



LONG BEACH STATE UNIVERSITY
**CENTER FOR LATINO
COMMUNITY HEALTH**
EVALUATION & LEADERSHIP TRAINING

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025





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.

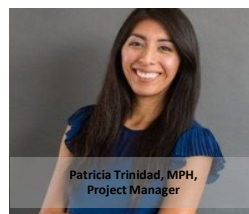
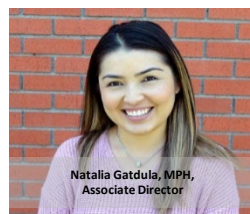


Organizational Chart



Meet our Team

Core Staff



Faculty Research Fellow:

- Dr. Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez



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Year at a Glance

2024 - 2025

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED IN PROGRAMMING

85 Adults
172 Children



STUDENTS TRAINED AND MENTORED

11 Graduate students
24 Undergraduate students



12
student co-authored
abstracts and posters



\$101,586.00
awarded in
scholarship funding



9
students attended a
professional conference



5 active grants and
contracts

\$842,610
in funding



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



Undergraduate student attending a community event



Graduate students harvesting produce for community



Student Training Topics 2024 - 2025

Community-Based Participatory Research

- Community-Based Participatory Research Overview

Culturally Responsive Nutrition Education

- Developing Interventions and Programs
- Motivational Interviewing

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
- Qualitative Methods
- Quantitative Methods
- Biopsychosocial Research
- Understanding Scientific Literature
- Responsible and Ethical Conduct
- Informed Consent Procedures
- Anthropometric Measurements
- Data Interviewing Techniques
- Data Entry and Management



Current Projects

Project Name: ÁNDALE Latino Research Training Program

Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture
NIFA Award #2020-67037-30663

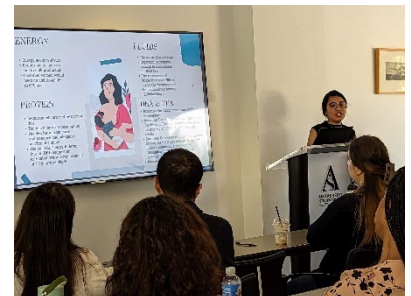


Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (Principal Investigator/ Mentor), Natalia Gatdula (Program Manager/ Mentor), Yesenia Sifuentes (Project Coordinator),

Purpose: To train fifty (50) undergraduate students in Latino nutrition and chronic disease prevention, enhance their professional development, and engage them in research to better prepare them to enter graduate school or the workforce.

Project Overview: The program consists of a one-week (40 hours) training focused on Latino nutrition and health, three professional development workshops, and nine weeks of faculty-mentored research. Ongoing mentorship is provided to students by research faculty and program staff. Students also receive funding to attend a professional conference.

Project Update: ÁNDALE ended its no-cost extension year to complete follow-up data collection with scholars. A manuscript is in progress highlighting the program model and findings on its impact on student success outcomes. The ÁNDALE program was submitted to Examples of *Excelencia* which highlights programs who exemplify evidence-based practices that intentionally serve Latino students throughout college. We hope to continue the ÁNDALE program and its impact in the near future. We appreciate all the CSULB faculty who provided mentored research to students: Dr. Michelle Barrack, Dr. Jackie Dawson, Dr. Jana Fogaca, Dr. Virginia Gray, Dr. Leilani Madrigal, Dr. Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez, and Dr. Kellie Walters; and to all the guest speakers who provided their time and expertise for the research trainings. Of note, ÁNDALE was affected by a temporary pause on funding for two months.



