

# Creating Community: Building and Sustaining Wellness Among Graduate Students and Postdocs

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## Overview

This was an afternoon dedicated to building and celebrating a community of care to promote mental health and wellness among UCSF's graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, program administrators and faculty. Self-care and seeking help for mental wellness are at a heightened state and thus, our goal was to build allyship and foster a stronger sense of belonging for members of the UCSF community.

## Data Snapshot

- 36 attendees
- Of the post-event survey respondents, 58% strongly agree that this event:
  - taught them something new about how identities impact their experiences and mental health
  - enhanced their sense of belonging at UCSF
  - helped identify coping and resiliency skills that would be helpful to them

## Resources

<https://graduate.ucsf.edu/news/graduate-division-and-student-health-and-counseling-services-host-second-creating-community>

<https://graduate.ucsf.edu/>  
<https://studenthealth.ucsf.edu/>



## Project Details

*Creating Community: Building and Sustaining Wellness Among Graduate Students and Postdocs* was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Genentech Hall. The event began with a keynote address from Dr. Adisa Anderson, senior staff psychologist at UC Berkeley, titled *Honoring the Past, Centering the Present Mental Wellness and Building Resilience for the Future*. Dr. Anderson incorporated speech and West African drumming to:

- explore how our history impacts our mental health and wellness
- unify as a community to heal from feelings of helplessness, isolation, and powerlessness
- build and strengthen a greater sense of belonging
- identify strategies to enhance coping and resiliency

Following the keynote address, learners participated in a workshop that drew from narrative therapy efforts and used plants, pots and paint to explore affirming images, words or quotes that express individual and community-based narratives of empowerment and affirmation.

## Project Challenges

Planned programming following the keynote address included a Snack Break, Plant Art Workshop, Self Compassion Workshop, optional Decompression Room, Guided Group Meditation Activity and Closing Remarks with a Book Giveaway. However, due to an unforeseen fire alarm that lasted approximately 40 minutes, programming following the keynote address was adapted to consist of only the Snack Break, Plant Art Workshop and Closing Remarks with Book Giveaway. There was also the challenge of decreased engagement as some attendees left the event altogether once the fire alarm began.

## Lessons Learned

In the future, the programming for this event could be broken up into two separate events. The rationale is two-fold: first, people may be more inclined to attend if the event is shorter and second, the plant art workshop garnered such positive feedback and high engagement that it may be worthwhile to dedicate more time towards this activity and host it as a standalone event.