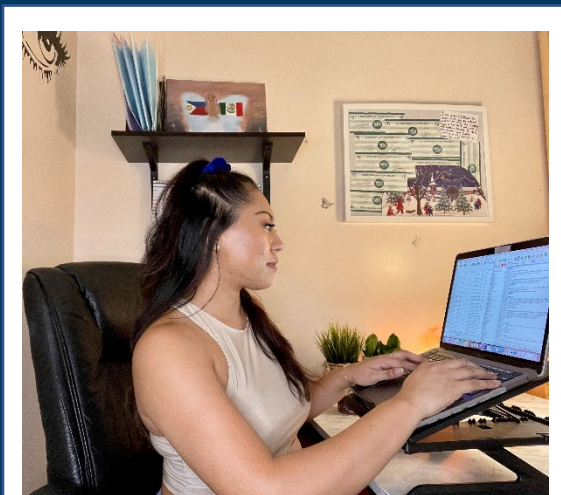


2021 CSUDH OUR Summer Research Awardees *Testimonials*

The mission of the **CSUDH Office of Undergraduate Research** is to enhance undergraduate student participation in research, contributing to the improvement of student outcomes by developing and supporting faculty-mentored original investigation within and beyond the curriculum.

This award was granted to a wide variety of undergraduate students across the university pursuing research. The purpose of this award is to provide summer research experience under the mentorship of a CSUDH faculty member and to also help students who otherwise need to work during the summer so they can reduce their commitments and engage in opportunities like undergraduate research. Participants will be presenting their research findings at the 2022 CSUDH Student Research Conference.

Check out what students have to say about their summer '21 research experience!



Margarita

Student: Margarita Alvarez

Major: Psychology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Dr. Giacomo Bono](#)

Research Project: Coping with Covid-19: Gender differences in stress, wellness, and academic functioning among college students and coping strategies that help

My experience with OUR summer research program has been humbling and rewarding. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of Dr. Bono's Positive Social Development Lab. Through his mentorship, I gained exposure to fundamental aspects of the research process that will be beneficial for my career. I learned how to analyze data in SPSS and had the opportunity to be a part of a research project that focused on gender differences in coping strategies for Covid-19. Research is exciting because there are always new avenues

to explore. Many doors can open which can lead to greater discovery. Research is the necessary tool for the advancement and development of society and humanity as a whole. I highly encourage other students to apply and take advantage of this resource that CSUDH has to offer. I am grateful to have been a part of a hard-working team and learn in an environment with like-minded individuals. Thank you OUR for making this opportunity possible, it has made my time here at CSUDH more worthwhile.

Student: Alexander Camarillo

Major: Clinical Science

Class Level: Senior

Research Mentor: [Dr. Philip Vieira](#)

Research Project: Supporting First Year Student Success through a Combination of High Impact Educational Practices

Program: Ronald McNair Scholar

During this past summer, I was given the opportunity from the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) to develop an educational framework and scientific based pedagogy for a first-year seminar course titled Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll: The Neuroscience of Hedonism, UNV 101. The purpose of providing such a course to freshmen students is to promote diversity and inclusion in STEM via research and hands-on lab experience. By giving students a basic scientific foundation, they can choose to pursue a STEM degree and career. Through focusing on the goal of improving access to STEM for underrepresented minority students, I learned different teaching pedagogies to use that help with inclusivity in the classroom. At the end of the summer, in conjunction with my research mentor, we were able to design a course for the Fall 2021 semester that will serve as a pipeline for diversity and inclusivity to the STEM field. Without the help and support from the OUR, I wouldn't have been able to perform such research that resonates with me and the community I come from.



