

The Centering Undergraduate Latinx Thriving with University Racial-Equity Action or **CULTURA** Title V HSI Project at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) will support UCSC's commitment to student success and equity with structural and cultural changes, data-driven decisions, and students' voices to reverse post-pandemic declines in Latinx enrollment (transfer), retention, and graduation rates. As UCSC enters its second decade as an Hispanic-Serving Research Institution, post-pandemic equity gaps require multi-level campus-wide changes that validate our Latinx and low-income students' potential and engage with them to support their pathways to graduation, graduate school, and high-demand careers.

The UC Office of the President has set the goal that every UC campus will graduate 70% of its students in 4 years, to eliminate equity gaps, decrease students' debt, and advance their social mobility. A team of UCSC faculty, staff, and students studied academic, survey, and student interview data from Latinx and low-income students and identified four strategies critical to achieve these goals. To enact these strategies, we propose fostering a campus-wide culture of Ecological Validation,<sup>1</sup> where teams of staff, faculty, and students implement four components:

1. **Strengthen a Latinx Student Servingness Campus Hub.** El Centro, the campus Chicana/Latinx Resources Center, will serve as a hub to support students' holistic needs, with student-led workshops that link key services, including tutoring, counseling and psychological services, financial planning, and alumni career panels. Expanded programs for prospective and current families will be offered in Spanish and English.
2. **Latinx Student Success.** CULTURA will use a case management approach through holistic coaching<sup>2</sup> to address students' experiences with institutional barriers and gaps. We will work in partnership with campus advising, Teaching and Learning Center, and Student Success and Equity units to integrate holistic and validating practices.
3. **Health Professions Pathways.** UCSC's new Global and Community Health major addresses health care workforce needs, particularly in underserved communities. To open critical transfer and career pathways, we will streamline transfer students' access with an ambassador program, peer mentoring and articulation summits that engage UCSC faculty and their counterparts at local community colleges.
4. **HSI Servingness Internships.** As an R1 (research-intensive) university, UCSC has opportunities to connect research and practice to improve educational equity. We will pilot and scale up this activity through a large course in research methods focused on HSI servingness. HSI Servingness Interns will extend and deepen their course projects into action research by implementing them with staff, faculty, and students.

Measurable objectives include: increase Latinx students' first-year retention rates by 5% (freshmen and transfer); increase number of degrees awarded to Latinx students each year by 10% (freshmen) and 5% (transfer); improve campus climate and Latinx students sense of belonging by 5%; increase Latinx and transfer students' enrollment in health professions pathways by 421%, and increase integration among campus units by 10%.

Funds requested: \$3 M; Both Competitive Preference and Invitational Priorities are addressed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hallett, R. E., Kezar, A., Kitchen, J. A., & Perez, R. J. (2023). *Creating a campus-wide culture of student success: An evidence-based approach to supporting low-income, racially minoritized, and first-generation college students*. Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36, 3-19. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wcc/Study/72030>