UC SANTA BARBARA

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Opening New Doors

UC Santa Barbara has been selected to receive a $2.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for Opening New Doors to Accelerating Success (ONDAS), a new Title V program.

The five-year grant is awarded under the education department's Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, which assists Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in expanding educational opportunities for Hispanic students.

HSIs are defined as colleges or universities in which Hispanic enrollment comprises a minimum of 25 percent of the total enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students, both full- and part-time.

UCSB was named a Hispanic-Serving Institution in January by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and is the only HSI that is also a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

"This year has been a milestone in receiving recognition for our campus's diversity – the result of decades of hard work and tireless dedication by our entire UC Santa Barbara community," said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "During this journey, I have had the privilege of seeing our Hispanic student population grow from 11 percent to 26 percent, along with many other splendid achievements.

"Our selection as a recipient of this significant Department of Education grant, which follows our HSI designation in January, is a reflection of our strong and shared commitment to our academic excellence and diversity," Yang continued, "and it will

allow us to further enhance programs and services for all students as well as provide new professional development opportunities for faculty."

"Our designation as an Hispanic Serving Institution began an important chapter in our history as a great public research university dedicated to education and the advancement of knowledge and discovery," said Executive Vice Chancellor David Marshall. "This grant from the U.S. Department of Education recognizes the unique opportunities that we can offer to our students. It will help us to support all of our students, to ensure their educational success, and to advance our commitment to excellence and diversity."

Added Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, interim dean of undergraduate education at UCSB and the grant's principal investigator, "The Title V award will be a great help to UCSB, providing new programming and services that will benefit all students on campus.

"With 44 percent of its incoming students being the first in their families to go to college, UCSB is providing a pathway for upward mobility that is world class," he continued. "This grant recognizes UCSB's commitment to rewarding academic achievement, and sets us on a path to do even more."

'A Critical Time'

The ONDAS program is designed to address challenges facing the university's underrepresented and low-income students, including higher-than-average rates of academic probation in certain majors and lower-than-average first-year retention rates. "The first year is a critical time because, among the total number of students who drop out of UCSB, the majority do so during their first year and in the summer immediately following," said Barbara Endemaño Walker, director of research development for the social sciences, humanities and fine arts in the Office of Research at UCSB.

To strengthen the success and retention of undergraduates, the grant will focus on two main areas of activity: first-year experiences and faculty professional development. "We identified the 10 majors and 41 courses in which these students are more likely to have difficulties that lead them to probation status," Walker said. Targeting students who take these courses, the grant will enable pre-matriculation (summer) enrichment through intelligent tutoring systems and access to the ONDAS Success Center, which will provide tutoring from graduate students and undergraduate peers as well as group study space and a community of scholars.

Faculty members teaching these courses will benefit from systematic, cohort-based and pedagogy-focused professional development activities such as workshops on developing disciplinary threshold concepts and incorporating them into course content, learning new course delivery technologies and creating learning communities related to diversity issues such as implicit bias and stereotype threat.

“With this grant, UCSB plans to ‘lift all boats’ by developing programs that will improve our ability to make students successful,” said Walker. “UCSB makes a commitment, by accepting this award, to institutionalize grant-funded programs. For example, the ONDAS Success Center established through the grant will remain active after the five-year grant program ends. The faculty development activities will benefit all students who take courses from those faculty members now and into the future.”

Designed for Inclusion

Administered through the Division of Undergraduate Education, the grant is not focused on any particular department or college but is designed to have far-reaching effects on campus. “Our goal is to include at least 2,300 students in ONDAS Success Center programs and 50 faculty members in professional development activities over the five-year grant period,” Walker said.

She added that the evaluation framework is designed to assess which grant activities are more or less effective in improving student success, and the strategies found to be most effective will be amplified and extended to a broader base of students. “The purpose of the grant is to build institutional capacity to improve student success and overall graduation rates,” Walker noted. “As such, our entire campus will benefit.”

The HSI grant from the Department of Education comes on the heels of UCSB’s No. 3 ranking on The Upshot’s College Access Index recently published by The New York Times. The index measures the success of colleges and universities nationwide in their efforts toward economic diversity.

According to the Times, the index is based on the share of students receiving Pell grants (which typically go to families making less than $70,000 per year); the graduation rate of students on Pell grants; and the net cost, after financial aid, that a college or university charged low- and middle-income students.

In addition, UCSB placed No. 14 in the 2015 Washington Monthly ranking and was highlighted in the magazine’s College Guide as one of 10 “Access Improvers.” In U.S. News & World Report’s 2016 list of colleges and universities that offer students the best education value based on academic quality and net cost of attendance, UCSB was ranked No 6.

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.