

# 2018 - 2019

# ANNUAL REPORT





For the past 20 years, the UCI SAGE Scholars Program has led the way in creating upward mobility for high-achieving UCI students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Open to UCI juniors and seniors from all majors, the SAGE Scholars Program provides students with leadership coursework, scholarship funding, tutoring, and mentoring that facilitates successful transitions into career and graduate school. With support from generous donors and alumni, the program has grown in scope and scale each year, while maintaining a 100 percent graduation rate, all-time.

Twenty-nine SAGE Scholars graduated in June 2019, representing 24 unique majors of study – from Mechanical Engineering to Public Health Policy, Economics to Education Sciences. This is a testament to both our program’s ability to support a diverse group of students and interests, and to the talent and determination of our SAGE Scholars, a majority of whom are the first in their generation to attend college.

Many of our Scholars also intern at companies and nonprofits throughout Orange County. By serving in these paid, yearlong internships, SAGE Scholars receive mentorship and tutelage from leaders, acquire real-world skills, develop their interests and passion, and embark on productive and auspicious careers.

The following pages include profiles on our 2019 graduating class. Reading through their biographies, I cannot help but be impressed by their journey, inspired by their accomplishments, and hopeful for the future these individuals will make for themselves and their community.

It is because of your continued support and involvement that the SAGE Scholars Program is able to create opportunities for students from all backgrounds to achieve the American Dream. On behalf of the SAGE Scholars and alumni, we thank you.

Sincerely,

Neda Moayedi  
Director  
SAGE Scholars Program



# SAGE at a Glance

**20** Years the UCI SAGE Scholars program has been in existence - the longest in the UC system

Graduation rate among SAGE participants, all-time: **100%**

**525+** SAGE Alumni, all-time

Number of 2018 – 2019 SAGE Scholars: **65**

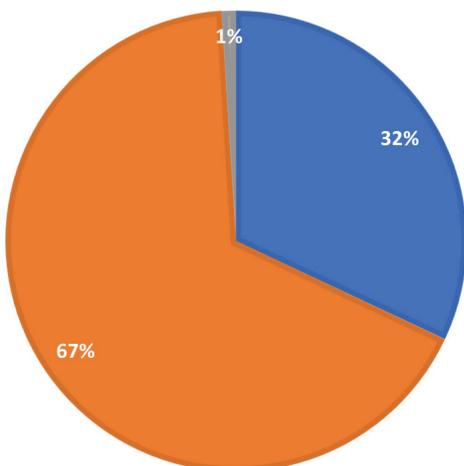
**24** Unique majors of study, Class of 2019 SAGE Scholars

Class of 2019 SAGE Scholars who are first in their families to attend college: **79%**

**41%** Class of 2019 SAGE Scholars who earned two or more bachelor's degrees

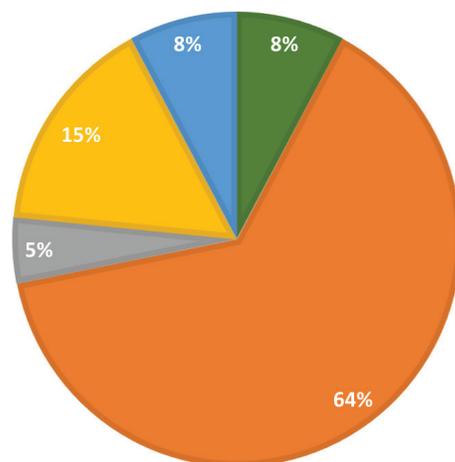
GENDER OF 2018-19 SAGE SCHOLARS COHORT

Male Female Declined to Answer



ETHNICITY OF 2018-19 SAGE SCHOLARS COHORT

Declined to State Hispanic/Latino Black Asian White



## Janeth Acuña

### 2019 Degree

B.S., Nursing Science

### Internship Experience

My internship experience allowed me to learn more about job opportunities available within the nursing/healthcare profession. It also allowed me to be more aware of 401k, taxes, and other financial opportunities and responsibilities.

### Transfer Institution

Rio Hondo College

### Biography

My name is Janeth Mireya Acuna Gaxiola and I am a first-generation college student, transfer student from Rio Hondo College, DREAMer, student athlete and SAGE Ambassador. I am from Downey, California. I majored in Nursing Science and I have done research focused on virtual reality in reducing pain perception in burn ICU patients, second-stage labor support, and dementia caregiver support. While at UCI, I received several scholarships, including the Crankstart (2017-2019), Elizabeth C. Tierney (2017-2018), UCI Opportunity Fund (2016-2017), and an athletic scholarship to play soccer (2016-2018). I received the Chancellor's Award of Distinction, was nominated to the Phi Beta Kappa national honor society, and have been on the Dean's Honor List for a majority of the quarters at UCI. I was also recognized as one of UCI's campus community Latinx leaders.

### Thank you

Thank you to our corporate sponsors and alumni for supporting SAGE. With your support, SAGE is able to help so many students be successful. Through your donations, I obtained a professional outfit that I can use for interviews and job events. I have gained so much knowledge and feel more prepared to enter the work force and make a difference. I also feel more prepared for graduate school. Nothing that SAGE has given me would be possible without your support. For that, I am grateful, and I thank you for making an impact in my life.



# Maritza Acuña

## 2019 Degree

B.S., Nursing Science

## Internship Experience

Edwards LifeSciences was a very empowering internship. It gave me insight into what it takes to make medical devices. As a project coordinator, I worked collaboratively with international and cross-functional teams to develop life-saving medical products and contributed to the full life cycle of the project. At Edwards, there were two SAGE Alumni — Anas Chaudry and Ijaz Sayed. They became my mentors and exposed me to future opportunities within the company and elsewhere. They always allocated time to teach me how to advocate for myself and offered financial advice — anything from 401ks to negotiating my salary, and even how to buy my first home.



## Transfer Institution

Rio Hondo College

## Biography

I am a first-generation student, a transfer student, and a student athlete. During my time at UCI, I received the Elliott Family Endowed Scholarship, Elizabeth C. Tierney Nursing Scholarship, and the Crankstart Foundation Scholarship. I have been involved in different research with the School of Nursing, including looking at the effect of quiet time in the Intensive Care Unit, support for families who have someone suffering from dementia, and have worked on a quality improvement project for sepsis, a potentially life-threatening condition. I have been a SAGE Ambassador for two years and have enjoyed working with the SAGE staff and other SAGE Scholars.

