

ANTLEADER OF THE YEAR



ARIELLE MEDINA

Arielle Medina (She/Her/Hers) is a fourth year Biological Sciences major with a Philosophy minor from Lake Elsinore. She enjoys the piano, video games, board games, baking/cooking, drawing, and collecting plushies! Her favorite animals are penguins, her favorite color is teal, and her favorite quote is Piglet: "How do you spell love?" Pooh: "You don't spell it, you feel it." Her involvements include:

- Bio Sci EASE Program (2017-2018)
- Active Member in Red Cross Club (RCC) and the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) (2017-2018)
- Mentee in the SPOP Mentorship Program (Fall 2017-Winter 2018)
- Celebrate UCI Ambassador (Spring 2018, Spring 2019)
- Co-Internal Affairs Chair for RCC (2018-2019)
- Publicity Chair for AMSA (2018-2019)
- Volunteer for Campus Organizations & Volunteer Programs (COVP) (Winter 2019-Spring 2019)
- SPOP Staffer (Winter 2019-Summer 2019)
- CONNECT@UCI Mentor (Fall 2019)
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- Peer Advisor for COVP (2019-2020)
- Vice-President for AMSA (2020-2021)
- Activities Coordinator for COVP (2020-2021)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

The most fulfilling experience I have had in a leadership role was definitely being a SPOP Staffer in the Summer of 2019 (a.k.a. Riptide Year). I have always wanted to be a SPOP Staffer ever since my own SPOP back in 2017 (s/o to SPOP 9 Ondas)! SPOP 9 is one of my favorite memories at UCI because my hall and staffers were amazing, and I am glad I was able to give back to the program that has positively impacted my UCI experience. Through staffing I had the opportunity to welcome new students and their families to UCI and help create a more comfortable and successful transition to campus life. It was incredibly rewarding connecting with students, answering their questions, sharing resources and advice, and helping them navigate through aspects of college. I hope to have positively impacted students just as I was when I was experiencing my SPOP.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

The accomplishment I am most proud of is being accepted to UCI! I love being an Anteater everyday, and UCI was my top choice for college so I was really excited I got in. It truly did feel like all my hard work in High School paid off, and I have been loving my time here at UCI ever since!

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

This is a hard question because I can't pinpoint one exact person! There are so many people at UCI who I admire and have greatly impacted me that I'd love to highlight. A huge shoutout to my EASE Peer Coach, my Ondas SPOP 9 Staffers, my SPOP Mentors and parents, the COVP and CSL Pro-Staff, and my COVP Volunteer Coordinator! I really would not be where I am now without all the love, support, and guidance I have received over these past years at UCI, and I hope to be able to reflect these to everyone I meet and connect with.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

Whenever I experience failure, I always talk it out with my friends. I am extremely grateful to have such amazing friends and communities in my life who love and support me even through the most challenging times. My friends always know how to cheer me up whenever I feel down and I can't thank them enough. In the end though, I always remind myself that every failure provides an opportunity to self-reflect where I can learn and grow from the experience.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

I would tell my first-year self to really recognize my potential to achieve greatness and to also not stress over every mistake and short-coming that happens.



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Sarah Alkhatib is a first year MPH Candidate, and was a Public Health major with an emphasis in Epidemiology as an undergraduate at UCI from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Sarah's hobbies include travel, cooking/baking, basketball, learning new languages, photography, and going to the beach! Her favorite quote is "The reason most people fail instead of succeed they trade what they want most for what they want at the moment." Sarah's involvements include:

Undergraduate:

- Peers Under Biological Sciences - Peer Mentor (2019-2020)
- University Studies 1 - Discussion Leader (2019-2020)
- ASUCI - Student Services Chief of Staff (2019-2020)
- ASUCI - Student Services, Campus Spirit Commissioner (2018-2019)
- ASUCI - Student Services, Campus Outreach Intern (2017-2018)
- Biology Education Research Lab - UROP Fellow (2018-2020)
- Office of Undergraduate Admissions - Student Assistant & International Ambassador (2017-2020)
- Biology 2A - Teaching Assistant (2018)
- Public Health Association - Club Member (2017-2020)
- Bio Sci EASE Program (2017-2017)

