



# CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA

GRANT YEARS 1 & 2 REPORT

OCTOBER 1, 2022 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

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*The contents of this report were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, they do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*

# MESSAGE FROM THE GRANT LEADS

We are proud and motivated by the tremendous momentum to transform UC Santa Cruz into a transfer-receptive campus. The Cultivamos Excelencia HSI grant has served as a catalyst and enabler for much of this work, with a designated emphasis on improving outcomes and experiences for transfer students of color. Year one of the grant provided an opportunity to unify stakeholders and collectively elevate **transfer as a high institutional priority**. Year two was defined as the "Year of the Transfer," which has been a huge success in raising the **awareness and prioritization** of transfer student needs.

October 1, 2024 kicked off the "Year of Transfer Excellence." This will be year three of our grant, and we are excited to **lead the campus from awareness to action**, as we work collectively with faculty and staff colleagues to innovate and implement impactful policies and practices. This is the year when we will also begin to take stock of pilot interventions and identify which ones are contributing to more equitable outcomes in access, retention, graduation and belonging for transfer students of color. To those ends, our Cultivamos Excelencia evaluation team and collaborators will continue to develop transfer receptivity assessment tools, which we aim to make available for the campus community.



We are grateful for the many partners who have mobilized around strategic transfer equity initiatives. Last year alone, we saw the formation of the Transfer Executive Leadership Team, the Hartnell Transfer Summit, two San Jose City College (SJCC) Summits, the Social Sciences Transfer Summit, the UCSC Transfer Summit, and the successful awarding of three additional transfer-focused grants: K-16 Collaborative, American Talent Initiative (ATI), and CULTURA HSI.

Our Cultivamos Excelencia team looks forward to continuing to lead our campus toward transfer receptivity and collaborating with our many stakeholders across campus on this important work.

In Community,  
Valeria Alonso Blanco  
Estrella Arteaga Organiz  
Saskias Casanova  
David Gordon  
Charis Herzon  
Sara Radoff



# CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA KUDOS

- **Chancellor Larive:** Prioritizing the vision of a transfer-receptive campus by establishing the Transfer Executive Leadership Committee and spearheading a strong relationship with Hartnell College.
- **Akirah Armstrong-Bradley & John Bollard:** Leading the Division of Student Affairs and Success through an equity lens and committing to infrastructures that enable transfer receptivity, such as HSI grant application support and commuting student spaces.
- **Ebonée Williams:** Providing leadership in elevating transfer as an institutional priority and building actionable strategies to engage students, staff, and faculty in positive and productive partnerships that lead to transfer receptivity, as exhibited through championing of Cultivamos Excelencia and campus leadership with the K-16 Collaborative.
- **Jody Greene & Michelle Whittingham:** Chairing the Transfer Executive Leadership Committee, strengthening our campus partnership with Hartnell College, and successful application for the American Talent Initiative (ATI) grant.
- **Maria Rocha-Ruiz:** Leading partnerships and programs centered on students in our local community, and serving as Principal Investigator on the K-16 grant, integrating student-centered transfer pathways.
- **Richard Hughey:** Establishing the new Degree Progress Unit with intentional transfer credit and articulation functions to support students' academic progress toward degree completion.
- **Timetra Hamilton & Shawntelle Bivens:** Collaborating on innovative programs and initiatives to build early relationships with community college students.
- **Julian Fernald, Randy Uang, Cinnamon Danube & Leo Rosen:** Providing incredible thought-partnership in building transfer receptivity measures that are actionable for staff and faculty to improve transfer student success.
- **Jody Greene, Sam Foster, Noori Chai & Robin Dunkin:** Creating faculty development opportunities through the Teaching and Learning Center.
- **Christine Hong:** Growing the network of transfer champions within the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department.
- **Marcella Gomez, Sagnik Nath, Kenya Alas, Narges Norouzi, Grant Hartzog, Carmen Robinson, Stacey Philpott:** Curating academic partnerships with STARRS to pilot transitional programs for community college students transferring to UC Santa Cruz
- **Kresge Provost Mayanthi Fernando:** Establishing a transfer curriculum through Kresge College spanning from orientation, deeper engagement with the research university; and hands-on opportunities for career development and giving back to the transfer community.
- **Dean Katharine Mitchell, Associate Dean Cynthia Lewis, and Associate Dean Rebecca Covarrubias:** Hosting a Social Science divisional-wide transfer awareness workshop for the 9 academic departments to discuss the experiences and academic outcomes of their transfer student majors.
- **Stephanie Sawyer:** Engaging faculty in reducing barriers to transfer by deepening their understanding and implementation of articulation agreements.
- **Joshua Warburg:** Managing multiple partnerships across institutions, maintaining the highest degree of organization, and enhancing our ability to work in concert for the betterment of transfer student success.
- **Lorato Anderson:** Collaborating on establishing new career development opportunities for graduate students through the Graduate Student Internship appointment type.
- **Kamil Shankar, Associate Director of Financial Aid:** Committing to supporting transfer students as they navigate financial aid and economic barriers at UCSC.
- **Jesus Morales:** Committing to sustaining EOP as one of the major transfer hotspots on campus.

# CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA

Year 2 | UC Santa Cruz | Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Grant | U.S. Department of Education

## Grant Overview

**Grant Type:** Title V, Part A\*

**Grant Cycle:** Oct. 2022 - Sept. 2027

**Grant Year 2:** Oct. 2023 - Sept. 2024

**Grant Funding Amount:** \$2,999,941

\* Title V, Part A Funding: Assist HSIs in expanding educational opportunities for and improving the attainment of Latino students. Grants also enable HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability.

The Cultivamos Excelencia project will build a **transfer receptive culture** for Latinx and low-income community college students to **thrive in their transfer pathways** to the University of California, Santa Cruz, and beyond, opening opportunities to graduate studies.

UCSC, a national leader as a Hispanic-Serving Research Institution, seeks to create systemic change that will improve and streamline transfer pathways and the lives of our local community college students to address issues of inequities of transfer, graduation, and advancing to graduate studies rates.

### Institutional gaps addressed by the grant:

1. Transfer pipeline and enrollment of more Latinx transfers from the California Community College system.
2. Low retention and graduation rates of Latinx transfer students.
3. Lack of an intentional and integrated plan for Latinx transfer student success that bridges from community college to post-graduation.

### Grant goals to increase:

1. Latinx students' transfer rates by 10%
2. Latinx transfer students with intentions for graduate study by 3%
3. Latinx transfer students' sense of belonging by 5%
4. Latinx transfer students' graduation rates by 5%



## Innovations in Transfer Student Success

### Community College Partnership Program

This initiative aims to build early relationships with students through mentorship and programming that will serve them prior to transfer, during their admission, and through their transition to UCSC.

Key components of this initiative:

- Cross-campus counseling and mentoring
- Pre-transfer workshop series
- Summer Transition Program
- Fall Orientation Program
- UCSC staff professional development

### Transfer Coherence

This initiative will guide academic departments in taking action to streamline transfer pathways by welcoming students and connecting them to research opportunities.

Key components of this initiative:

- Integrating expertise and practices in academic divisions and student affairs
- Faculty and department transfer-focused workshops
- Transfer summits

### Undergraduate Research and Graduate Pathways

Through this initiative we will expose transfer students to graduate pathways via research internships, mentoring, and assistance in navigating the graduate school application process.

Key components of this initiative:

- Mentoring by graduate students
- Graduate school preparation workshops
- Faculty professional development workshops for transfer students' inclusion in research/labs
- Research Symposium

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The goal of this component is to establish strong relationships with Latinx and low-income students prior to transfer, and, upon admission, increase activities that cultivate a sense of belonging and personal relationships with staff, faculty, and peers at UC Santa Cruz. We accomplish this through early outreach to students enrolled in university-bound programs like the Puente Project within our regional community colleges, by providing these students with transitional support between their community colleges and UC Santa Cruz, and by training staff on campus how to better support transfer students of color.