## Thank you

Thank you so much for supporting SAGE. With your help, I received professional attire that I have used for interviews and networking events. The internships you offer SAGE Scholars really make a difference and provide us incredible experiences.

## Nicole Balbuena

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Political Science  
B.A., Sociology  
B.A., Chicano/Latino Studies

### Internship Experience

Interning at a law firm gave me the insight into whether I wanted to pursue law school. This internship experience also provided an opportunity to network and to find the career path that I want to continue on after graduation.

### Transfer Institution

Orange Coast College

### Biography

In 2016, I became the first in my family to attend college, received an associate in arts degree in Political Science, and transferred to UCI. For three years at UCI, I have taken 16 to 28 units of coursework per quarter, oversaw two student organizations, conducted undergraduate research, and worked one part-time job, all while maintaining a 4.0 G.P.A. and making it to the UCI Dean's Honor List each quarter.

### Thank you

The SAGE program provided an ample amount of opportunities, including applying to internships, networking with professionals, and informing scholarship and leadership opportunities. The directors of the program are attentive to the needs of each student, including myself. As a first-generation student, it is challenging to navigate the educational system, but the SAGE staff made it easy. Their unwavering support and constant contact has allowed me to embark on my next steps — pursuing a Ph.D in Sociology.



# Marisol Banuelos

## 2019 Degrees

B.A., Criminology, Law and Society  
B.A., Education Science

## Internship Experience

My internships influenced my decision to become a college counselor. My work with the TRIO program showed me the importance of support systems for students.

## Transfer Institution

Orange Coast College

## Biography

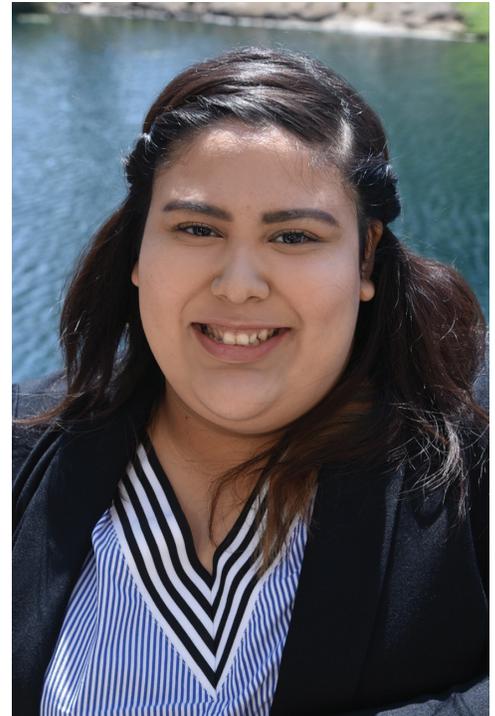
I am a first-generation student from Garden Grove, California. While at UCI, I had the opportunity to intern for various nonprofits, work with elementary school students, and serve as a peer mentor. Through my experiences with the TRIO program at UCI, I became passionate about becoming a college counselor. I hope to work at a community college and encourage other students to follow their dreams.

## Thank you

Thank you for the support that you have given the SAGE Scholars program. Being a member of the program for the last three years has played a monumental role in my educational career. The SAGE Scholars program has given me the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in graduate school and the work force.

One way that SAGE impacted my life is through the consistent support and encouragement I received. This kept me motivated and gave me the confidence to strive toward my goals. I do not know how I would have gotten through the graduation application process without the help of SAGE. Through the process, SAGE was there to show the resources and provide me with tips on how to be successful. Most importantly, they had faith in me that I would succeed.

SAGE also gave me the opportunity to learn about topics that first-generation students do not inherently know. This included meal etiquette, retirement plans, money management and much more. It was incredibly beneficial to learn from experts, and I will continue to use the information long after graduation. In all, SAGE has played a monumental role in my life.



## Alexia Burquez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Political Science  
B.A., International Studies

### Internship Experience

I participated in many internships and all have taught me different professional skills. Among the most valuable skill I gained through interning is learning to adapt to different work environments and how to leverage those environments to build the skills I want.

### Biography

While at UCI, I interned with various politicians and nonprofits to help advance minoritized communities. I was also a member of the Underground Scholars Initiative, an on-campus organization dedicated to bolstering student success for formerly incarcerated individuals. After my undergraduate studies, I will pursue a law degree to help advocate for marginalized communities. I volunteered at UCI's Saturday Academy of Law, where I tutored underserved high school students in critical reading and writing through case law. I also completed the Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute Fellowship Program at UC Berkeley, where I engaged in rigorous quantitative and qualitative coursework. Over the summer I participated in the Ready For Women Fellowship at Los Angeles City Hall under Councilwoman Nury Martinez. I also participated in the UCDC Academic Internship Program, where I was a Business Development Fellow for the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, while simultaneously interning for Congresswoman Nanette Barragan. Most recently I studied abroad in Rome and Madrid where I completed course work for my International Studies minor. Now that I have graduated, I will be moving to New York City for the summer where I will be a Partnerships Fellow at the Ross Initiative in Sports Equality, and in the fall I will be moving to Washington D.C. to complete the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Public Policy Fellowship.



### Thank you

I want to take this moment to vocalize my immense gratitude. Through SAGE's leadership development courses, networking opportunities, internships, and both academic and emotional support, this empowering program provided the tools I needed to thrive at an institution of higher education. As a first-generation, low-income college student, navigating a university environment can become hectic. With SAGE's support and guidance, however, I was able to find my voice and leverage my capabilities to achieve my goals. Thank you — I now aspire to one day be in a position where my financial contributions will change lives, like yours have changed mine.

# Lourdes Maldonado Castaneda

## 2019 Degrees

B.S., Mechanical Engineering with specialization in Aerospace Engineering  
B.S., Materials Science Engineering

## Internship Experience

I interned with Parker Hannifin for my final year of study at UCI. It has greatly aided in my professional growth and development. The experience has exposed me to industry practices and has given me a skill set that I would not have gained in the classroom. It allowed me to work alongside professionals in my field, contribute on multi-disciplinary teams, and excel in a variety of projects.



