

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



Center for Latino Community Health, Evaluation, and Leadership Training
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LONG BEACH STATE UNIVERSITY
**CENTER FOR LATINO
COMMUNITY HEALTH**
EVALUATION & LEADERSHIP TRAINING

 CSULB Center for Latino Community Health

 @csulblatinocenter



Mission

To improve, promote, and advocate for the health, culture, and well-being of diverse Latino/Hispanic communities.

Vision

To improve health, educational, and social equity among the Latino communities with whom we work and serve.

Values

- We are driven to action by our community-centered mission.
- We embody an attitude of community service.
- We operate with integrity and inclusiveness.
- We foster leadership and empowerment.
- We value our grass-roots underpinnings.
- We are accountable to the communities we serve.
- We uphold the community-driven missions of UnidosUS and CSULB.
- We acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate the cultures, resiliency, insights, and contributions of Latino/Hispanic families and communities.



ABOUT US

The California State University Long Beach (CSULB) Center for Latino Community Health, Evaluation, and Leadership Training (hereafter Center) started as a partnership between UnidosUS (formerly known as the National Council of La Raza [NCLR]) and CSULB. The CSULB Center was established in 2005 by Dr. Britt Rios-Ellis through a congressional earmark led by then Congresswomen Hilda Solis. The Center is part of the Department of Health Science in the College of Health and Human Services. The Center has three pillars of work which are highlighted in our descriptive name.

Community Health

The Center's research and program areas embody the use of community based participatory research methods – an academic model that promotes community empowerment, learning, and participation in society. Our research promotes faculty excellence through research, prepares students for success, expands the self-efficacy of community members involved in our projects, and creates collaborative partnerships aimed at impacting the delivery and messaging of Latino health through culturally and linguistically appropriate methods.

Evaluation

We provide culturally and linguistically appropriate evaluation services to community-based organizations and health entities such as federally qualified health centers and local health departments. These services include research and evaluation design; quantitative and qualitative instrument development; training for data collection staff (in person or via webinar); technical assistance; data processing and cleaning; data analysis; and report writing. Funders include both local and national organizations.

Leadership Training

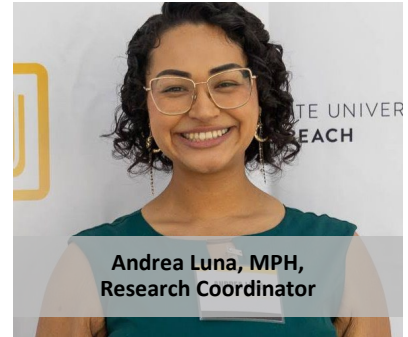
We are committed to student success and the academic and professional preparation of future generations. We collaborate across departments and colleges to gain funding to provide exemplary student success programs. Each year, we provide internship opportunities and fellowships to support students from CSULB and other institutions. In collaboration with faculty and staff across the campus, we provide student trainings and workshops to support academic and professional development.



Organizational Chart



Meet our Team



Faculty Research Fellow:

- Dr. Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez



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2025 -2026 Year at a Glance

4 Grants & Contracts

\$528,261 Total Funding



23

Students Trained & Mentored



4

Students Attended a Professional Conference



\$78,640.53

Student Support Funding



7

Student Poster Presentations



208

Community Members Engaged in Programming



101

Community Members Engaged in Listening Sessions



308

Surveys Administered



We turned 20



On October 9, 2025 our Center celebrated its 20th year anniversary. CSULB administration, faculty, staff, community partners, students, and alumni joined the celebration. The Center's Founding Director, now President of CSU Stanislaus, Dr. Britt Rios-Ellis and the Center's advisory board whom have played a key role in the Center's success across the past 20 years were also in attendance. Since celebrating its 10th year anniversary in 2015, the Center has received 24 federal grants and 11 contracts amounting to nearly \$8 million in funding. The funding has supported the Center's mission to develop, implement, and evaluate numerous community-based research projects that have served approximately 3,500 community members. The funding has also supported the training, mentorship, and professional development of over 300 undergraduate and graduate students with nearly \$1 million in student support.



Supporting Student Success @ The Beach

Who we serve and train?

- Undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a degree in the fields of nutrition, health science, kinesiology, healthcare administration, sociology, social work, and other related health fields.
- Underrepresented students (e.g., first-generation, financial need, members of racial/ethnic minority groups, with a disability).
- Undergraduate and graduate students interested in working to improve the health and well-being of the Latino community.

How we serve and train?

- Competency-based trainings
- Professional development
- Research experience
- Experiential learning
- Mentorship
- Paid fellowship opportunities
- Conference travel opportunities



Graduate students and staff attending the American Public Health Association Conference in Washington DC in November 2025.



