The Campus-Wide, Leadership, Academics, Social Justice, and Service (C.L.A.S.S.) Awards were created in 2006 to honor USD faculty and staff who contribute to the development of a campus community that is culturally diverse and create an educational environment that motivates and supports student learning and personal development. The honorees have dedicated and prepared students to make a positive impact in our global society.

The recipients and nominees are usually recognized at the Diversity Banquet in May. While we had to cancel this year’s banquet, we are continuing to honor deserving students.

This publication highlights our 2020 recipients and nominees. We want to extend a warm thank you to students, staff, and faculty for submitting nominations and continuing to honor the many deserving graduates that make USD a stronger community.

In Solidarity,
Mayté C. Pérez-Franco, Ph.D.
Director, United Front Multicultural Commons
The L. Reuben Mitchell Award for Campus-Wide Impact
This award is for a student who has contributed to the University through their leadership, active involvement, and outstanding contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion across campus.

The Dr. Evelyn Kirkley Award for Leadership
This award is for a student who led an organization as a member of an executive board and through their leadership capacity led initiatives that contributed to the development of leadership in others.

The Dr. Joseph Colombo Award for Academics
This award is for a student who received a 3.2 and above grade point average in their field as well as participated in conferences where they presented their academic research focusing on diversity and/or social justice issues.

The Dr. Judy Rauner Award for Social Justice
This award is for a student who led community service initiatives or other projects that addressed community issues. This student was instrumental in establishing partnerships and engaging students in social justice work.

The Dr. Judith Liu Award for Service
This award is for a student who has actively engaged in the San Diego community by volunteering their time. Through their actions, they help to bridge the spaces that keep communities separated.

The United Front Multicultural Commons Award for Inspiration
This award is given to a C.L.A.S.S. Awards nominee who embodies the true spirit of the UFMC, striving for unity and a socially just community. This person both mentors and inspires others to become leaders and helps to create change within the United Front and our USD campus.
THE L. REUBEN MITCHELL AWARD FOR CAMPUS-WIDE IMPACT

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RECIPIENT

Elie Nyembo
Bachelor of Arts
Ethnic Studies

In the words of the nominator(s):

Elie is a game-changing campus organizer. As a working-class immigrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Elie found ways to not only flip but also recreate the script. He creatively created the conditions needed to make space and build a community rooted in social justice and solidarity. This is no easy feat; however, Elie’s contagious fire, hilarious wit, and steady perseverance pierced many bubbles and had people taking many seats.

For two years, he interned at the UFMH where he not only ran the social media platform, researched social justice issues, and coordinated educational events, but also immersed himself in a dynamic student-led environment that introduced him to different people, organizations, cultures, and concerns. He soon joined the Black Student Union and Black Men Initiative as well as Students of Color in STEMM and the Public Health Club which reflected his commitment to health equity for Black immigrants and other aggrieved groups. After months of thoughtful conversations with peers, he and several others vived the African Student Union in order to address the issues and challenges impacting African diasporic students at USD.

Currently serving as the Vice President of ASU (and Students of Color in STEMM), Elie and ASU’s E-board created a brave space where African students could explore their identities in community. Always one to build relationships across boundaries, Elie recruited students to ASU and invited faculty to present an intimate workshop and discussion about the history of European empire on the African continent and its colonial afterlives which still structure the lived experiences of Elie and his peers. Moreover, he contacted African student organizations at both San Diego State University and UC San Diego in order to create a countywide network of African diasporic students who would build and support each other.

As an Ethnic Studies major, Elie is especially attuned to relationality, intersectionality, and coalition building not only as theoretical and analytical frameworks, but as embodied politics as well. In fact, his co-founding of the Third World Coalition student organization with two Latina and Black women could be seen as the latest manifestation of his ongoing political evolution as a student organizer. Their meetings attracted members from DSCA, MECha, BSU, qSTEM, FUSO, and non-affiliated students who had never joined a student organization. TWC members had just started to connect and build with each other when the COVID-19 crisis hit. Despite this disruption, Elie and the other co-founders intend to mentor a group of students to continue their necessary and hopeful work this fall.

