





Soaring to New Heights

Celebrating 15 Years of Excellence

The future is full of opportunities for our ambitious and resilient ACE Scholars. Thanks to your belief in their exceptional potential and ability to overcome challenges, our students continue to shine brightly.

Because of your generous support, ACE graduates are making a difference in the world as educators and nurses, as technology experts and business owners, as counselors and social workers and so much more. We are proud to celebrate their many accomplishments!

It has been said that we rise by lifting others. Thank you for believing in what is possible and for making an investment in the leaders of tomorrow, our inspiring ACE Scholars.

In gratitude,

Andres Favela, interim associate vice president of Student Academic Support Services

Laurie Orr, LCSW, counselor

Leigh Quijada, LCSW, coordinator/counselor



Celebrating Class of 2022

The Class of 2022 marks the 15th graduating class of the ACE Scholars program. Thirteen amazing scholars received their degrees in June 2022, and their future is bright. For our amazing scholars, graduation marks not only an important milestone in their lives, but also a new chapter of becoming changemakers in our region and beyond. For our ACE Scholars, graduation symbolizes perseverance, dedication and commitment to success. The Class of 2022 will continue to be an inspirational force and soar to new heights.

CONGRATULATIONS ACE SCHOLARS CLASS OF 2022

TATIANA APELU
M.A., sociological practice

SARAY BENAVIDES
B.A., criminology and justice studies / sociology

NICOLE CRAWFORD
B.A., communication

JOVANA HARO
B.A., sociology

SKYELA HORNE
B.A., psychological science

ELVIRA LAGUNA
B.A., social sciences

GENEVIE LOPEZ
B.A., psychological science / child and adolescent development

FATIMA NASSER
B.A., criminology and justice studies

GUADALUPE OJEDA
B.A., social sciences

PAUL RUIZ
B.A., criminology and justice studies

AMANDA SUTTON
B.A., American Indian studies

SHANNYN THOMAS
B.A., criminology and justice studies

ANGELICA TRAMILL
B.A., psychological science



I remember thinking, wow, I picked the right school. For the first time in my life, I wasn't somebody's burden. Someone actually wanted to be there for me. So I decided then and there that I would become the Tatiana that I should be.

— Tatiana Apelu, M.A., sociological practice



ACE Scholars Services

Empowering Our Students

KELLY (4th-year)

ACE has helped me feel more comfortable on campus and accomplish my goals. Not having a support system close to me was one of my biggest fears going into college, but ACE has always been there with open arms to answer any questions and help. I will always appreciate their support. I am grateful for ACE because of the resources they have provided me. From tutoring to

snacks, they always had something I could use, questions they could answer, or a special treat after a hard week of studying.

MARIA (2nd-year transfer student)

ACE has helped me to stay on track academically. I am grateful for ACE because I have a place I belong. Being in the foster care system, sometimes the only sane place is school. I was so excited

to know Cal State San Marcos had ACE Scholars because I felt like I could finally connect with classmates like myself. Everyone at ACE is welcoming, and it feels good to know I have a place.

ELAYNA (3rd-year transfer student)

ACE has helped me accomplish my goals here at CSUSM. Any questions I have, ACE representatives can help and guide

me. I am grateful for ACE because it gave me a family, a quiet place to study, and the courage I need to get my degree next year.

ALEXUS (3rd-year transfer student)

ACE has helped me to plan with my college schedule and activities. I am grateful for ACE because whenever I have a problem, I can always turn to Ms. Quijada for help. She always finds a solution.

ALYSSA (2nd-year transfer student)

ACE has helped me accomplish a successful transition to CSUSM. With their help,

I have been supported and encouraged along the way. Grateful hearts are happy hearts: I am grateful for ACE because I have the extra guidance and resources available through the program. It helps tremendously!

JEANETTE (3rd-year transfer student)

ACE has helped me accomplish so much in the past year. Leigh is phenomenal at what she does. I would not be three-quarters done with my B.A. if it were not for ACE. I am grateful for ACE because I would not be where I'm at if it weren't for the ACE support system behind me.



Ensuring all students can pursue the dream of a college degree is the core of our institution's mission. ACE empowers former foster youth to believe in themselves by providing a family-like environment where they can learn, grow and thrive to become successful scholars and reach their highest potential in college and beyond.

— Dr. Viridiana Díaz,
VP of Student Affairs

2021-2022 STATS

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5

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

...

10

TRANSFER STUDENTS

...

2

GRADUATE STUDENTS

...

58

ACE SCHOLARS

...