Student: Lauren Casillas

Major: English Education

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Iara Mantenido](#)

Research Project: A New Wave of Linguistics

My experience with the OUR Summer Research Program has been filled with hard work, dedication, and opportunity. I would like to thank the OUR and its staff members for supporting me. I would also like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Iara Mantenido, for teaching me and encouraging me to apply. During the program, I've learned to follow my passion for Educational Linguistics, gained confidence, and conducted my very own research. The literature review was one of my favorite parts of the process because it showed me what has previously been done and what hasn't been done before. This led me to create an introductory curriculum

designed to provide access to LA public schools based on K-12 students' interests. I also developed a portfolio proposed to departments and schools of possible collaboration formats as an outreach. In addition, learning the process of IRB approval is a skill that will serve as a valuable asset in graduate school. Lastly, I aim to present the curriculum at the 2022 Student Research Conference and at a linguistics conference. I am proud to represent my culture as a dedicated Latina student with the goal of becoming a professor. Overall, I am grateful for this learning experience that has shaped me into becoming a researcher.

Student: Lukas Daniels

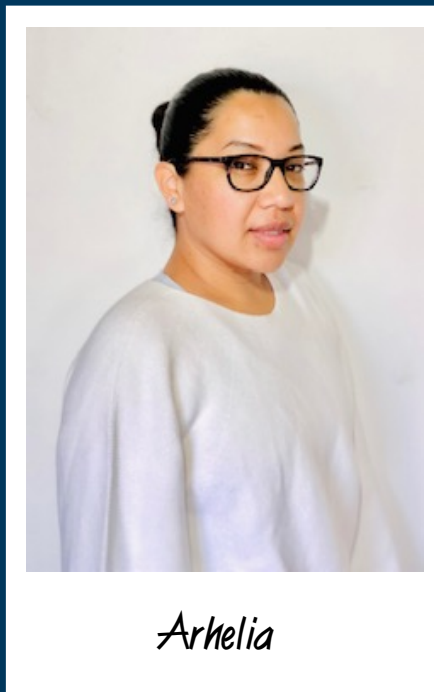
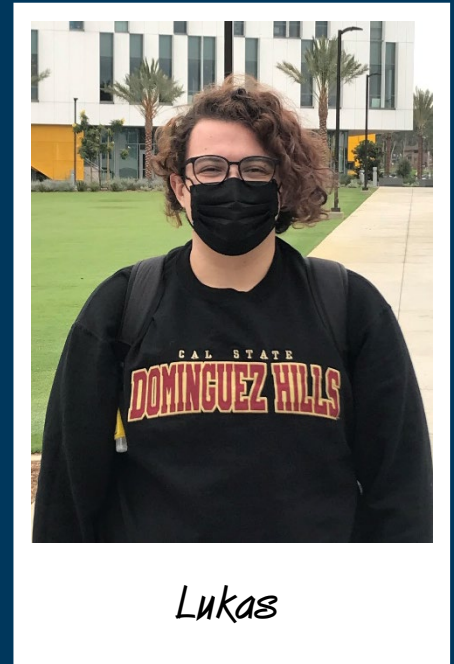
Major: Anthropology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Dr. Sarah Lacy](#)

Research Project: Chestfeeding Among Transgender Gestational and Adoptive Parents

The OUR Summer Research Program provided me immense support in conducting my first anthropological research project as well as prepared me for graduate school and future grant applications. I started the summer overwhelmed with the endless possibilities graduate school provides. However, with my advisor's support I was able to determine what area of research I want to pursue and use this project as a starting point for my graduate school search and applications. Additionally, OUR Summer Research Program provided me the time and space in my schedule to focus on research that I find incredibly important and interesting. For that, I am incredibly grateful and excited as I have a taste for what is to come in graduate school. Moreover, the OUR Summer Research Program helped me build a strong connection with Dominguez Hills regardless of the pandemic limitations. This connection helped me to stick with my educational goals, apply for graduate programs, and reach for my biggest dreams. Overall, I am appreciative of the support and connections I gained from the OUR Summer Research Program.



