultural activities.

- **University Seminars.** To promote members' interest in higher education, FLA hosts University Seminars twice during the academic year. These events bring together high school members and FLA alumni who are enrolled in two- and four-year colleges and universities. The seminars target students whose parents did not have the opportunity to attend college. The seminars offers motivational and informational sessions about college preparation, financial aid, and student life. Through workshops offered by FLA alumni in professional fields, the seminar also exposes students to career opportunities.

- **Alumni Engagement.** Since its inception, FLA has maintained an active alumni network. In fact, in 2022 the FLA alumni list included over 9,500 members. The network boasts school administrators, teachers, lawyers, a judge, elected officials, health care providers, executive directors, private business owners, and nonprofit leaders among its ranks. Many serve as volunteers or guest speakers at FLA events, and they provide other types of in-kind and financial support for the group.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and early 2021, FLA refined its programming to respond to the needs of its members and their communities while accommodating the requirement for remote learning. During this time, FLA served as a vital resource for youths

and their families, providing members with accurate and timely information on how to stay safe and healthy. Regular online gatherings with youth leaders provided a safe space to socially connect with peers, troubleshoot challenges with online learning, and stay involved in grassroots campaigns. These interactions also helped FLA members emotionally as they experienced the high infection and mortality rates in their communities. FLA was able to fully resume its in-person programming in the summer of 2022.

FLA MEMBERS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT

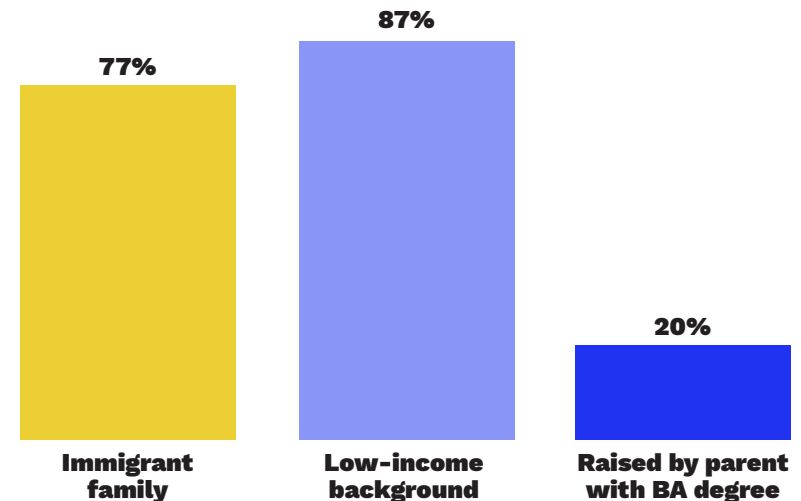
Demographic Profile of FLA Members

Surveys collected in 2019, just before the FLA shifted its programming in response to the pandemic, evidence the quality and impact of FLA's programming. Thirty of FLA's core leaders (regular participants at the time the study was conducted) completed a survey that was part of a larger statewide study on youth civic engagement led by Veronica Terriquez (first author of this report). Data collected from these thirty youths offer a snapshot of FLA's membership, programming, and the growth that members experience from being part of the group.

The survey group was made up of high school and college students. The average age was seventeen, with ages ranging from twelve to twenty-four. Just over half, 56 percent, identified as young women, and 44 percent

identified as young men. At the time the survey was administered, all of FLA's members identified as Latinx or Hispanic, and 77 percent reported being from an immigrant family, meaning that at least one of their parents was foreign-born (fig. 1). FLA targets students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Among respondents, 87 percent were eligible for free and reduced lunch in high school. Twenty percent were raised by at least one parent with a bachelor's degree.

FIGURE 1. FAMILY BACKGROUND OF FLA SURVEY RESPONDENTS, 2019.