## Biography

I am a first-generation college student from Perris, California. I enjoy encouraging young minds to pursue degrees in STEM, so I have volunteered with the ALMA Science Academy, MAES Science Extravaganza, Athena Olympiad, and the MESA Program. On campus, I have been co-president for MAES: Latinos in Science and Engineering, as well as vice president of recruitment for Phi Sigma Rho. I interned with Parker Aerospace and served as a MAES National Student Representative. I was fortunate to be awarded the Dell Scholarship and a SAGE Scholarship to alleviate financial burdens. Upon graduating, I will be relocating to Fort Worth, Texas to start my professional career with Lockheed Martin.

## Thank you

Thank you for allowing this program to continue to thrive. SAGE allowed me the opportunity to network with colleagues in a variety of fields and provided me a safe space on campus where I can reach out for any questions or advice. I was able to gain a mentor, an internship and a scholarship through this amazing program and I will forever be grateful.

Your contributions allowed me to learn, through SAGE classroom settings, about elevator pitches, leveraging LinkedIn, and how to talk to professionals. Then, I was able to apply those skills at conferences, which resulted in multiple full-time job offers. I continue to recommend this program because of its success and dedication to outreach.

Thank you once again for your continued support of the SAGE Scholars Program!

## Perla Cermeno-Molina

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Criminology, Law and Society  
B.A., Psychological Science  
Minor, Biological Sciences

### Internship Experience

Through the UCDC Summer Internship Program, I interned for the nonprofit Mil Mujeres Legal Services, where I drafted U-visa certification requests and worked with prosecutors, law enforcement, and judges from across the nation. Throughout the course of this internship, I was also mentored by a UCI alum who worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Washington, D.C. I had the privilege of shadowing her at court.

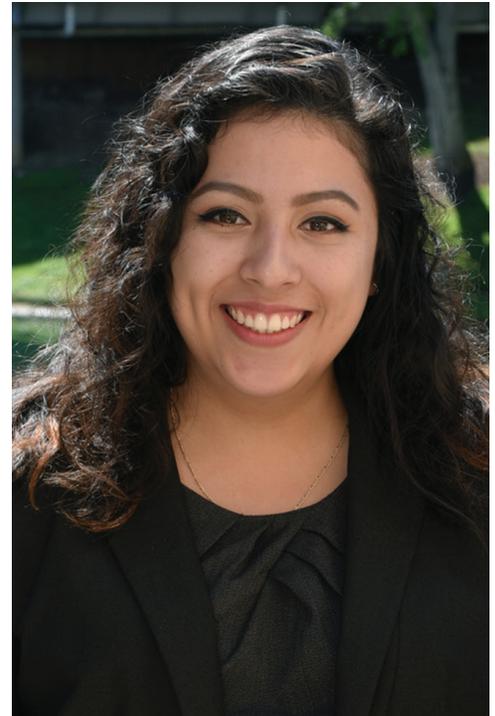
I was also a part of the Global Cities Urban Realities multi-city Study Abroad Program, and interned at the nonprofit Islington Law Centre. There I dealt with housing, debt, immigration, education, and welfare benefits cases and attended court hearings alongside the centre's solicitors. This was one of the best experiences, as my supervisors allowed me to sit in on hearings and shadow some of the solicitors.

### Biography

I am a low-income, first-generation college student from Los Angeles. I have been actively involved in the SAGE Scholars Program for three years and served as a SAGE ambassador. I am secretary and mentor for the Chi Alpha Epsilon Honor Society, a member of the Pre-Law Society, an office assistant for the School of Social Ecology Dean's Office, a student worker for Dining & Hospitality Services, and a resident advisor for Student Housing. This fall, I will be interning at a law firm in the Los Angeles area as a paralegal assistant, while taking courses towards a paralegal certificate from UCI to gain the practical skills needed for a career in law. I then want to earn an M.B.A with an emphasis in philanthropy concurrently with a law degree in hopes of becoming a practicing attorney in either family litigation or intellectual property.

### Thank you

Thank you for sponsoring the SAGE Scholars program. Without your continued support we would be limited in our access to certain programs that have benefited us in developing our skill set and transferable skills. The SAGE activities and courses are an integral part of our program and education, and have greatly impacted my growth into a more outspoken and brave young woman who is prepared to tackle the real world.



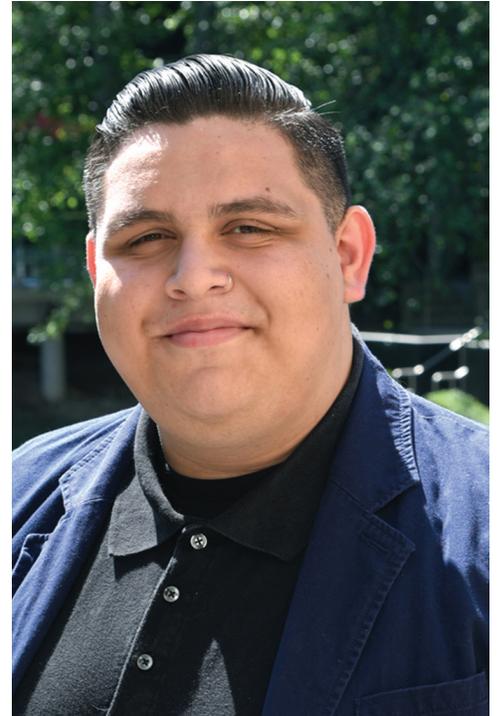
## Luis Chaidez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Education Sciences  
Minor, Sociology

### Biography

I am a first-generation Latino college graduate who majored Education Sciences and Sociology. While at UCI, I found a unique space to serve as a community leader in the field of education. I conducted research under the faculty supervision of Dr. Alexander Cho and Dr. Mimi Ito in the Connected Learning Lab at UCHRI and co-published a research article on connecting single-parent mothers/guardians to out of school educational opportunities for their children. I also conducted research under Dr. Jeanett Castellanos, associate dean, School of Social Sciences, and presented findings at the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Symposium. I also held an appointment as a research assistant for faculty in the School of Education. I served as a college advisor in South Los Angeles for UCI's Early Academic Outreach Program, and worked as a high school program assistant for the Upward Bound program at Cal State Long Beach. I am passionate about education policy and homeless youth, and plan to pursue a master's degree in Social Welfare concurrently with a Ph.D. in Education Policy and J.D. in Criminal Law. I have a strong passion to advocate for male youth in low-income communities, as well as single mothers. I have taken the initiative to serve as a community organizer helping youth transition into school post-incarceration and supporting immigration reform for the undocumented community.