Student: Arhelia Figueroa

Major: Psychology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Dr. Joanna Perez](#)

Research Project: Reconociendo Nuestro Poder: Experiences of Latinx Immigrant Non-English-Speaking Parents During COVID-19

As a non-traditional student and parent, there are limited opportunities that allow me to be financially stable while focusing on conducting research. However, the OUR Summer Research Program gave me the financial means and resources to complete the IRB process, review academic literature, and begin research participant recruitment, including building rapport. I now feel prepared to continue with the research project throughout my senior year. I also feel like a competitive candidate for graduate programs. Beyond enhancing my research experience, the OUR Summer Research Program affirmed my passion to use research to create social change. With the support of my research mentor and the Toro UndocuScholars Research Program, I plan

on continuing my research project to bring awareness and advocate for my community. Indeed, I am grateful that the Office of Undergraduate Research at CSUDH offers students like myself life changing opportunities.

Student: Benjamin Garcia Morales
Major: Computer Science
Class Level: Junior
Research Mentor: [Dr. Wai Yan Pong](#)
Research Project: Density of length spectra of natural numbers

Research was something I honestly never saw myself doing especially as an undocumented student. However, this experience was quite interesting. This was the first time I've ever done research and it felt a bit overwhelming, but I felt greatly supported by my mentor. I think this experience is one that all undergrads should participate, especially those who plan on going into graduate work or planning to go into a PhD program. Personally, I want to thank my mentor as he was the one who informed me of this opportunity and I felt very supported by him. Many people have never decided to take a chance with me but, he extended his hand to me and I got to experience something that I didn't think would be possible for me. A piece of advice I want to share is to keep your eyes on the prize. Yes, there will always be times in which you are frustrated and just want to say "I can't do this.", but you should keep trying. Reach out to your mentor and tell them how you feel, more often than not, they will help you. During my research, I felt I was way over my head, but Dr. Pong really helped me and he had the patience to support me even when my house caught on fire. He gave me time to work on my own thing.



Benjamin



Mikaela

Student: Mikaela Gil
Major: Ecology and Environmental Biology
Class Level: Sophomore
Research Mentor: [Dr. Justin Valliere](#)
Research Project: Prescribed Burning for California Grasslands: How Effective is it?
Program: LSAMP

The OUR internship and funding has impacted my higher education in many ways. Through OUR, I was able to further broaden my knowledge of environmental sciences, expand on my experience with scientific literature and writing, and practice the process of writing meta-analyses. OUR made it possible to commit my summer time towards becoming a better researcher and I now truly feel that my career path is within my reach. This experience has also taught me the value of the scientific process outside of classroom settings. I also learned the importance of collaborating ideas through proper communication, such as weekly meetings with my professor to

discuss findings and allowed me to practice those skills in a STEM related setting. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity with OUR, as my pathway to a researcher has become enriched with experiences during the summer! Thank you so much, OUR!

Student: Jennyfer Ibarra

Major: Psychology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Dr. Alfredo Gonzalez](#)

Research Project: California ESL Public High School Teachers: Analysis of the Extent of Bias Towards Factors of Success and Adequate Support in an Anti- Immigrant Climate with Latinx ESL Students

My experience as a recipient of the OUR Summer research award was enjoyable and informative. The opportunity awarded helped sharpen my research skills as well as learn new research methods. Through frequent meetings and guidance by my research mentor, Dr. Gonzalez, I was able to build an Implicit Association Test as well as using Grounded Theory to create a method to measure relationships between educators and their English learning students. Following this, I was able to obtain IRB approval and continue my research working with human subjects. The award also provided a chance to dedicate time to my research project by easing financial stress as a student. As a migrant student, I am the first in my family to pursue a Ph.D. With the guidance of Dr. Gonzalez, I am now more confident in my research skills and navigating through higher education. This in turn also became an encouragement to prepare for graduate school and the GRE. I also hope to use my research as a writing sample for doctoral program applications and continue to be enthralled by relationships between humans and society.