## Advising and Mentorship

As part of CCPP, staff and student leaders are available to provide prospective students and their families with general one-to-one advising and events to support navigating the process of transferring to UCSC. For example, during our Dia de la Familia event, prospective students and their families are able to visit UCSC, attend info sessions, and begin to build connections with other prospective transfer students. Upon admission to the university, students continue to receive support through one-to-one counseling and our Fall Early Move-in Orientation



**Year One: 15 appointments were held with Advisor and Student Leaders**  
**Year Two: 62 appointments were held with Advisor and Student Leaders**



**Year One: 65 students attended 4 events**  
**Year Two: 164 students attended 7 events**

## Transfer Scholars Pathways (TSP)

This program serves local community college students through information workshops, events, and one-on-one mentorship from a current UCSC transfer student to receive direct guidance on goal setting, path exploration, and navigating the UC application process.

### Key highlights:

- TSP Experiential Learning Academy
  - 14 students served
- 7th Annual Dia de la Familia
  - 55 students and 25 family members served
  - Answering the question, “What was the most important thing you learned during Dia de la Familia:
    - *“That I am not alone and that there’s plenty of opportunity at a UC and it’s possible as a first generation low income learning disabled LGBTQIA Latina” - Student Participant*
    - *“That it’s okay to fail because you will think about it and will keep trying and to fail early instead of failing late or asking questions and don’t be shy” - Family Member*
- TSP Transfer Transition Day Event
  - 7 students served
  - Conducted in collaboration with Research Scholars Program Research Symposium.

## Summer Transition Program (STP)

Over the course of four months, the program serves students via four events and one-on-one mentorship with a current UCSC student to receive direct guidance on acclimating to the quarter system, assistance with financial planning, navigating the campus, balancing family responsibilities, and making intentional connections with resources and opportunities.

*"I think that if I wouldn't have done that program, I would have been super lost. I think that I would have maybe still been able to kind of like, you know, like graduate, like make it throughout the quarters. But it would have definitely been extremely more like heavy, like just like a heavier burden to carry..."*

- Student Participant

### Year One:

- 18 students participated in the STP workshops and TMP mentorship
- 10 students attended the 3 day Fall Early Move-in Orientation

### Year Two:

- 26 students participated in the STP workshops and TMP mentorship
- 72 students attended the 3 day Fall Early Move-in Orientation

## Transfer Champions for Racial Equity Staff Professional Development Series

Professional development opportunities for professional staff, as well as graduate and undergraduate student leaders to affirm, cultivate, and activate policies and practices that contribute to racial equity in transfer student outcomes and shape a culture of receptivity and validation for transfer students that permeates every aspect of campus.

### Eight staff from six departments completed the intensive series for professional staff

- Emily Giovanelli, Student Health Outreach and Promotion (SHOP)
- Andrea Mena and Alyssa Gomes, Disability Resource Center
- Autumn Johnson, African American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC)
- Leydi Cortes, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
- Gwyn Vandevere and Jeyson Aldana, Academic Advising
- Maya Woolfe, Humanities Division Academic Programs and Student Achievement



### Undergraduate Student Leaders from the following programs participated in a virtual workshop:

- Kresge 1T Peer Navigators
- Black Academy Mentors
- PATHFINDERS Computer Science and Engineering Mentors
- Slug Orientation Leaders
- Community College Partnership Program Mentors
- Transfer Mentors
- Transfer Edge Peer Mentors

Year One: 81  
Year Two: 91

### Graduate Student Leaders from the following program participated in a half-day workshop:

- Kresge 25 Teaching Assistants
- Cultivamos Excelencia Graduate Pathways Coordinator and Research Scholars Mentors

Year One: 6  
Year Two: 8

# TRANSFER COHERENCE

Partnering with UCSC's Teaching and Learning Center, Cultivamos Excelencia delivered workshops for faculty about departmental actions to promote transfer student success grounded in the theory of Transfer Receptivity (Jain, 2022) and learning from an ongoing study of transfer students of color experience at UCSC lead by faculty Co-PI and Psychology faculty Casanova. Participants in this workshop collaboratively generated ideas for building relationships with and for transfer students of color during the workshop. The departments have started to carry out a transfer-specific actions to make their department more receptive to their transfer students.



