

UC SANTA BARBARA

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[Sonia Fernandez](#)

## **UC Santa Barbara kicks off Commencement with College of Creative Studies ceremony**

UC Santa Barbara kicked off the 2023 Commencement season Sunday, June 11, with the first of a series of ceremonies celebrating its newest crop of graduates. The College of Creative Studies took over Campbell Hall as its unusually gifted and driven undergraduates marked a major milestone in their lives.

“You have inspired us with your intelligence, your perseverance, your curiosity and your accomplishments,” Chancellor Henry T. Yang told the 103 graduates.

“I remember the excitement of freshman move-in weekend, and I will remember how you demonstrated your courage and resilience when a global pandemic turned our world and your college experience upside down. The same passion and optimism that have helped you face these challenges will serve you tremendously as you embark on your life’s next chapter.”

About two-thirds of the graduating class of the “graduate school for undergrads,” as CCS is known, walked away with honors. Some students planned to pursue advanced degrees at prestigious institutions, or embark on ambitious careers, or to take some much-needed time off to contemplate their next steps.

“If you want to lead an adventurous life, a creative life, you need to protect your internal world,” said featured speaker alum Vinitha (Menon ’99) Watson, who with husband David Watson ’99 started Zoo Labs, a nonprofit artist accelerator aimed at Black, Indigenous and people of color. “Get support. Keep unlabeled yourself. Keep breaking the stereotypes.”

“Collectively you’ve participated in 13 solo art exhibitions, 37 group exhibitions and organized 25 different art exhibitions,” said CCS Interim Dean Tim Sherwood. “You’ve realized 12 new computer applications, organized nine concerts, published



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- The ceremony also featured the encouragement and congratulations from student speakers Sierra Vakili (writing & literature), Isabella Catanzaro (physics) and Phoebe Pineda (writing & literature); as well as musical contributions from Adrian Cunningham, Martina Chen, Joseph Alvarez, Terry Wong and Eric Huang.

Biology grad Lindsey Washiashi received the Chancellor's Award For Excellence in Undergraduate Research, while Marianne Arriola (computing) and Lila Prableen Velasquez Singh (writing & literature) both received the Sara Sterphone Student Service Award.

The graduation ceremony was followed by a reception and more celebrations in the Campbell Hall Plaza.

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## **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.