Reasons for Joining FLA

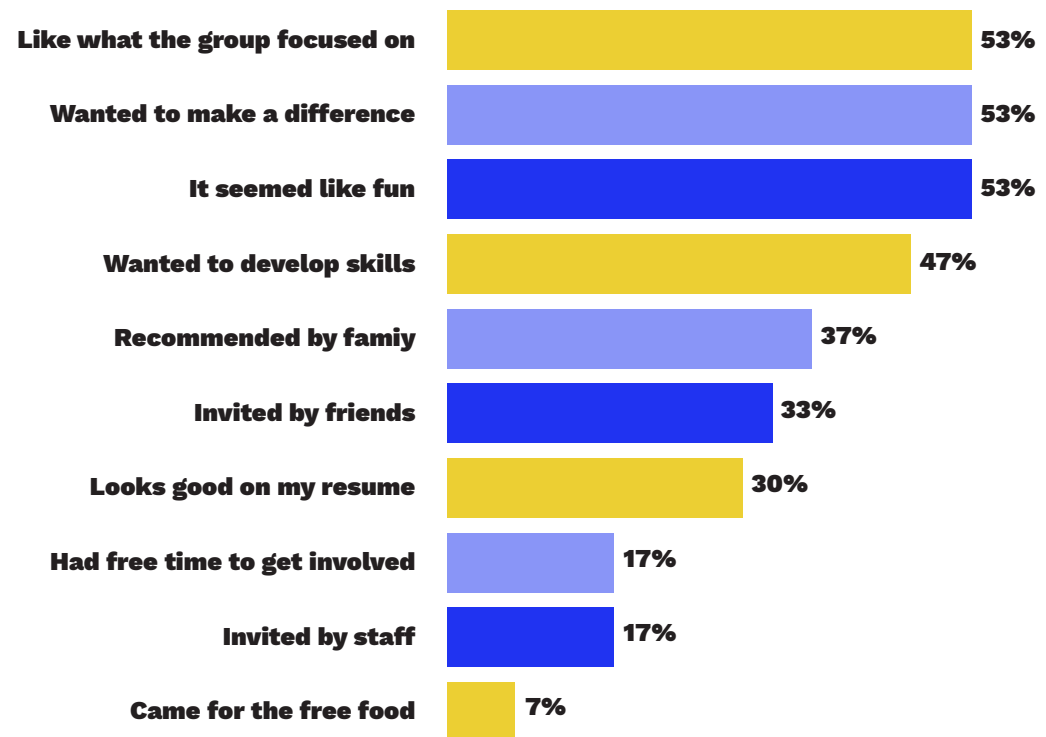
Survey participants were asked to indicate up to three reasons why they joined FLA. We asked this question to understand what initially motivates young people to join a group like FLA. As shown in figure 2, the majority reported joining because they wanted to make a difference, because they liked what the organization focused on, and/or because participation seemed like fun. Just under half (47 percent) joined because they wanted to develop new skills. Some joined because the organization was recommended by a family member (37 percent), they were invited by friends (33 percent), or because their involvement would look good on their resumes (30 percent). Smaller percentages joined because they had time to get involved (17 percent), adult staff invited them (17 percent), or they enjoyed the free food offered at events (7 percent).

Participation in FLA Activities

Survey participants were also asked to report the types of FLA activities that they engaged in. Results suggest that FLA offers its members many

meaningful opportunities to develop their civic skills and to exercise their voices. As shown in figure 3, almost all respondents, 90 percent, reported that they had made important decisions within the organization and/or had given a public presentation. Eighty percent said that they had participated in a march, action, or rally, and 73 percent met with elected officials. Most also talked to

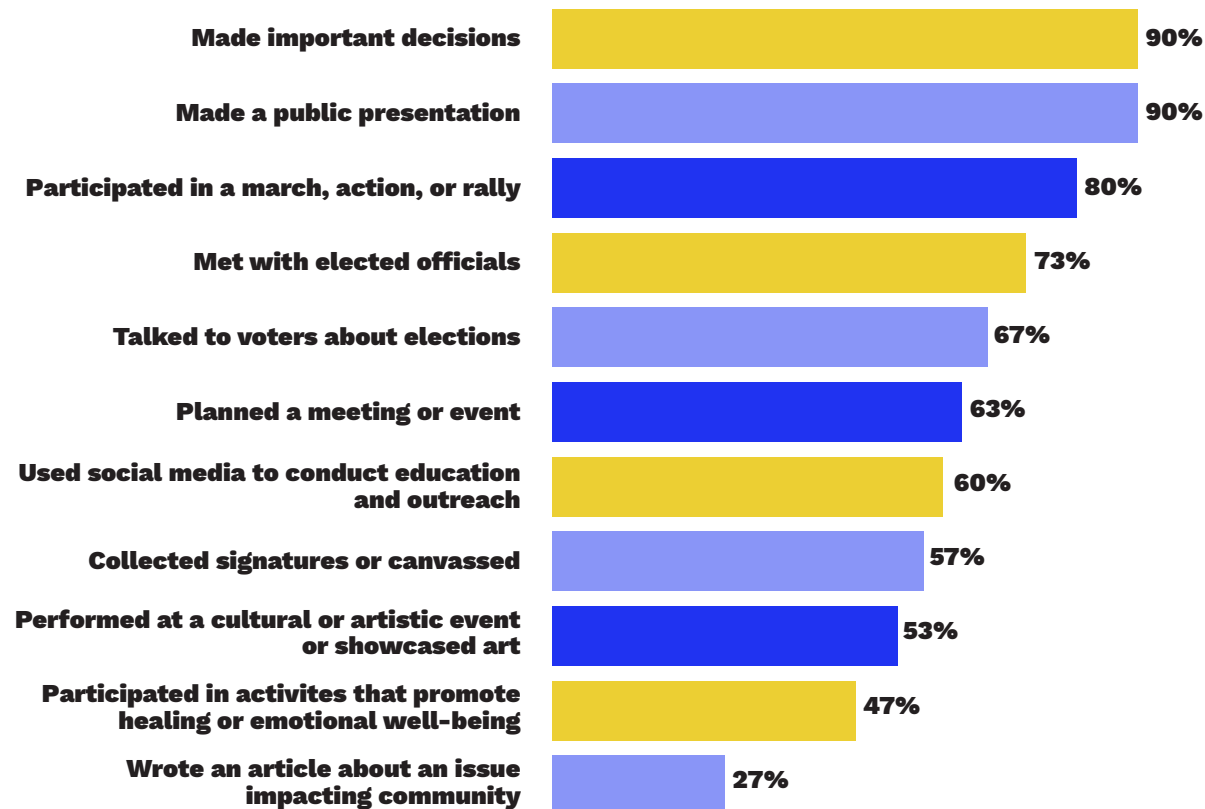
FIGURE 2. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' REASONS FOR JOINING FLA, 2019.



