

THE *Current*

July 23, 2007

[Andrea Estrada](#)

UCSB Faculty Member Wins Foundation Membership Grant

An assistant professor of education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who was named one of five William T. Grant Scholars last year, has received a supplemental award from the William T. Grant Foundation to support her professional mentorship of a junior researcher of color.

Laura Romo, a professor at UCSB's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, will use the additional funding—\$60,000 over two years— to involve graduate student Rebecca Mireles Rios in her continuing research on ways to improve the life chances of young Hispanic girls.

"The William T. Grant Foundation is committed to increasing the number of people of color at higher levels of the career ladder in research, and is investing in promising graduate students as a way to achieve this goal," said Romo. "The funding will allow Rebecca to work full-time with my research team in developing workshops to enhance communication between Latina immigrant mothers and daughters about sexuality and self-protective behaviors."

In 2006, Romo received a William T. Grant Foundation award consisting of \$300,000 over five years, for research that seeks to develop effective ways to teach the mothers of young Latinas how to be more effective in discussing pregnancy and HIV prevention. In addition, her project encourages mothers to foster their daughters' educational and career aspirations.

Tapping into curriculum developed by Girls, Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and working with Kary O'Brien, director of program services, Romo has adapted the organization's pregnancy-prevention program to meet the specific needs of young Latinas by adding cultural and contextual themes relevant to Latino families.

The goals of Romo's project—to teach pregnancy prevention, foster a desire for education, and enhance mother/daughter communication—support one another, she noted.

Rios will help Romo expand her research to include young Latinas at Girls, Inc. in Caprinteria. She will interview upper elementary and early middle school-aged girls to get a sense of their perceptions about higher education.

"Rebecca will find out what ideas they have about college, what they're hearing, and what they need to hear in order to think about going to college," said Romo. "She'll start laying the groundwork for the educational component of the program."

Romo's research interests include child and adolescent health, adolescent development and sexuality, and family processes. She came to UC Santa Barbara in 2002 from the University of Texas Medical Branch, where she served as an assistant professor in the obstetrics and gynecology department.

Since 1936, the William T. Grant Foundation has worked to further the understanding of human behavior through research, focusing on improving the lives of young people in the United States.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.