



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Program for Public Discourse

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

ACADEMIC YEAR

INTRODUCTION

To the Carolina community and beyond, the UNC Program for Public Discourse (PPD) is proud to report on the success of an exciting year of programming, which we could not have done without your help. With the resources provided by UNC and the generosity of our supporters, combined with the adaptability of our audience and contributors, we were able to connect with hundreds of individuals and continue strengthening our students' capacities for public discourse, enabling them to serve as better citizens, civic leaders, and stewards of our democracy.

Our Annual Report for this academic year lays out how we built on our existing programming while adding new initiatives to better address the myriad issues affecting our country. It also explores how our audience reaches beyond the Carolina campus and across the political spectrum, broadening and deepening the impact of our efforts to improve public discourse.

In the coming year, we're expanding on all of these elements to meet the needs of our community. The PPD exists as a resource for anyone interested in cultivating engaged citizenship, and we're collaborating on a variety of projects and programs with other campus organizations. We are also working to bring even more UNC faculty members from numerous disciplines into the PPD to offer their expertise to each other and our audience.

We thank everyone who was part of the PPD this year. We look forward to meeting everyone who will be part of it during the coming academic year, where we'll explore the intersection of [Democracy and Public Discourse](#).

Sarah Treul
Faculty Director

Kevin Marinelli
Executive Director

OVERVIEW

Our **PUBLIC** events connected members of the Carolina community and broader public with intellectual leaders from across disciplines and professions, exposing them to new perspectives and modeling constructive debate between diverse viewpoints. (Read more on [Page 4](#))

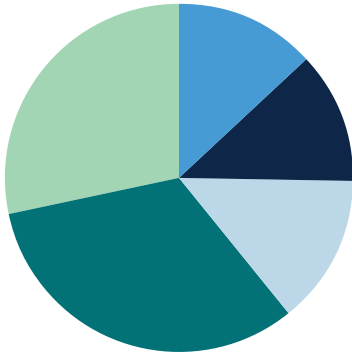
Our **STUDENT** programming invited students to participate in reading groups, debates, and deliberations as Agora Fellows, continue the conversation with our speakers via classroom visits and small-group Q&A sessions and learn how to transform their discursive practices in classroom workshops. (Read more on [Page 5](#))

UNC FACULTY collaborated with the program by sponsoring events and classroom visits from PPD leadership and guests, serving as speakers for our panels and debates, presenting their work and ideas in our Faculty Symposium on Deliberative Pedagogy, and lending their expertise and voices to the program as Faculty Affiliates. (Read more on [Pages 5 and 6](#))

PPD AUDIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Relation to UNC



13% - Student
12% - Faculty
14% - Staff
33% - Alumni
28% - None

ENGAGEMENT

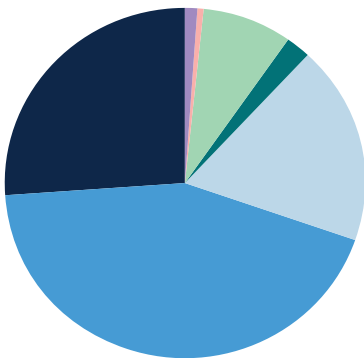
Over **1,800** attendees across all PPD events

94% rated events as "Good" or better

+1,205 subscriptions for email updates

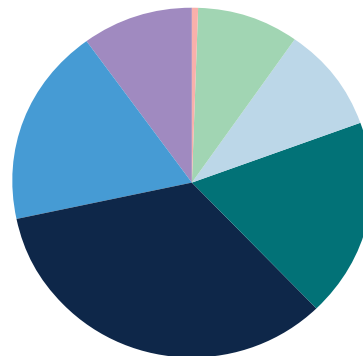
Over **300** UNC students participated in PPD events

Education



1% - Less than HS
1% - HS or equiv.
8% - Some college
2% - Associate's
18% - Bachelor's
44% - Master's
26% - Doctorate

