

College Debate 2016: "The Leaders of Today"

About 130 student delegates from all over the United States left College Debate 2016 at Dominican University of California June 3 feeling empowered to engage others in a national conversation around the key issues that resonate with younger voters.

On the final day of the two-day workshop, delegates met and listened to California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, PBS "The Open Mind" host Alexander Heffner, and Dr. Syb Brown, Professor of Journalism at Belmont University. They discussed topics ranging from innovation, civility, and digital media to developing strategies to engage peers in conversations focused on the issues that resonate with younger voters.

"I'm looking at this room and seeing the leaders of today," Secretary Padilla told delegates.

[College Debate 2016](#) is a first-of-its-kind initiative created by Dominican to provide college students from throughout the country a platform to discuss and debate the complex issues facing the nation. Dominican is a Voter Education Partner for the [Commission on Presidential Debates](#).

Delegates will return to Dominican in September for a moderated town hall meeting, which will be live-streamed to campuses across the U.S. During the town hall, students will agree on the key issues - and very specific questions - for the presidential candidates to address. These questions will be presented to the moderators of the 2016 presidential debates.

"One of the biggest things I've learned at College Debate 2016 was the importance of initiative. It's so easy to be passive when hearing about issues," said Darien Newton, a University of Hawaii at Manoa sociology major from Alaska. "After listening to all these speakers and networking with everyone, I realize I have the power to really make a change wherever I'm at. My biggest takeaway was knowing when I get home, I can actually plan events like this and do my part to make people aware."

College Debate 2016 started on June 2 when award-winning filmmaker Julie Winokur presented her *Bring It to The Table* documentary. *Bring It to The Table* is a multi-media project that unites citizens around issues and across party lines.

"The documentary that we opened with on Wednesday really carried the message that I will take away," said Madelyn Starr, a delegate from Loyola Marymount University. "Even if you think you're open-minded, you may have biases and you need to consciously confront those when you have a dialogue with people. Otherwise, it goes in one ear and out the other. It won't make a single dent in what you have already decided."

Following the *Bring It to The Table* screening, Winokur talked with the delegates about bridging political divides, examining assumptions, and engaging in civil discourse to help move democracy forward.

"It's about coming to the table and having that equal playing field. Civility is very present in that idea as well," said Maia Rosenberg from Goucher College in Maryland. "We learned how that translates into action and actions that make policy change."

"I love meeting people with different ideas than mine and I've met so many great people here. We've talked about trying to form a youth vote commission nationally," said Jared McGinn from Nebraska Wesleyan University. "I really look forward to working with people when I come back in September."

Using #CollegeDebate16 as an identifying tag on social media platforms, delegates will begin to engage each other and their networks. Following the June meeting, they will participate in online meet-ups, webinars, and other technology-mediated tools to expand the conversation.

For more information, visit collegedebate.org or follow College Debate 2016 on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

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