voters about elections (67 percent), planned a meeting or event (63 percent), utilized social media to conduct education and outreach (60 percent), and collected signatures or canvassed for a campaign (57 percent). The majority (53 percent) said that they performed at a cultural or

artistic event or showcased their art, and just under half (47 percent) participated in activities promoting healing or emotional well-being. Finally, 27 percent of respondents reported that they wrote an article or produced other public media about an issue impacting the community.

FIGURE 3. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN FLA ACTIVITIES, 2019.

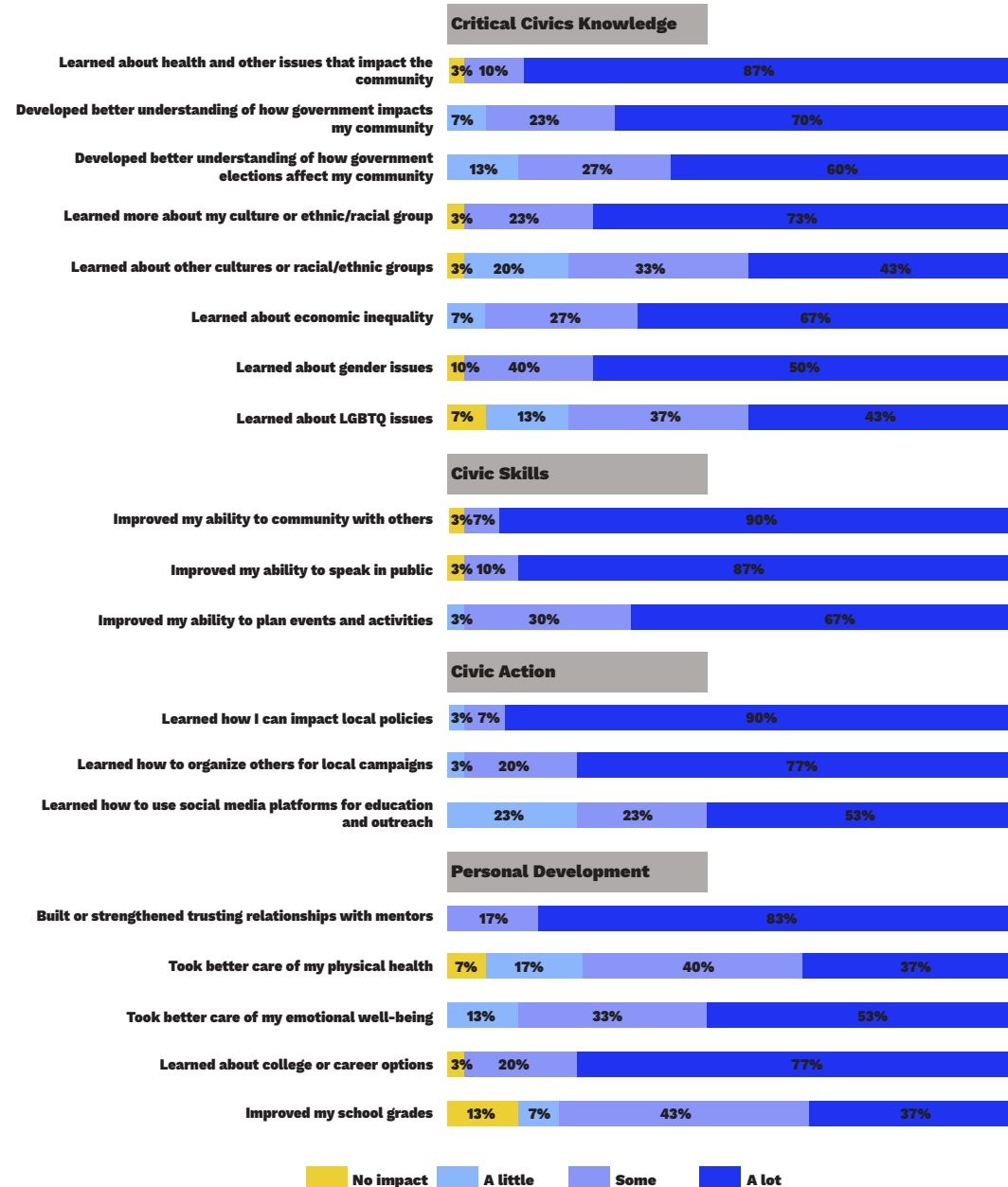


Members' Growth and Development

FLA contributes to its members' healthy development in various ways and to different degrees. As part of this study, participants were asked to rate the degree to which their involvement with FLA impacted different aspects of their personal development: did it have no impact, very little impact, some impact, or a lot of impact? Figure 4 shows the results. For the sake of brevity, here we focus on those who reported that their involvement with FLA had "a lot" of impact.

Survey results suggest that FLA's programming provides members with critical civics knowledge that increases their understanding of local issues and the diversity of their communities. An impressive 87 percent of respondents reported that they learned "a lot" about health or other community issues. A sizable share, 70 percent, became a lot better informed about how government decisions impact their communities, while another 60 percent reported learning a lot about how government elections affect their communities.

FIGURE 4. IMPACT OF FLA PROGRAMMING ON SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, 2019.



The critical knowledge of civics that youths gain in FLA includes an understanding of different forms of diversity and inequality. In this regard, 73 percent of those surveyed reported learning a lot about their own culture or ethnic/racial group, while 43 percent learned a lot about other ethnic/racial groups. The majority also learned a lot about economic inequality (67 percent) and gender issues (50 percent), and 43 percent learned a lot about LGBTQ issues.

Most of the FLA members surveyed reported that they had acquired critical civic skills through their involvement. They overwhelmingly reported that their participation had a lot of impact on their ability to communicate with others (90 percent) and their ability to speak in public (87 percent). Approximately two-thirds (67 percent) of surveyed members said that their ability to plan events and activities had increased a lot.