Graduate:

- AGS - Chief of Staff (2020)
- Student Fee Advisory Committee - Vice Chair (2020)
- Public Health 1 - Class Reader (2020)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

The most fulfilling experience I had was being Chief of Staff of ASUCI during my undergraduate senior year. This involvement in student government provided me with the foundation to further network and become more involved in and proud of my campus. I worked with some of the best people I know, made great friends, and achieved memorable accomplishments such as hosting campus-wide events like APAD, Homecoming Week, and Summerlands. It was extremely rewarding seeing all our ideas and hard work come to life!

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am most proud of continuing my studies at UCI, and being accepted into their MPH program. I am passionate about research, public health, and academia, just as much as I am proud to be an Anteater! I am ecstatic to be back and looking forward to making more memories, friends, and positive impacts on campus and with my studies.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

I continuously look up to all those who have believed in me and given me the opportunities I am fortunate to have been part of. Notably, I am thankful for the guidance and mentorship of my ASUCI commissioner and VP Dilraj Toor, AGS President and SFAC Chair Conner Strobel, Dr. Pavan Kadandale, Pimjai Santaiwat, and Bianca Angeles. Additionally, all my friends who I met at UCI continue to inspire me with their dedication and ambition - I couldn't have been where I am without them!

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

During my toughest times, I always resort to my faith and my family. When faced with failure, I try to keep a positive mindset, learn from my mistakes, and adjust accordingly. Although it can get really hard sometimes, the resilience of my parents and brothers reminds me to keep going because with everything I do, I hope to make them proud.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

I would tell my shy freshman self to not be afraid to dip my toes in any and everything! I wish I had joined all my involvements earlier so I could have more time in them and meet even more amazing people at UCI. I would be cautious to not spread myself too thin, but also be committed to the involvements I feel most match my passions and interests.



Bethany Urbano is fifth year Political Sciences and Education Sciences double major from Santa Ana, CA. Bethany's hobbies include cooking, board games, photography, and hiking!

Bethany's favorite quote is "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what your can rise from, how you can still come out of it." Bethany's involvements at

UCI include:

- UCI Sustainability Center: Earth Representative (2016-2017)
- Summer Academic Enrichment Program (2018)
- Phi Alpha Delta - Pre Law Fraternity (2018-2020)
- UCI National Society of Leadership and Success (2018-2020)
- UCI International Center: English Conversation Partner (2018-2019)
- Science of Learning Lab: Research Assistant (2019-2020)
- University Studies 1 - Discussion Leader (2019-2020)
- School of Social Sciences - UROP Fellow (2019-2020)
- Undergraduate Researcher for School of Social Sciences Honors Program (2019-2020)
- School of Social Sciences: Global Connect Teaching Intern (2019-2020)
- School of Education Peer Academic Advisor (2019-2020)
- ED 126 Ethics & Education - Course Assistant (2020)
- UCI SPOP Staffer: Ember Year (2020)
- UCI Study Abroad Center: Generation Study Abroad Ambassador (2020)
- UCI Barnes & Nobel Scholarship Cohort - Literacy Project (2020)
- SS 193 A-C: Teaching Assistant (2020)
- Middle Earth Resident Advisor (2020)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

