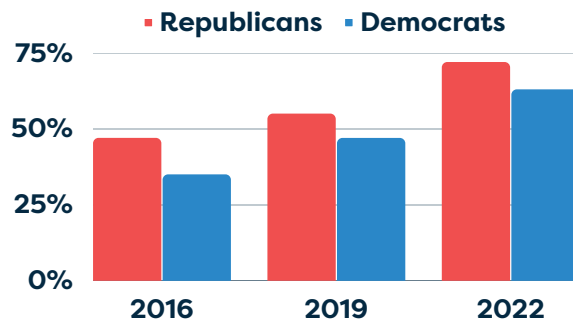


CASE STUDY:

Intercollegiate Experiential Civic Learning

Across the United States and on college campuses, we have a crisis of civility and democracy. How can we teach civic skills when civil conversations seem nearly impossible?



% of people viewing opposite party as immoral, dishonest, and closed-minded



Can we translate hot-button political issues into civic learning?

With rising polarization across our country and college communities, the nonpartisan nonprofit Unify America partnered with University of North Dakota leaders and faculty from 41 other universities nationwide to offer the 4th biannual Unify Challenge College Bowl in February and March 2023.

Meet the Unify Challenge College Bowl.

Over six nights, thousands of student participants across 26 states joined the virtual College Bowl to share perspectives across differences and strengthen their civic muscles. From North Dakota to Florida, the Unify Challenge College Bowl is proving that small conversations can make a big difference in cultivating the civic learning and leadership skills we need for the future.

DETAILS ABOUT THE

National College Bowl

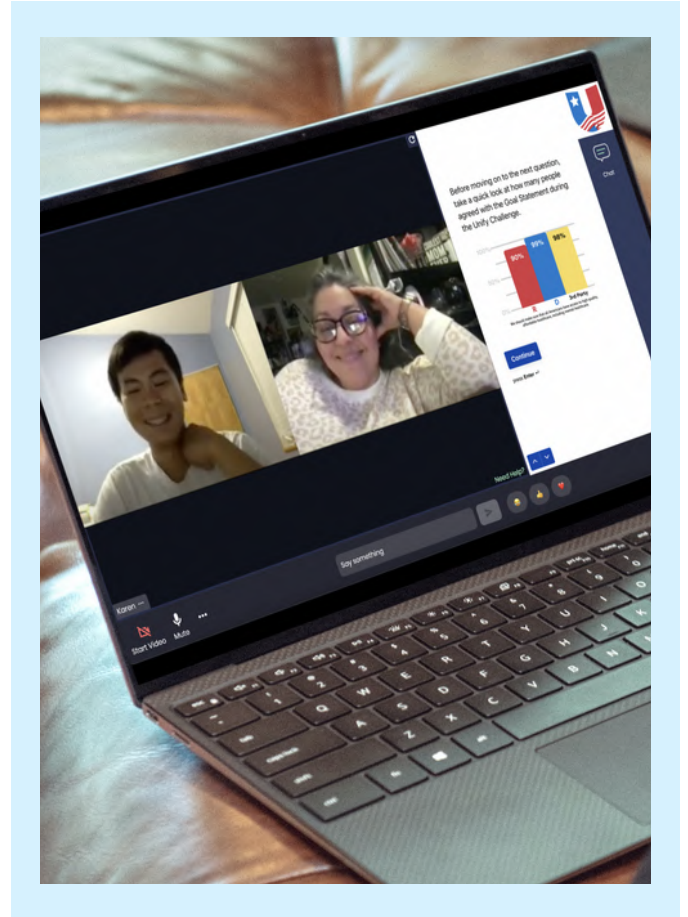


Here's how it works

First, students complete a short sign-up form with information about their demographics and political ideology and choose one of the 12 available dates for the Unify Challenge. They'll log in with a unique link on the date they picked and meet their partner. Our matching algorithm pairs students from different ideological backgrounds or geographic backgrounds.

Together, the pair walks through an unhosted but guided survey of 17 goals for America, ranging from free speech and criminal justice to immigration and education.

In our feedback survey, students reported an excellent experience. Though many joined the conversation with nervous apprehension, the students say they found more agreement across the topics and, most importantly, more hope for the future of our democracy.