Students and staff at the CHHS Student Research Symposium in April 2026.



Student Training Topics 2025 - 2026

Community Engaged Research

- Community-Based Participatory Research

Culturally Responsive Nutrition Education

- Developing Interventions and Programs
- Health Education Delivery
- Working with Children

Latino Nutrition & Chronic Disease Prevention

- Introduction to the Importance of Latino Nutrition
- Nutrition-Related Chronic Diseases Affecting Latinos

Professional Development

- Professional Etiquette
- Graduate School Planning
- Resumes and CVs
- Elevator Speech
- Goal Setting & Campus Connection
- Abstract development
- Scientific poster development

Research Methods

- Introduction to Mixed Methods Research
- Quantitative Methods
- Biopsychosocial Research
- Responsible and Ethical Conduct
- Informed Consent Procedures
- Data Interviewing Techniques
- Data Entry and Management



Students tabling at a community outreach event.



Student presenting research poster.



Students and staff at the 20th year anniversary celebratory event.



Current Projects

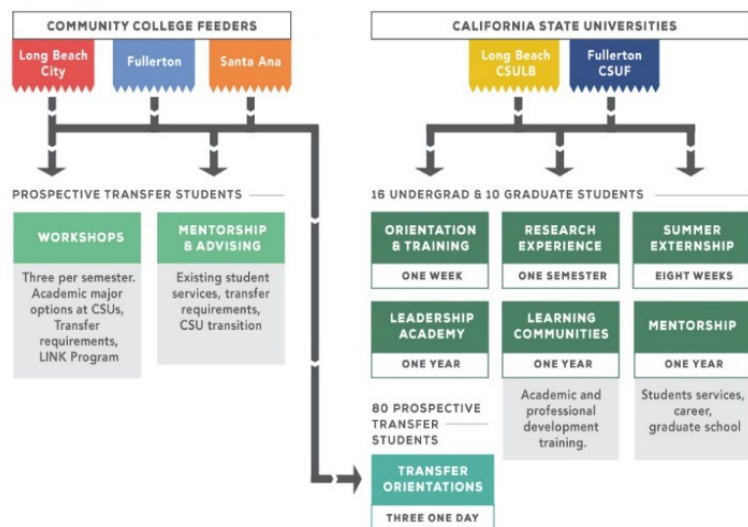
Project Name: Leveraging Interdisciplinary Nutritional Knowledge

Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture-NIFA (July 2021-2026) Award # 2021-77040-34904



Project Staff: CSULB - Dr. Melawhy Garcia (PI), CSUF – Dr. Lilia Espinoza (Co-PI)

Project Overview: The LINK Program is a collaboration between five Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Southern California: two 4-year universities, California State University (CSU) Long Beach and CSU Fullerton, and three 2-year community colleges (CC) including Fullerton, Long Beach City, and Santa Ana. The LINK Program promotes the success of 26 underrepresented students in the food and human sciences professional and scientific workforce emphasizing Latino nutrition through outreach, mentoring, education, support services, research, and professional internships with community partners.



Project Update: Community college workshops and awareness events continued through May 2026 to increase awareness about careers in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (FANH) workforce. A poster presentation on the LINK model was presented at the SOPHE Annual Conference in Portland, and an oral presentation at the 2026 AHSIE 18th Annual Best Practices Conference in Boston. Manuscripts are in progress.

Project Milestones



26 students from CSULB and CSUF participated in the LINK Scholars Program across 2 cohorts



\$193,014.83 in scholarship funding awarded to CSULB scholars across 2 years



71 workshops and awareness events facilitated with collaborating Community College partners



961 community college students reached



Project Name: Harvesting Healthy Habits in Long Beach

Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture-NIFA (January 2023-2027)
Award #2023-69015-39407

Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (PI); Natalia Gatdula, MPH (Co-I); Andrea Luna, MPH (Research Coordinator)

Purpose: Provide undergraduate and graduate students with a comprehensive research training experience that includes hands-on experiential learning while developing and implementing an intervention that aims to improve eating patterns and healthy lifestyles to reduce the risk for chronic diseases among underserved children in grades 3 to 5 and their families.

Collaborators: Puente Latino Association

Intervention:

- **Children:** Four, 2-hour weekly group sessions (Weeks 1-4) with three components: nutrition education, food demonstration, and gardening activities.
- **Parent/Caregiver:** Two, 2-hour groups sessions (Weeks 1 and 4) of nutrition education.