"We will be known forever by the tracks we leave." -- Dakota Proverb
THE L. REUBEN MITCHELL
AWARD FOR CAMPUS-WIDE
IMPACT

GRADUATE STUDENT RECIPIENT

Andrea Aduna
Master of Arts
Higher Education Leadership

In the words of the nominator(s):

Andrea (Drea) values diversity and inclusion and brings these values to her work every day at the Center for Student Success and as a member of the USD community.

Drea worked to include diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the Student Success Coaching program. She improved the Coaching orientation agenda to include diversity and inclusion by adding topics such as how to support international students, student identities and intersectionalities. Her hope for the Coaching program is to make the Student Success application process more equitable so that more students would consider becoming a coach to diversify our coaching team and to better support the students who come to coaching. Drea’s voice and perspective has helped to begin the work of making the Student Success Coaching program more inclusive.

Drea is also active in the USD community outside of the Center for Student Success. Drea helped plan and facilitated a breakout session highlighting storytelling and community healing for the womxn of color community during the Womxn of Color Summit last fall semester. Drea is also a Rainbow Educator, helping to educate the USD community on how to be more inclusive to the LGBTQIA community.

As a professional and classmate, Drea shares her own identity as Filipino-American and her growing awareness of this identity. Drea comes from a strengths-based approach, helping other students grow in their identity and use their voice for positive change and impact.

Drea has contributed to help make the USD community more inclusive of diversity. Her voice has reached many colleagues and spaces on campus, helping to make the voice and perspective of women of color known both in the workplace and to the broader community.

A single seed can turn into a forest.
A single heart can transform a nation.” -- Bryan Thao Worra
In the words of the nominator(s):

Jenelle is by far one of the most capable, dedicated students I’ve met. Before we were on FUSO’s Executive Board, I knew that she was involved in cultural dances and was an extremely active member within FUSO. Although she was not elected to the E-board for her second year of college, it did not discourage her from being an active leader by volunteering for dances, regularly attending events, and socializing with all FUSO members, regardless if she knew them or not. She ran again for the E-board and was elected. Since then, she has played an integral role in encouraging attendance and participation. Jen loves FUSO with all her heart and it can be seen when she advocates for the membership and future of FUSO in all she does. She has really taken the “ate” or big sister role and has become a significant mentor and role model for many of our members including myself.

She understands that FUSO and its values live on when the members are actively attending and forming their own relationships with each other. She genuinely wants to have relationships with the people she meets and the people she works so hard for. Her committees—which are a new inclusion to her Vice President External position—always include General Body Members that she believes have the potential to be great leaders. When elections come around, she always encourages people to run, despite insecurities or doubts. She always has a way of encouraging people to be the best they can be, no matter where they are in life. Working with her has made me more passionate about my own position, and I believe her influence has greatly improved my performance as an E-board Member. Her leadership inspires others to always lead with love and innovation in mind. During her time on Executive Board, she’s helped create two new events, helped collaborate with other organizations, and created a new committee for one of FUSO’s biggest events of the year. Her innovation itself brings more people to love FUSO and the family FUSO has created. Aside from that, she shows that she has a genuine love for FUSO’s members—with or without her title of Vice President External—and that love runs deep.

She has an intense passion for FUSO and serving the Filipino community. I know that everyone in FUSO will miss her greatly next year. Her presence will remain although she is gone and I know her name will still be mentioned long after she graduates because of how much she’s accomplished.

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” —Mahatma Gandhi
In the words of the nominator(s):

Andrea is in her second year as a graduate student in the Master of Higher Education program in SOLES and works in the as the Graduate Assistant for New Student Orientation. Andrea's primarily passion is empowering under-represented students. This passion is evident in her work with planning the first Latinx Social during OLE! Weekend (new student orientation weekend). She worked tirelessly to collaborate with campus partners and students so Latinx-identified students can feel a sense of belonging at USD. It is because of her initiative and drive that USD now has an event to welcome this population to campus.