Project Milestones



53 undergraduate students
participated across
four cohorts



\$216,835.08 in scholarship and travel funds
awarded across 5
years



26 scholars
submitted an
abstract and/or
presented at a
conference



35 scholars
continued research
post program

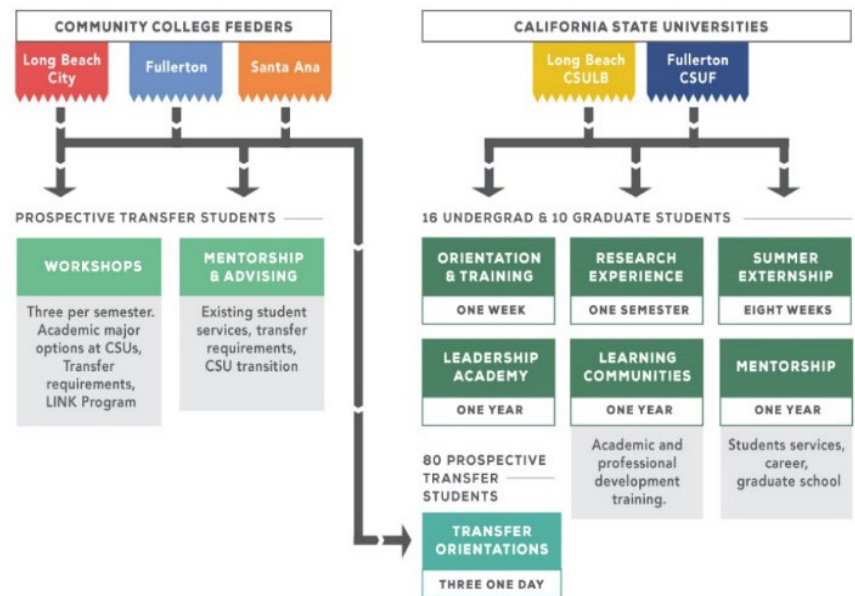


Project Name: Leveraging Interdisciplinary Nutritional Knowledge

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

Project Staff: CSULB - Dr. Melawhy Garcia (PI), Yesenia Sifuentes (Project Coordinator), 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: The second cohort of LINK Scholars completed program activities including research

placements and externships with community-based partners. Scholar follow-up data was collected to assess academic and professional outcomes after participating in the program. Community college workshops and awareness events continued through June 2025 to increase awareness about careers in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (FANH) workforce. The CSU/CC Consortium established by LINK continued to meet quarterly to strategize and align efforts related to transfer student success. The LINK Advisory Board including representatives from doctoral granting institutions convened to review program progress and student applications and competitiveness for doctoral programs. A no-cost extension was granted through July 2026.

Project Milestones



25 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



6 workshops and 3 awareness events facilitated with collaborating Community College partners



158 community college students reached



Project Name: Harvesting Healthy Habits in Long Beach

Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture-NIFA (January 2023-2026)
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: Fourteen cohorts including 44 families (96 parents and their children) participated in the Harvesting Healthy Habits 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. Of note, the project was affected by a temporary pause in funding from March to June 2025.





Harvesting Healthy Habits in Long Beach Cont.

Graduate Research Fellows:



Selene Tovar, Public Health



Melissa Pompa, Public Health

Undergraduate Research Fellows:



Alexis Pope, Nutrition & Food Science



Cristian Giron, Nutrition & Food Science



Maria Porta, Nutrition & Food Science



Thanh Dahn, Nutrition & Food Science



Heather Dietrick, Nutrition & Food Science

Project Milestones



\$71,618.48 in scholarship funding awarded this fiscal year



10 student abstracts and poster presentations



6 students (Cohort 2) completed their research fellowship



5 students recruited and trained for Cohort 3 of Research Fellows



34 3rd – 5th graders participated in the program



84 community members participated in the program

**Project Name:** Eat, Play, Go! Transdisciplinary Obesity Prevention for Latino Families

Funding Agency: United States Department of Agriculture - NIFA
(November 2020- October 2025) Award #2021-69015-33433

Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (Principal Investigator), Patricia T. Buentrostro, MPH (Project Manager)



Purpose: To address the disproportionate rates of obesity among Latino youth ages 10 – 13 years by developing and implementing a youth-focused and family-based intervention in Long Beach. The intervention focuses on physical activity, fruit and vegetable consumption, and strengthening communities with behaviors that encourage healthy lifestyles.