### Thank you

Thank you for your support in maintaining a strong program that can help and lead participants to find clarity in their future endeavors. SAGE has extended so many opportunities for me to grow as an academic and professional through various initiatives provided by the staff. The programming, mentorship, and cohort have provided me the tools to pursue my educational dreams. I enjoyed the conversations with the staff, alumni, and peers. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to immerse myself in this community of scholars.

## Brianda Ruiz Chavez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Criminology, Law and Society  
B.A., Urban Studies

### Biography

I am a first-generation college student and have a wide-range of educational and professional interests. I am currently interested in the legal field and am looking for paralegal positions to gain insight into what legal fields to pursue. I am also interested in pursuing a doctoral program in Sociology or Criminology. My research interests are immigration, undocumented youth, police, and power control, as well as housing accessibility and zoning codes.

### Thank you

SAGE is able to provide classes and guidance thanks to your efforts. This program has a great mission and vision and without your contributions it would be difficult for the program to help so many students.



# Ivy Chen

## 2019 Degree

B.A., Business Administration

## Internship Experience

One of my most memorable internship experiences was with the SAGE sponsor ENO Brands. The internship was unique in a sense that it was rotational and so I was able to shadow and work on projects for different departments such as Accounting, Client Services, Marketing, and more. Through this, I discovered that Marketing is my cup of tea. At ENO Brands, I not only was able to acquire skills that I continue to talk about during interviews to this day, two years later, but I was able to be a part of a family who I'm thankful to turn to when I need advice or wish to visit.

Since then, I've interned at a salad company called Bonduelle Fresh Americas, Beyond Meat, and most recently, Danone. All of these companies have helped me understand the complicated world of food and how I can contribute to the company's greater missions. Aside from learning everything from market research to customer service to sales data, I've become more confident in the workplace thanks to these internships. By the time I graduated, I felt almost certain, for once, that I could contribute in whatever organization I would commit to later down the line.



## Biography

I am from Garden Grove, California and studied Business Administration while at UCI. I received the Taiwanese American Scholarship as well as a SAGE Scholarship while interning at ENO Brands, an amazing SAGE partner. I began at UCI as a Biological Sciences major but soon discovered that business was my calling. With the help of SAGE, I was able to transfer into the Paul Merage School of Business. Once there, I served as the chief operations officer with the Lambda Phi Nu Business Leadership Fraternity, volunteered as a consultant in 180 Degrees Consulting, and worked as a peer career advisor to assist students with their professional dreams. I am passionate about all things food, and aspire to work in a health-focused food company.

## Thank you

Without SAGE, I wouldn't have been able to graduate with my dream degree alongside other people who have also accomplished their goals! I've never been more proud to be a part of such an amazing community who lifts each other from the bottom up. In the beginning, my peers were just as confused as I was, but with the help of SAGE's mentorship, classes, and support, we all have made it somewhere. I remember last year when I attended the SAGE Luncheon, I heard that my peers accomplished the impossible by making it to medical school, graduate school, and even received fellowship offers. Who knew that I could do it too? I remember always turning to the SAGE advisers and my peers wondering how in the world would I be able to get from A to B but their encouragement helped keep my head held high. All in all, SAGE has been and still continues to be my biggest cheerleader as I reach for the "impossible" goals. And the program can continue to help cheer on a bigger group with the assistance of SAGE donors like yourself!

## Herschell Valenova Dayag

### 2019 Degree

B.A., Public Health Policy

### Internship Experience

I had the incredible opportunity to serve as an intern at the Patient Experience Internship at the UCI Medical Center. This internship opened my eyes to the many roles involved in the effective delivery of healthcare. I had the opportunity to round with a hospitalist team, which is composed of physician educators, residents, medical students, case managers, and nurses. It was fascinating to see them discuss the backgrounds of each patient and discuss their treatment plan. This experience showed me the significance of collaboration between healthcare professionals in the delivery of healthcare in a hospital setting. It also allowed me the opportunity to have direct communication with patients. This internship motivated me to continue my education so I can engage in a career in the field of healthcare.



### Biography

I have served as a student researcher for the UCI Medical Center Department of Neurology, and have been placed on the UCI Dean's Honor List annually. My previous research efforts resulted in being a first author and oral presenter of an abstract published in a national research journal at a national conference. In addition to research, I enhance physician-patient communication by serving as a patient experience intern at the UCI Medical Center. I was nominated for the 2019 UCI Dynamic Womxn Spotlight Award and won the 2019 UCI Engage Undergraduate Great Partnership Award. As an accomplished military child student, I have been invited to speak at military scholarship events and have been a nationally featured military child scholar.

### Thank you

I would like to thank you for all of the support provided to the SAGE Scholars. My experience with the program for the past two years has provided me with a strong foundation to continue to build my education and career. From guest speakers, mentorship graduate school planning, and resume writing, SAGE has provided resources for me to succeed in my future. The quarterly service projects have been an enjoyable learning experience. Engaging in these volunteer events has motivated me to pursue a career in giving back to my community.

# Ivette Diaz

## 2019 Degree

B.A., Psychology and Social Behavior

## Transfer Institution

Orange Coast College

## Biography

I am a non-traditional student from Santa Ana. I transferred from Orange Coast College with an Associate's Degree in Psychology. While at UCI, I was named to the Dean's Honors List, earning a cumulative GPA of 3.5. My internship as a Behavioral Therapist supported children with autism. I graduated from UCI with a bachelor of arts in Psychology and Social Behavior. After graduation, I will continue supporting children with autism as a behavioral therapist for California Psychcare.

## Thank you

As a transfer student, I felt really lost and out of place my first quarter. When I joined SAGE, I learned about the many resources that UCI has to offer, and this is something that I benefitted from. By being part of such an empowering program, I feel very confident in myself with my studies, and my professional life.

I really enjoyed the SAGE Scholars classes because of all the valuable information that was being discussed. I thought that the guest speakers' presentations were very beneficial and provided a lot of guidance and advice. I had the opportunity to meet incredible people who shared similar interests to myself while also expanding my network.

## Elsie Dominguez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Public Health Policy  
B.A., Political Science

### Internship Experience

My most memorable internship experience at UCI was as an advocate for University of California Global Health Institute-Advocacy Initiative. At the time, it was a pilot group and I was representing the University of California, Irvine among all UC campuses. We had no funding, but we were able to gather speakers to help train us on how to advocate for issues to a congressperson. We were able to build an initiative from the ground up by researching global health policies, executing various tasks, and networking with local congressmen, professors, and community members.