Project Update: Twelve cohorts including 49 families (103 parents and their children) participated in the Harvesting Healthy Habits research program this reporting period. Participants learned about nutrition-related chronic diseases, the importance and benefits of eating a healthy breakfast, the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables and their benefits, and about added sugars and ways to reduce the intake of sweetened-sugar beverages. Child participants also made healthy snacks and learned about gardening by planting their own vegetable seeds. Student research fellows received research training, mentorship, and professional development opportunities and were trained to deliver the intervention.

Project Milestones



\$78,640 in scholarship funding awarded this fiscal year



5 student abstracts and poster presentations



6 students (Cohort 3) completed their research fellowship



154 community members participated in the program

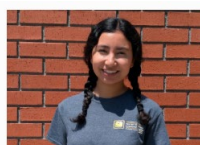


54 3rd – 5th graders participated in the program

Student Research Fellows:



Heather Dietrick
Major: Nutrition & Food Science



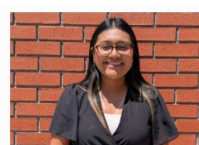
Primavera Garcia
Major: Health Science / Beach EDGE MPH



Nicole Olea
Major: Health Science / Beach EDGE MPH



Ximena Sifuentes
Major: Health Science



Yeraldine Polo
Degree Program: Master in Public Health



Katelyn Chu
Degree Program: Nutrition & Dietetics



Contracts

Project Name: Culturally Informed Enhanced Learning Opportunities (CIELO) for Speech Language Pathologist and Early Childhood Special Education Project Evaluation

Funder: California State University, Los Angeles

Funding period: 10/01/2023 – 09/30/2026

Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (Evaluator); Natalia Gatdula, MPH (Evaluator)



Purpose: CIELO aims to improve the diversity and quality of bilingual applicants to the Early Childhood Special Education and Speech Language Pathology programs by improving interdisciplinary practices leading to better student and family outcomes through implementation of rigorous evidence-based programs that meet CTC, NAEYC, CAA/ASHA/ and CEC-DEC standards.

Center's Role: Monitor student data collection, conduct data cleaning and analysis for reporting requirements.

Evaluation Update: The evaluation team participated in ongoing evaluation planning meetings with the CSU LA team and led the analysis and reporting of CIELO student and process outcomes in Spring 2026 for the annual report submitted in May 2026. Data collection is going and the evaluation team continues to monitor data collection and quality.

Project Name: Latinx Community Health Needs Assessment

Funder: Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services

Funding period: 03/01/2026 – 09/04/2026

Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (Project Director); Andrea Luna, MPH (Project Manager)

Purpose: The Latinx Community Health Needs Assessment represents a comprehensive effort to understand the health needs, experiences, and priorities of the Latinx community in Long Beach, CA.

Center's Role: The Center serves as the research partner alongside community partners Latinos in Action, Puente Latino Association, Casa Guerrero, and Centro CHA. The Center is leading the survey design, collaborating on survey data collection, leading the community listening sessions, data analysis, and report and workplan to be disseminated by the City of Long Beach.

Project Update: 200 community members completed the needs assessment survey and 100 participated in listening sessions. Data analysis and reporting are in progress.



Recognitions



Excelencia IN EDUCATION
EXAMPLES ★ EXCELENCIA

2025 Example - Baccalaureate Level

ÁNDALE Latino Research
Training Program
California State University, Long Beach (CA)



www.EdExcelencia.org/what-works/examples-excelencia/annual-examples-excelencia



The ÁNDALE Latino Research Training Program was the 2025 Example of *Excelencia* at the baccalaureate level. ÁNDALE earned recognition by exemplifying an intentional commitment to advancing success for Latino and other underrepresented students in higher education. The ÁNDALE Program aimed to train fifty (50) underrepresented undergraduate students in Latino nutrition and disease prevention, enhance their professional development, and engage them in research with a faculty mentor in an effort to better prepare them to enter graduate school or the workforce. The program consisted of an intensive one-week training and nine weeks of hands-on research with a faculty mentor from the College of Health & Human Services. Through their participation, students gained an understanding of the research process, community-based participatory research as it relates to nutrition and Latino health, responsible and ethical conduct of research, mentorship and professional development.

