

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Maria Zate

## **UCSB names new dean of its Gevirtz Graduate School of Education**

UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Dennis Assanis, with Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost David Marshall, announced the appointment of Jaime Lester as the new Jules Zimmer Dean of the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, effective July 1, 2026. Lester will join UCSB from Johns Hopkins University School of Education, where she is currently vice dean and a professor.

“We are excited to welcome Dr. Jaime Lester as she takes on this important new leadership role,” Chancellor Assanis said. “She will bring high scholarly standards, extensive administrative experience and an ability to create new programs. She has a strong record of innovation, collaboration and consensus-building. We are confident that Dr. Lester will work closely with the faculty, building upon a strong foundation of research excellence and community engagement, to help the Gevirtz School thrive as it prepares to launch new undergraduate degree programs, and contributes to our future as a public research university.”

At Johns Hopkins, Lester has played a central role in the creation of a new multi-year academic strategic plan for the School of Education. She has partnered with research centers and faculty to increase externally funded doctoral research assistantships, led new initiatives to support student success and retention, supported faculty in securing external funding for research and student support, and facilitated cross-disciplinary networking initiatives to support collaborative development of new curricula and research. She also worked to create new degree

programs, including online programs, as well as new partnerships across Hopkins and with community organizations.

Funded by federal and private organizations, including the National Science Foundation, Lester's research includes projects that address faculty retention, student success, equity and inclusive excellence.

"I am honored to join the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education and UC Santa Barbara. I am inspired by the Gevirtz School's talented faculty, dedicated staff, engaged students and deep commitment to improving lives through education, research and community partnership," Lester said. "Gevirtz School has a remarkable history of improving lives through education and applied psychology, and I am excited to work alongside this vibrant community as we build on its strengths and advance its mission in service to California and beyond."

Lester previously served as a professor and Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs and Strategic Initiatives in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University. She directed faculty recruitment strategy across 18 departments and established an Inclusive Excellence Advisory Board and faculty fellows program to support recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, and revised faculty evaluation systems to improve accountability and advancement pathways. Lester has over 50 peer-reviewed academic publications and research expertise in organizational change and collaborative leadership, with a particular emphasis on faculty development. Her publications regarding educational technologies, equitable workplace practices, and organizational change are broadly used in higher education practice, and she regularly consults on issues such as faculty workload, pedagogical innovations and leadership.

Lester earned her doctorate and master's in higher education from the University of Southern California, and her bachelor's degrees in English and women's studies from the University of Michigan.

Media Contact

**Shelly Leachman**

Editorial Director

(805) 893-2191

[sleachman@ucsb.edu](mailto:sleachman@ucsb.edu)

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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.