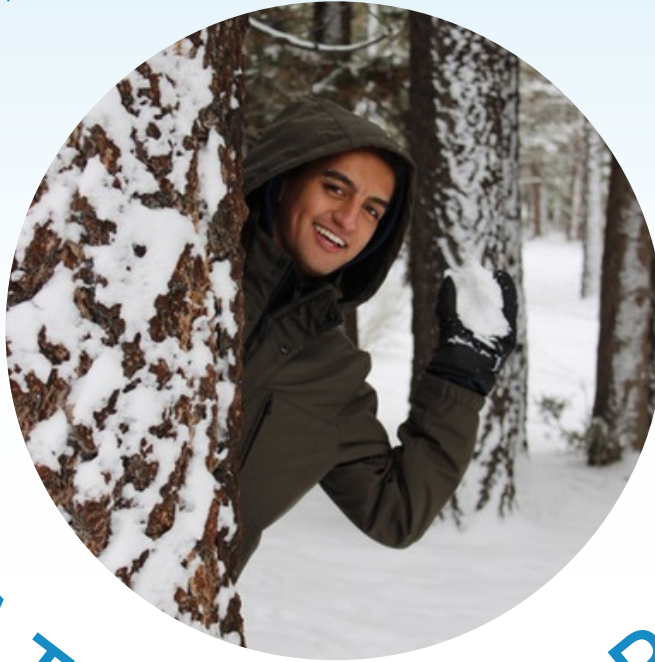


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NATHAN TORRES

Hi! My name is Nathan Torres, and I am a fourth year Psychology major with a minor in Sociology. I enjoy hanging out with friends, kayaking, playing video games, reading, exploring new places, and listening to music.

Involvements at UCI:

- Latinx Resource Center - QTPOC Programs Coordinator (2022-2023)
- Latinx Student Psychology Association - General Member (2022-2023)
- First Year Transfer Experience (2021-2022)

Community College Experience:

- The Puente Project (2019-2021)
- Office of Student Equity Programs and Services - Student Worker for Puente Learning Community (2019-2021)
- Association of Chicana Activists - Vice President (2020-2021)
- Senator at Large for the Associated Student Organization (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 would have to be being able to connect with both my own community and to communities outside of my identities. Throughout the leadership roles I have held, I have been able to meet incredible people from various backgrounds. In these leadership positions I have been exposed to all types of cultures, with which I could not have been able to partake in without the trust and support from the people in those communities. Being in a leadership role requires you to, at times, get out of comfort zone, to try new things and to simply hope things turn out okay in the end. However, the experience you gain from these roles is beyond rewarding because I can now say that this has allowed me to learn about other cultures, other people, and even more about myself. The experience you gain while working with other people is something I have not taken for granted either; the knowledge, kindness, and strength I have gained while working with others has improved beyond measure. Additionally, I find it important to learn from the same situations I have experienced by paying it forward to other individuals who may need this kindness, knowledge, and guidance. I hold the belief that everyone you meet has something to teach you, which can be a good and a bad thing. Regardless, it is through these good and bad experiences that we can learn how to grow, and we can continue to maintain and develop even stronger communities for other individuals who may need them. All in all, I would say that partaking in and creating spaces that are inclusive, unified, and welcoming for all individuals is a fulfilling experience and the journey itself is a reward in the process.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

The accomplishment I am most proud of thus far would have to be transferring into the University of California, Irvine. I am a first generation, queer, latine individual who grew up in a low-income household. My siblings and I were mainly raised by our grandparents because my mother and father spent their time working to provide what they could for us. My parents went to school briefly however, they never had the opportunity to finish because life got in the way of their American dream. My siblings all decided to take routes outside of school leaving me wanting to follow the route less taken, which meant pursuing an education. Throughout high school I was often reminded about the importance of seeking and pursuing higher education however, no one had taught me about the costs and difficulties that I would come across in this journey. I quickly realized that as much as I wanted to pursue an education, I did not have the support, funds, or knowledge to do so. Nevertheless, I ended up taking the path less traveled and that meant applying to and entering community college. At first, I was ashamed of this experience, not only because there was a negative stigma surrounding community college in my high school, but also because I felt like I was being left behind while others got to go to their prestigious universities. It was difficult to adjust to community college because I had to navigate this space alone without friends or family to support me. However, life always seems to take the most unexpected turns because my community college experience became something otherworldly after I began to experience everything it could offer. I joined programs that provided me with mentors, friends, knowledge, and opportunities that I could not have been more grateful for. Despite the negativity within the people and environments I was surrounded with, I continued to move forward, and it changed my life for the better. I eventually graduated from my community college, and I had applied to UCI, among other universities, only to be shockingly accepted into all those that I had applied to. We can all guess where I ended up and although this journey has not been easy, I am proud to say that I did it.

