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# UC Irvine School of Education champions academic equity and transformation

Fostering future educators through research-practice partnerships and a commitment to social justice

In an ever-evolving educational landscape, the University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine) School of Education has emerged as a transformative force, dedicated to preparing the next generation of educators and innovators. With a bold commitment to equity, groundbreaking research and dynamic partnerships, the School of Education has secured its place among the most respected institutions in the field, ranking No. 8 among public schools of education in 2024 (and No. 17 overall) by *U.S. News & World Report*.

“This remarkable ascent in the rankings over just 10 short years reflects the collective efforts of our faculty, staff and students, united by a shared vision to reshape education and equip students for success in a globalized, data-centered and technologically driven world,” says Dr. Frances Contreras, dean and professor at UC Irvine School of Education. “We continue to distinguish ourselves by prioritizing community impact, with an unwavering commitment to equity, social justice, cutting-edge research and innovative partnerships.”



Proudly offering a robust curriculum spanning undergraduate to doctoral studies, UC Irvine School of Education serves as an academic home for educators at all career stages in California and beyond. Originally focused on credentialing high-quality and justice-centered teachers, the School of Education now

prepares and serves future teachers through programs like Master of Arts in Teaching, Cal-Teach and bilingual certificates in Spanish and Asian Languages, addressing the evolving needs of pedagogy from early learning to adulthood.

## Bridging Research and Practice

Central to the School of Education’s success is its focus on research that addresses critical issues in education. With over \$142 million in active grant funding in 2024 and a total tenure-track faculty of 37, the school stands at the forefront of educational research and innovation.

“This level of funding is an extraordinary achievement for our age and size,” notes Dean Contreras. “It amplifies our ability to tackle the most urgent educational needs and ensures that our research has a tangible, meaningful impact. By empowering the next generation of educators, we are investing in a future that is more equitable, just and informed.”

The faculty at the School of Education leads cutting-edge studies that not only advance theory but also deliver real-world solutions to pressing challenges, from classroom equity to the integration of technology and AI in teaching. With over 16 active grants related to AI and education, the school is leading in this space across the P-20+ education continuum.

Dean Contreras further emphasizes that research is only as valuable as its application: “The most effective research can be turned into curriculum and applied in real-world settings. This guiding principle drives our efforts to address education’s most pressing challenges, from improving equity in classrooms to integrating new technologies into learning environments.”

## Innovative Partnerships: A Catalyst for Change

At the heart of UC Irvine School of Education’s approach is its dedication to reimagining education through partnerships. Notable collaborations with Anaheim Union High School District and Santa Ana Unified School District led to the school’s first university-assisted partnership with James Monroe Elementary School in Santa Ana. This innovative facility will integrate research directly into a K-5 dual immersion school, emphasizing language and STEM. This partnership with Monroe Elementary builds on a two-decade-long collaboration with UC Irvine’s Center for Educational Partnerships, further strengthening the university-district relationship. The School of Education aims to co-design innovation, inform pedagogy and work with practitioners to improve student outcomes.

Both partnerships are part of the larger Orange County Educational Advancement Network (OCEAN), a coalition of scholars advancing education through collaborative research. These efforts reflect the school’s mission to serve the region by applying research to drive innovation and transformation. Through collaboration with faculty, staff, students and community partners, the school fosters change in today’s world while shaping tomorrow’s leaders.

## A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, UC Irvine School of Education remains steadfast in its mission to address the challenges of the 21st century. Through pioneering research, robust community engagement and innovative programs, the school is poised to continue leading the charge in educational transformation.

“For our students, alumni, partners and the communities we impact, the message is clear: Investing in education today is investing in the future,” says Dean Contreras. “Our vision is firmly rooted in a commitment to academic excellence and social responsibility, ensuring that the school remains a leader in educational transformation for years to come.”

**UC Irvine**  
School of Education

**Nationally Top-ranked School**

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