Jennyfer



Kelsie

Student: Kelsie Kaufman

Major: Cellular and Molecular Biology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Samantha Leigh](#)

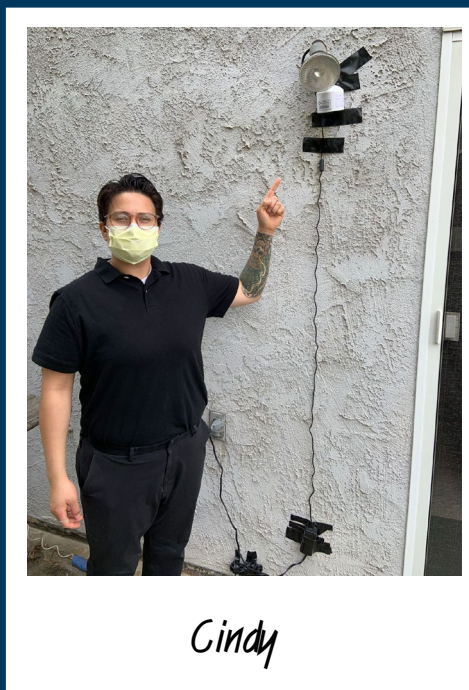
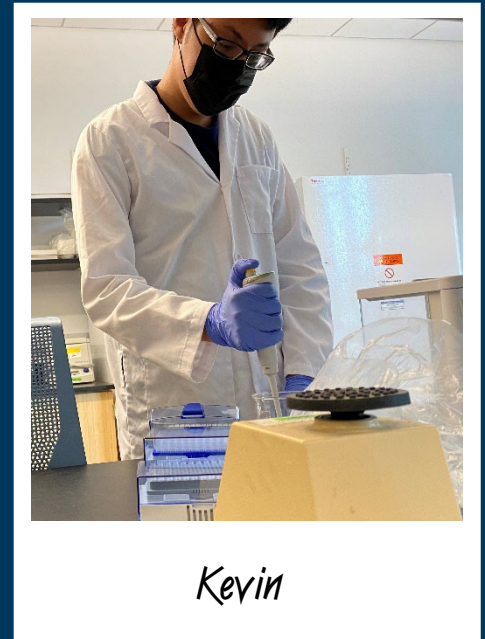
Research Project: Ingestion of Microplastics by Commercially Important Fishes

After such a rough year of having to stay at home and having to take classes and complete work at home, it was so nice to be able to go out this summer and do some work in both the field and in the lab. The OUR Summer Research Award made that possible. In this research lab, we're researching the issue of microplastics being found in the water off of our coastal shore and whether they are being ingested by the fishes. This funding allowed me to take time off of work and go on a field excursion to catch some anchovy and halibut specimens. In the Fall semester, we will be dissecting them

and recording the number of microplastics found in their digestional tract and tissues. I was also able to gain a little hands-on lab experience by becoming familiar with chemicals in the lab and the various types of equipment that I will be working with. I'm excited to continue this research in the coming semesters, as this is such a critical threat not only to the wellbeing of the oceanic ecosystem, but also to us humans. Being a part of this program gave me the experience of working in a research lab, which is something I've never done before. I'm so thankful for being given this opportunity.

Student: Kevin Mosqueda
Major: Microbiology
Class Level: Junior
Research Mentor: [Samantha Leigh](#)
Research Project: The Pervasiveness of Microplastics in Southern California Marine Ecosystems

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to participate in the OUR summer program which allowed me to continue my research in person rather than solely online. I was able to participate in a field day and get hands-on experience, which I would have not been able to do without this program. I was able to take part in a micropipette training and a lab safety training, which broadened my knowledge of working in a lab. In addition, I got to analyze the data that was previously collected in the Spring even further and find the average amount of microplastics for the different areas that were sampled. Being able to observe how fish samples were collected and prepared to be stored for research, was very informative. Although we did not get to the dissections of these samples due to COVID restrictions, in the future the fish samples we collected will be dissected and microplastics will be extracted from their tissues. Furthermore, more analysis will be conducted for the data collected which will allow us to compare the samples even further. I look forward to continuing my research and presenting it at the 2022 Spring Student Research Conference.



