



The Center for Government
and Civic Service
Austin Community College



Spring 2026 Recap

June 2026



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To learn more about the CGCS, visit cgcs-acc.org or contact us at admin@cgcsacc.org.

Spring at a glance

The Center for Government and Civic Service
Spring 2026 Recap



127

Total participants
across events



95

Students served
through
simulations



13

Total events
designed and
executed



Law, AI and Access to Justice

Participants explored legal literacy, tenant rights, AI reliability, and the potential to leverage AI to empower individuals and communities.



Civic Leadership Simulations

Students practiced communication, empathy, conflict management, and problem-solving through scenario-based learning.



Civic Discourse and Strategic Communication Workshops

Workshops helped students and community members practice conflict management, dialogue, and strategic communication.



Partnerships and Public Service

CGCS strengthened collaborations with faculty, nonprofit partners, civic initiatives, and future student pathways.

CGCS Impact Pathway



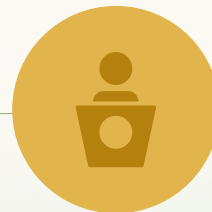
1 Learn

Law, AI, tenant rights, access to justice, and civic discourse.



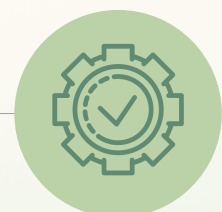
2 Act

Four engaging simulations, workshops, and hands-on civic learning.



3 Reflect

Empathy, communication, and decision-making.

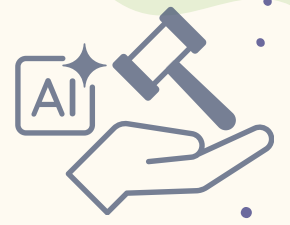


4 Build

Leadership, partnerships, opportunities and public service.

Central Texas Law Summit:

“Should ChatGPT Be Your Lawyer?”



As part of the **CGCS**’s Central Texas Issue Series, the Central Texas Law Summit brought 32 attendees—including students, legal professionals, and community members—together to examine how artificial intelligence is shaping access to legal information and decision-making. Through discussion and scenario-based engagement, participants explored tenant rights, legal literacy, AI reliability, and the risks and benefits of using tools like ChatGPT for legal advice.



32

Total attendees,
including 13 students

Central Texas Issues Series



The Central Texas Issue Series (CTIS) connects students and community members around regional challenges that call for dialogue, collaboration, and action. Other ongoing CTIS issues include climate and journalism. The second annual climate summit is scheduled for Fall 2026.



*“Such a great discussion! **CGCS** did a great job of providing insight on the role of AI in the future of the legal field. Informative and thought-provoking!”*

*– **Ethan Sumineg**, Student*

Civic Leadership Simulations



The **CGCS** develops and employs scenario-based learning to help students practice and enhance civic leadership skills and attributes. Across **four simulations**, 95 students engaged with complex situations that challenged them to communicate across perspectives, manage conflict, weigh competing priorities, and apply consensus-building and decision-making skills in real time.



Dysfunctional Family Dinner Simulation

In partnership with Professor Clare Murray's English Composition II class, the CGCS designed a conflict resolution simulation centered on a dysfunctional family dinner. Students practiced empathy, navigating disagreement, and relationship repair through assigned roles and guided reflection.

KEY
SKILLS

Conflict resolution

Empathy



Data Center Tabletop Exercise

In partnership with Professor Amber Klotz's class at ACC Northridge, CGCS facilitated a tabletop exercise centered on the proposed development of a data center. Students weighed economic, residential, and municipal impacts before reaching a team decision and briefing "the mayor," played by CGCS Director Bryan Port.

KEY
SKILLS

Consensus-Building

Critical Thinking



Veriscenia Simulation

CGCS executed **two** simulations for middle and high school students focused on communication, leadership, and confidence-building. Participants practiced how to represent themselves and their communities while working toward individual and shared objectives.

KEY
SKILLS

Communication

Public engagement



95

Students served



4

Total
simulations



"I really enjoyed the tabletop exercise because (...) it pushed us to think critically, communicate effectively, and work together to reach a decision."

- Ervin Johnson, ACC Journalism Student



Civic Discourse and Strategic Communication Workshops

The **CGCS** expanded civic learning through **workshops** that helped students, staff, faculty, and community members practice communication, de-escalation, civic dialogue, and advocacy. These programs focused on helping participants develop strategies to productively navigate through disagreement to find a path to consensus.



57

Total workshop participants



8

Strategic Communication techniques taught



5

ACC campuses reached



Braver Angels Workshop

Check-out Braver Angels at braverangels.org



CGCS partnered with the national nonprofit Braver Angels to bring two workshops to the ACC community. Participants learned skills for de-escalating polarization, engaging in civic discourse with empathy and curiosity, and intervening constructively in difficult conversations. This is an ongoing partnership that will hold workshops every semester at varying ACC campuses.



