

UC SANTA BARBARA

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A University Within a University

Professional development efforts don't usually involve singing and dancing. But they can — and did — at Gaucho U, a UC Santa Barbara cohort-based training and development certificate program for staff. Participants also work on proposals for campus improvement projects and present them to a panel of campus leaders.

At Wednesday's Gaucho U project presentations, one cohort group led the audience in a rousing rendition of "Lean On Me" to introduce their project called the Gaucho Mentor Connection. Another group asked the audience to stand up and exercise to the beat of Pharrell Williams' "Happy" to kick off its UCSB Gaucho Wellness, an open group for staff, faculty and students promoting holistic wellness.

Designed to create innovation, engage employees, change culture, build community and develop leaders, Gaucho U is in its second year. More than 60 UCSB staff participated this year, presenting their final projects to an audience at the campus's Loma Pelona Center. The official Gaucho U graduation takes place on April 22 in the same venue.

"These projects are incredible," said Marc Fisher, senior associate vice chancellor for administrative services. "Gaucho U has been a huge success. I think it's made a really key change at UCSB."

An example of one of last year's pilot projects that came to fruition is the weekly farmers market that takes place Wednesdays in the parking lot by the Faculty Club. Other projects this year include UCSB Plugged-In, a proposal for a multimedia venue

to showcase the campus community via podcasts and videos. The group's example was a video shot with an iPhone of farmers market participant Sweet Lady Cook, who is a UCSB alumna.

Another group is organizing Gaucho Live Concerts on the Green, a social event showcasing arts and entertainment. The inaugural concert will take place on Thursday, May 29, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on the lawn behind the UCen. Other cohorts are developing GauchoGo, a mobile website home page for UCSB, and working to establish Gaucho Service, a community service program with paid time off to participate in activities on and off campus.

In addition to Fisher, the panel of campus leaders who listened to the presentations included Kum-Kum Bhavnani, chair of UCSB's Academic Senate and a professor in the Department of Sociology; Michael Young, vice chancellor for student affairs; Wilfred Brown, executive director of housing and residential services; and Pam Lombardo, acting associate vice chancellor for administrative services.

Lombardo announced full funding for the Gaucho Mentor Connection, which elicited cheers from the cohort group that developed the program. Not all of the projects result in actual programs, and some of the proposals may take more than one iteration to become feasible.

These projects are only a part of Gaucho U. Participants spend more than 40 hours over a six-month term taking five different courses designed to enhance communication skills, encourage teamwork and collaboration and practice leadership. They also study change management and how to thrive in the workplace. The courses are taught by staff and faculty members from departments across campus.

"Gaucho U has provided me with opportunity as a staff member," said Alicia Holm, a graduate program adviser. "I have met new staff from around campus; I have shared my ideas; I have created a project; and I have taken a journey. I am excited to say I feel more a part of the campus community and aware of how I can participate now that I have participated in Gaucho U."

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.