One of the most fulfilling experiences I've had at UCI is being a Middle Earth Resident Advisor. Throughout my first-year of college I heavily relied on my RA's AntEater advice and first-generation wisdom to help me navigate my new unfamiliar environment. The genuine connection and encouragement I received from my RA lead me to study abroad in Japan, double major, and get involved with on campus organization. In a similar way, these last few months I have had the opportunity to work towards building an inclusive and supportive community for my first-year residents. By fostering authentic relationships with each one of them, I have been able to share insightful advice, provide campus resources, and help them navigate this new virtual/unfamiliar college environment. The most rewarding part of this experience, amongst the pandemic, has been the extra steps I've taken to ensure residents feel supported inside and outside their virtual classroom and connected to others at their home away from home. I am beyond grateful to follow my RA's steps and hope to continue to positively impact and support my residents amidst the online and socially distanced environment.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

One of my most meaningful awards has been receiving the Barnes & Noble Literacy Scholarship, where I initiated and am currently leading the creation of a community library for a rural town in Michoacan, Mexico. Ensuring that books are available and accessible to any child at any time of the year is the first step in decreasing the level of poverty found in undereducated communities. This would empower students to acquire reading, writing, and numeracy skills, which can serve as the foundation to help them address many of the other issues that keep low-income communities vulnerable. My ability to effectively communicate, create a strategic plan, and problem solve has allowed for this multifaceted project to come to fruition. Without the support of my advisors and campus community, generational poverty and illiteracy would continue to be preeminent in my mother's hometown.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

My role model at UCI is my mentor, Dr. Jeanett Castellanos, who helped me cultivate an ambitious work-ethic and mindset. There are no words to describe how much she has positively impacted my academic pursuits and acted as a catalyst for my career in public policy. She has truly carved the pathway for many students, including myself, to pursue higher education. I hope to be able to follow in her footsteps and be a great role model and mentor. Additionally, all my friends, first-generation classmates and leaders on-campus who I have had the opportunity to meet continue to inspire me with their commitment to our campus community and dedication to be agents of change.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

During my most challenging times, I have relied on my faith and familial support. First and foremost, my mother has always served as my inspiration and motivation for anything that I do. She is the embodiment of resilience and her unconditional support has guided me throughout my most difficult times. When faced with failure, I do my best to remain optimistic and remind myself that when one door closes another door opens. By learning from one's mistakes and continuously adapting I believe we as individuals place ourselves in the state of mind that allows for an endless amount of opportunities to flow into our lives.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

The advice I would give my first-year self is to unapologetically prioritize my well-being. To do my best to remember that my habits, mindsets, and routines are building blocks for my mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. To welcome with enthusiasm the concept of moderation and actively engage in a lifestyle that allows me to pursue my academic ambitions without sacrificing the little things in life.



Lauren Seberos is a fourth year English major with minors in Asian American Studies and Creative Writing from Los Angeles, CA. Lauren's hobbies include anime, manga, drawing, and writing

- ZotCon at UCI: Performance Coordinator Board Member (2018-2019)
- UCI International Center: English Conversation Partner (2018)
- UCI Illuminations (2018-2019)
- Hermanas Unidas (2019-2021)
- Video Game Development Club at UCI: Game Writer (2020-2021)
- Japanese Student Association (2020-2021)
- Her Campus at UC Irvine: Chapter Writer (2020-2021)
- Her Campus at UC Irvine: Chapter Editor (2021)
- The Patient Project: Patience and Pandemic Creative Journal: Published Poet (2020-2021)
- The Scribe at UCI: UCI Undergraduate Medical Humanities Publication: Selected Poet (2021)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

The most fulfilling experience I have had in a leadership role would definitely be my performance coordinator board position for ZotCon at UCI. As someone who is very passionate about Japanese culture and media, I really wanted to help create an event and space that many people could enjoy to form new common connections. I know many student on campus have enjoyed anime and other hobbies related to Japanese culture which inspired me to run for this position. I really loved to see how the community reacted positively to the first anime convention on campus which I was excited to help put on with my board team. I think this position has taught me a lot not about not only leadership, but also has allowed me to personally grow as a student overall on campus. I was able to use my interests and skills to give back to the UCI community which was extremely humbling to see since this organization at the time was brand new.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am proud of having my poem selected for The Patient Project's creative journal Patience and Pandemic because it showcases a voice that normally people wouldn't get to see. I got to delve deeply into how the pandemic has affected me a whole and was able to have a creative outlet to express myself a writer. I am glad other people were able to take away my experience as something important and impactful. As a writer, I want to continue inspiring others with my work in the future.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