269

ACE SCHOLARS SINCE INCEPTION

WORKING SCHOLARSHIPS
OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS (2017-2022)

23

DEPARTMENTS
ACROSS CAMPUS (BELOW)

100

SEMESTER LONG
WORKING-SCHOLARSHIPS

43

ACE SCHOLARS



Admissions & Records
ACE Scholars Services
Anthropology Department
Artes Center
Career Center
CEHHS
Cross Cultural Center
CSUSM Corp. Human Resources
Department of Recreation
Dreamer's Resource Office

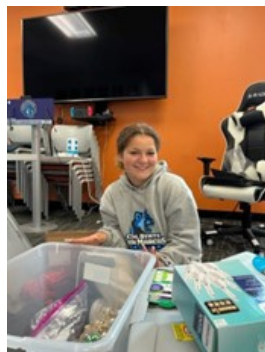
Early Outreach
Event and Conference Services
FACES
Global Education
Global Studies
Health and Wellness Center
Office of Inclusive Excellence
Institutional Planning and Analysis
Latin@ Center

Office of Academic Advising
Office of Sustainability
PASS Department
Project Rebound
Registrars Office
Student Leadership Center
Sociology Department
Student Health & Counseling
Student Life & Leadership
Veterans Services



ACE SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

A 6-week transition program for our 7 first-year freshmen which included on-campus residency, 1 or 2 college courses, academic skills workshops, and community building "Fun Friday" events (pictured).



Summer Bridge students also receive Working-Scholarships.
Brandon at the Veterans Center (left) Hailey at the Latin@ Center (middle).
Right: ACE Summer Program Assistant (3rd from left), ACE Staff, and the ACE first-year freshmen during a Summer Bridge community building event.

MEET TATIANA

Tatiana, Received a B.A. in Sociological Practice in 2020 and M.A. in Sociological Practice in 2022. Currently a Program Coordinator with Together We Rise, a non-profit organization support foster youth.



IN HER OWN WORDS:

In 2016, I came to CSUSM as a bright-eyed 18-year-old with little to no job experience. My resume was so empty that I had placed a long list of hobbies as employment history with hopes to “fake it till I make it.” Through my working scholarship opportunities, I can confidently say that I have an impressive resume now with a plethora of skills and experience working in different areas of higher education.

I have had the opportunity to work jobs on campus that granted me flexibility with my class schedule and mentorship from appointed supervisors. The bonus was that I was gaining an income while doing this all.

My working scholarship has changed vastly since my undergraduate days and has been molded into an opportunity for me to gain experience as a graduate teaching assistant. I have hopes and dreams of becoming a college professor but I did not know how to gain the experience. ACE informed me that they would help fund this opportunity for me and that I could work alongside my favorite faculty members with my working scholarship.

I have gained more teaching experience through this scholarship than I would have to be in my graduate program alone, It has boosted my self-confidence in the classroom and instilled a newfound passion for teaching. I have been given the chance to guest lecture multiple times, I love talking to my students, and I find joy in passing on my knowledge to others. I can thank ACE Scholars for blessing me with this opportunity.



As I head into the workforce and begin job hunting, I know that I have an advantage in higher education job roles because of the experience I gained with my working scholarship. The employers I have interviewed are always impressed with the unique skill set that I have compiled together over the last 6 years with my working scholarship. I am forever grateful for the people who help fund these working scholarships, they quite literally prepared me for the real world.”

JEFF “JJ” GUTOWSKI

B.S., business
administration,
Class of 2015

In 2018, I made the switch from my role as director of marketing for a large Southern California real estate developer in pursuit of my lifelong passion for aviation. I excelled in flight school and took a role as an aviation lecturer at Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology. I was reunited with a friend from college as his assistant chief at a flight school in Los Angeles. Together we created our own flight school, implementing the vision for excellence we had. We are extremely proud to see how successful that vision has become. You can learn more about what we built at: www.clipperaviation.com.

ACE always had my back and let me know that I was loved and cared about, which is exactly what ACE students need. My favorite ACE memory is when they helped me with an interview for my very first internship. I learned through the internship, ironically, that I did not want to be in that industry. ACE encouraging me to take that internship was a career catalyst and still is a sounding board for some of my business acumen that has led to my success. I will always be grateful for the ACE program.



CHRISTINA (CAMPS) DESHOMME

B.A., communication,
Class of 2019

I started a photography business in Houston and just opened an event space and studio rental. I am now starting a nonprofit to provide arts and enrichment classes to foster youth. As a former foster youth, this project is near to my heart. In addition, I am collaborating and sponsoring events for small business owners/entrepreneurs as well as influencers and bloggers. Proceeds from these events will help fund the non-profit. I am passionate about giving back to the community. The goal is to be a resource for small businesses, influencers and bloggers, as well as a resource for foster youth who need mentorship and a safe place to express themselves. More info can be found here: www.christinadeshomme.com.

I have so many wonderful memories from the ACE program. I've met amazing friends and mentors along the way. It's hard to say what my favorite memory is, but I will say I really value the fact that someone was always there for me when I needed someone. If I didn't have ACE, I really believe I would not have made it. I am thankful and I will always be grateful for the ACE crew. I can't wait to come visit!