Student: Cindy Munoz
Major: Geography
Class Level: Junior
Research Mentor: [Tianjun Lu](#)
Research Project: Using Citizen Science and Low-Cost Sensors to Assess Air Pollution Exposure at Disadvantaged Communities In Southern California

My experience with the OUR Summer Research Program has been an important opportunity, learning more about my own community's environmental health issues with scientific research. This program has laid out the infrastructure of my own lifework contributing to environmental progress in marginalized communities. Thus, being a person of color affected by these environmental threats, I have grown fond of seeking organizations and various opportunities in order to help conduct the groundwork to inform people of what is occurring in their neighborhoods. Not only am I able to understand and communicate with the public, but also make this information

accessible for others in low-income communities. In the efforts to address the hazards on a local and global scale, I aim to help reverse and prevent future pollution in these areas. Thank you for granting the award and opportunity.

Student: Raven Nolasco

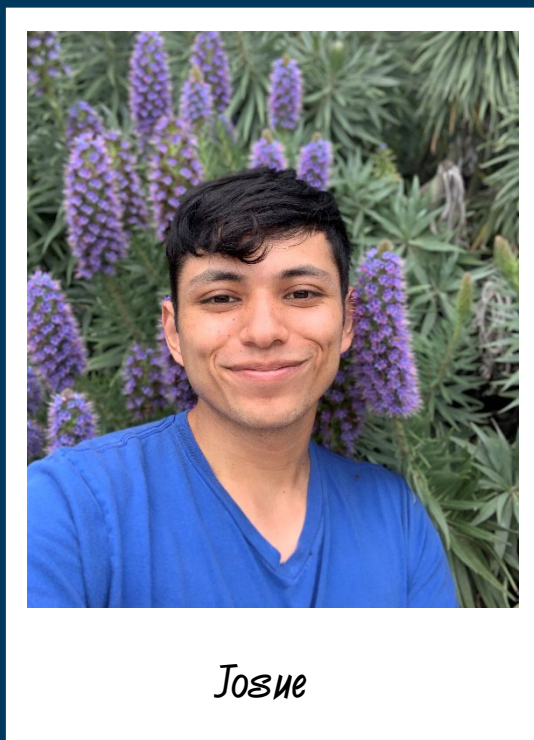
Major: Microbiology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Samantha Leigh](#)

Research Project: Microplastic Ingestion by Commercially Important Fish Species

I would love to thank the OUR Summer Research Program for funding my research this summer. I consider myself blessed to have been able to conduct this research while being paid, given Covid-19 did impact us all with lack of employment. The OUR took a chance on me, one I will forever appreciate. After expressing the importance of this research to OUR, I was granted an award to do research with Professor Leigh. I am now confident in conducting more research in the future and plan on growing in the biology research field and pursue a PhD to become a biology professor. Every aspect of our research was fundamental to my future knowledge in research. I can carry all the knowledge I have learned this summer with me for the rest of my research career. I would like to encourage everyone reading this that it is never too late to start on research and you never have to know what you want to research, just getting involved will make the biggest difference. You will always leave with enough knowledge to improve as a scientist.



Student: Josue Paredes

Major: Political Science

Class Level: Senior

Research Mentor: [Hyo Joon Chang](#)

Research Project: Can the United Nations Effectively Address North Korean Human Rights?

My experience in the OUR research program gave me the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge from my classes to investigate the tools the UN has to deal with human rights in the DPRK. It was an incredible opportunity to spend time researching an issue that has affected so many people. The human rights abuses in North Korea are unlike anywhere else in the world. At times the research evoked strong emotions from me, but this also reaffirmed why it was such an important topic to research. This experience let me spend my summer growing my research skills and investigating solutions to one of the worst human rights abuses on earth. I am grateful for my opportunity to work with Dr. Chang and refine my research skills.