*"I actively talk about the strengths of transfer students in my class and in office hours. Talk about my own experiences as a transfer student."  
- EEB faculty workshop participant*

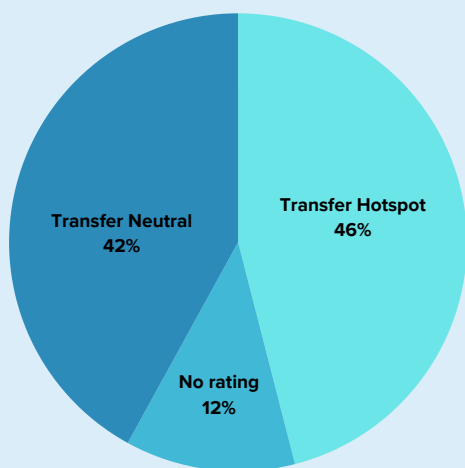
**3 Departmental Workshops: History, CRES, and EEB**  
**56 faculty and staff**  
**Divisional Workshop with Social Science**  
**8 departments**

## Post Workshop Survey Highlights

After the workshop:

- **92%** of faculty agreed that they had increased their understanding of:
  - The academic experiences for transfer students of color at UCSC
  - How a sense of belonging influences educational experiences for transfer students of color
  - The role of relationships in fostering belonging among transfer students of color
- **92%** of faculty felt confident that they could develop tangible strategies for supporting transfer students of color at UCSC.
- **85%** of faculty agreed on readiness to take action to support transfer students of color by:
  - using the TLC, HSI Transfer Coherence, and/or STARRS website resources at UCSC.
  - identifying opportunities within their department to create new or redesign activities, programs or policies

## Department Transfer Receptivity Ratings (26 faculty)



- **Transfer hotspots** are places that support transfer students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. They advocate for transfer students; support them in ways they can thrive; center transfers in their mission; and actively do outreach and develop programming for transfer students.
- **Transfer-neutral** are places that provide support to all students without specifically addressing the various needs of transfer students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. They may or may not be deliberate with their outreach or programming for transfer students.
- **Transfer must-be** are places that do not support transfer students. Their services are unknown or inaccessible to transfer students but are essential to transfer student success, and they do not provide outreach and programming for transfer students.

## Action Taken:

- History launched a first-year transfer course
- History department faculty and staff created a transfer-specific welcoming event for their majors. Transfer student attendees expressed increased confidence and a stronger sense of community and belonging to UCSC
- CRES department faculty engaged in preparing to collect focus group data to better understand transfer student experiences in CRES, specifically how they build community



# UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AND GRADUATE PATHWAYS



**The Research Scholars Program** provides paid research internships and graduate pathways support to transfer students. Over the past two years, the program connected 32 transfer students to paid research opportunities over three academic quarters.

The program was piloted in Spring 2023 and during the 2023-2024 academic year, the program also served 4 interdisciplinary graduate student mentors who guided the transfer research scholars regarding the hidden curriculum of research experiences and navigating graduate school preparation.

Each transfer student's research was guided and supported by a faculty mentor and a first-generation graduate student mentor who holistically guided them through the program.

- Four Latine graduate students from applied mathematics, literature, and molecular, cell, and developmental biology guided the research scholars on their academic journey through one-on-one weekly meetings.
- The graduate mentors expressed a desire to help students in ways they wished they had received guidance when they were undergraduate students.

## Best practices for culturally sustaining mentoring skills

Faculty mentors are encouraged to engage with transfer students by:

01 asking about the mentee's home life.

02 reiterating research contributions by the mentee.

03 speaking about contributions that diverse persons have made to the research/field.

04 providing visual and real-life examples when reviewing materials.

