

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

September 28, 2015

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Alumni Association Honors NASA Astronaut

NASA astronaut José Hernández will be honored as UC Santa Barbara's 2015 Distinguished Alumnus on Saturday, Oct. 24, at an awards lunch in the campus's Corwin Pavilion.

The ceremony also will celebrate UC Santa Barbara's status as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). An HSI is defined as a college or university in which Hispanic enrollment comprises a minimum of 25 percent of the total enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students, both full- and part-time. UC Santa Barbara was named a Hispanic-Serving Institution 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.

"We are very excited to have José Hernández return to campus to help us kick off the campaign to raise money for Dreamers' scholarships," said George Thurlow, assistant vice chancellor for alumni affairs and executive director of the campus's alumni association. "José's story is an inspirational one for all alumni and for all Californians. His work today with Latino youth is even more inspirational."

Hernández, who earned his master's degree in electrical and computer engineering in 1986, was a mission specialist on Space Shuttle STS-128. His parents were farmworkers who moved with the crops across the western United States. Hernández did not learn English until he was 12, but he excelled in math and

science. After graduating from Franklin High School in Stockton he went on to the University of the Pacific and then to UCSB. He worked for the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory before being selected for the NASA space program.

Currently, Hernández heads the nonprofit Reaching for the Stars! Foundation, which helps prepare students in the Stockton area for careers in science, technology, engineering and math. In 2014, a middle school in San Jose, California, was named for Hernández and at the school's official opening he spoke about perseverance, noting that NASA rejected him 11 times before finally accepting him as an astronaut.

Hernández made similar remarks in his 2014 commencement address. He told engineering and science graduates that “changing the world can happen anywhere, and anyone can do it. ... The talent here today can change the world.”

The award lunch begins at 12:30 p.m., and the cost is \$25 per person. The public is welcome. For reservations, call Mary MacRae at (805) 893-2957.

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.