

PBS "The Open Mind" host speaks at College Debate 2016

PBS host Alexander Heffner (@heffner) has joined Dominican University of California's College Debate 2016. Heffner, the host of the public affairs program The Open Mind, will draw on his own background in student activism as he works with College Debate 2016 student delegates.

The Open Mind host spoke to about 140 delegates at College Debate 2016 today in Guzman Lecture Hall on the Dominican campus.

Named a Voter Education Partner for the [Commission on Presidential Debates](#), Dominican is leading a first-of-its kind national initiative to use technology and social media to engage college students in the presidential election. [College Debate 2016](#) will provide college students from throughout the United States a platform to discuss and debate the complex issues facing our country. The end result will be a memo to the moderators of the 2016 Presidential Debates containing detailed College Debate 2016 questions for the candidates.

[Heffner](#) has covered American politics, civic life, and the Millennial vote since the 2008 presidential campaign and reported extensively on youth engagement. His writing has appeared in leading newspapers and magazines and his analysis has been featured on nationally broadcast media outlets. He founded and edited the first-ever online national student newspapers covering the 2008 presidential campaign and the first year of the Obama presidency, and also directed a nonprofit initiative for which he taught civic education/journalism in under-served New York City classrooms.

Dominican accepted applications from public, private, and community colleges in all states to serve as College Debate 2016 delegates. Delegates were announced in April, and soon after, the students will turn to social media to identify the issues that matter most to their generation. Using #collegedebate16 as an identifying tag on social media platforms, delegates will begin to engage each other and their networks. Online meet-ups, webinars, and other technology-mediated tools will develop the delegate cohort.

About 140 delegates were selected to attend a June 1-3 planning and training session on the Dominican campus in San Rafael to organize issue-focused events and outreach on their home campuses. Delegates will return in September for focused discussion on national issues and the drafting of the memo to the Presidential Debate moderators. The culminating event, [a moderated Town Hall meeting](#), will be streamed live to watch gatherings at the delegates' home campuses across the country.

Heffner worked with the delegates during the June event. Leading a panel discussion focused on student activism, he helped the delegates develop strategies and events – both online and on-campus – designed to engage peers in conversations focused on the issues that resonate with younger voters.

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