*"I learned a great deal about the various challenges transfer students face when adjusting to UCSC especially as it relates to getting involved in research. I empathized with their transition and what it means for them to navigate a new place in such short time."*

- Faculty Mentor

Year One: 20 students  
Year Two: 12 students

## Key highlights from our Research Scholars surveys:

- Most graduate school preparation markers and navigational cultural capital increased post-program (1.5% and 0.41%).
- Increased knowledge of campus resources The strength of relationships with faculty, staff, and peers did not change.
- Sense of belonging decreased slightly (-0.27%), which may result from multiple campus disruptions (e.g., strikes, encampments) when the post-survey was completed.
- Increased belonging in their research spaces.
- A want for the program to incorporate more social events to encourage community building.

## Key highlights from our 4 graduate students and several faculty mentors:

- Graduate mentors indicated increasing their knowledge of the mentee's familial, aspirational, resistance, and navigational capital.
- Graduate mentors recommend future mentor training focused on resources for transfer students.
- Faculty mentors increased the use of culturally sustaining mentoring skills.
- Faculty mentors recommended clearer expectations for faculty mentors and more mentoring workshop.

# DATA & EVALUATION

## Transfer Experience & Receptivity Assessment Metrics

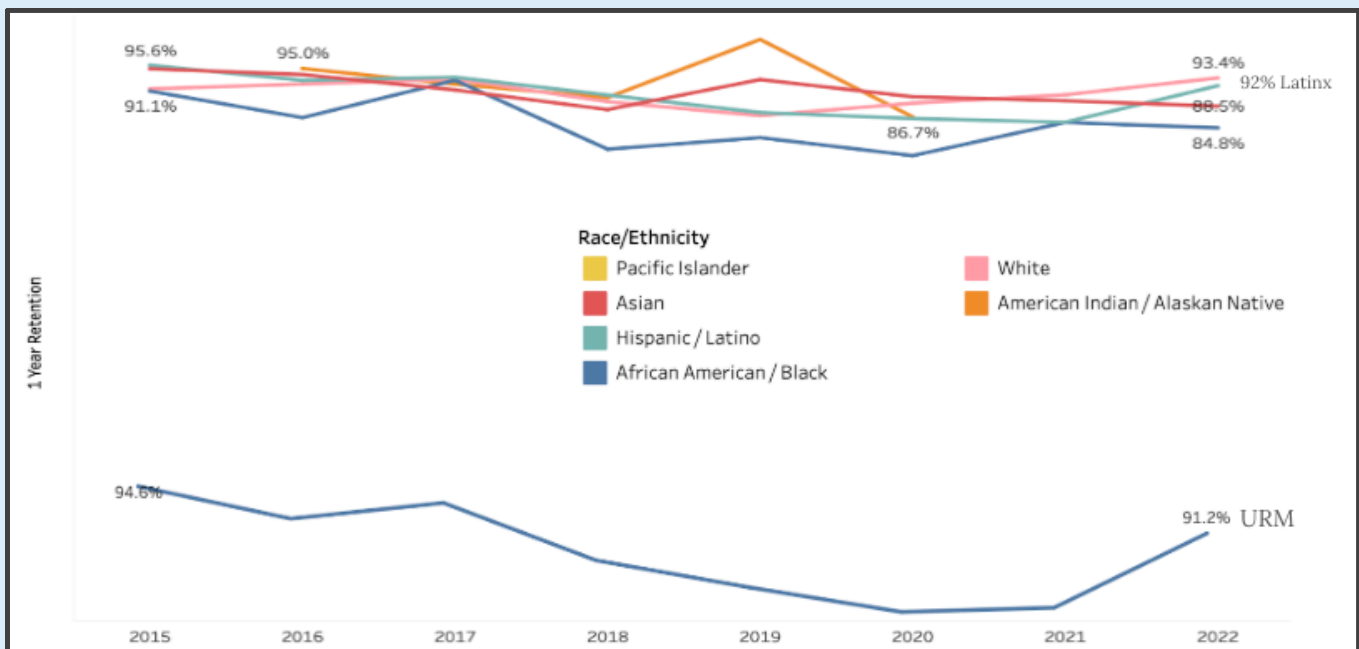
Equity-driven assessment tools are the 5th element of a Transfer Receptive Culture, and the Cultivamos Excelencia Evaluation team has been developing consistent measures to institutionalize for our campus through our partnership with IRAPS:

### 2024 UCUES included two of our scales:

1. **The Transfer Landscape scale** allows students to identify transfer hotspots - places on campus that support transfer students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
2. **The Institutional Responsibility for Student Success scale** asks students to evaluate how well our campus is institutionally (e.g., practices and policies) addressing transfer student needs.

