



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Program for Public Discourse

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

ACADEMIC YEAR

INTRODUCTION

To the Carolina community and beyond, the UNC Program for Public Discourse (PPD) is proud to report on the success of another exciting year of programming, which we could not have facilitated without the support of our students and colleagues. Continuing to build on the foundations we established, we connected with hundreds of new and returning participants and continued strengthening our students' capacities for public discourse, enabling them to serve as better citizens, civic leaders, and stewards of our democracy.

This Annual Report lays out the ways we worked closely with Carolina students, faculty, and community members through events and workshops that centered this year's theme of Democracy and Public Discourse. With the return to campus life, we were able to bring all of our collaborators together in-person for important discussions about how to rebuild trust in our institutions and one another.

PPD continues to position UNC as a global leader in public discourse, and we have and will continue to support and work with those on the Carolina campus and beyond reinvigorating the culture of reasoned and balanced debate in higher education.

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.

Sarah Treul
Faculty Director

Kevin Marinelli
Executive Director

OVERVIEW

Our **PUBLIC** events connected members of the Carolina community and broader public directly with important voices from across disciplines and professions, exposing them to new perspectives and modeling constructive debate on topics of public concern. (Read more on [Page 4](#))

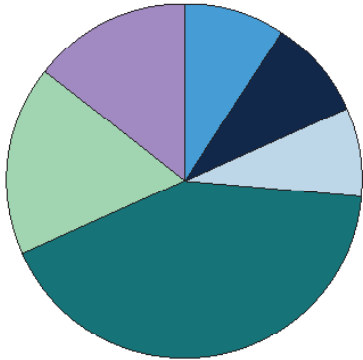
Our **STUDENT** programming gave students the chance to experiment with public discourse as Agora Fellows, continue the conversation with our speakers via classroom visits and small group discussions, and learn how to transform their discursive practices in classroom workshops. (Read more on [Page 5](#))

Our **UNIVERSITY** collaborations saw us working with faculty and programs from across UNC to bring important conversations to campus and further consider how we can encourage a culture of productive deliberation in our classrooms. (Read more on [Pages 5](#))

PPD AUDIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Relation to UNC



9% - Student
9% - Faculty
10% - Staff
41% - Alumni
17% - Other
14% - No relation

ENGAGEMENT

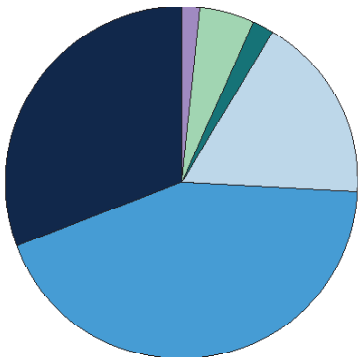
Over **1,700** attendees across all public PPD events

94% rated events as "Good" or better

+ 911 subscriptions for email updates

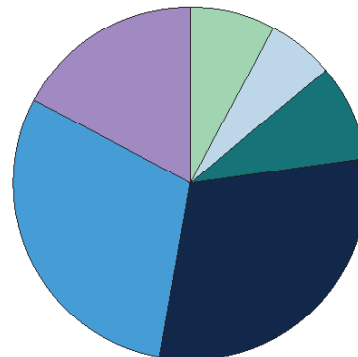
Over **500** UNC students participated in PPD events

Education



2% - HS or equiv.
5% - Some college
2% - Associate's
18% - Bachelor's
41% - Master's
32% - Doctorate

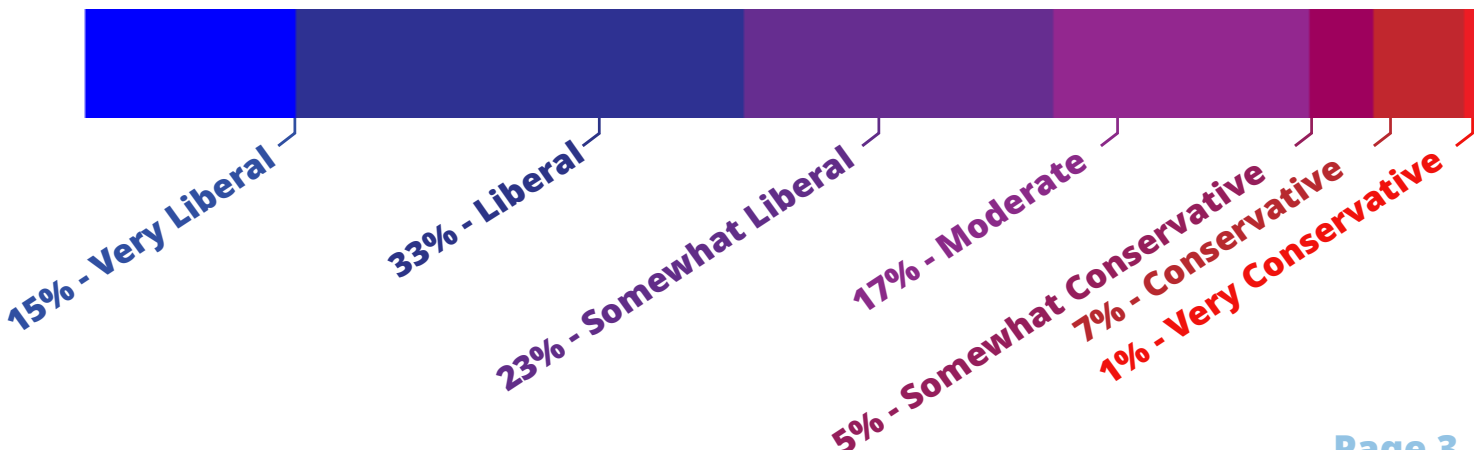
Age



8% - 18 - 24
6% - 25 - 35
9% - 36 - 50
30% - 51 - 65
30% - 66 - 74
7% - 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

This academic year, we explored the theme of Democracy and Public Discourse across our Abbey Speaker and Debating Public Policy Series events, modeling how we can better communicate with one another to discuss the interplay of science and politics, rebuilding trust in the electoral process and journalism, and the ways social media and the communities in which we live shape our relationships with one another.

