UC SANTA BARBARA
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Highest Honors

For their scholastic achievement, their extraordinary service to the university and the community, and their personal courage and persistence, three graduating seniors at UC Santa Barbara have been named winners of the university's top awards.

• **Paola Dela Cruz-Perez**, of Compton, is the recipient of the Thomas More Storke Award for Excellence, the campus's highest student honor, for outstanding scholarship and extraordinary service to the university, its students and the community.

• **Kelli L. Forman** is the recipient of the Jeremy D. Friedman Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding leadership, superior scholarship and contributions to undergraduate life on campus.

• **Felipe O. Infante**, of Pasadena, is the recipient of the Alyce Marita Whitted Memorial Award, which recognizes a nontraditional student's endurance, persistence and courage in the face of extraordinary challenges while pursuing an academic degree.

In addition, **Alejandra Martinez-Ramos**, of Los Angeles, will receive the Yonie Harris Award for Civility in Public Discourse, which is named in honor of the former dean of students and is presented to a graduate who exemplifies the principles of free speech and respectful dialogue and who fosters a campus climate of civility and an open exchange of ideas.

And for the first time this year, UCSB has named two recipients of the Michael D. Young Engaged Scholar Award, presented usually to one student who has skillfully integrated his or her knowledge and/or values into action. Sociology and feminist studies major **Saxon Cropper-Sykes**, and **Haley C. Ferrera**, who will earn a degree in economics and accounting, will receive the award. The honor recognizes the legacy of Michael Young, former vice chancellor for student affairs, particularly his commitment to empowering students toward principled leadership.

These and other student award winners will be honored at a University Awards Ceremony and Reception Friday, June 16, from 3:30 to 6 p.m. in the campus's Corwin Pavilion. The 2017 recipient of the Mortar Board Award, which is given in recognition of having earned the highest cumulative GPA of the graduating class, will be announced at the ceremony.

Dela Cruz-Perez, the Storke Award recipient, will also be honored at the Humanities and Fine Arts commencement, 1 p.m. Sunday, June 18. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in the history of public policy, she earns a special distinction for completing a senior honors thesis on the Ventura School for Girls. An exemplary student and a dedicated researcher, Dela Cruz-Perez in her years at UCSB also established herself as a true leader, role model and outstanding community member on campus and in Isla Vista. She also participated in the UCDC Program, interning at the Justice Policy Institute, and is a member of the Honors Program with 3.77 GPA.

Dela Cruz-Perez's service is equally impressive. She served a three-year term as director for the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District and was an off-campus senator for Associated Students, as well was the student body's External Vice President for Local Affairs. She held the role of Special Projects Coordinator for the Associated Students' Pardall Center and was a team leader for the Educational Opportunity Program. She was a lead organizer for the Isla Vista Beloved Community Conference and was instrumental in securing funding for a community engagement position at the Isla Vista Foot Patrol.

Nominator Miroslava Chávez-García, a history professor who served as Dela Cruz-Perez's thesis advisor, described her pupil as "an impressive and accomplished student who works hard not only to further her own academic and personal goals but also those of her larger community on the UCSB campus and beyond."

After graduation, Dela Cruz-Perez will participate in the prestigious Judicial Administration Fellowship Program, sponsored by the state of California and designed for students committed to public service and interested in the justice system. She will be a full-time staff member in the Alameda County Superior Court, Office of Planning, Research and Outreach while simultaneously pursuing her graduate degree in Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Sacramento.

Friedman Award recipient Kelli Forman, who will earn her degree in dance, is a dynamic leader, outstanding organizer and creative choreographer. Also a gifted teacher and scholar, she is credited with elevating the university's dance program through her efforts in advocating for the integration of street dance courses into the curriculum within UCSB's Department of Theater and Dance.

During her time at UCSB, Forman completed an undergraduate research project focused on documenting masters of various street dance forms from across the country. She organized master classes in street dance as well as a university-wide discussion of the role of other marginalized American dance forms within the systems of higher education. She founded a new campus organization, Gaucho Street Dance, which bridged the gap between experienced and passionate hip hop and street dancers and the more traditional, conservatory-style training of the UCSB theater and dance department.

Off campus, Kelli serves as the National Program Director of Everybody Dance Now! (EDN!), a non-profit organization that provides free, weekly hip hop classes for young people in Santa Barbara and seven other cities. Her passion for teaching underserved youth and advocating for equality in arts education inspired her to co-create EDN!'s first standards-based hip hop dance curriculum.

Nominator Brandon Whitted, assistant professor of dance, said, "In our current climate of racial tension, divisive rhetoric and the results of long-established institutionalized racism, Ms. Forman's work will profoundly contribute to the conversation through the community-building lens of dance."

Felipe Infante, winner of the Whitted Award, will graduate with a degree in global studies, a double minor in education and Spanish and a certificate from the Technology Management Program. Infante first came to UCSB in 1998 and returned almost two decades later to complete his education. Jumping back into academia,

Infante chose courses that built on his research skills. As a mentor to other undergraduates he is known for taking struggling students under his wing, introducing them to his own advisor and mentor and reducing the stigma of asking for help.

Despite facing many personal challenges in his time here many years ago, and during his current UCSB career, Infante persevered. He never received less than a 3.82 GPA, often earning a 4.0. He and his teammates won the $5,000 Elings CNSI Award in the 2017 New Venture Competition for their development of a THC-free cannabis strain which can be used to treat mental and physical illnesses without toxic or addictive side effects. In the words of his nominator, Infante, who will pursue a graduate degree in public health, “exemplifies hard work, intellectual inquisitiveness, and the idea of treating education as an opportunity to gain new insight and explore new directions.”

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.