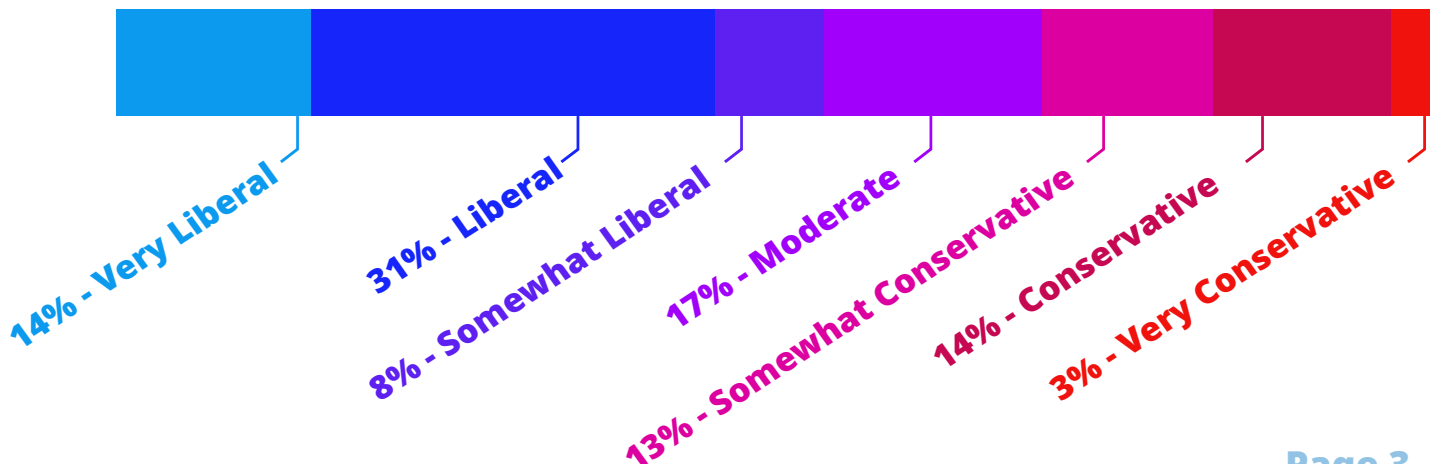
Age



1% - Under 18
9% - 18 - 24
10% - 25 - 35
18% - 36 - 50
34% - 51 - 65
18% - 66 - 74
10% - 75+

Political Identification

79% of our audience follows politics "A good deal" or more, and they describe their political views in the following ways:



PUBLIC Events

Across **five** panel discussions and **one** debate, this year's events modeled how we can better communicate with one another to tackle the difficult questions surrounding health policy, free speech, racial justice, political division, and economic equality.

In hosting and recording these events on Zoom, we brought hundreds of individuals from the Carolina community and beyond into the discourse, and we will continue to share our events this way as we return to campus.

JULY 2020

What Principles Should Guide our Lockdown Strategies for COVID-19, Now and in the Future?

Working with the UNC Center for Bioethics, we convened a panel of economists and health experts and ethicists, including **Drs. George Annas, Myron Cohen, Kevin Murphy, and Audrey Pettiphor**, to discuss economic security, public health priority, and the protection of civil liberties in the time of COVID-19.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Robert P. George & Cornel West in Conversation

With moderation from **Thomas Chatterton Williams**, we hosted a conversation between **Drs. Robert P. George & Cornel West**, whose frank words and ability to foster a friendship despite political differences afforded a grounding moment in uncertain times.

OCTOBER 2020

Free Speech on Campus

As part of UNC Research Week, we brought together **Greg Lukianoff and Drs. Sigal Ben-Porath and Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill** to discuss the civic purpose of college campuses, and the crucial role free expression plays in achieving it.

2020

2021

FEBRUARY 2021

Establishing the Abbey Speaker Series

A generous investment from **Nancy '74 and Doug Abbey** established the **Abbey Speaker Series** to foster meaningful public discourse about the most pressing issues of the day.

FEBRUARY 2021

Abbey Speaker Series: Defining Racial Justice in the 21st Century

Jamelle Bouie moderated a discussion about the myriad issues at the intersections of race and class and whether our current political climate creates space to address them, featuring **North Carolina State Senator Valerie Foushee and Drs. Touré Reed and Jacqueline C Rivers**.

MARCH 2021

Abbey Speaker Series: The Future of Conservatism

Panelists **Daniel McCarthy, Drs. Patrick Deeneen, Yuval Levin, and Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo**, and moderator **Dr. Jed Atkins** explored how the different strains of American conservatism have shifted over time and asked what might serve as a new unifying narrative moving forward.

APRIL 2021

Debating Public Policy Series: Debating the Minimum Wage

For our first-ever debate, we brought UNC faculty members **Drs. Luca Flabbi and Paige Ouimet** together to debate the proposal to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 and discuss what factors inform our current and future wage policies.

STUDENT Programming

A group of dedicated UNC students joined the PPD as **AGORA FELLOWS**, meeting bi-weekly to experiment with public discourse in a collaborative environment with guidance from Prof. Kevin Marinelli. Students engaged a variety of timely and timeless issues of public concern over a range of discursive modes including dialogue, debate, book groups, and critical reflection.

PPD faculty led **STUDENT WORKSHOPS** for classes and student organizations, including the Buckley Public Service Scholars, as part of the program's co-curricular efforts. These sessions focused on teach students how to articulate their positions effectively, engage opposing views responsibly, consume information critically, and, above all, transform their discursive landscapes creatively.

UNC students were able to **CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION** with our events' panelists, getting face-to-face time with Dr. Yuval Levin, Greg Lukianoff, Daniel McCarthy, and Dr. Jacqueline C. Rivers wthrough attending student-only meetings, or experiencing classroom visits from Drs. Sigal Ben-Porath, Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, and Touré Reed.