She has become a voice for those students that are not often represented or even heard. This is also evident in Andrea's involvement in the First-Generation Action Team. Andrea is a strong advocate for First Generation Students at USD and has even lead a few of the First-Generation Gathering and Dialogues that take place in the Graduate and Law Commons.

Andrea is the current Graduate Student Council Chair. Through her leadership and example, she has proven the importance and value of making connections and finding community. She has helped to plan events that bring together graduate and law students and helped them feel a sense of belonging. Andrea has been a key advocate in supporting Graduate and Law Students through COVID-19. She has been meeting with administrators to seek out resources for students, advocating for graduate and law students in committees, and advised the council through allocating GSC funds to support the Student in Needs Fund. Andrea is not one to draw attention to herself nor seek recognition for her accomplishments but she has a huge heart and her compassion inspires and comforts those around her. It has been a beautiful thing to work alongside her and watch her find the strength in her own voice.

DR. EVELYN KIRKLEY
AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP

GRADUATE STUDENT RECIPIENT

Andrea Garcia
Master of Arts
Higher Education Leadership
“The most important thing in your life is to live your life with integrity and to not give into peer pressure to try to be something that you’re not.”

--Ellen DeGeneres

In the words of the nominator(s):

Tatiana has a quiet strength. She asserts herself when appropriate and listens carefully when others need support. She integrates skills she developed as a Student Support Services Peer Mentor to assist coworkers with their personal concerns and challenges, while modeling how to be a self-advocate. Her multifaceted communication skills are rare and impactful.

While we know Tatiana best through her leadership as a student employee, her research targets a broader community. She plans to study educational psychology in graduate school to better understand the experiences of underrepresented students in multiple educational settings and develop strategies to support those involved. Through her hard work and academic dedication, this first-generation student was recently accepted to Stanford to earn her PhD.

Tatiana has presented research at the USD Summer Research Colloquium, UCSD Summer Research Conference, USD Creative Collaborations, and the Baylor McNair Research Conference. She was selected as a panelist at the Future Faces of STEM Conference at UCSD and also chosen to speak about experiences as a McNair Scholar and Researcher at USD's 2019 Research Week Lab Crawl for TRIO.

Tatiana requires little to accomplish a lot. She has made significant contributions to a variety of communities and has invested her studies in learning how to support college readiness among underserved populations. She is a beautiful example of a USD Changemaker who is making our world better for those who may have otherwise never known they were capable of advanced education. We may never know the full impact of Tatiana's endeavors, but I guarantee she will continue to improve the lives she touches through her incredible work and service.

DR. JOSEPH COLOMBO AWARD FOR ACADEMICS
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RECIPIENT

Tatiana Zamora
Bachelor of Arts
Psychology
Dr. Judy Rauner Award for Social Justice
Undergraduate Student Recipient

Gabriel Fallis
Bachelor of Arts
Ethnic Studies

In the words of the nominator(s):

Gabe exemplifies the mission of USD and serves as a role model at USD and in the larger San Diego County Native American community. He became an executive board member of AISO in the fall of 2017. He was central in the planning of events meant to raise awareness of Native American issues, especially when the students were working to educate the campus on the history of the Catholic Mission system and its impact on California Native American peoples. Because he is an enrolled member of the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, indigenous to Northern California, he became a campus leader with the goal to rename Serra Hall.

He thrived during the two years that AISO students focused on these renaming efforts, built relationships with non-Native students and worked in coalition with fellow student organizations. He worked tirelessly as an advocate, student leader, mentor, and member of ROTC. He worked to educate organization members, build relationships, and work in solidarity on a myriad of equity issues. His leadership positions as a community outreach contact for AISO as well as being elected to the vice chair and chair positions. He was especially committed to using his place as a campus leader to empower other students to engage in change efforts on campus and to support the leadership development of the younger Native students. He was also committed to educating allies to ensuring all members of the organization felt included.

