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Racial Justice Fellows

Aiming to enhance the recruitment of graduate students committed to teaching, research and mentorship around racial justice, the Graduate Division at UC Santa Barbara in fall 2020 launched its Racial Justice Fellowship Program. And now they've announced their first fellows.

The four graduate student awardees in the inaugural cohort of fellows are: Ricardo Delgado Solis (Chicana/o Studies), Gaby Hinojosa (Clinical, Counseling & School Psychology), Brianna Reddick (Feminist Studies) and Maria Guadalupe Romo-González (Education). Each fellow will receive $8,000 in summer funding for three years on top of a five-year package of full funding.

"Because of my experiences as an undocuqueer Latinx college student, I realize what an amazing opportunity is presented to me," said Delgaldo Solis, a first-generation student who hopes to pursue a career in academia after graduate school. "Getting the Racial Justice Fellowship validates my conviction that it is possible to pursue higher education despite the various challenges I've lived in life. This fellowship allows me to see many people in academia rooting for students who belong to marginalized groups. Obtaining the Racial Justice Fellowship is proof that even when I do not believe in myself, there is an academic panel cheering for my academic success!"

Delgado Solis this week will graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree. in sociology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in gender and sexuality studies from UC Riverside. When he begins his graduate work at UCSB's Chicana/o Studies Department, he

hopes to document the challenges, struggles and achievements of first-generation undocuqueer students, demonstrating their resiliency and creation of supportive communities.

“For most of my life, systemic inequalities around me made me believe that becoming a professor was impossible just because of my skin color, nationality, language, undocumented status, sexual orientation and financial status,” he said. “The Racial Justice fellowship at UCSB is the confirmation that I needed to keep moving forward in my academic journey at the graduate level.”

The program symbolizes an important step forward for all the awardees.

Brianna (Bri) Reddick earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications with a minor in politics and international affairs from Wake Forest University in North Carolina in May 2019. At the UCSB Department of Feminist Studies, Reddick’s research will focus on menstrual equity, internship and leadership experience, teaching potential and scholar-advocacy work to benefit young Black and other women of color.

Maria Guadalupe Romo-González tutored migrant children, served as a mentor for middle school students, and co-founded a PUENTE program at UC Berkeley. She is currently conducting equity-focused research on higher education access for the education policy program at New America, a think tank based in Washington D.C. She described her desire to pursue a doctorate at UCSB’s Gevirtz Graduate School of Education as a way to “pay it forward as a mentor and professor to other first-generation, low-income, English language learners and Latinx students.” As a Higher Education Policy Fellow at the Leadership Enterprise for Diverse America, she lobbied Congress for equitable higher education opportunities for first-generation and low-income students and presented policy proposals to that effect.

Gaby Hinojosa graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from California State University, Northridge, where she worked on research at BUILD PODER, a program funded by the National Institutes of Health. The program focuses on training undergraduates from underrepresented groups for doctoral programs and careers in the biomedical sciences. Hinojosa is pursuing a Ph.D. in the Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology Program at UCSB, where she hopes to conduct research on mental health intervention and prevention programs. She also looks forward to teaching and mentoring students at an ethnically diverse university.

“We are very proud of the work that graduate students across campus are doing in response to racial injustice in our society,” said Interim Graduate Dean Leila J. Rupp. “We launched these new fellowships to help recruit students with current and future commitments to make a difference through teaching, research and mentorship.”

Funding for the fellowship is a campus-wide collaboration between the Graduate Division and the deans of the Bren School, the College of Engineering, the College of Letters and Science and the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education.

“We are very excited to award our first cohort of the Social Justice Fellowship,” said Walter Boggan, director of Graduate Admissions, Outreach, and Diversity Initiatives. “I am almost certain that this support and commitment from the Graduate Division and the deans from across all disciplines will truly spark our efforts in recruiting and retaining a diverse graduate student population.”

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.