### Biography

I am a first-generation student, who graduated with degrees in Public Health Policy and Political Science. During my time at UCI, I worked on issues that promoted both peacebuilding and improving community health at the local level. I advocated with the University of California Global Health Institute-Advocacy Initiative to empower and represent local communities in advancing global health policies. I also served as the program coordinator for Students for Global Peacebuilding (SGP), where I carried out detailed programs to promote advocacy and action about peacebuilding initiatives on campus. Most recently, I worked in Development for both Alzheimer's Orange County and Global G.L.O.W. to help further their missions through actively fundraising and organizing community awareness events. After graduating from UCI, I plan to pursue graduate school.

### Thank you

Thank you so much for supporting the SAGE program. SAGE has given me many informative workshops regarding networking, professionalism, and career planning. As a first-generation college student, these workshops were the first time I was exposed to some of these topics and they have been very useful in helping me navigate the workforce. In addition, SAGE mentoring was helpful to me because my mentor gave me insight into their work-life experience post college. These insights has convinced me to pursue higher education and obtain a masters degree. Again, thank you for all of your support!

# Graciela Castrejon Fernandez

## 2019 Degrees

B.A., Political Science  
B.A., Criminology, Law, and Society

## Internship Experience

During my freshman year, I interned for a personal injury law firm. During my two years at the firm I worked alongside an attorney and got the opportunity to draft subpoenas, correspondence, and office memorandum regarding personal injury cases.

## Biography

I am a first-generation student from Santa Ana. During my time at UCI, I was part of Alpha Phi Omega and the Pre-law society. After working for a personal injury attorney for nearly three years, I plan to pursue a law degree. I also had the opportunity to learn about immigration law by volunteering with OneJustice. I served as a translator alongside attorneys who were serving domestic violence victims about their chances of receiving a U-Visa.

## Thank you

As a SAGE Scholar I would like to thank you for your dedication and sponsorship of this amazing program. The SAGE program has made a huge impact in my professional development. Coming from a low-income family, I unfortunately do not have a lot people around me that can help me achieve my professional and educational goals. Thankfully, the SAGE program has been able to fill in this gap and I would not have been able to accomplish these goals without the amazing people that lead SAGE.

The SAGE mentoring program was a key component in my professional development. My mentor was able to help with my personal statement and resume and I will always be eternally grateful for their feedback. Again, thank you for your support without your help students like me would not get these amazing opportunities.



## Aileen Guzman

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Public Health Policy  
B.A., Sociology

### Internship Experience

This year I interned at the American Heart Association. I enjoyed interning here because I learned about nonprofits and the way they function. I also learned about stroke and heart disease, which are leading killers in the United States. Most importantly, I gained an appreciation for the nonprofit sector because I now have a better idea of the hard work that goes into funding and health education.

### Biography

I am originally from Los Angeles and the first person in my family to attend college. During my time at UCI, I worked at the UCI medical center in the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department as an administrative assistant. As a third-year, I served as the fundraising director for the Latino Business Student Association. In addition, I received two scholarships: the Dr. Francisco Lara Scholarship and the Manuel N. Gomez scholarship. These scholarships are awarded to promising third-year students who have contributed to the community and excel in school.

### Thank you

Thank you for supporting the SAGE Scholars Program at UCI. During my two years in the program, I have flourished professionally and academically. The in-class presentations, with themes ranging from undergraduate research to dinner etiquette, have been eye-opening and invigorated my undergraduate experience. I have established meaningful relationships through this program and have gained friends, mentors, and professional networks. The most memorable event for me was Working Wardrobes, where we received professional outfits. This event not only boosted my self-confidence to tackle any interview, but also refreshed my knowledge on interviewing skills and body language.



# Yanin Carolina Henriquez

## 2019 Degree

B.A., Economics

## Internship Experience

I have had moments where I doubted myself and my capabilities, but in retrospect, I think that was what I needed. Starting my internship at ENO Brands, there were so many things that I needed to learn and I think that I doubted myself because I was finally getting out of my comfort zone. That is one of the biggest lessons I have taken from my internship.

## Transfer Institution

Long Beach City College, UCSB

## Biography

I am a first-generation college student from Long Beach, California. I transferred to UCI after a year at University of California, Santa Barbara followed by another year at Long Beach City College. My interests include economics with an emphasis on finance and banking, as well as accounting. Other interests I have are going to concerts and hanging out at the beach. I was lucky enough to attain a business development internship in Cypress.

## Thank you

I want to say thank you for every single moment that you have given to SAGE. I do not think I would be the same person if it weren't for SAGE. I learned more about job applications, salary negotiation, and graduate school. It has been a blessing to be shown all this valuable information and to be given all of this attention.



## Abigail Llanos Hernandez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Psychology and Social Behavior  
B.A., Criminology Law and Society

### Internship Experience

Through internships, I was able to develop and strengthen my leadership skills. I received great mentorship and professional support. I was also able to create unique projects and collaborate on company initiatives and programs, which gave me valuable experiences. In my internship at Cintas, I generated sales, streamlined training processes and created a sales contest that boosts overall company sales.

### Transfer Institution

Los Angeles City College

### Biography

I am a first-generation Latina student. I transferred to UCI from Los Angeles City College. Studying at UCI was a dream come true. At UCI, I was a Dean's Honor Roll student, and was actively involved in research, mentorship, leadership and community service. As an academic advisor, I advised more than 700 students and created academic and professional workshops for students. I received several scholarships while at UCI and as a SAGE scholar, I was able to secure an internship and job upon graduating.

### Thank you

Thank you to all of the SAGE sponsors. As a non-traditional student, you have made it possible for me to obtain not one, but two college degrees. SAGE does so much to transform the lives of so many high-achieving students like me who would not have these opportunities otherwise. This is all made possible because of your generosity. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am a mom, a wife, a student and now a working professional who was able to become the first person in her family to obtain a college degree. I will forever be full of gratitude for the impact your support has had for me and my family.



# Sara Lathrop

## 2019 Degree

B.A., History

## Internship Experience

As an intern for the Sustainability Project Commission in ASUCI, I learned how to be a part of a professional team. I learned how to organize events in various fields, at times making promotional posters and drafting a budget, other times thinking up creative activities and collaborating with different offices within ASUCI and beyond. I learned how to write grant proposals and draft policy. I also frequently attended larger ASUCI meetings, leadership trainings, communication workshops, and team-building retreats. This experience not only allowed me to make networking connections with other students, but was my first opportunity to hold myself accountable in a professional setting with regards to work output and relationship-building.