Lastly, as a first-generation student who had to overcome numerous barriers to get where he is, his favorite activity was speaking with Native students from the local urban and tribal Native American communities. Since coming to USD, Gabe has always wanted to encourage and inspire other Native students to reach for their dreams. As a result, he has spoken with over 200 Native students during his time at USD. His ability to connect with these students and his enthusiasm for access and inclusion activities will be greatly missed by those at USD and in the larger Native American Community.

A common saying in Indian Country is to speak about our youth as their ancestors’ prayers. He embodies his ancestors’ resilience and represents their dreams and hopes for a future that I don’t even think they could have fully envisioned.

"Let us make our future now, and let us make our dreams tomorrow’s reality."

-- Malala Yousafzai
In the words of the nominator(s):

Hannah shows great leadership at the Black Student Resource Commons, The Commons, the classroom and overall USD campus. It has been my pleasure to work in partnership with Hannah as one of her Rainbow Educator team members. Hannah has a deepened commitment to serve our campus community in various capacities, uplifting both our divisional and university missions valuing community and human dignity.

Through her role with the Rainbow Educator Program, she regularly trains and advises best practices for both professional staff and students to integrate into their own practice. She is also a great facilitator as a Rainbow Educator and creates awareness, education, and engagement within the USD community around social justice topics. Due to her ability to hold space and dialogue, she can understand the needs of others in their own development around facilitation. Her impact on our Rainbow Educator team resonates outward towards every attendee of our workshops across campus. The Rainbow Education work is a reflection of her action research and collaborative efforts with Stacey Williams in creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for our students.

Additionally, I have the pleasure of supporting Hannah through her job search process with potential Residence Life roles. In this capacity, I have experienced her ability to self-reflect and process critical information between her inner, true-self, and the environments she navigates at USD and other campuses. As a self-identified queer Black woman of color, she actively incorporates her identity into how she processes the USD community, the Rainbow Educator Program and our field as a whole.

DR. JUDY RAUNER AWARD
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

GRADUATE STUDENT RECIPIENT

Hannah Gray-Chambers
Master of Arts
Higher Education Leadership

“There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.” -- Arundhati Roy
In the words of the nominator(s):

Danny has proven to be an inspirational member of our campus community as he shows up daily with humility, kindness, and intentionality with all he does. Through Danny’s role with Associated Student Government (ASG), he has focused his energy to establish ASG’s brand recognition and social media presence, enhance transparency by making Senate meetings available online, and create ways to make ASG accessible to everyone on-campus.

Outside of his service to ASG, Danny has poured his time and energy into engaging with local communities through his involvement with the Mulvaney Center. In particular, Danny has actively worked on the Beyond Borders Team whose focus is to create immersive experiences with neighbors on both sides of the border. Danny works to shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and unspoken narratives of border communities.

Danny also serves a volunteer at the Jewish Family Services (JFS) Family Migrant Shelter. Through his time with JFS, Danny works to provide humanitarian services to asylum-seeking families. Danny is also an active participant with University Ministry. He has served as a Tijuana Immersion Trip Leader, participated in the SEARCH and first-year retreat, and attends mass regularly.

He uses his faith to advocate for our most vulnerable communities and spread kindness through servant leadership. Danny’s commitment to service on and off USD’s campus makes him an excellent candidate for the Dr. Judith Liu Award for Service.

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

--Martin Luther King, Jr.
In the words of the nominator(s):

Donna is very involved in SOLES and the graduate/law student community. Her roles and involvement at USD include Graduate Assistant in UC Operations, President of Asian Students in Alliance (A.S.I.A.) graduate student organization, SOLES ambassador, Graduate Student Council, and SOLES Graduate Student Association. Her dedication to bring diverse communities together and creating spaces to share narratives has been instrumental in building the sense of belonging among graduate students.