Quick Data Highlights

3,832

students have participated in our biannual College Bowls since October 2021

82%

of all participating students have rated the experience an 8 or higher (on a scale of 1-10)

98%

of all participating professors surveyed would consider using the Unify Challenge again in their classrooms

79

universities and colleges have participated since October 2021

INTERDISCIPLINARY

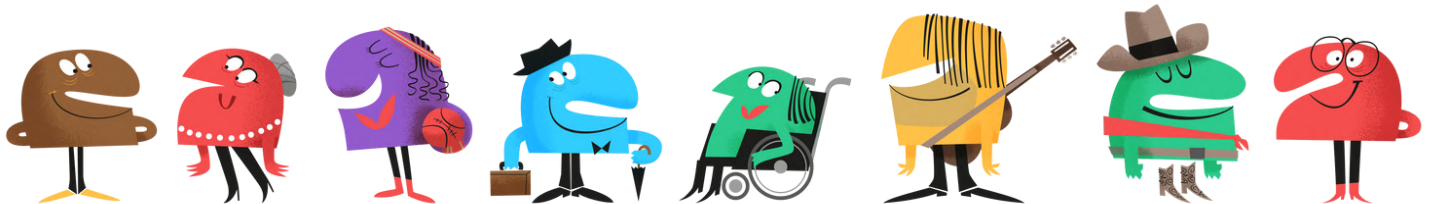
Civic Learning is for All

Civic skill-building across disciplines and fields of study

During the Spring 2023 Unify Challenge College Bowl, the University of North Dakota led the way with the most student participants and engaged faculty members. But the professors didn't just represent political science educators.

They represented a wide variety of departments and courses, including:

**Social Work • Criminal Justice • History • Gender Studies • Nutrition
Political Science • Education • Atmospheric Sciences • Biomedical Sciences
Space Studies • Aviation**



Dr. Grace Keengwe
Associate Professor,
Teaching & Leadership

— “ —

[My courses are] preparing students to teach and work with diverse students. [Students learn] assessment strategies that think about diverse learners... and they are learning how to collaborate with parents with diverse views. This activity will help them consider views of others broadly in their work as teachers.

— ” —



PROGRAM DETAILS FROM

The University of North Dakota

Unify America and the University of North Dakota (UND)

Since the origin of the Unify America College Bowl in October 2021, professors and academic leaders on campus have been the program's champions, spotlighting the impact and sharing the opportunity with others in their network.

However, at the University of North Dakota, initial support and energy came directly from the President and Provost who encouraged Vice Provost of Strategic Programming and Special Initiatives Jeff Holm and Educational Opportunities Officer Casey Hoffman with facilitating faculty involvement.

In fact, Holm and Hoffman incentivized professor participation. Faculty members who offered the Unify Challenge College Bowl as part of their curriculum were offered a stipend of \$250, with funds from the Teaching Transformation and Development Academy at UND.

As a result of the recruiting efforts by the UND team:

15

UND professors utilized the Unify Challenge College Bowl in their courses.

194

UND students were matched with partners from different perspectives.



Andrew P. Armacost
President, University of North Dakota

— “ —

I am certainly proud of how both the faculty and students saw the value in the goals of the program and willingly gave of their time to participate... We look forward to continuing to participate.

It aligns so well with our campus goal of bringing the members of our campus together during times of great societal polarization.

— ” —

What do students really think?



After the Spring 2023 Unify Challenge: College Bowl, we asked students how they felt before the Challenge and if talking with their partner changed how they felt. [Here's a video](#) that includes five of those voices. Separately, during the feedback survey we collected anonymous UND student feedback:

"I felt like we respected each other on what we disagreed on, and also had common ground."

"I think this was a great way to open means of communication and get differing perspectives."

"I really enjoyed hearing from someone that had an opposite view than me."

"I felt it was productive and we both had our say and could respect how each other got to our positions even if we disagreed on the positions, themselves."

"I think communication is key to solving a lot of issues in the world and I love that this forum gives people the opportunity for open discussions."

"It was nice to have a respectful conversation with someone who has opposing beliefs as mine."

"I was surprised that I could have a genuine conversation with someone from a completely different area than me. I was afraid that we would disagree on most things, but I was surprised that even when we disagreed we found common ground."

"It was nice to hear her perspective and to connect with someone who thinks differently."

"I never would have met my partner and I learned a lot from his lived experience and point of view."

"I was really nervous at first but overall it was a great experience."