Intervention:

- Four, 2-hour weekly group sessions (Weeks 1-4) with virtual grocery store tour, physical activity, and nutrition label-reading activities
- Two, 15-minute telephone booster sessions (Weeks 8 and 12)
- Text Messages to provide reinforcement of the Eat, Play, Go! intervention content



Project Update: A total of 185 children and their caregivers participated in the Eat, Play, Go! Intervention with 81% of dyads retained for three-month follow-up data collection. Children and caregiver participants showed significant improvements in physical health and self-reporting physical activity (waist circumference, body mass index) and eating patterns (increased consumption of vegetables and breakfast and decreased consumption of sugar sweetened beverages and fast food among children). The intervention findings showed significant increases in caregiver nutrition knowledge and intentions to provide children with healthier food options. A total of 11 students (6 undergraduates and 5 graduates) participated in 12-month paid research fellowships to engage in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention. Eat, Play, Go! is a promising culturally tailored intervention for Latino families. A manuscript focused on the curriculum and development was submitted for publication. The project received a no-cost extension to finalize data collection and analysis through October 2025.

Project Milestones

11 research fellows and 39 interns received training and mentoring across 3 years



\$138,788.00 in scholarship funds awarded across 3 years



149 families with 185 children completed the intervention



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 – 09/30/2025

Project Staff: Dr. Melawhy Garcia (Evaluator), Patricia T. Buentrostro, 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 through the development of recruitment materials and increased community partnerships. Moreover, it aims to improve interdisciplinary practices leading to improved student and family outcomes through implementation of rigorous evidence-based programs that meet CTC, NAEYC, CAA/ASHA/ and CEC-DEC standards.

Center's role: Identify and select student assessment instruments to be used in the evaluation. Monitor student data collection, conduct data cleaning and analysis for reporting requirements.

Project Milestones

Evaluation Update: The evaluation team participated in ongoing evaluation planning meeting with the CSU LA team. The evaluation team led the analysis and reporting of CIELO student and process outcomes in Spring 2025 and prepared documentation for the annual report submitting in May 2025. Data collection is going and the evaluation team continues to monitor data collection and quality.



Student Research Symposium

The 2nd Student Research Symposium was hosted by the Center for Latino Community, Health, Evaluation, and Leadership Training as part of the **2025 CSULB Week of Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity (RSCA)** on **April 18, 2025** at the CSULB Graduate Research Center.

Undergraduate and graduate students from various majors in the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) shared their faculty-mentored research through poster presentations. The symposium included presentations which showcased the Center for Latino Health's projects and research as well as research by faculty in various CHHS departments including Family and Consumers Science, Health Science, Kinesiology, and Physical Therapy. All abstracts were reviewed by a panel of faculty and staff in CHHS. A total of 16 students presented posters. The top six ranking abstracts were entered into a research competition in two categories: undergraduate and graduate research.

Graduate Student Research Competition Presenters



Student Name: Melissa Pompa
Major: Master in Public Health
Co-Author: Dr. Melawhy Garcia
Poster Title: ¡Salud a la Vida! Cheers to Life!: Social Influences on Binge-Drinking among Young Latino Adults using the Social Cognitive Theory Framework



Student Name: Channel Ruiz
Major: Master in Public Health
Co-Author: Dr. Melawhy Garcia
Poster Title: How Does Food Insecurity Influence Dietary Patterns and Obesity among Hispanic Mother-Child Dyads in Long Beach?