## Biography

I am from Temecula, California, and graduated with a history degree, *magna cum laude*. I've been active in both departmental and campus-wide organizations; I worked as an intern for the Sustainability Project Commission in ASUCI, as an intern for the Humanities Commons, and as a peer academic advisor for the School of Humanities. I've undertaken research as part of the Humanities Honors Program, completing a thesis focusing on prostitution in San Francisco after the Gold Rush. I am a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and the recipient of the Malcolm R. Stacey Memorial Scholarship and the McCulloch Memorial Scholarship. After graduating, I will take a gap year as a teaching assistant in Poitiers, France, and then I hope to earn a teaching credential and become a high school History teacher.

## Thank you

Thank you for funding and contributing to SAGE activities and programs, including its requisite courses, volunteer service events, and material donations. Thanks to your kindness, I have benefited from financial advice, career guidance, and assistance with interviews and applications. I owe a debt of gratitude, especially for finally being able to own a business outfit with which to go on interviews, as well as the opportunity to advance my career by taking a class this summer on teaching English abroad through the Division of Continuing Education — right in time before I become a teaching assistant in France this fall!

SAGE introduced me to many resources that I would have been lost without, including information on graduate school and funding, research opportunities, and scholarships. This has aided me in academic pursuits as well as professional ones. By connecting with peers both in my department and outside of it, I have been given a broader perspective of UCI and the community's resources. I now look to my future with optimism and confidence.

## Erika Montano

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Psychology and Social Behavior  
B.A., Education Sciences

### Internship Experience

Working at the Early Academic Outreach Program helped me realize I want to pursue a career in the Education field. I truly enjoy getting to help students and parents in achieving their educational goals.

### Biography

I am a first-generation student from Santa Ana, California. Throughout my four years at UCI, I was involved in many organizations and programs that helped shape my educational pathway, including the SAGE Scholars program. I've decided to pursue a career path in higher education because I am passionate about helping underserved students. I plan on applying to master's and doctoral programs in higher education.



### Thank you

Thank you to our corporate sponsors and alumni for helping SAGE Scholars reach our goals. Your constant motivation made us succeed.

# Omaira Noori

## 2019 Degrees

B.A., Business Economics  
B.A., Sociology

## Internship Experience

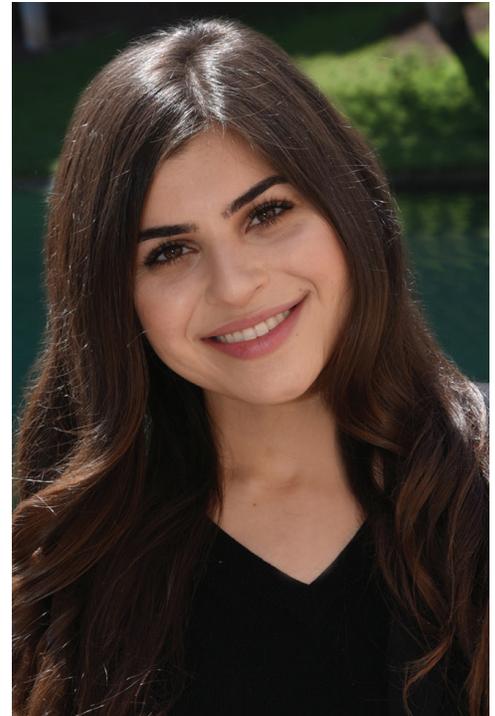
SAGE has been instrumental in preparing me for the working world. From my SAGE internship at Global G.L.O.W. to my SAGE classes and workshops and meaningful meetings with SAGE staff, SAGE has equipped me with the tools to succeed in the professional world outside of college.

## Biography

I am a first-generation college student, born and raised in Los Angeles. Throughout my time at UCI, my dream school, I interned with Global G.L.O.W., received a SAGE internship, and was awarded the Boukai Family Scholarship. During my senior year, I was initiated as a Phi Beta Kappa member.

## Thank you

Thank you for all of your support to the SAGE program. Because of your generosity, many students like myself were equipped with pivotal instruments to succeed in reaching our goals. From our mentoring programs to our SAGE internships, SAGE has given each of its scholars real-time training and practice for the real world. It is because of generous donors like yourself that we were able to employ these tools to better equip ourselves for our futures. So thank you again!



## Stephanie Palmer

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Psychology  
Minor, Education Sciences

### Internship Experience

During my two-year internship at Human Options — an emergency shelter for individuals and families fleeing relationship violence — I experienced immense growth. Through this internship I learned a great deal about my passion to work with members of my community to further the awareness and education of relationship violence and self-empowerment to children and adults.

### Transfer Institution

Fullerton College

### Biography

I am a transfer student from Fullerton College. I began psychological research at Fullerton College and was one of the first six students to present psychosocial research at the National Association of Psychological Science Conference in 2015, representing Fullerton College for the first time in 100 years. Upon acceptance into UCI, I began working with Dr. Kristin Monroe as a Francisco Ayala Scholar, transcribing various interviews of Holocaust survivors on their experiences of resiliency and survival after extreme violence and loss. I then furthered my research passion at UCI as a study coordinator in Dr. Sarah Pressman's multi-million dollar Stress, Emotion and Energy (SEE) Study, examining the associations between positive emotions, stress and physical health outcomes. I want to use this research knowledge to educate families about the association between our emotions and stress and the impact this may have on our long-term health.

### Thank you

Thank you for your kindness and generosity in my award as a SAGE Scholar. Through your efforts I have learned how to develop into a well-rounded, knowledgeable, and confident scholar who is able to enter the workforce with guidance and life-long support. The amount of enjoyment I have for SAGE is hard to state in words, as I am filled with utmost gratitude, love, and admiration for the SAGE Staff and Scholars I have met along the way. I truly believe that I have a family in SAGE forever, and I am so appreciative for this opportunity.



# Flor Parra

## 2019 Degree

B.A., Political Science

## Internship Experience

My most memorable internship so far was at Learning Rights Law Center; I loved the feeling of helping students with a background like mine.

## Transfer Institution

Santa Monica College

## Biography

I was born in South Central Los Angeles and transferred from Santa Monica College. During my time at UCI, I volunteered at Esperanza Immigrant Rights, where I served as a translator for attorneys and clients looking to gain residency. I also interned at the Learning Rights Law Center, assisting parents in need of legal information regarding their child's education, and at Higbee & Associates, working in their copyright department. This fall, I will be working at an immigration law firm in downtown Los Angeles, and I plan on going to law school within the next two years.

