

UC SANTA BARBARA

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[Andrea Estrada](#)

Ambassadors to the World

For the seventh consecutive year, the Peace Corps has included UC Santa Barbara on its annual list of Top Volunteer-Producing Colleges and Universities. With a contingent of 40 graduates currently participating worldwide, UCSB is ranked No. 18 among large schools.

Since the Peace Corps was founded in 1961, more than 1,680 UCSB alumni have traveled abroad to serve as volunteers.

“Peace Corps service is an unparalleled leadership opportunity that enables college and university alumni to use the creative-thinking skills they developed in school to make an impact in communities around the world,” said Sheila Crowley, Peace Corps’ acting director. “Many college graduates view Peace Corps as a launching pad for their careers because volunteers return home with the cultural competency and entrepreneurial spirit sought after in most fields.”

UCSB is one of five universities in California — and three UC campuses — recognized for Peace Corps service. In 2016, California ranked No. 1 among states with the highest number of Peace Corps volunteers — 916.

Amanda Larson, who graduated from UCSB in 2013 with a bachelor’s degree in sociology, served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi from 2014 to 2016. She said the skills she developed as a student contributed to her success as a volunteer, helping her integrate into her new community and develop programs and projects that would have the highest impact.

“When I first moved into my village, my Chichewa language acquisition was still at a beginning level,” she recalled. “I got a lot of laughs, but as people got to know me, little by little, they could understand me. It was possible for me to connect and build relationships without in-depth conversation.”

And those relationships have stayed with Larson. “I truly became a part of my community of Kamsonga,” she said. “I had multiple parents care for me. I had little sisters that were my shadows and best friends. I had a dog that the village treated as my family member. I was so loved, and I so loved them in return. In the Peace Corp world, our greatest impact lies in the relationships we make, and that’s the greatest impact left on us.”

In the years since President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, more than 225,000 Americans of all ages have served in 141 countries worldwide. Volunteers develop sustainable solutions to address challenges in education, health, economic development, agriculture, the environment and youth development. More information about the organization can be found at peacecorps.gov.

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.