Common Ground Alliance Project
Student Services Fee Project Description
Submitted January 13, 2021

Project Description
The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Project has historically built on the collaborative efforts of African American Student Affairs (AASA), Asian Pacific American Student Affairs (APASA), the Guerrero Student Center (GSC), Native American Student Affairs (NASA), LGBTQ+ Resource Center, Women and Gender Resource Center, Disability Resource Center, and the Immigrant Student Resource Center to provide a comprehensive approach to increasing students’ multicultural awareness and their ability to address social justice inequalities. Through engagement in critical conversations, students learn intergroup dialogue skills, build community with each other, increase awareness across identities, and create space for students to collectively discuss ways to create positive change on campus and in the larger world.

This initiative is especially timely for the 2021-2022 academic year, given the national and local climates that are calling for real sustainable systematic change toward equity and inclusion. COBA’S 2020 List of Demands, that echo MSUA’s 2016 List of Demands, illuminate where positive change is necessary toward creating a safer and more comfortable campus for students with marginalized identities. CGA’s intersectional mission centers many of COBA’s priorities: providing the cultural centers with additional resources, accountability responses based on community and transformative justice, increased cultural competency of students, and mental health resources. Given the shift toward virtual community and social media presence, CGA as a student-led initiative will reach students in ways that make sense for the highest level of development.

Thanks to the SSFAB, CGA programs impacted over 21,000 UArizona students between 2015-2020. Your continued support will allow us to pick up where we left off with this project and continue to impact our students by increasing awareness and understanding of multicultural and social justice issues and building stronger coalitions across campus. Funding for the CGA Project will provide resources to administer campus wide events, provide intersectional collaborations, deliver social justice retreats, and build the capacity of the Centers through more staff.

The total requested investment is $918,200 over a three-year time period. The bulk of these funds will be for the staff needed to run these programs: a portion of a Director position, a Program Coordinator, two Graduate Assistants, and seven undergraduate SPEAKOut student workers who will both grow the marketing and messaging of the Cultural and Resource Centers and increase outreach and education about intersectional issues and identities with an emphasis on marginalized identities. Equally important, we are requesting $50,000 for programming and operations expenses, which will be essential to the success of this project. These will fund transformative experiences like the Common Ground Courage Retreat, and the CGA Event Series including the César Chávez Series, Indigenous People’s Day, Black History Month events, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Heritage Month events, and Transgender Day of Resilience and
Coming Out Week programming, to name a few. It will also fund important Intersectional programming such as the Queer & Trans People of Color (QTPOC) Discussion Group, which will engage participants in empowerment building dialogues and activities while also presenting events and activities for the wider campus to learn more about being allies to QTPOC. The Common Ground Courage Retreat, CGA Event Series and Intersectional Programming will have immense impact in shifting attitudes toward equity and inclusion.

**Student Impact**

We estimate the CGA Project will have a direct impact on at least 5,000 UArizona students per year with potentially thousands more benefitting from improvements in the general campus climate. Additionally, the CGA Project aligns with students’ priorities (SSF & UA Green Fund Survey 2017) by creating paid positions for undergraduate and graduate students to develop skills that will make them more marketable for future career opportunities. This initiative supports career based experiential learning and leadership opportunities for students.

Students who participated in CGA related programs have reported an increase in their awareness and understanding of multicultural and social justice issues while building stronger coalitions across campus. For example, a student who participated in a past CGA retreat said: “The CGA retreat is a great opportunity for students to meet people who share similar and different identities to themselves as well as to work to create a collaborative environment.” CGA engages not only in increasing awareness but also increasing skills to address injustice. CGA strives to foster the kind of conditions that support student success and achievements through programs focusing on Health & Wellness, which also aligns with students’ priorities in the SSF Survey. Such programs include Native Prayer Circles, Wellness Wednesdays at AASA, AROMAS at the Guerrero Center, and the QTPOC discussion group. The impact of these kinds of events ripples out and has the potential to impact the larger campus through shifts in climate.

**Assessment**

This project is intended to impact all UArizona students in meaningful ways to push them toward higher degrees of multicultural awareness, competence, and inclusion. We will track all events including speakers, workshops, retreats, and programs in order to understand their impact on students and continually improve our offerings. Through social media analytics, we will be able to track CGA and SPEAKOut’s online interactions and impact on users. We will also do in-depth formative and summative assessment for student workers that will illuminate student learning in their roles to ensure that they have the best support possible to aid in the learning of other students.

**Longevity**

The robust 5-year history of this project is due to the continued investment of the SSFAB. Institutional funding remains our long-term goal and we continue to work toward it. In fact, we thought the institution was going to permanently fund this project last year, which is why we did not apply for SSF funding for the 2020-2021 grant cycle. Given the current national context, and the repeated demands of UArizona students, the work of this project is more important than ever—we must invest in inclusion and social justice programs and prepare our students to be citizens of the world. Inclusion & Multicultural Engagement (IME) will continue to search for additional funding sources to support this important initiative and our hope is that our SSF ask will shrink with future applications.