My role model at UCI would definitely be my previous English professor Dr. Julia Lupton. She was the very first professor I had for an English course and taught Shakespeare. I was inspired by her enthusiasm for the subject she was teaching and she encouraged me to get involved with the UCI Illuminations program since I had an interest in the arts. Through that program, I was able to meet many amazing writers, artists, and other talented people that I wouldn't have otherwise had an opportunity to meet. She really allowed me to explore what my true passions in life and helped me become the student I am today.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

Whenever I have dealt with failure, I often tell myself "Keep moving forward." I often find myself facing several obstacles at the same time, but if I have the dedication to continue moving forward within my life then I will be able to see it through. I know that if I finish a difficult goal all the way to the end, I know the rewards will be worth it.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

I would tell my first year self that life is not always a straight path and it's alright if you are uncertain about your calling in life. There is no right or wrong direction you can go in as long as you are happy with yourself at the end of the day. I would also mention how if people can't see you for who you truly are, then they aren't worth your time. Live life with the people who care about you the most and enjoy the pleasures you have around you. Try new things and take time for yourself when you need it.

A graphic titled "ANTLEADER SPOTLIGHT" featuring a photo of Luis Henriquez, a young man in a dark suit and purple tie, standing on a path at night with string lights and tropical plants. The name "LUIS HENRIQUEZ" is written in large white letters below the photo, and "FEBRUARY 2021" is written in smaller white letters to the right. A star-shaped logo for the "CENTER FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP" is located in the bottom left corner of the graphic.

ANTLEADER SPOTLIGHT



LUIS HENRIQUEZ

FEBRUARY 2021



Luis Henriquez is a third year chemical engineering major from Los Angeles, CA. Luis's hobbies include traveling, hiking, and going to the beach. Luis's involvements include:

- Campus Village Student Housing Fellow (2019-2020)
- Campus Village Student Delegate (2019-2020)
- Latinx Resource Center Fellow (2020-2021)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

One of the most fulfilling experiences I have had has been being able to support my community by providing access and information to different resources that are available on campus. As a first-generation student, I missed many growth opportunities. Thus, I set the goal of providing students with access to a variety of resources I wished I was aware of during my previous academic years. Connecting with many students has been rewarding as they better prepare for their future careers. Being part of their academic journey is amazing as many students often relate and build community is the ultimate goal of self-improving.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am proud of being in a great institution where I have the opportunity of achieving my goals and following my passion.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

As funny as this may sound, I do not have a single role model at UCI. Instead, I would say that every professor and professional staff that I have had the honor of meeting has something unique to teach. Each person has portrayed dedication in their respective areas of work, determination in the achievement of their goals, and adaptability as we experience the current pandemic. Everyone has made my academic journey at UCI unique and inspire me to continue and pursue my passion.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

It is not far from the truth that failures do occur, sometimes more frequently than we would like, but whenever they have happened, I leaned on my faith and family for support. Keeping a positive attitude amidst difficult times proved burdensome, but I always thought about my family and my desire to make them proud which ultimately led me to overcome the problem at hand.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

I would strongly encourage my younger self to get involved around campus as each person working at UCI is a unique role model capable of sharing knowledge required to succeed in life.