**Equity Analysis:** Tracks transfer student outcomes in the areas of access, retention and graduation, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and/or community college. Most recent data reveals an increased retention of Latinx students, however there are decreasing retention rates for Black and Asian transfer students.

### Equity Analysis: 1st Year Transfer Retention Disaggregated by Race



**Transfer Experience Survey:** Bi-annual survey that includes the UCUES questions and expands into transfer belonging, transfer capital, community cultural wealth of the transfer population, perceived transfer prejudice and social identity (e.g., race, class, gender) threat.

**Focus Group (FG) Toolkits:** Provides a framework for departments that want to do a qualitative study of transfer student experiences in their department. Focuses on raising visibility of underrepresented, intersectional groups.

## Cultivamos Excelencia Program Evaluation Reports

- [Transfer Scholars Pathways \(TSP\) and Summer Transition Program \(STP\):](#)

Gain insight into mentorship initiatives to ease the transition for community college students of color entering UCSC. This infographic details how STP and TSP guide students through academic and financial planning, relationship-building, and campus life.

- [Research Scholars Program Evaluation:](#)

The Cultivamos Excelencia Research Scholars surveys assessed transfer students' experiences before and after program participation, highlighting transformative insights and program impact at UCSC in 2024.

- [Graduate Mentor Program Evaluation:](#)

Dive into the experiences of Latinx graduate mentors, emphasizing growth in culturally responsive mentoring and insights into transfer students' familial, aspirational, and navigational capital, enhancing future mentoring relationships.

- [Faculty Mentor Workshop Evaluation:](#)

This infographic includes surveys from faculty mentors, which evaluated their insights and experiences before and after the program, providing actionable recommendations to enhance mentoring practices and program outcomes

- [History Department Transfer Coherence Evaluation:](#)

This infographic offers a closer look at the History Department's commitment to transfer student success, including specific initiatives like transfer-focused courses and department events. Faculty collaboratively identifies impactful strategies to enhance belonging and academic engagement.

- [CRES Department Transfer Coherence Evaluation:](#)

Discover the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department's targeted efforts to support transfer students of color. Faculty are implementing focus groups, department-wide programming, and strategies to enhance inclusivity and connection building.

- [EEB Department Transfer Coherence Evaluation:](#)

This EEB Transfer Coherence Workshop infographic highlights strategies to support transfer students of color and the department's action plan for fostering inclusivity and academic success.

- [Social Sciences Transfer Coherence Evaluation:](#)

Discover how the faculty in the Division of Social Sciences support transfer students. Gain insights into how receptive the department and campus are to transfer students and how faculty initiatives, including social events and student partnerships, foster meaningful connections and create a sense of belonging.

# STEERING COMMITTEE

## CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA



**Akirah Armstrong-Bradley,**  
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Director, Student Excellence, Engagement, and  
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**Ebonée Williams,**  
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**Jesus Morales,**  
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# GRANT LEADS

## CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA



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Associate Director of Transfer  
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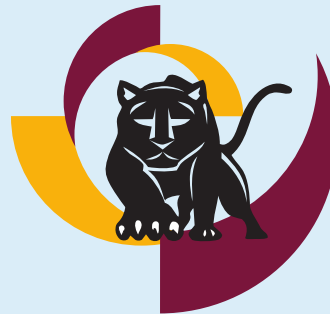
**Charis Herzon,**  
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**Sara Radoff,**  
Services for Transfer, Re-entry,  
and Resilient Scholars Director

# PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

## CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA



**HARTNELL COLLEGE**



UCSC TRANSFER PREPARATION PROGRAM

UC Santa Cruz  
Transfer Executive  
Leadership Committee

# THANK YOU