Student: Jocelyne Mena

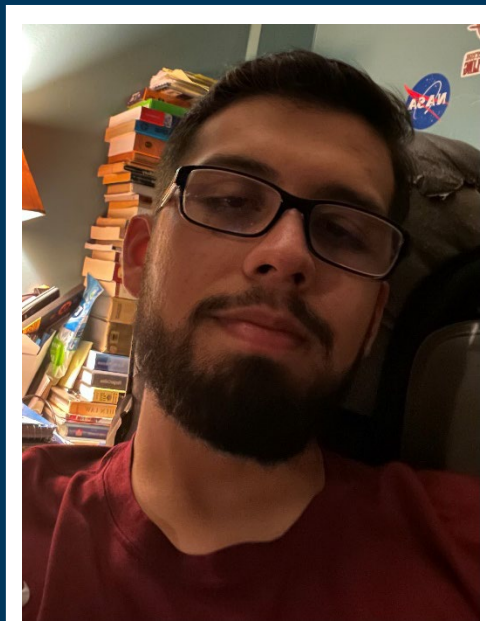
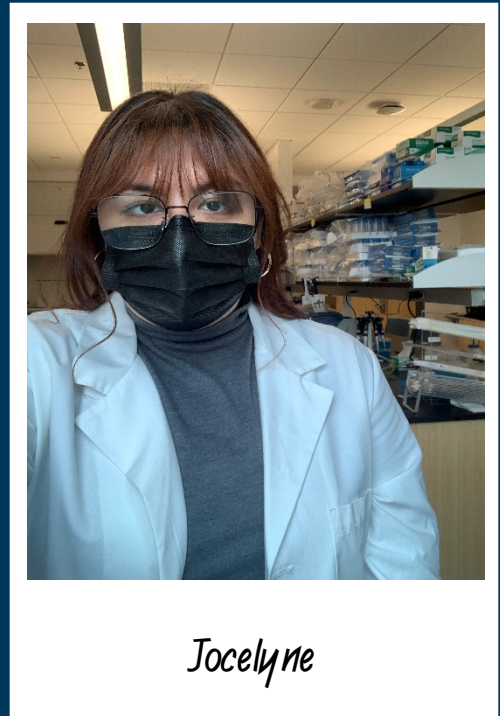
Major: Biology

Class Level: Senior

Research Mentor: [Karin Kram](#)

Research Project: Identifying Genes that Play a Role in Long-Term Stationary Phase in *Escherichia coli*

It was such a great opportunity to experience research through the OUR Summer Program, especially during the pandemic. Working with the OUR Summer Program gave me a number of new skills and the experience of working in a research lab. As a biology major, research is one of the foundations needed to succeed. Reading and understanding research papers along with doing actual research and gathering data for my own research, was a very enjoyable and educational experience. I was able to derive lab work knowledge, scientific writing skills, team working skills and a better understanding in research. With this experience, I can say that I am confident in pursuing a career as a research scientist. Having the support of the Office of Undergraduate Research and my mentor, Dr. Kram was everything I expected and more.



Carlos

Student: Carlos Zuniga

Major: Ecology and Environmental Biology

Class Level: Junior

Research Mentor: [Shehla Pervin](#)

Research Project: Examining Genetic Signatures between Fast and Slow Growing Tumors in African American Triple Negative Breast Cancer

My experience with the OUR Summer Research Program has been challenging, but extremely gratifying to finally be paid to do something I loved to do, which was continuing to work on my research of triple-negative breast cancer with Dr. Pervin and her exceptional group of research students this summer. Tigress was an amazing help this summer in the entire process from applying to the final week of my time with the program and was very understanding of any issues I may have faced this summer and always being there to assist however she could. The support from this program was absolutely amazing, being able to finally be paid to work on something I was passionate about was a dream come true for me! As soon as I saved enough money, I quit my job making coffee to

put more time towards working on my research. My research was done from home on my computer due to COVID and quitting my other job allowed me to maximize my efforts this summer on the project. I will always be extremely grateful for what the Office of Undergraduate Research and Tigress has done for me, this summer was extremely inspiring for me as a researcher. Thank you!