Donna is also involved in the San Diego community with the Lao Cultural Community Center of San Diego. She was tasked with implementing and executing the center’s 2020-2021 scholarship for Lao-American high school graduates and current undergraduate students. It is important to recognize Southeast Asian scholars and their resiliency. She was able to leave her mark at the Cultural Community Center of San Diego not only through her scholarship implementation, but also her dedication to strengthening the bridge between APIDA communities and higher education. She also used her position as President of Asian Students in Alliance (A.S.I.A.) to build community through food while also creating an inclusive environment for members who do not hold the APIDA identity. A.S.I.A.’s Foodie Friday’s would highlight different food types by gathering at various local businesses.

Through this programming, Donna was able to connect students to the San Diego community while also supporting local businesses.

Donna is an amicable and caring individual who inspires and is passionate about higher education, social justice, and supporting other students, especially first-generation students and students in the APIDA community. Her service to the community has left great impact.

“Finally I was able to see that if I had a contribution I wanted to make, I must do it, despite what others said. That I was OK the way I was. That it was all right to be strong.”  --Wangari Maathaing
UNITED FRONT
MULTICULTURAL COMMONS
AWARD FOR INSPIRATION

In the words of the nominator(s):

Ever since Davis transferred to USD, she has grown as a leader and has helped others to do the same. As an e-board member for AISO, she has connected with several prospective and current Native students to create a sense of belonging and explore the connection of their Native identity with their leadership approach. Moreover, she is very passionate about merging her Native identity with her passion for the earth sciences, as shown in her Teacher Assistant role in fall 2019 and her internship with Audobon in spring 2020.

As a student intern at the UFMC, Davis' leadership has created spaces of reflection and community building. At the group level, she has led dialogues to explore the connection of social identities and the way student leaders practice leadership within their multicultural and changemaking student organizations at the the United Front Leadership Council. At the individual level, I have witnessed Davis mentoring and coaching other students, especially first- and second-year students, to help them develop skills such as leadership, time management, communication, etc.

Additionally, Davis acted as an Empower Retreat Facilitator hosted by the Women's Commons this past February 2020. Due to a last minute change, Davis was asked to be part of the facilitation team a couple of days prior to the retreat and she seemingly jumped in to the challenge and helped other women learn about themselves and how they practice leadership. Davis has been a great leader at USD and I cannot wait to see the great things she will accomplish after graduation.

Davis Luanava
Bachelor of Arts
Environmental and Ocean Sciences

“Consciousness is power. Tomorrow’s world is yours to build.”
--Yuri Kochiyama
“The American dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay. Our families don’t always cross the finish line in the span of one generation. But each generation passes on to the next the fruits of their labor.”

--Julián Castro

AWARD NOMINEES

Ale Esquer
Andrea Aduna
Andrea Garcia
Annabel Gong
Ayodeji Bandele
Daniel Rodriguez
Davis Luanava
Donna Soukantouy
Elie Nyembo
Gabriel Fallis
Grace Strumpfer
Hannah Gray-Chambers
Idiuso (Iddy) Okeke
Jenelle Seguin
Jesse Magaña
Jesseca Bates
Jesus Martinez Saucedo
Kimberly Guzman
Kortney Young
MarGhece Barnes
Marion Chavarria Rivera

Maya Matabwa
Nadia Abdala
Perla Cruz
Tatiana Zamora
Terrance Horne
A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

Awards Selection Committee
Dr. Evelyn Kirkley
Faculty
Manda Sayegh
Administrator
Valerie Mora
Graduate Student
Kapri Tulang-De Silva
Undergraduate Student
Dr. Mayté Pérez-Franco
Administrator

2019-2020 UFMC Team
Analleli Villegas Barrera
Davis Luavana
Fanisee Bias
Sungmin Bak
Ximena Moreno Jose
Daniela Gurgol Saldana
Mayté Pérez-Franco
Miso Jang
Valerie Mora

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.”
--Mother Teresa