William McKay is fourth year Political Science and Sociology major who just graduated in Winter 2021 from Long Beach, CA. William's hobbies include basketball, camping, hiking, Pokemon cards, and watching Netflix. William's involvements at UCI include:

- Philanthropy and Alumni Chair of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity (2019)
- Brotherhood and Ritual Chair of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity (2020)
- FRESH Basic Needs Hub Can Drive (Fall 2020)
- UCI School of Social Sciences Chinese Lunar New Year Festival (2018-2020)
- Vice President of Scholarship of the Interfraternity Council Executive Board (2019)
- President of the Interfraternity Council Executive Board (2020)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

Being the President of the Interfraternity Council during a pandemic was stressful, yet extremely fulfilling. Our executive board worked hard to make sure that recruitment activities were adapted to an online format while at the same time ensuring that member chapters were not holding events that would spread COVID-19. In a culture that is so dependent on social gatherings, we had to completely rewrite the script and find ways to still engage members and create a supportive atmosphere.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

The accomplishment I am most proud of would be hosting Kappa Sigma's weeklong philanthropy in 2019 which raised \$7,500 for Vietnam veteran Robert Lewis. He broke his hip from a fall he took while homeless so we raised enough money for him to stay in an apartment until the government could give him assisted living.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

Ekpeju Ed E-Nunu is my role model at UCI. While I was serving as the president of the Interfraternity Council, he was our organization's advisor. I look up to him because he approaches every situation with kindness, compassion, and understanding first and foremost. He is a leader that cares a lot about getting to know everyone he works with which helps him put people in a position to succeed. On top of that, he has an excellent work ethic and whenever I found myself running low on motivation I followed his example for inspiration.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

Failure is part of the process for improving, although it can be frustrating we cannot grow until we fail. The main thing is to not get down on yourself, when we set a goal and try our best to achieve it and we fail to do so, it just means you have to go back to the drawing board and set more realistic expectations for yourself until you are ready to go back at it. When I felt frustrated or overwhelmed I would control my breathing and work to ground myself; then I would focus on what I needed to do to improve, and I would attack my weakness relentlessly.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

I would tell my first year self to not be so worried about what other people think of him. UCI can be a scary place as a freshman. You want to put yourself in a position to start a successful career while at the same time making new friends. We are sometimes pressured into making bad decisions because of the social groups we are thrown into but it is important to follow your own moral compass and do things that you truly enjoy doing.



Shannon Pham is a fourth year Biological Sciences major from Fontana, CA. Shannon's hobbies include lifting at the ARC, playing violin, and hiking. Shannon's involvements at UCI include:

- DecadePlus Mentor for first and second year mentees (Fall 2018-Spring 2021), Mentee (Fall 2017-Spring 2021)
- U See Eyes Board Member - Member (Fall 2017-Spring 2021) Volunteer/Outreach Chair (Fall 2018-Spring 2019), Publicity Chair (Fall 2019-Spring 2020), Co-Vice President (Fall 2020-Spring 2021)
- Student Center Starbucks (Fall 2017-Winter 2019)
- Gavin Herbert Eye Institute (Winter 2019-Spring 2021)
- University Optometric Center (2021)
- Global Medical Training Food Drive Volunteer (Spring 2021)
- Remote Area Medical Volunteer (Winter 2018-Winter 2019)
- ARC's You Belong Here Campaign Feature (Spring 2020)
- Vietnamese Rose Pageant hosted by UCI's Vietnamese Student Associate: Top 10 Contestant representing UCI among all UC's (Fall 2019)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

My most fulfilling role is that of a peer mentor for first and second years in DecadePlus. It has been my privilege for the past three years to help these underclassmen maintain a certain GPA to keep their Chancellor's Excellence Scholarship. Being a first generation college student and the oldest in my immediate family allows me to provide relatable first-hand insight to guide my mentees. It is fulfilling to witness them progress towards their goals at UCI.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am most proud of my accomplishment in my journey in the pre-optometry club, U See Eyes, and witnessing the club expand. I was the most active member during my freshman year where I was only of the very few general members, if not the only member besides the board, that would attend our meetings due to lack of club exposure. As I advanced to Volunteer/Outreach Chair, Publicity Chair, the Co-Vice President, I am proud to see our club grow to an amazing 30 active members. I enjoy providing my experience in the pre-optometry field and my academic/personal journey at UCI to the general members.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