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OCTOBER 2021

Abbey Speaker Series:
Social Media and Democracy: Helping or Hurting?

Panelists Siva Vaidhyathan and Rumman Chowdhury and moderator Yascha Mounk came together to contend with the implications of social media's unprecedented scale and varied role in the communities and political systems of countries throughout the globe.

NOVEMBER 2021

Abbey Speaker Series:
Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide

Moderated by PPD faculty affiliate Marc Hetherington, this panel discussion featuring Samar Ali, Chris Arnade, and Elizabeth Corey explored how rural and urban residents can better understand disparities in how the other values a sense of place, adjudicates truth, and defines and strives to have flourishing, fulfilling lives.

NOVEMBER 2021

Debating Public Policy Series:
Voting Reform - an Agnostic Dialogue

As part of UNC Research Week, we brought together faculty members Rick Su and Jason Roberts and alumnus Douglas Heye '94 to discuss the contentious issue of voting reform and how to restore trust in the electoral process.

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FEBRUARY 2022

Abbey Speaker Series:
Science and Democracy

UNC Provost Chris Clemens moderated a conversation between Luana Maroja and former UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp '86 about how the roles scientists inhabit - be it as citizens, educators, or communicators - complicate their positions in a democracy.

MARCH 2022

Debating Public Policy Series:
Taiwan and the Future of US-China Relations

Our panel discussion with June Teufel Dyer, Eric Yu-Chua Huang, Shelley Rigger, and moderator and UNC professor Klaus Larres laid out the economic, defensive, and ideological factors informing the relationship between the US and Taiwan and how each views Beijing.

APRIL 2022

Abbey Speaker Series:
Journalism and Democracy

McKay Coppins, alumnus John Hood '88, and Nafari Vanaski joined moderator Molly Worthen to consider the crucial role journalism - particularly local journalism - plays in democratic societies and the ways individuals and organizations can address the technological and economic factors driving the decline of local news and trust in the media.

STUDENT Opportunities

Our undergraduate **Agora Fellows** met bi-weekly to experiment with public discourse in a collaborative environment with guidance from Prof. Kevin Marinelli and graduate students Nicholas Gerstner and Josh Youakim. Fellows engaged with subjects of timely concern, including the politics of academia, the meaning of gender, and affirmative action in higher education, through dialogues, debates, and reading groups.

As part of our co-curricular efforts, our numerous **student workshops** modeled how to articulate positions effectively, engage opposing views responsibly, consume information critically, and, above all, transform discursive landscapes creatively.

UNC students had the opportunity to continue the conversation with our events' panelists, getting face-to-face time with Rumman Chowdhury to discuss careers in data science, or taking part in classroom visits from Chris Arnade, Samar Ali, and Nafari Vanaski.



Kevin Marinelli leads a group of MBA students in a workshop.



Students speak with panelists following "Journalism and Democracy"

FACULTY Collaborations

To kick off this year's theme of Democracy and Public Discourse, we convened a panel of faculty experts for an **interdisciplinary discussion**. PPD faculty affiliates **Claude Clegg**, **Kurt Gray**, and **Marc Hetherington** and Hussman School of Journalism professor **Shannon McGregor** laid out how research happening at UNC can help us better understand challenges and opportunities for public discourse.

In Spring 2022, PPD partnered with faculty affiliate **Emily Boehm** to present "**Leading Controversial Conversations**," a three-part workshop series hosted through the **Center for Faculty Excellence**. Across the sessions, dozens of faculty met to learn and discuss methods for setting ground rules for discussion, facilitating productive dialogue, and encouraging students to take argumentative risks.



Molly Worthen moderates "Democracy and Public Discourse"

Throughout the year, PPD worked with various UNC programs to bring timely conversations to Carolina's campus. Partnering with the **UNC Graduate School**, **Democracy Initiative**, and several others, PPD brought Johns Hopkins University President **Ronald J. Daniels** to the campus to **discuss the role of universities in modern democracies**, and convened a panel of military, media, and legal experts to discuss **the information war taking place in the Russia-Ukraine conflict**.

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

Faculty Affiliates

Adams School of Dentistry
Lance Thurlow

*Department of African,
African American, &
Diaspora Studies*
Claude Clegg

Department of Biology
Emily Boehm

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 Geography
Jon Lepofsky

Department of History
Lloyd Kramer
Michael Morgan

Department of Nutrition
Elizabeth Mayer-Davis
Lindsey Smith
Emma Tzioumis

*Department of Peace,
War, & Defense*
David Delaney

Department of Philosophy
Matthew Kotzen
Michael Vazquez

*Department of Physics
& Astronomy*
Fabian Heitsch

*Department of Political
Science*
Marc Hetherington
Kevin McGuire
Tim Ryan
Jason Roberts

*Department of Psychology
& Neuroscience*
Kurt Gray

Department of Public Policy
Doug MacKay

*Hussman School of
Journalism & Media*
Deb Aikat
Victoria Ekstrand

*Public Health
Leadership Program*
Aimee McHale

School of Education
Suzanne Gullede
Keith Sawyer

School of Social Work
Travis Albritton
Tanya Jisa
Allison De Marco

PPD Staff

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Nicholas Gerstner
Department of Communication

Josh Youakim
Department of Communication