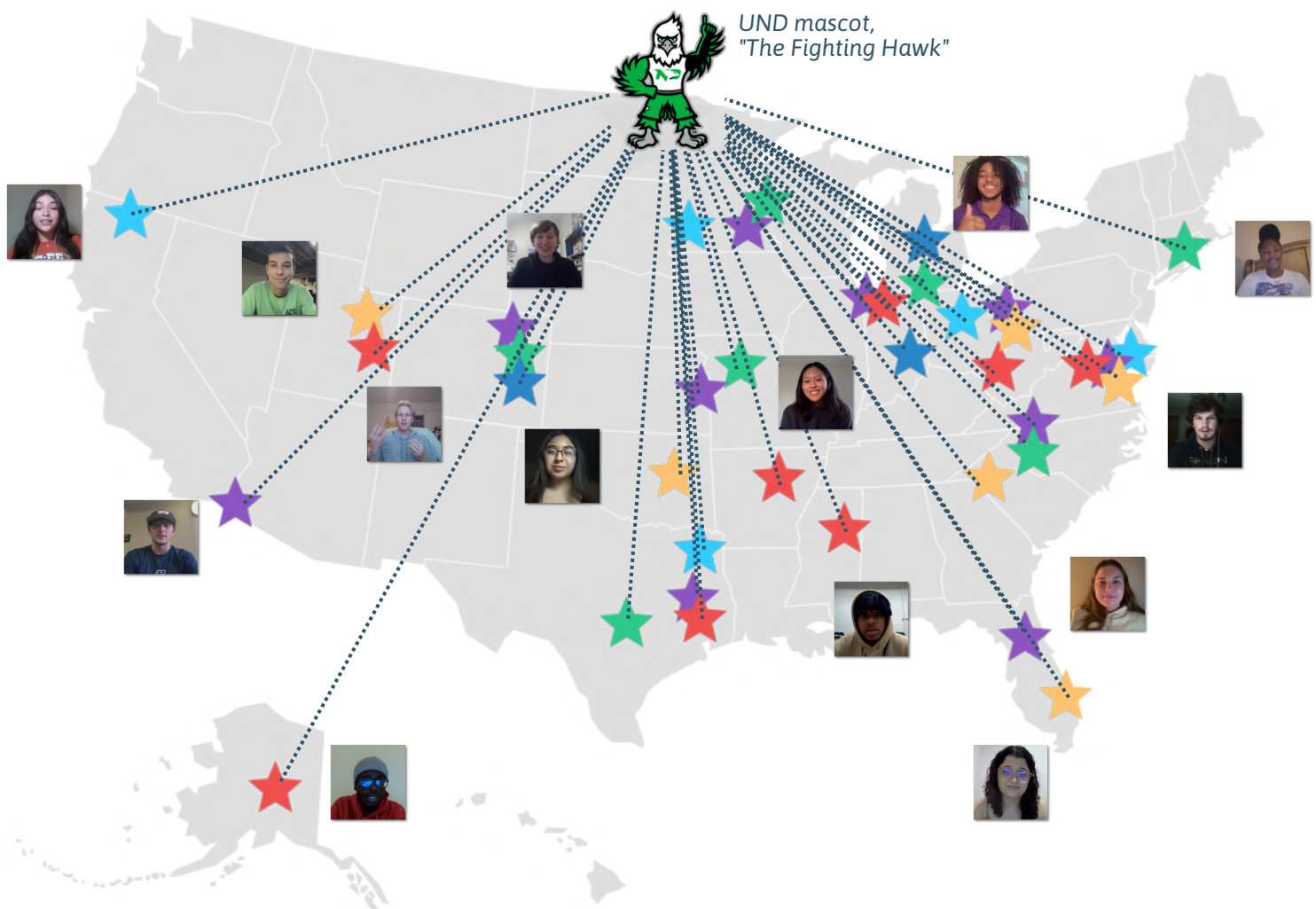
"I learned that people are not as split as the media and politics try to portray."

"I liked all of the questions that were asked and some of them stumped the both of us so it was cool to talk those through in a civil manner."

Nationwide Conversations

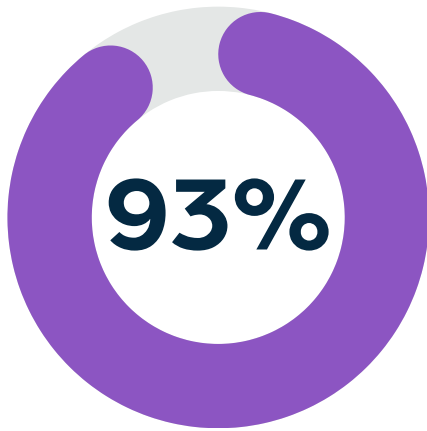
Who did students connect with?