The ÁNDALE program engaged 53 underrepresented undergraduate students between 2020 – 2024. The majority of ÁNDALE Scholars identified as female (n=39, 73.5%) and of Hispanic/Latino descent (n = 39, 73.5%). Nearly 19% (n=10) identified as Asian, 3.8% (n=2) as Black/African American, 3.8% (n=2) were Middle Eastern, and 3.8% (n=2) were of mixed races. Nearly 89% (n=47) were first generation college educated, 71.7% (n=38) were low-income based on Pell-grant eligibility status, and 7.5% (n=4) identified as having a disability. The ÁNDALE Program was been impactful in academic and professional student outcomes. From pre-to-post program, ÁNDALE Scholars demonstrated increases in knowledge, skills, and abilities related to scientific research. Sixty-six percent (n=35) continued research with their faculty mentor beyond the program time commitment. All ÁNDALE Scholars were in good academic standing following program participation with an average term GPA of 3.81. Moreover, all ÁNDALE Scholars (100%) have graduated or remain on track to graduate based on degree planners.





Student Research Symposium

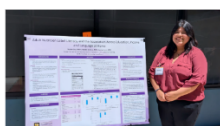
The 3rd Student Research Symposium was hosted by the Center for Latino Community Health, Evaluation, and Leadership Training as part of the **2026 CSULB Week of Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity (RSCA)** on **April 24, 2026** at the SSPA Courtyard.

Undergraduate and graduate students from various majors in the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) shared their faculty-mentored research through poster presentations. All abstracts were reviewed by a panel of faculty and staff in CHHS. A total of 12 students presented posters. The top six ranking abstracts were entered into a research competition in two categories: undergraduate and graduate research.

GRADUATE RESEARCH COMPETITION WINNERS



1st Place: Primavera Garcia Trabanino, MPH student. Poster titled "Nutrition Parenting Practices as Predictors of Vegetable Intake Among Children Aged 7-11"

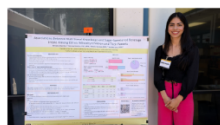


2nd Place: Nicole Olea, MPH student. Poster titled "Adult Nutrition Label Literacy and the Association Across Education, Income and Language at Home"



3rd Place: Victoria Min, MPH student, Poster titled "Prevalence and Correlates of Alcohol and Tobacco Use among People in Tajikistan Utilizing the 2023 WHO STEPS Surveillance Survey"

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH COMPETITION WINNERS:



1st Place: Ximena Sifuentes, Public Health student. Poster titled "Associations Between Nutritional Knowledge and Sugar-Sweetened beverage Intake Among Ethnic Minority Children and Their Parents"



2nd Place: Sabrina Momoh and Tonii Adedipem, Public Health students. Poster titled "Black Infant Health Media Campaign"



3rd Place: Katelyn Chu, Nutrition and Food Science student. Poster titled "Residential Area and its Association with Fruit and Vegetable Intake Among Children in Long Beach"



July 2025 – June 2026 Fiscal Data

Grants and Contracts (Continued from previous-year funding)

<i>Name of Project</i>	<i>Funder</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Award Start/End Date</i>
Leveraging Interdisciplinary Nutritional Knowledge	U.S. Department of Agriculture	\$261,177.60	8/1/2021 - 7/31/2026
Harvesting Healthy Habits in Long Beach	U.S. Department of Agriculture	\$228,083.90	1/15/2023 - 1/14/2027
Project CIELO	CSULA (U.S. Dept. of Ed)	\$14,000	9/30/2025 – 9/30/2026
Subtotal		\$503,261.50	

New Grants and Contracts (initiated between July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026)

<i>Name of Project</i>	<i>Funder</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Award End Date</i>
Latinx Community Health Needs Assessment	Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services	\$25,000	September 4, 2026
Subtotal:		\$25,000	



Publications (2)

Aguirre, D., Garcia, M.L., Buenrostro, P.T., Korosteleva, O., Dionicio, P., Garay, J., Durazo, A., Bravo, M., & Bird, M. (2025). The Familias Saludables Study: A culturally tailored family-centered intervention for childhood obesity prevention among Hispanic communities. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. doi.org/10.1007/s40615-025-02348-2

Buenrostro, P.T., Garcia, M.L., Luna, A., Leon-Cruz, G., Tovar, S., (2026). Development of Eat, Play, Go! culturally tailored curriculum addressing Latino youth obesity. *Health Education and Behavior*. doi.org/10.1177/10901981261428144

Presentations (9)

*Student Author

*Chu, K., Sanchez, K., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Residential area and its association with fruit and vegetable intake among children in Long Beach*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

Espinoza, L., Garcia, M., Gatdula, N., Higgins, R., Musick, J., Mathot, S., Hurtado, J., Nguyen-Rodriguez, S. (2026, April 23). *Leveraging Interdisciplinary Nutritional Knowledge Program: Academic pipeline and training to develop the Latine nutrition workforce*. Abstract and poster presentation at the 2026 SOPHE Annual Conference in Portland, OR.