Student Name: Pamela Martinez
Major: Master in Public Health
Co-Author: Dr. Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez
Poster Title: Perceived Stress and Meanings of Eating among Ethnic Minority Children



Undergraduate Student Research Competition Presenters



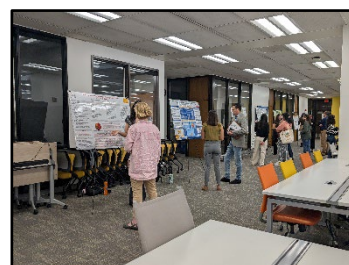
Student Name: Alexis Pope
Major: Nutrition & Dietetics
Co-Author: Dr. Melawhy Garcia
Poster Title: Exploring the Association of Social Determinants of Health on Nutritional Knowledge among Adults



Student Name: Thanh Danh
Major: Nutrition & Dietetics
Co-Author: Natalia Gatdula, MPH
Poster Title: Nutrition Knowledge and Intention to Consume Fruits and Vegetables among Latino Adults



Student Name: Heather Dietrick
Major: Nutrition & Dietetics
Co-Authors: Natalia Gatdula, MPH & Patricia Buenrostro, MPH
Poster Title: Child Confidence and Frequency of Vegetable and Fruit Consumption and their Association to Frequency of Eating Home-Prepared Meals





July 2024 – June 2025 Fiscal Data

Grants and Contracts (Continued from previous-year funding)

Name of Project	Funder	Amount	Award Start/End Date
ANDALE Latino Research Training Program	United States Department of Agriculture	\$104,368.40	4/15/2020 - 4/14/2025
Leveraging Interdisciplinary Nutritional Knowledge	United States Department of Agriculture	\$261,177.60	8/1/2021 - 7/31/2026
Harvesting Healthy Habits in Long Beach	United States Department of Agriculture	\$228,083.90	1/15/2023 - 1/14/2027
Eat, Play, Go!	United States Department of Agriculture	\$234,980.66	11/15/2020 - 10/14/2025
Project CIELO	Department of Education via CSULA	\$14,000	09/30/2024 – 9/30/2025
Subtotal		\$842,610.56	

New Grants and Contracts (initiated between July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025)

Name of Project	Funder	Amount	Award End Date
Subtotal:		\$0	



Publications (2)

- Flórez, K.R., Whalen, A.D., Estrella, M.L., Chambers, E.C., Gallo, L.C., Daviglus, M.L., Garcia-Bedoya, O., Garcia, M.L., Talavera, G.A., Perreira, K., Ma, W., Isasi, C.R. (2025) Do household ties matter for diabetes awareness and self-care behaviors? Insights from the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos. *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.diabres.2025.112053>
- Alvarado, C., Nguyen-Rodriguez, S.T., Frank, G.C., Garcia, M. & Gatdula, N. (2025) Influence of home language use on association between parent education and child adiposity in Latino families. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. doi.org/10.1007/s40615-024-01935-z

Presentations (13)

*Student Author

- *Cortez, P. Gatdula, N., & Luna, A. (2025). *Assessing the relationship between parental involvement in regulating screen time and children's physical activity*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Danh, T. & Gatdula, N. (2025). *Nutrition knowledge and intention to consume fruits and vegetables among Latino adults*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Dietrick, H., Gatdula, N. & Buenrostro, P.T. (2025). *Child confidence and frequency of vegetable and fruit consumption and their association to frequency of eating home-prepared meals*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- Espinoza, L., Garcia, M., Nguyen-Rodriguez, S.T., Gatdula, N., Tenorio, Y., Sifuentes, Y. (2024). *Leveraging interdisciplinary nutritional knowledge (LINK) scholars training program: Preparing the public health workforce in Latino chronic disease prevention*. Abstract and oral presentation at the 2024 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, MN.
- *Giron, C. & Garcia, M. (2025). *The influence of eating as a family on Latino children's eating patterns*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Pompa, M. & Garcia, M. (2025). *¡Salud a la Vida! Cheers to Life!: Social influences on binge-drinking among young Latino adults using the Social Cognitive Theory framework*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Pope, A. & Garcia, M. (2025). *Exploring the association of social determinants of health on nutritional knowledge among adults*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Pope A., Garcia M., Trinidad P. (2025). Parental Influences on Hispanic/Latino children's fruit and vegetable consumption. Abstract and poster presentation at the 46th Annual Meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine, San Francisco, CA