During the Spring 2023 Unify Challenge College Bowl, 42 universities and colleges participated — including public four-year institutions, community colleges, military academies, religious universities, HBCUs, and technical colleges from 26 states — so UND students were matched into one-on-one conversations with students from across the nation.

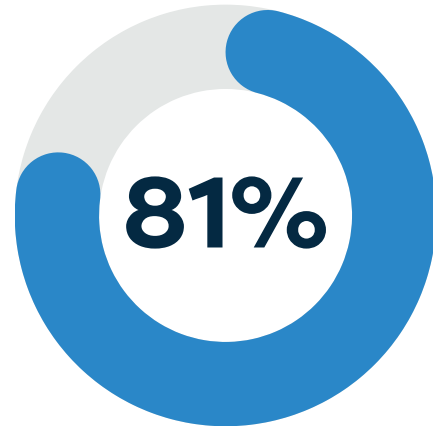


DATA SUMMARY FROM

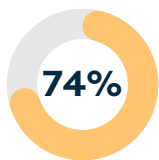
UND Student Participants



of UND students felt heard and not judged when sharing their opinions



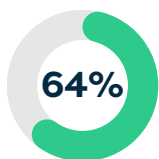
of UND students said it helped them see a new perspective they hadn't considered before



of UND students wish they had more opportunities to talk openly about these topics

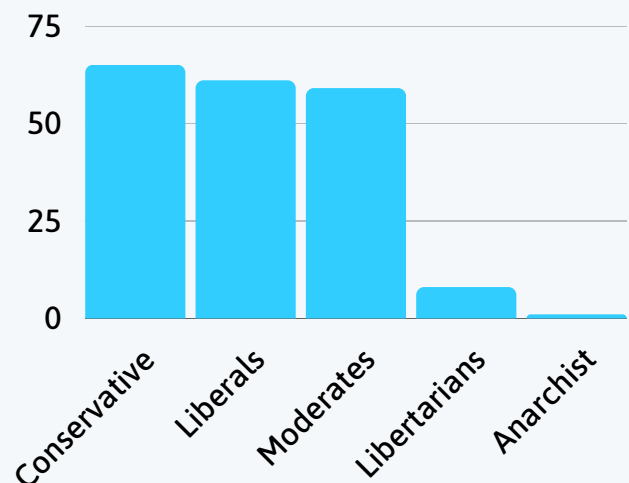


of UND students rated the experience an 8 or higher (on a scale of 1-10)



of UND students felt more hopeful about the future of our democracy

UND STUDENTS' POLITICAL IDEOLOGY



Data: 2023 Spring College Bowl.

POST-EXPERIENCE

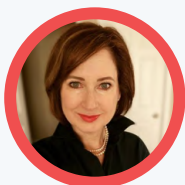
Feedback from Faculty

After the Unify Challenge College Bowl, professors could submit feedback about the experience. Here is what the University of North Dakota faculty said:

— “ —

All 40 of my students who participated said that this was an incredibly valuable experience and that they highly valued the opportunity to learn that they could have important conversations with people from other places.

— ” —



Tami Carmichael
Professor, Theatre Arts and
Interdisciplinary Studies

— “ —

This was a unique opportunity for my students to overcome their fears of discussing political topics with someone who may view things differently. This is valuable for my course in particular because we cover many topics.

— ” —



Jason Evans
Assistant Professor, Aviation

9 out of 10

was the average rating of the
College Bowl experience from
UND professors

100%

of UND professors said they
would recommend the Unify
Challenge to colleagues

HARNESS THE POWER OF Viewpoint Diversity



About Unify America

Unify America is on a mission to replace political fighting with collaborative problem-solving, starting with opportunities for finding shared goals and practicing civility.

In 2021, we piloted our first Unify Challenge College Bowl with ten universities nationwide and have grown to partner with 79 universities across the country, reaching nearly 4000 students to date.



info@unifyamerica.org



unifyamerica.org

About the University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota is the state's oldest and largest university. We offer 225+ highly accredited on-campus and online degrees.

We provide students accessible educational opportunities as they embark on their journey to become leaders through hard work and determination. We believe in work worth doing. We value diverse people, perspectives, and ideas. We take active steps to ensure a sense of belonging and equity for all.



UND.info@UND.edu



UND.edu