Participants generally indicated an increased capacity to take civic action. Almost all FLA members who were surveyed (90 percent) had learned a lot about how to impact policy. Most (77 percent) had also learned a lot about organizing others to participate in campaigns that benefited their communities. Just over half (53 percent) reported learning a lot about how to use social media platforms for education and outreach.

Participants were also asked about how their involvement with FLA affected personal development. Eighty-three percent reported a lot of growth in building

or developing trusting relationships with mentors. In the area of health, 37 percent indicated that they now took a lot better care of their physical health, while just over half (53 percent) said that this was the case when it came to their emotional well-being. Given FLA's focus on supporting members' future professional success, it may not be surprising that 77 percent said that they learned a lot about college and career options. Finally, 37 percent reported that they improved their school grades by a lot as a result of their involvement in FLA.

CAMPAIGN VICTORIES SINCE 2016

FLA's programming prepares young people to lead grass-roots campaigns to change local policies. FLA youth leaders, in collaboration with educators, community stakeholders, family members, and state policymakers, have contributed to concrete policy changes in their Central Coast communities. The following describes some of FLA's campaign victories. This information was obtained through four sources: interviews with FLA members, FLA staff, and other stakeholders; the organization's public social media postings; reviews of municipal policies; and media coverage.

Safe Zones, No ICE on Campus (SBUSD, 2016)

The November 2016 national elections had a significant impact on immigrant families. Because of xenophobic attacks on immigrant communities during the campaign

and after the election, FLA members feared for their safety and the safety of their families, and they were deeply worried about their future in the United States. FLA youth leaders in Santa Barbara demanded that the Santa Barbara Unified School District establish “safe zones” that would protect all youths from harassment and efforts by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to identify undocumented students. Youths and parents successfully encouraged school board members to introduce Resolution No. 2016/2017-22, which states that district schools are a “safe place” for all students and their families. On December 13, 2016, the school board unanimously approved the resolution.