Offering Frontline and Academic Perspectives on Public Discourse Post-Election

In a **UNC-exclusive event**, the PPD brought together political operatives and UNC faculty to provide students with political insight from the ground level of the campaign trails and academic insight into how the 2020 elections might shape the future of their civic lives. In part one, Democratic and Republican operatives **B.J. Rudell** and **Brett O'Donnell** used the 2020 elections as a lens through which to view the ways Americans talk about politics at all levels. In part two, UNC faculty members from the Department of Communication (**Dr. Chris Lundberg**), Department of Political Science (**Drs. Susan Bickford** and **Marc Hetherington**), and School of Social Work (**Dr. Travis Albritton**) discussed the intersecting forces influencing how and whether partisans can have productive conversations in an increasingly polarized political climate.

FACULTY Collaboration

Throughout the academic year, the PPD worked with faculty from across the campus and partnered with organizations and departments, including the **UNC Center for Bioethics** and **Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies**, to connect our speakers, faculty, and students.

The program brought together dozens of UNC faculty, administrative personnel, and students to participate in the **UNC FACULTY SYMPOSIUM ON DELIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY**, a daylong series of panel discussions on best practices for public discourse in the curriculum and the classroom designed to help faculty share ideas and refine their skills for fostering dialogue and debate.

To broaden our knowledgebase and bring a greater range of voices and views into the program's conversation, the PPD invited several dozen UNC professors to join the program as **FACULTY AFFILIATES**. Coming from a broad range of disciplines, these affiliates will lend their expertise to the facilitation of UNC students' capacities to engage in public discourse.

Testimonials

"The Agora Fellows provides students a more personal space to debate and investigate the issues and discourse of the day. Unlike a lecture hall or class where you are compelled to speak because you have to, the Agora Fellows speak because we want to. During the pandemic, students felt disconnected from one another, and the Agora Fellows provided a space for students to connect. The meetings became a personal space where I and its other members could get to know and trust one another."

Dylan Heneghan, political science and communications double major at UNC, describing his experience as an Agora Fellow

"I turn on the news or check social media, and it feels like everyone is at each other's throats; yet when I talk to people in person about public discourse, what I most often hear is regret -- that so many issues are almost too polarizing to mention, let alone discuss, and that so many of our relationships suffer as a consequence. I think the Program for Public Discourse has the potential to help restore public confidence that constructive conversations are actually possible - and prove by example that such conversations are healthy and beneficial for us all."

Aidan Buehler, philosophy and economics double major at UNC, on the program's impact

"Another thing I love about this program [is] the opportunity to talk to people from different perspectives because people are so tightly locked into their sound bubbles and that further makes their views more and more extreme in one direction."

Dr. Jacqueline C. Rivers, executive director of the Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies at Harvard University, speaking about the program during *Defining Racial Justice in the 21st Century*

What's Next?

Discussing Democracy and Public Discourse

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the PPD invites the broader UNC community to participate in an ongoing conversation - taking place across the various areas of our programming - about [Democracy and Public Discourse](#). Public discourse is essential to democracy, and voters, activists, and policymakers cannot make informed decisions unless they are able to listen to different perspectives. Join us as we learn what it means to exercise the most essential components of democracy - compromise, negotiation, and persuasion - through interdisciplinary dialogue.

Continuing the *Abbey Speaker Series*

In exploring the year's theme, our Fall 2021 *Abbey Speaker Series* events will address specific, material elements affecting democracy. In October, "[Social Media and Democracy - Helping or Hurting?](#)" brings together leaders from academia and the tech sector to discuss whether social media can promote - or at least co-exist with - democracy. The following month, "[Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide](#)" explores how city-dwellers, suburbanites, and rural residents can better understand each other.

Hosting the *Symposium of Programs for Public Discourse*

Next spring, the Program for Public Discourse hosts the [Symposium of Collegiate Programs for Public Discourse](#). Bringing together directors of similar programs from across North America, the daylong symposium of workshops investigates the role of public discourse in higher education. The symposium will be completely supported by a grant from the Heterodox Academy.

PPD Leadership

Sarah Treul
Faculty Director
Department of Political Science

Kevin Marinelli
Executive Director
Department of Communication

Nora Hanagan
Event Coordinator
Department of Political Science

Jon Lepofsky
Outreach Coordinator
Department of Geography

Faculty Affiliates

Department of Biology

Emily Boehm
Kelly Hogan

Department of Communication

Aaron Shapiro

Department of Computer Science

Jay Aikat

Department of Economics

Luca Flabbi

Department of English & Comparative Literature

Jennifer Larson

Department of History

Lloyd Kramer
Michael Morgan

Department of Nutrition

Lindsey Smith
Emma Tzioumis

Department of Peace, War, and Defense

David Delaney

Department of Philosophy

Matthew Kotzen
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Department of Physics and Astronomy

Fabian Heitsch

Department of Political Science

Marc Hetherington
Kevin McGuire
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