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

At UCI there have been various role models I have had the honor of meeting, befriending, and working alongside to. Each of the role models in my life appear to be different from one another at first glance however, they have each assisted, educated, and guided me to become who I am today. Two of the first few people I want to acknowledge are my current supervisors, known as Victoria Rocha and Adeli Duron. They have continued to motivate me and inspire me to be the best version of myself that I can be. The faith they have placed onto me by allowing me to work for the Latinx Resource Center has left me feeling honored. I have learned so much about myself through this position, and I have continued to learn about what a leader looks like by working alongside them. Their support and guidance are something that I will always cherish and although I do not say it often, I wanted to share my appreciation for them. Another few individuals I wanted to acknowledge were my close friends that I have met and gotten to know at UCI. Each of my friends have taught me something new every single day and I appreciate their honesty, kindness, wicked humor, and intelligence. They have placed their trust in me and for that I will forever be grateful because the friendship we have made together has allowed me to grow as a person and open my heart a little bit more than I am used to. I appreciate our talks, study sessions, and chats because they always leave me feeling lighter. We may not have known each other for a long time, but I hope to maintain our friendship for years to come. Aside from UCI, I also wanted to shout out a few of the individuals I have worked with at my community college who, without their support, guidance, and encouragement, I would not be at UCI at all. Those individuals being Clara Sevilla, Professor Eun Park, Professor Francisco Bustos, and Professor Rachel Nead. Overall, role models come in all shapes and sizes, and I consider myself lucky to have this many people to look up to because they continue to inspire me every day!

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

When I think of failure, I don't think of it as something negative holding me down because I don't believe failures are negative. In my opinion, failure might be the most important thing we can experience because of how human it makes us. Unfortunately, we do not talk about failing as much as we should even though everyone ends up failing at one point in their life. Through my personal experiences with failure, however, I have discovered that I react differently depending on the type of failure I experience. At times it can bring out the worst in me by making me irritated, dejected, shameful, and even disappointed with myself. Yet, over time I have taught myself that these emotions are okay to experience. I have learned that it is okay to feel frustrated with myself, to feel irritated when things break down, and to feel sad when something does not work out. I taught myself that failure is a natural part of life and that everyone goes through it, whether they want to or not. Failure is a process that not many individuals are comfortable with, but I also understand it is not easy to cope with at times. It can hurt because we put our hardest work, time, and effort into our projects just to have it fall through. And it hurts. But the great part about it is that we tried, we can keep trying, and we will keep trying afterwards. That is the funny thing about life; it never stops. Regardless of how I feel in the moments when I face failure, I continue to teach myself to be patient, to be kind to myself, and to give myself the space I need to cope with the fact that things didn't work out. Having a strong support system from friends and family also eases the pain of failure as well. Having people who care about you and want you to succeed continues to bring the motivation within me needed to combat my feelings of failure. Overall, I have learned to understand that failing does not make me a failure; it simply makes me human, and there is nothing more human than getting up and trying again.

What advice would you give your first-year self?

If I were to speak to my first-year self again I would give them countless pieces of advice. I think I would begin by letting them know that the hard work they are doing, internally and externally, is going to pay off tenfold. Working on yourself can be a difficult journey and learning to be comfortable in your own skin is easier said than done; however, that does not mean you should not continue to do that work because the work that you put into yourself will end up preparing you for the work that you accomplish in the real world. I also want to mention that life does not always get easier, but the people you end up surrounding yourself with do help make it easier. Trust your intuition because only you know who will stand by your side and who will be there to help you during those hard and rainy days. Be willing to open to people let yourself be loved by other people because there is a community out there is willing to trust, support, and help you with whatever you need. Nonetheless, I know it can be hard getting to know other people and it can be a struggle to try new things; yet, I would say don't be afraid to take that risk. Taking that step forward will place you in positions that you will forever be grateful for. I am not going to lie, the first step is always the hardest since we never know what will happen next, but that should not discourage you from trying things out because you will be unexpectedly surprised most of the time. The last thing I would tell my younger self would be to trust the process; everything is always working out regardless of what you may think. Things are never as scary as we believe them to be however, just know whatever step you take will bring rewards that you will always be thankful for.