Safe Zones, No ICE on Campus (OUHSD, 2016)

Following their peers in Santa Barbara, FLA members in the Oxnard Union High School District advocated for a “safe zone” resolution. Youths aligned with a parent group to demand that the district protect undocumented students. They shared their stories and testimonies at a school district meeting and in individual meetings with board members. Thanks in part to youth and community pressure, the school board unanimously approved Resolution No. 16-22 on January 18, 2017. The resolution states the district’s commitment to making every campus a “Safe Zone” and outlines the responsibilities of district personnel specifically in regard to undocumented students.

A-G for All! (OUHSD, 2018)

FLA members in Oxnard knew that many of their high school peers were not eligible to apply for admission to University of California and California State University campuses because they had not completed the A–G course requirements. According to data collected by the California Department of Education, only 23 percent of students enrolled in ninth grade in 2011-12 had completed their A–G requirements when they graduated in 2015. In response, FLA members launched a multi-year campaign in 2015 to demand the alignment of the Oxnard Unified High School District’s graduation requirements with the A–G requirements. Students surveyed their peers about their academic success, support from counselors, and personal expectations for higher education. To gain broader support for their campaign, FLA established a coalition with Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), Central Coast United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), and One Step A La Vez. After three years of organizing, youth leaders claimed a victory when the school board voted unanimously on May 16, 2018, to make the A–G course requirements the default curriculum.

Tobacco Retail License (City of Port Hueneme, 2020)

FLA members from Port Hueneme and South Oxnard sought to eliminate the sale of flavored tobacco products due to the vaping epidemic that was affecting youths of color across the nation. They claimed a partial victory

when the Port Hueneme city council voted on March 16, 2020, to establish a tobacco retailer's license. FLA members saw this as a positive step toward achieving their goal of banning the sale of flavored tobacco in Central Coast cities.

Santa Maria Eviction Moratorium (City of Santa Maria, 2020)

Although Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide moratorium on evictions on March 27, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic Central Coast families remained concerned about their ability to pay rent. Pandemic-related earnings loss, illness, and other challenges had left many families financially unstable. In response, FLA youths worked in coalition with CAUSE to strengthen the eviction moratorium. Members in Santa Maria helped collect more than one thousand electronic signatures for a petition that demanded renter protections. Members also created testimonial videos, which were shared via Instagram and Facebook, to raise awareness of the financial struggles that community members were facing. Thanks in part to community pressure, the city of Santa Maria adopted its own temporary eviction moratorium on April 7, 2020. Compared to the governor's policy, the city's policy gave tenants thirty days instead of seven to notify their landlords in writing (including by email or text) that they were unable to pay rent. It also initially gave renters six months to pay back rent after the moratorium's end

date, and it included protections for commercial tenants that were not covered by the state policy.

Sexual Education for All! (SBUSD, 2020)

Students in the Santa Barbara Unified School District were concerned that the school board was not going to implement the state-approved *Teen Talk Middle School* sexual education curriculum that the district had chosen in compliance with the California Healthy Youth Act, which took effect in January 2016. A small but vocal group of parents and residents opposed the curriculum, with some openly objecting to *Teen Talk's* LGBTQ inclusivity and arguing that marriage should be between only a man and a woman. In response, FLA members attended the school board meeting on March 10 to support the implementation of the curriculum. School board members sided with FLA members, and on September 8, 2020, the curriculum was unanimously adopted for grades 7 and 8.

Grading Modifications during the Pandemic (SMJUSD, 2021)

During the height of the pandemic in 2020-21, low-income youths across the country struggled with remote learning, and this was no different in Central Coast communities. The digital divide, crowded living conditions, caring for younger siblings, financial stresses, illness, and deaths in their families and communities made learning difficult. Concerned about their academic standing, FLA members

in Santa Maria advocated for more opportunities to make up assignments, which would help them pass their courses. In response, Santa Maria Joint Union High School District voted on February 25, 2021, to adopt an interim policy to address these concerns. The policy modified credit requirements for graduation in 2021, allowing (on a case-by-case basis) for seniors to graduate with minimum state credit requirements. It also gave students several options for improving their fall 2020 grades, including obtaining an incomplete in a course in order to give them additional time to submit assignments or accepting a “no mark,” which would allow them to retake a course at a later date without a negative impact on their grade point average.