My role model at UCI is Dr. Susan Ghodsi, an optometrist who works at the University Optometric Center located at the University Town Center (UTC). She attend UCI as an undergrad, volunteered in the campus optometry office when it used to be located in the Student Health Center, and eventually achieved her career as an optometrist in the office I work in as a Student Optometric Assistant. Seeing her thrive through UCI in the same path I am following is something I admire.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

In dealing with failure, I allow myself to feel and express to not bottle in my emotions; I remember that my feelings are valid. After an initial grief period if needed, I will note that I cannot control anything about the past and can only potentially control the future by redeeming myself. Failures are more so lessons to work with in bettering the future, thus I will put my main optimistic focus on the present and future.

What advice would you give to your first-year self?

Advice I would give to my first year self is to remember that just being at UCI is something to be proud of and no matter what situation faces you, you will be okay. Be prepared to become more outgoing/confident and for that to be one of the best traits you acquire for your professional and personal life. You will not always perform to your full expectation but you did what you knew to be best in that time. Forgive yourself because I promise what lies ahead will be even greater.



Nayeli Lopez is a fourth year Education Sciences and Social Policy & Public Service double major from Boyle Heights, CA. Nayeli's hobbies include reading poetry and going to the beach! Nayeli's involvements at UCI include:

- Tutor for Reading One-to-One Tutoring Project by Professor Farkas (Fall 2018-Spring 2019)
- Student Research Assistant for Individualizing Student Instruction Lab (Spring 2019)
- Fundraising Co-Chair for MEChA de UCI (Fall 2018-Spring 2019)
- Mentor for Bridging Anteatr Mentorship Program (Fall 2018-Spring 2020)
- Volunteer for the Student Outreach and Retention Center (Winter 2019-Spring 2020)
- Peer Academic Advisor for the School of Education Student Affairs Office (Summer 2020-Spring 2021)
- Pathfinder Peer Educator (Summer 2020-Spring 2021)
- SSARC Peer Consultant (Fall 2020-Spring 2021)
- GAPP Field Study Intern (Winter 2021-Spring 2021)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role?

This is a tough question! I feel that all of my leadership experiences at UCI have been very fulfilling in their own unique way. However, if I have to choose one I think it would be being a Peer Academic Advisor because this role is very close to home in regards to my career goal. I've always wanted to become an academic counselor and this leadership role has allowed me to get some sense of this dream. I really enjoyed being able to help others get closer to achieving their goals by being able to advise and support them.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

The accomplishment I am most proud of is actually this one! I think ending my last year at UCI by being recognized for my achievements is very nice, I get to share my experiences with others even after I am gone.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

I have many great role models at UCI, I've been very lucky to meet some amazing people who have given me unconditional support and guidance. However, I believe Dr. Espinoza has had the biggest impact on me. She has been the person who has really taught me a lot about following my dreams as a Latina, especially during the application process to graduate school. She was the first person to really introduce this to me and not only encouraged me to pursue it but supported me through it. She has always been someone I could ask questions or for help. She is a resilient and admirable woman, I really do look up to her and everything she has done as a professional.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

I've failed many times before being successful, I remember my first year I was not involved at all because I was going through a hard time adjusting. However, I knew it was important to get engaged with the UCI community by becoming involved and so I applied to be a Peer Mentor at SSI for TRIO and Summer Bridge, I thought I had a good shot at getting either of the positions because of high school involvements but I did not get it. I had relied on getting one of those positions and had not applied to anything else! I learned my lesson on always seeking more opportunities because you never know which one you may land. A no should give you more motivation and that's what it did, I made sure to stay involved my remaining years through summer internships and school orgs/clubs. I wish I had started earlier though! There are definitely a lot of positions at UCI that I would've liked to be a part of.