## Thank you

Thank you so much for your help. Without programs like SAGE, people like me wouldn't have as many opportunities as we need to succeed after graduation. I truly believe SAGE is the reason I had a positive experience at UCI.



## Rakiswende Sakande

### 2019 Degree

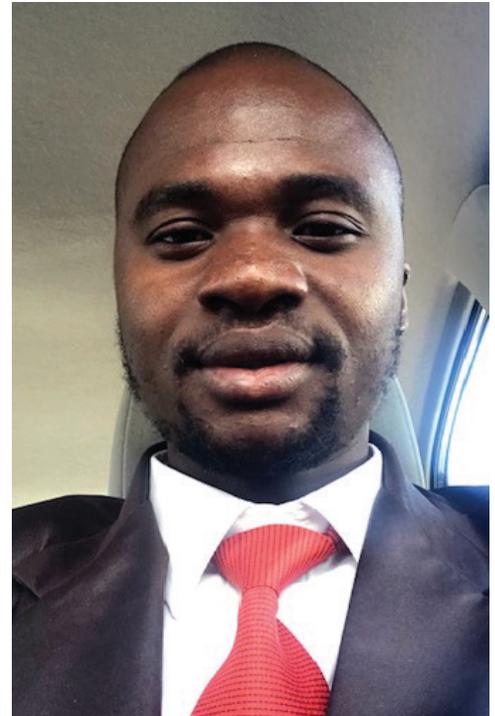
B.S., Aerospace Engineering

### Transfer Institution

City College of San Francisco

### Biography

I am originally from Burkina Faso, where I also grew up, and I transferred from City College of San Francisco. There I received my A.S. degrees in Physics, Math and Engineering. I am a first-generation student, and I recently received the Houts Family Scholarship.



### Thank you

It is with a great pleasure that I can say thank you for your inestimable support. Through your support we have learned a lot about finances, credits, ways to talk with recruiters, and tips on job applications. The SAGE Scholars program is a family for most of us, and we receive emotional, financial, and many other supports. The mentorship program allowed me to learn how to overcome the challenges of the transition between school and the work force; it was a great experience.

Again, thank you for your support!

# Jessica Santiago

## 2019 Degrees

B.A., Political Science  
B.A., Criminology

## Internship Experience

My externship with the Honorable Judge Thomas Delaney helped open doors for me. He introduced me to many lawyers and judges, all who shared their different journeys toward the legal field and their inspiration to pursue a legal career. This helped me affirm my decision to pursue law school and work towards becoming an immigration lawyer.

## Biography

I am a first-generation college student from Orange, California. During my time at UC Irvine, I was awarded the Dr. John R. Miltner Scholarship, The Chancellor's Award of Distinction, the Social Sciences Order of Merit, and was inducted to the Chi Alpha Epsilon, Pi Sigma Alpha, and Phi Beta Kappa honor societies. One of my most treasured involvements was participating in UCI Law's Saturday Academy of Law for three years as a teaching assistant, lead teaching assistant, and program coordinator. After graduation, I will be attending UCI's Law School, realizing my goal of becoming an immigration lawyer. After, I hope to open my own firm in Orange County.

## Thank you

Thank you for sponsoring a safe haven for first-generation students like myself to comfortably ask questions, develop professionally, and venture into higher education. SAGE provided me with a family — an overwhelming support system that encouraged me to apply to fellowships and scholarships that I would not have felt confident enough to do on my own. SAGE was always there to give me the push I needed to reach my goals. Thank you for sponsoring SAGE to connect me with individuals who share my drive and aspire to break barriers.



## Iman Jamilatou Sow

### 2019 Degree

B.A., International Studies

### Internship Experience

My summer internship at the U.S. Department of State allowed me to learn so much more about the government sector in Mauritania, Africa. Working around diplomats, I got the opportunity to attend press briefings where the American Ambassador was present, and take notes based on events that were happening. In addition, I conducted research on the country commercial guide, and conducted several human rights presentations for the local youth, where many dialogue conversations took place. It was a great opportunity for me to gain experience in her field of interest.



### Transfer Institution

California State University, Monterey Bay

### Biography

I transferred from California State University, Monterey Bay. I am a Senegalese/American and grew up in four different countries in West Africa, attending American/International Schools. The exposure I've had to multiculturalism ignited a passion in me to pursue a bachelor's degree in International Studies. I am fluent in both French and English, and I plan to attend law school to focus on international human rights.

### Thank you

Thank you for supporting SAGE, as I believe I was provided with so many resources that have shaped me into the woman I am today. The classes and the support system SAGE provides has reassured me that success will occur through hardwork and dedication. I will continue to utilize the skills I have learned throughout my time in SAGE to be able to make a difference in the world. Thank you.

# Denise Tadillo

## 2019 Degree

B.S., Civil Engineering

## Internship Experience

My internship experience has been great. I learned about myself and how to be a professional through internship opportunities.

## Transfer Institution

Ventura College

## Biography

I am a first-generation graduate with a degree in Civil Engineering. I transferred from Ventura College in 2016. At first, I was wondering how I would be able to pay for college; however, UCI provided me with many opportunities for financial help and scholarships. I received the Southern California Edison Scholarship for transfer students, which was able to cover most of my first-year tuition. While at UCI, I landed an internship with OCTA. A year later, I interned with Fuscoe Engineering and received a full-time job offer by the time I graduated.

## Thank you

I want to say thank you for sponsoring a great program like SAGE. Your help has allowed students to be able to attend workshops to hone their professional skills. It has also provided a space where there is room and opportunity for growth. The exercises SAGE introduced to us helped me acknowledge my strengths and my weaknesses. Over the three years in SAGE, I have learned so much about myself. Thank you for providing me with that opportunity.



## Itzel Garcia Vasquez

### 2019 Degrees

B.A., Psychology  
Minor, Biology

### Internship Experience

Interning with Latino Health Access (LHA) was such an amazing experience. Serving as an intern further strengthened my desire to pursue a master's degree in physician assistant studies. By working at LHA, I realized that there are so many different ways in which to help the community.