Strategic Communication Workshops

CGCS conducted five strategic communication workshops across ACC Cypress Creek, Round Rock, Rio Grande, Highland, and Northridge. Participants learned communication techniques to help them advocate for themselves and their communities.



Middle School Workshop

CGCS also supported a workshop for middle school students, extending strategic communication learning beyond ACC classrooms.



“First of all, [the **CGCS** team] was amazing to work with. Their patience and the meticulous effort they put into this project was unrivaled. I'm also so grateful they took a chance on my class to run this simulation for the first time.”

– Clare Murray, **English Composition Professor**

Partnerships and Civic Engagement



The **CGCS** strengthened its work through faculty collaboration, nonprofit partnerships, civic engagement, and public service pathways. These partnerships helped extend the Center's reach beyond individual events and into classrooms, community spaces, city-facing civic engagement, and future student opportunities.



5,000

People brought together



10+

Collaborations & partnerships



ACC Collaborators

CGCS worked with ACC faculty, the ACC Honors Program, the ACC Character Education Institute, and the ACC Sustainability Club to connect students with applied civic learning, leadership, and community-facing issues.



Civic Engagement

CGCS partnered with multiple organizations to design and implement novel civic engagement opportunities, bringing together over **5,000** people over the spring of 2026.



Public Service Pathways

In partnership with the Public Service Desk, CGCS is developing the upcoming Generative AI in Public Service (**GAPS**) Internship, a fall opportunity designed to connect students with applied public service projects.

Check-out the PSD at <https://thepublicservicedesk.org>

Partners & Collaborators

ACC Collaborators

- ACC Faculty
- ACC Honors Program
- ACC Character Education Institute
- ACC Sustainability Club
- Office of Experiential Learning

And more +



Civic + Community Partners

- Open Government Partnership
- New America
- Braver Angels
- Central Texas Learning Festival
- Skull Games
- University of Virginia

Tech + Public Service Partners

- Public Service Desk
- Austin LangChain
- Austin AI Alliance
- Austin Forum of Technology & Society
- Smarter Reality



The Month Students Led the Center

During May and early June, the Center entered a unique leadership moment as **Marisela Perez-Maita** stepped into the lead role of acting director, with **Cate Thomason** serving as acting deputy director.

This moment reflected the center's belief that students are not only learners but also capable leaders and young professionals. Under student intern leadership, the team continued daily operations, advanced existing projects, supported new planning efforts, maintained the center's space and workflow, and helped prepare for fall programming.

The experience became a meaningful example of student leadership in action. Marisela, Cate, and the CGCS team helped strengthen the Center through initiative, responsibility, collaboration, and care.

Students can lead.



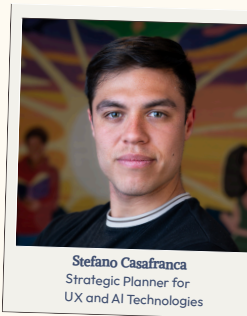
Marisela Perez-Maita
Acting Director



Cate Thomason
Acting Deputy Director



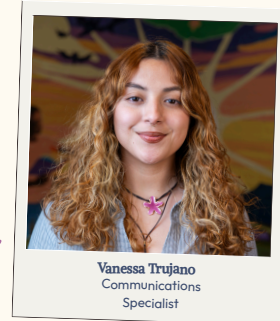
Austin Wells
Strategic Planner for Community
Relations & Environmental Affairs



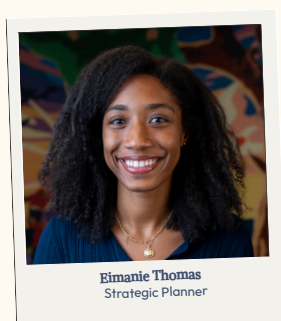
Stefano Casafranca
Strategic Planner for
UX and AI Technologies



Brenden Fogg
Operations Intern &
Strategic Planner



Vanessa Trujano
Communications
Specialist



Eimanie Thomas
Strategic Planner

The CGCS Team

“I was deeply impressed that the team not only managed the center but also deepened ongoing initiatives and launched new ones. They performed as seasoned professionals.”

— *Bryan Port, Director*

Looking Ahead



During the spring of 2026, the **CGCS** expanded and enhanced its civic learning pipeline through simulations, legal and AI literacy, civic dialogue, partnerships, and student leadership. Looking ahead, the Center will continue advancing a growing range of opportunities that connect students with leadership, public service, applied learning, civic engagement, and community problem-solving. Featured initiatives such as leadership simulations, GAPS, future law programming, student training in conflict management, and the Climate Summit reflect this momentum alongside continued workshops, simulations, collaborations, and additional programming in development.



Featured opportunities on the horizon



GAPS Internship

Student teams +
nonprofit clients



Student Facilitation

Civic dialogue
workshops led
by students



ACC Climate Summit

Sustainability,
resilience, and
regional collaboration



Future Law Programming

Panels, scenarios,
and legal literacy

AND MORE



Together, these next steps reflect the CGCS's continued commitment to turning civic learning into meaningful public service and leadership.