

THE *Current*

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[Debra Herrick](#)

UCSB's ÉXITO Program graduates third cohort of future ethnic studies teachers amidst rising attacks on ethnic studies

In Spanish, “éxito” means success. At UC Santa Barbara, ÉXITO stands for Educational eXcellence and Inclusion Training Opportunities, a first of its kind program in the UC system that provides students with a clearly structured pathway to [becoming K-12 Ethnic Studies](#) teachers. Funded by a \$3 million U.S. Department of Education Title V grant, the program's third cohort is now graduating.

Their commencement comes at a crucial moment, said Ingrid Banks, [an associate professor of Black studies](#) and a member of the program's core faculty.

“The ÉXITO program at UCSB is exponentially important today as the attacks on ethnic studies escalate,” said Banks. “In training future ethnic studies teachers and current teachers invested in centering ethnic studies in their curriculum, the ÉXITO program provides a necessary social justice intervention within primary schooling.”

Designed for highly motivated students, the undergraduate program serves as a pipeline to earning a bachelor's degree in one of the UCSB's ethnic studies departments or in feminist studies and to applying to a master's degree in education and a teaching credential program.

The program's core faculty hail from the departments of Asian American studies, Black studies, Chicana and Chicano studies, and the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. They work with the ÉXITO team, led by co-directors Professor Rebeca Mireles-Rios and Professor Lisa Sun-Hee Park, associate director Adanari Zarate Ph.D. '20 and graduate student researchers.

"On behalf of the ÉXITO team, congratulations to our graduating scholars," said Zarate. "Thank you for the contributions you have made to our program and campus. We look forward to the amazing things you will do for the field of education and student communities. Always remember your 'why.'"

Michelle Ramos Ramirez '24

A "proud product" of unincorporated East Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District, Ramos Ramirez is earning her B.A. in Chicanx studies with a minor in educational studies. She will continue her research and training in ethnic studies education in UCLA's master's and teacher education program. Despite the challenges of transitioning to UCSB as a first generation college student, she said, she "found solace and inspiration within her ÉXITO cohort — a community of resistance that fuels her transformative vision for the future."

Cailey Angeles Larmore '24

Larmore, who uses they/them pronouns, is graduating with a B.A. in Asian American studies with distinction in the major, and a B.S. in psychological and brain sciences. During their time at UCSB, they were active in FIERCE Outreach, Kapatirang Pilipino and the Asian American Studies Department. Larmore will pursue their dual teaching credential and master's degree in education at UC Berkeley.

Among the highlights of Larmore's experience at UCSB were: "being part of the executive board for FIERCE Outreach, meeting my now partner through a creative writing class in Asian American Studies, my partner and I independently deciding to become part of ÉXITO at the same time, getting to do research under my favorite professor in Asian American studies, attending the drag shows put on by TQComm, and playing mahjong with my friends."

Eduardo "Eddie" Vázquez '24

A double major in Chicana studies and sociology from North East Los Angeles, Vázquez, who uses they/them pronouns, served on the outreach board of UCSB's SexInfo OnCampus; served on the Students for Reproductive Justice board and as a grader for SOC 152A (Human Sexuality). Additionally, they have worked with Orientation Programs during summer and as the resident assistant for the undergraduate apartments queer community, Lavender Living. After graduation, Vazquez will return to Los Angeles for UCLA's Teacher Education Program and to pursue a master's degree in education with a specialization in ethnic studies.

Juan Rivera Garnica '24

Rivera Garnica is graduating as a double major in Chicana/o studies and film and media studies. He is originally from Mexico but was raised in Los Angeles after moving to the U.S. He will pursue his master's degree and credential in the Teacher Education Program at UCLA this fall, hoping to become a high school social studies teacher with a focus on ethnic studies.

ÉXITO participants **Amelie Calderon, Stephanie Pantoja, Riechal "Riqui" Martínez and Evelyn Giraldo** also completed the program and will be taking a gap year before continuing towards their teaching degrees.

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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.