Grading Modifications during the Pandemic (SBUSD, 2021)

FLA students in the Santa Barbara Unified School District were outspoken about the unequal impact that the pandemic and online instruction had on student learning. District data demonstrated that Latinx high school students and those who were eligible for free and reduced lunch were disproportionately failing multiple courses in comparison to their peers. In response, FLA members spoke at online school board meetings to share the academic challenges they faced, including inconsistent Wi-Fi, the lack of a quiet study location, poor technology, mental health concerns, and so on. The school board

was receptive to student concerns. On January 12, 2021, it temporarily changed the grading policy for secondary students to include an option for “no credit” in lieu of a letter grade of *F*. Students who received no credit avoided the negative impact of an *F* on their GPA. Additionally, students who received no credit received one-on-one support to create a plan of action to earn a passing grade.

Grading Modifications during the Pandemic (OUHSD 2020)

FLA members in Oxnard followed the lead of their peers in Santa Barbara, demanding grading accommodations to counter the pandemic-related challenges that they were experiencing. They adopted a similar strategy, attending an online school board meeting on December 16, 2020, to educate board members about the difficulties that they were experiencing with online instruction and the obstacles that hindered their completion of assignments. The students’ testimony aligned with district data on student learning. The board voted to adopt revisions to the district’s student evaluation policy that moved it away from a punitive system to one that bases a student’s grade solely on mastery of a subject. Students are graded on their knowledge of the subject matter, rather than nonacademic factors such as school attendance, effort, conduct, and other behavioral factors. Since proficiency in a subject is the primary grading criterion, the policy expanded students’ opportunities to pass a class.

Smoke-Free Outdoors Ordinance (City of Port Hueneme, 2020)

Secondhand and thirdhand smoke poses serious health threats to children and adults. For residents of multi-unit housing, particularly apartment buildings and condominiums, secondhand smoke can be a major concern. Secondhand smoke can migrate across units and common areas, and thirdhand smoke can remain embedded in soft surfaces such as upholstery and carpeting for many months. Both can cause respiratory and other health problems. FLA members in Port Hueneme helped spread awareness about the importance of enacting a city ordinance that would regulate smoking by publishing newspaper opinion pieces and voicing their concerns and making public statements at multiple city council meetings. With community support, members gave a Powerpoint presentation about the need for smoke-free environments during a city council meeting on April 5, 2021. On May 17, the city council passed Ordinance No. 779, which prohibits smoking in common areas in apartment buildings, condominiums, retirement facilities, nursing homes, and dormitories. It also prohibits smoking in other public places, including privately owned businesses.

Mental Health Resources in Oxnard (OUHSD, 2021)

Students across the country faced heightened mental health challenges during the pandemic. In Oxnard, FLA

members advocated for a response to their mental health needs. To this end, they conducted an online survey of 244 of their high school peers. They presented their research findings to the Oxford Union High School District on March 12, 2021, and shared the results with the school district's director of student support services. In response, the district's superintendent affirmed OUHSD's commitment to addressing mental health issues and providing additional student resources at the board's meeting on September 29. In April, the school board voted to create new wellness centers at each high school, revamp their mental health website, and create peer-to-peer student mentors by providing them with training that specializes in mental health. The FLA also successfully requested that the title "Student Intervention Specialist" be changed to "Wellness Specialist" to promote student access and decrease the stigma associated with mental health concerns.

Alcohol Ordinance (County of Santa Barbara, 2021)

In 2015 FLA partnered with the county of Santa Barbara to identify ways in which minors' exposure to alcoholic beverages could be reduced. To work toward this goal, FLA established the Youth Wellness Coalition to address the display of alcoholic beverages in retail stores within city limits. In 2020, FLA partnered with the city of Santa Barbara's Policy Department to reduce the number of window ads that promote alcohol consumption. They

advocated for the ordinance by testifying at meetings of the Santa Barbara planning committee and city council. In their presentations, members emphasized that liquor stores were disproportionately concentrated in the city's lower income areas, including the Westside and Eastside, and they argued that this contributed to high alcohol consumption by youths in low-income neighborhoods. The city council approved the ordinance on September 21, 2021. The ordinance specifies where retail displays of alcoholic products may be placed and limits where new stores that sell alcoholic beverages may be established.