### Biography

I was born in Oaxaca, Mexico and raised in Santa Ana, California. Over the course of my undergraduate career, I've been involved in on- and off-campus opportunities. Since my freshman year, I've worked for the Early Academic Outreach Program as a student coordinator and data assistant. My highlights this past year were being a coordinator for the Diversity in Medicine Program and a volunteer for the Peer Health Educators here at UCI.



### Thank you

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank you for all your support. SAGE would not be possible without you. Because of your generosity, SAGE has impacted many lives, including mine. Through the SAGE courses, I was able to receive valuable information from different guest presenters. From workshops on negotiating a salary to financial literacy, I have been able to grow personally and as a rising professional. SAGE also provided me with free books that helped me understand myself and prepare for my future. All these small components make a difference. I really enjoyed being a part of the SAGE family — the program also gave me amazing mentors, friends, and colleagues. Thank you again for your contribution to SAGE!

# Carolynne Villaescusa

## 2019 Degrees

B.A., Education Sciences  
B.A., Social Policy and Public Service

## Internship Experience

My internship experience allowed me to grow through hands-on involvement and real world application of what I have been taught throughout my college career. My first internship was with Child Creativity Lab in Santa Ana. The nonprofit organization was a creative space where students learned about the value of upcycling and the impact of their imagination. At the facility, children were challenged to complete STEM based activities by repurposing items deemed as trash. This internship gave me the confidence to believe in the positive impact I can and will make on future generations. My position as education programs intern allowed me to develop the alignment between their STEM based activities and the Next Generation Science Standards. I also facilitated workshops for K-8 students at the facility and various elementary schools across Orange County.



My second Internship experience was as a student researcher with KidWorks in Santa Ana. My position revolved around the program's University Starts Now program for grades K-6. As an intern, I created a caring and nurturing environment for children to understand their work, supported staff with program activities, lessons, and behavior management throughout the facility, as well as gathered data on the 6th grade class through observational methods to study the organization's effects on the children's well-being. Throughout this experience, I was given access to be part of an actual classroom which ultimately helped me identify my passion for teaching elementary school.

## Biography

I am a first-generation college graduate. Growing up in the small bordertown of Calexico, I developed a strong passion in community advocacy for youth through education. Throughout my undergraduate career, I've had the privilege of working with education-based nonprofits, including the Child Creativity Lab and KidWorks. Through their work, I've become further inspired to continue on a path to helping communities in need through educational empowerment. As a SAGE Scholar, the Ueberroth Family Foundation awarded me the opportunity to continue my growth with KidWorks through a yearlong paid internship and scholarship to pursue my studies.

## Thank you

Thank you for partnering with the SAGE program at UCI. SAGE truly taught me real-world skills that have helped me become the person I am today. From cover letters to life insurance, SAGE offers eye-opening information to its students to help bridge the gap between college and adulthood. Their guidance throughout my undergraduate experience has been a great motivator, and my time at KidWorks was an amazing experience. Through my position, I was able to work in the fastpaced environment of a classroom and develop behavior management skills that I will utilize in the future. Aside from the position itself, I am eternally grateful for the scholarship. I utilized the funds to buy materials for class, transportation to KidWorks, and to cover my housing fees. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to finish my college career at UCI and the newfound knowledge! To SAGE alumni - Thank you so much for giving back to the program. You give current SAGE scholars the hope that we could also reach your level of professionalism. Your wisdom and mentoring helped make what the program is today.

## Francisco Javier Villegas

### 2019 Degree

B.S., Mechanical Engineering

### Internship Experience

This past fall, I acquired an internship at Air Industry Company, a partner of Precision Castparts Corp. As an intern, I learned valuable technical and communication skills, and the internship helped me understand that industry is more than what is learned in class. Under the guidance of my supervisor, manager, and coworkers, the internship helped me grow as a manufacturing engineer, and I can confidently say that I am prepared to work at The Boeing Company.

### Biography

I am a first-generation student from South Gate, California. As an undergraduate, I have been involved with organizations such as the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, Anteater Racing, DECADE PLUS, and Powerlifting Club. I have also had the opportunity to conduct research in the Laser, Flame, and Aerosol Laboratory and the Nano Thermal Energy Research Laboratory; and work at Air Industry Company as an engineering intern, where I assisted with the manufacturing of aerospace fasteners. Throughout my time in college, I have understood the impact that STEM has had on low-income communities and the value of giving back to my community and others. After graduation, I plan to join The Boeing Company as a full-time engineer. Additionally, I will continue to participate in the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, where I will empower first-generation college students and low-income communities.

### Thank you

Thank you for investing your time and efforts toward SAGE. Coming from a limited-resource community and being a first-generation student, it was challenging to go through college. For the past two years, however, SAGE provided the foundation I needed to succeed and accomplish my goals. The numerous guest speakers at every SAGE class always made the class engaging, and I was always interested in learning something new. SAGE's ability to introduce outside workshops, like Working Wardrobes, was especially helpful as it provided me with professional clothing, informed me of interviewing etiquette, and the importance of body language. I am truly thankful for all SAGE has done for me. I hope that one day I can give back to SAGE as a leader in my discipline.



# Fall Service Learning Project

SAGE Scholars volunteered at the Maywood Education Fair. Twenty five Scholars lent their support to the community resource fair and its activities and workshops, which fostered higher education awareness and promoted a college-going culture in low-income communities.



## Winter Service Learning Project

SAGE students worked closely with the director of the Irvine Ranch to restore the health of the trees, remove burnt plant material, spread mulch, and work in the orchard. More than 40 students supported the efforts in restoring the grove to transform it into a thriving Food Forest, while protecting the ecosystem's health and maximizing biodiversity.



## Spring Service Learning Project

SAGE Scholars volunteered with two nonprofit organizations — Higher Ground and Muzeo. Approximately 30 Scholars facilitated artistic activities and ice breakers for students and parents that attended the Children’s Festival at Pearson’s Park.



## Working Wardrobes

SAGE Alumni donated almost \$6,000 to fund a partnership with Working Wardrobes. Sixty students received complimentary professional outfits upon the completion of two career-readiness workshops on February 23 and March 1, 2019, which focused on image and body language.



## SAGE Cooking Lessons

The SAGE Ambassadors facilitated a workshop on vegetarian cooking in collaboration with the Global Sustainability Resource Center at UCI. The students learned how to make plant-based meals. Participants received a complimentary cookbook upon completion of the workshop.



## SAGE Loves You

SAGE Scholars made thank you cards for their mentors, family and friends who supported their goals and achievements.



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