

Dear GENup Community,

We hope you are having a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to the New Year! Although 2021 has presented us all with myriad difficulties, we'd like to take this opportunity to commemorate some of our collective achievements this past year.

GENup continues to grow rapidly, proudly serving as California's largest youth-led education advocacy organization, with 4,000+ members and over 100 chapters nationally. This year, our advocacy successes have impacted over six million public school students, from issues of mental health and school lunches to youth empowerment and racial justice in our classrooms.

On the Ethnic Studies front, we successfully advocated for the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 101, which mandates ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all graduating California high schoolers starting in the 2029-2030 school year. As part of this effort, we worked closely with organizations such as the [Fred T. Korematsu Institute](#), [Diversify Our Narrative](#), the office of Assemblymember (and AB 101 author) Jose Medina, the office of State Superintendent Tony Thurmond, and others to support AB 101's passage through the legislature as well as secure Governor Gavin Newsom's signature. A key part of this effort was an in-person rally we organized in support of AB 101 at the Capitol in Sacramento, which fielded speakers such as Assemblymember Medina and Dr. Karen Korematsu. At the university level, the University of California (UC) Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools and Academic Senate—the UC governing body which oversees matters regarding the admission of undergraduate students—approved a GENup-created & crafted proposal to research making ethnic studies an A-G admissions requirement at UC schools. Currently, two GENup collegiate undergraduates serve on the UC-wide Faculty Working group on Ethnic Studies implementation. Should we succeed, our policy would affect more than 200,000 high school applicants annually.

In addition to AB 101, GENup led the passage of a total of 18 other impactful bills which have the potential to make our schools safer and more equitable. These bills include (but are not limited to): Assembly Bill 824 (written by GENup and the California Student Board Member Association), which allows students to serve on county and charter boards of education; Senate Bill (SB) 14, which allows students to take days off from school for mental health reasons and mandates new training projects to address youth mental health issues; and AB 367, which requires public schools and recommends UCs and private schools to stock restrooms with free menstrual products. We successfully fought for universal school lunches, broadband/internet access for all, and summer credit recovery options for California public school students. More information about the bills we helped pass can be found [here](#).

With respect to civic engagement, GENup leaders worked with [Authentic Preparation Today](#) to develop and implement the State Seal of Civic Engagement in districts statewide, making

California the first state in the nation to do so. Already, the Seal has been adopted in dozens of districts and county offices of education across the State. We also kicked off our historic [Civic Engagement Pledge](#) campaign in partnership with the California Department of Education, our Superintendent Thurmond, and California Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber.

In addition to those efforts, we [launched](#) a school vaccination campaign with Senator Pan, the Public Health Student Ambassador Program, and the California Department of Public Health, striving to fight vaccine hesitancy amongst youth and significantly up student vaccination rates in schools. We also stood up to AAPI hate and worked with Stop AAPI Hate, the CA AAPI Legislative Caucus, and the CA Department of Education to pen a letter to all California district Superintendents on steps they can take to protect AAPI students from bullying and hate incidents at schools. The recommendations were youth-centered and written.

At the collegiate level, we advocated to secure full voting rights to both student representatives on the California Community College System Board of Governors, improved accessibility for transfer students through the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act and common course numbering system, promoted LGBTQ+ rights by fighting for the ability to change an individual's name and gender on government documentation, supported student's access to basic needs by spreading awareness on CalFresh eligibility, and sponsored SB 26 to ensure better student protections for college athletes. Through virtual panels and lobbying at the Sacramento State Capitol, we have fought tirelessly for Cal Grant Reform (via AB 1456) to expand financial aid to nearly 200,000 more California students and will continue pushing for this initiative this upcoming legislative cycle. At the community organizing level, we piloted a thriving college mentorship program and new FAFSA literacy workshops to support high school students along their path to higher education. Not only have we continued to expand our collegiate executive team with passionate student leaders, but we have also built our collegiate membership through new activists and continued engagement from GENup's incoming college freshmen.

Local GENup chapters also came out in force this year to show the strength of their advocacy efforts. In Los Angeles and San Diego, along with several other districts statewide, students successfully advocated for the passage of Student Bills of Rights, which articulate the fundamental rights and protections every student is entitled to in their districts. Our Student Bills of Rights collectively represent over 800,000 students. Furthermore, GENup members across the state organized student-led town halls for school board elections over the past year, helping voters access vital information about the candidates running in their local elections. Our Elk Grove Unified Chapter created their district's first ever student board member seat, a new youth-position which will represent over 64,000 students. Another GENup chapter led a triumphant mental health campaign, securing \$20 million in one time funding for the implementation of new GENup student-driven policies including mental health literacy, virtual wellness centers, and cultural competency training for educators. Our GENup Sonoma Chapter

partnered with their local education foundation to supply \$1,700 worth of culturally inclusive grade-level books to 17 classrooms at El Verano School. Finally, our chapters across California organized passionately and relentlessly during COVID-19, fighting for equitable school policies on issues ranging from school funding to youth representation.

As we look forward into 2022, we hope that you will continue to join us in fighting for lasting change that improves the education system in California and nationwide. We are so proud of what we have built thus far, but we still have a long way to go. Onwards to a new year: the same priorities, but with a new vision, and a rejuvenated youth-led movement ready to change our nation's diverse education system for the better.

Happy New Year's Eve,  
Benjamin, Asheley, Irene, Michael, Rylee  
GENup Communications Team