Redistricting Efforts for Local School Districts (Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, 2022)

Following the 2020 census, FLA members became involved in redistricting efforts in Santa Barbara County. Their goal was to ensure that school boards in the Santa Barbara and Santa Maria school districts would better reflect the demographic makeup of their constituencies. FLA partnered with CAUSE and MICOP to advocate for redistricting maps that would incorporate "minority-majority" districts that could pave the way for the Latinx community in both cities to elect school board members that would better represent them. FLA members and their allies presented their maps at public hearings. On February 8, 2022, the Santa Barbara school district adopted a map developed by FLA and CAUSE. In Santa Maria, the activists' efforts led to modifications to the

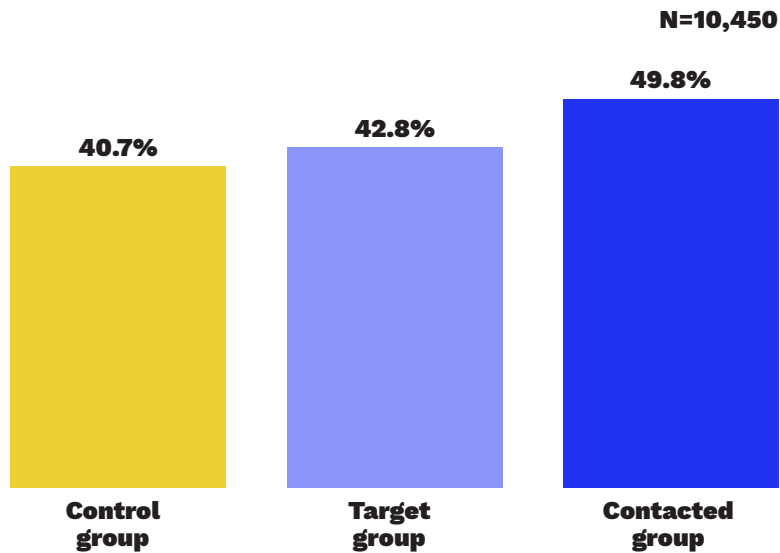
options initially presented by the district, with the final map blending board and community priorities. This map was adopted on March 9. The new maps will define district boundaries for the next ten years.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

FLA has also participated in youth-led efforts to educate and mobilize voters. Since 2017, FLA has devoted significant energy to emphasizing the importance of voting and increasing young people's commitment to getting out the vote in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Specifically, they have engaged members in voter registration and pre-registration, non-partisan voter education, and voter mobilization. Through these efforts, FLA emphasizes that even if members cannot vote themselves because they are under the age of eighteen or are non-citizens, they can contribute to electoral processes by educating others and encouraging them to exercise their right to vote.

These efforts had a positive impact on voter turnout. In a 2018 experiment, Veronica Terriquez compared predicted voter turnout between a control group of voters aged eighteen to thirty-four who were not targeted for outreach and voters of the same age who received an informative phone call.² Recognizing that there were other simultaneous efforts by partisan political campaigns to get out the vote during this election season, the experiment also measured the "added value"

FIGURE 5. IMPACT OF FLA PHONE-BANKING EFFORTS ON THE TURNOUT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS AGED 18 TO 34, 2018.



of FLA’s youth-led efforts. The findings, presented in figure 5, show that compared to the predicted turnout for the control group, 40.7 percent, the predicted turnout for those targeted for outreach was 42.8 percent, regardless of whether an FLA member spoke to the voter. In other words, FLA increased overall turnout in target communities by an estimated 2.1 percentage points. Even more significant was the finding for those who were successfully reached by phone: the average predicted turnout

rate was 49.8 percent, meaning that FLA’s peer-initiated phone conversations resulted in an estimated 9.1 percent increase in turnout. This research suggests that when FLA members spoke to young voters on the phone, they made a convincing case for voting.

Building on this success, FLA remained active in 2020 in promoting residents’ participation in government elections. In addition to going door-to-door to encourage residents to complete the census, young leaders registered voters and phone-banked to encourage them to vote in November 2020. Leading up to the election, FLA’s young members collectively logged over 20,000 conversations with voters. Such work helps build electoral power in communities that have historically been overlooked by government representatives. FLA’s successes evidence the importance of investing in nonpartisan youth-led efforts to get out the vote in their own communities.

THE 805 UNDOCUFUND

In 2018 FLA worked alongside CAUSE, MICOP, the McCune Foundation, and the Ventura County Community Foundation to establish the 805 UndocuFund to ensure that undocumented individuals and families in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties receive necessary resources during emergencies. The 805 UndocuFund was a response to the hardships caused by local wildfires, which led to evacuations, destroyed homes and workplaces, produced

hazardous air conditions, closed schools, and resulted in severe economic impacts. Immigrant families, especially those with undocumented family members, suffered disproportionately from the related housing shortages, wage and job losses, and unexpected childcare expenses. These families also lacked access to federal safety net programs, exacerbating the challenges they faced. The 805 UndocuFund has helped fill the gap. FLA alumni helped raise funds for impacted families, while FLA youth leaders helped spread the word about the resources available through the fund.

