

# Cultivating Community Leaders: A Reflection on the 2023 Newman Civic Fellows Convening

*Read time: 2 minutes*

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*Embark on a transformative journey with USF student Viet-Hung Nguyen as he shares insights from the 2023 Newman Civic Fellows Convening—where passion meets purpose, and community leaders unite to inspire change. Read more to join the conversation on leadership, service, and shaping a better world.*

As I stepped into the plane at Boston Logan International Airport to travel back to San Francisco, I reflected on a great past few days at the 2023 Convening of [Newman Civic Fellows](#). I had participated in workshops about community leadership and public service while forming connections with dozens of student leaders from all over the U.S.

My involvement with the [Leo T. McCarthy Center](#) began 2 years ago. As a freshman looking for a part-time job, I was drawn to [Engage SF Literacy](#), a tutoring program that works with elementary school students in the diverse Western Addition. Engage SF Literacy's culturally responsive teaching curriculum taught me how to adapt to different students while respecting their identities and acknowledging their external circumstances. I took advantage of opportunities to see guest speakers at USF discuss cultural humility so that I could reflect on my own experiences and potential biases. These are values that I now hold close in all aspects of my life.

As a 2023-2024 Newman Civic Fellow, I am part of a year-long cohort for 150+ community-committed students working to address public problems. We engage in skill development and professional learning opportunities. The highlight is an annual 3-day conference in Boston, Massachusetts: the Convening of the Newman Civic Fellows, which I was grateful to attend this past October. At the conference, I was delighted to meet so many students from numerous states working on different issues. Some students were involved in non-profit organizations working to end substance abuse, while others worked with prisons and ex-offenders. It was amazing to see so many leaders of our age devoted to different societal problems. Of course, not every student was working with new grassroots organizations or non-profits. I met a student named Jacob, who is involved with his community church through volunteering opportunities. Another student, Paul, is applying his public policy knowledge to present technical data and better shape community interventions. Paul and Jacob taught me that civic engagement can also be low-profile and on-the-ground, which is something to appreciate about tutoring with Engage SF Literacy. In Boston, we had the opportunity to visit the [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum](#) and [Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate](#), where we participated in a mock discussion and vote about the Green New Deal.

Leaving the conference, I felt extremely hopeful. I learned that there are groups of passionate community leaders everywhere, and I am grateful that the Leo T. McCarthy Center is working to increase that. Equipped with these new connections and a continued desire to change the world from here, I am looking forward to applying these community values throughout my journey with USF.

I'd like to thank [Dresden Smith](#), [Karin Cotterman](#), and President Paul J. Fitzgerald for mentoring me at Engage SF Literacy and nominating me for the Newman Civic Fellowship.

Learn more about becoming a Newman Civic fellow :

<https://compact.org/current-programs/student-programming/newman-civic-fellowship>

Learn more about Engage SF Literacy:

<https://myusf.usfca.edu/mccarthy/programs/engage-san-francisco/literacy>

