



# UC Center Sacramento

## “From Barriers to Ballots: Identifying and Reducing Voting Barriers for Young People”

**2024 UCCS “Grow Our Own” Public Lectureship and White Paper Award Winner**  
**Professor Laura Wray-Lake, Dr. Chris Wegemer, Ryo Sato, Leslie Ortiz, and Amy Wong, UCLA**

**With Jannelle Jackson, California Deputy Secretary of State**

**Wednesday,  
May 29th**

12:00—1:00pm  
In person  
attendance or by  
Zoom webinar

**Please note our  
new location:**  
1115 11th St,  
Sacramento, CA

For catering  
purposes, please  
RSVP by  
**May 22nd**  
([uccs.ucdavis.edu](http://uccs.ucdavis.edu))  
to ensure that we  
have a lunch for you.

Policy advancements that reduce structural barriers to voting for young people are urgently needed to build a more inclusive democracy in California. For decades, young voters, ages 18-25, have exhibited persistently low voting rates, a phenomenon that older adults have often attributed to youth deficits in interest or knowledge. However, structural barriers that disproportionately deter young people from political participation may better explain these age disparities in voting.

We review the current state of research on structural voting barriers young people face and share findings from a national survey of young voters in the 2020 presidential election. We offer evidence-based policy recommendations to promote youth engagement in California’s electoral process, arguing that California state leaders must continue to protect and expand access to voting for young people to create a more functional democracy.

**Dr. Laura Wray-Lake** is a Professor of Social Welfare at UCLA. Through nearly 100 research publications and a book, her research has advanced the field of youth civic engagement and shed light on how and why young people become politically active. Recently Professor Wray-Lake’s expertise in youth civic engagement has translated into policy-related work on the voting age; she served as an expert witness in support of SCA-2, a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have lowered the voting age to 17 in California.



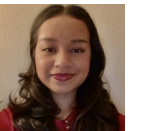
**Dr. Chris Wegemer** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at UCLA. Drawing from his background in labor activism and high school teaching, his research examines the social underpinnings of youth civic development. Dr. Wegemer’s current work utilizes AI-driven storytelling to promote civic learning in politically polarized educational contexts.



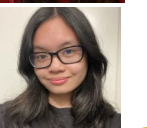
**Mr. Ryo Sato** is a third-year UCLA undergraduate double majoring in Sociology and Statistics. He is interested in migrant political mobilization with a focus on political and ethnic identities, as well as how civic engagement and social disparities interact with each other.



**Ms. Leslie Ortiz** is a second-year UCLA undergraduate majoring in Public Affairs. She is interested in how voting barriers affect the political voice and power of young people of color and their communities.



**Ms. Amy Wong** is a third-year UCLA undergraduate double majoring in Philosophy and history. She is passionate about increasing youth civic engagement and creating a more functional American democracy through education, policy, and research.



For questions contact Brooke Miller-Jacobs at (916) 319-4835 or [UCCS-talks@ucdavis.edu](mailto:UCCS-talks@ucdavis.edu).

The views and opinions expressed during this lecture are those of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the views of UCCS.