In 2020, the 805 UndocuFund began focusing on supporting immigrant families as they coped with the impacts of the pandemic, which fell disproportionately on immigrant communities, and inadequate healthcare. With the support of the Ventura County Community Foundation, the McCune Foundation, and individual donors, 805 UndocuFund disbursed 6.1 million dollars to more than forty-five thousand households in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. FLA youth leaders utilized social media and Spanish-language media to educate their communities about health and safety during the pandemic and the availability of these funds.

In 2021, the 805 UndocuFund incorporated as a community-based non-profit organization in order to create a sustainable disaster response organization that focuses on immigrants. The 805 UndocuFund is governed

by a volunteer board of directors made up of leaders from FLA, MICOP, and CAUSE.

THE LASTING IMPACT OF FLA

Since its inception in 1982, FLA has expanded meaningful opportunities for its young leaders. The organization offers culturally informed academic guidance and civics training during a time in young people's lives when they have the potential to overcome hardship and experience significant developmental growth. Moreover, the organization instills among young people a commitment to advancing equity and social justice in their own communities and beyond. Because of the quality of its programming, the organization has an impressive record of success, with thousands of accomplished alumni who, despite their humble beginnings, earned a college degree and continue to serve the community.

Given FLA's long track record, many of its current members are likely to continue their public service as they pursue postsecondary education and transition to adulthood. They will become part of an established network that addresses the individual needs of young people, builds electoral power, and advocates for ongoing community improvements. In short, FLA members are likely to improve opportunities for others who come from low-income, immigrant, and Latinx backgrounds.

NOTES

1. Gilbert Cuevas (1935–2018) was the leading co-founder and first executive director of Future Leaders of America. His spouse, Angie Cuevas, along with other community leaders, played a critical role in getting the organization off the ground.

2. This experiment relied on de-identified voting records obtained through Power California and PDI. It used two-stage least squares regressions to measure the impact of youth-led voter outreach efforts on turnout.

AUTHORS

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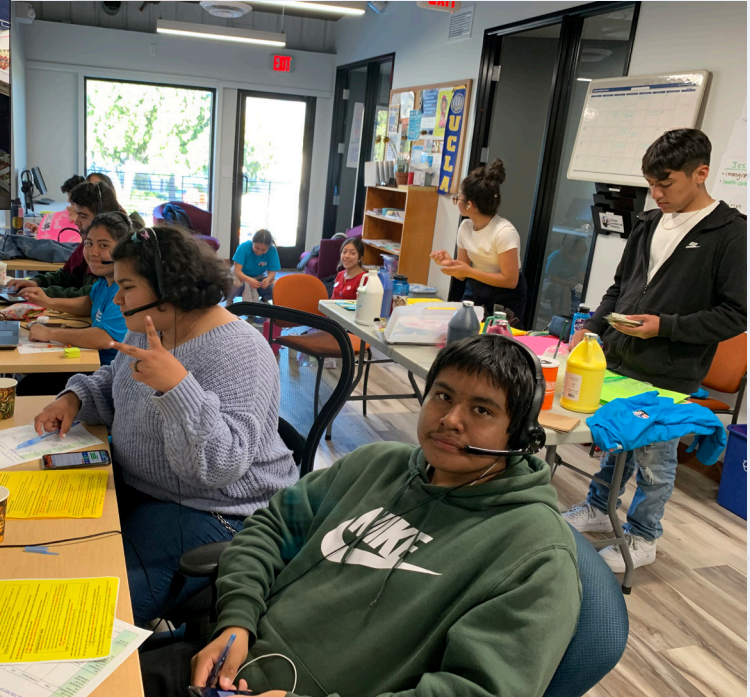
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“FLA helped instill a sense of leadership in me and helped me thrive. They gave me the skills and the ability to put myself in a situation where I can excel and access higher education. They have helped me take on challenging situations, where I can speak up against social injustice in a tactful way, so that I can make a difference.”

— **Eunice Gonzalez-Sierra**, FLA, UCLA, and Brown University alum and teacher in the Santa Maria–Bonita School District

“Our alumni network is strong. The organization has impacted many of their own personal and professional trajectories so they give back in a number of ways. Thanks to the organization, many are now in leadership positions here in the Central Coast and beyond. They volunteer, serve as mentors, and open doors for the students. Alumni come back and help direct our youth leadership conference and our family camps. Some support us financially, or sit on our Board. Our alumni have been instrumental in contributing to the direction, deep impact, and expansion of our work.”

— **Gloria Soto**, executive director of FLA



America (Liuna Local 220)
United Food and Commercial Workers
(UFCW Local 770)
Service Employees International Union