- *Pope A., Garcia M., & Trinidad P. (2025). Parental Influences on Hispanic/Latino children's health behaviors. Abstract and poster presentation and University of Southern California 12th Annual research Symposium on Diabetes & Obesity, Los Angeles, CA
- *Porta, M. & Gatdula, N. (2025). *Level of education and its association to food security and self-efficacy for food security among Latino adults*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Ruiz, C. & Garcia, M. (2025). *How does food insecurity influence dietary patterns and obesity among Hispanic mother-child dyads in Long Beach?* Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Tovar, S., Gatdula, N. & Garcia, M. (2025). *Hispanic/Latino Adolescent comfortability in communicating about protective sexual behaviors*. Abstract and poster presentation at the CSULB Symposium at Week of Research and Scholarly Activity, Long Beach, CA.
- *Tovar, S., Trinidad, P., & Garcia, M. (2025). *Sedentary Behaviors: How can Hispanic/Latinos parental practices influence their child's sedentary time*. Abstract and poster presentation and University of Southern California 12th Annual Research Symposium on Diabetes & Obesity, Los Angeles, 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:

- Channel Ruiz, Center intern
- Ivy Gonzalez, HHH intern
- Melissa Pompa, HHH Fellow
- Mario Rodriguez, EPG Fellow /intern
- Patricia Cortez, HHH intern
- Rachel Westphal, HHH intern
- Selene Tovar, HHH Fellow
- Yeraldine Polo, HHH Fellow
- Nicole Olea, HHH Fellow
- Primavera Garcia, HHH Fellow
- Victoria Min, EPG intern

Undergraduate Students:

- Alexis Pope, HHH Fellow
- Anne Trujillo, EPG intern
- Cristian Giron, HHH Fellow
- Daniel Perez, EPG intern
- Heather Dietrick, HHH Fellow/Intern
- Itzel Torrico, HHH intern
- Jhanna Galan, HHH intern
- Katelyn Chu, HHH intern/Fellow
- Leonel Sandoval, HHH intern
- Lizette Najera, HHH intern
- Manuel Marroquin, HHH Fellow
- Maria Cutino, LINK Scholar
- Maria Porta, HHH Fellow
- Marlene Rodriguez, EPG intern
- Marlon Zelaya, LINK Scholar
- Mayra Hernandez, EPG intern
- Nancy Tovar, EPG intern
- Rachel Lee, HHH intern
- Rocio Quintanilla, HHH intern
- Shreya Thakuri, HHH intern
- Thanh Danh, HHH Fellow
- Valeria Perez, HHH intern
- Victoria Min, EPG intern



CSULB Faculty Collaborators:

Amber Johnson, Health Science
Guido Urizar, Psychology
Iveris Martinez, Center for Successful Aging
Jackie Dawson, Physical Therapy
Kamiar Alaei, Health Science
Kellie Walters, Kinesiology
Michelle Barrack, Nutrition and Dietetics
Sandra Arrevalo, Human Development
Selena Nguyen-Rodriguez, Health Science
Virginia Gray, Nutrition and Dietetics

External Faculty Collaborators:

Lilia Espinoza, Cal State Fullerton
Rita Higgins, Fullerton College
Sarah Mathot, Santa Ana College
Jennifer Musick, Long Beach City College
Jazmin Hurtado, Santa Ana College

Collaborating Partners:

Hilda Gaytan, Puente Latino Association

Advisory Board:

Sara Elena Loaiza, Executive Director, Latino Consultants
Vickie Mays, Professor, UCLA Psychology and Fielding School of Public Health
Jennifer Ng'andu, Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Kurt Organista, Professor, University of Berkeley School of Social Welfare
Britt Rios-Ellis, Dean, College of Health Sciences and Human Services, CSU Monterey Bay
Richard Zaldivar, Executive Director, The Wall Las Memorias Project
Jorge Daboub, Vice-President of Client Development, Univision
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
Ana Carricchi-Lopez, City Health Officer, Long Beach Department of Health and Humans Services



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