Espinoza, L., Garcia Vega, M., Gatdula, N., Higgins, R., Musick, J., Mathot, S., & Nguyen-Rodriguez, S. (2026, March 8–11). *Leveraging interdisciplinary nutritional knowledge program: Latine nutrition curricula and pipeline* [Conference presentation]. 18th Annual Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators (AHSIE) Best Practices Conference, Boston, MA, United States.

*Garcia Trabanino, P., Sanchez, K., Gatdula, N. (2026, April 24). *Nutrition parenting practices as predictors of vegetable intake among children aged 7-11*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

*Olea, N., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Adult nutrition label literacy and the association across education, income and language at home*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

*Polo, Y., Dionicio, P., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Objective and subjective physical activity assessment in Latino children participating in the Eat, Play, Go! intervention*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

*Ramirez-Rivera, A., Sanchez, K., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Gender and age differences in children's nutrition-related attitudes, social norms, and self-efficacy towards fruit and vegetable consumption*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

*Sifuentes, X., Dionicio, P., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Associations between nutritional knowledge and sugar-sweetened beverage intake among ethnic minority children and their parents*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.

*Vilchez, A., Dionicio, P., Gatdula, N., Luna, A. (2026, April 24). *Food insecurity status and grocery store preference: associations with fruit and vegetable intent among parents*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Student Research Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.



Acknowledgments

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty, and community collaborators and community members who allowed us to continue working towards our mission and were involved in our various initiatives through survey and curriculum development, intervention implementation, health education, student training and mentorship, community outreach and recruitment, data collection administration, grant writing, presentations, data analysis, evaluation, and reporting.

Graduate Students:

- Daniel Gonzalez, Center Intern
- Lesli Arenivar, HHH/Center Intern
- Nicole Olea, HHH Fellow
- Primavera Garcia, HHH Fellow
- Yeraldine Polo, HHH Fellow

Undergraduate Students:

- Abigail Ramirez-Rivera, Center Intern
- Alondra Vilchez, HHH Intern
- Camili Rivas, HHH Intern
- Daniel Gonzalez, Center Intern
- Heather Dietrick, HHH Fellow/Intern
- Jasmine Fujimoto, HHH Intern
- Jhanna Galan, HHH Intern
- Kassandra Padilla, Center intern
- Katelyn Chu, HHH Fellow
- Katherine Ayala, HHH intern
- Leonel Sandoval, HHH intern
- Lizette Najera, HHH intern
- Mayra Villanueva, HHH intern
- Miriam Godoy, Center intern
- Natalia Samora, HHH intern
- Ximena Sifuentes, HHH fellow
- Yesenia Serrano Hernandez, intern
- Yoselyn Nunez Nives, HHH intern

CSULB Faculty Collaborators:

- Azucena Pacheco, Chicanx/Latinx Studies
- Amber Johnson, Health Science
- Brian Kwan, Health Science
- Iveris Martinez, Center for Successful Aging
- Jeremy Ramirez, Healthcare Management
- Kamiar Alaei, Health Science
- Kellie Walters, Kinesiology
- Kurt Escobar, Kinesiology
- Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez, Health Science
- Toni Espinoza-Ferrel, Health Science
- Virginia Gray, Nutrition and Dietetics

External Academic Collaborators:

- Cristina Arellano, Fullerton College
- Daniela Gonzalez, Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexicali
- Jazmin Hurtado, Santa Ana College
- Jennifer Musick, Long Beach City College
- Kimberly Sanchez, UC Merced
- Lilia Espinoza, Cal State Fullerton
- Noe Crespo, San Diego State University
- Patricia Dionicio, Stanford University
- Rita Higgins, Fullerton College
- Sarah Mathot, Santa Ana College

Community Collaborators:

- Adela Perez, Casa Guerrero
- Hilda Gaytan, Puente Latino Association
- Marta Cota, Latinos in Action
- Ariana Sahagun, Centro CHA

Advisory Board:

Ana Carricchi-Lopez, City Health Officer, Long Beach Department of Health and Humans Services
Britt Rios-Ellis, Dean, College of Health Sciences and Human Services, CSU Monterey Bay
David Hayes-Bautista, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at the School of Medicine, University of California Los Angeles
Jennifer Ng'andu, Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Jorge Daboub, Vice-President of Client Development, Univision
Kurt Organista, Professor, University of Berkeley School of Social Welfare
Liliana Martinez, Director of Health Education & Outreach, TCC Family Health
Richard Zaldivar, Executive Director, The Wall Las Memorias Project
Vickie Mays, Professor, UCLA Psychology and Fielding School of Public Health
Sara Elena Loaiza, Executive Director, Latino Consultants