

2025 Social Justice in Education Conference

Presenter Biographies

Dra. Maricela Becerra García joined the Spanish Program at CSU Channel Islands in 2020 as an Assistant Professor and currently serves as Faculty Lead for the ASSET Scholars Program. Dra. Maricela Becerra García is proud to be “CSU made” as a double alumna of CSU Long Beach. Her experiences as a first-generation and undocumented student, immigrant, English learner, and student parent, continue to shape her role as an educator and femtor.

Sandra Birmingham, M.Ed, is a child of two immigrants and first-generation college graduate. Sandra joined CSU Channel Islands in 2012 and is currently serving as an HSI STEM Project Director. Spending over 18 years working on Department of Education grants, she is committed to furthering improving academic student success and engagement and advancing educational equity.

Kevin Brannon is an educator, radio personality, award-winning filmmaker, and founder of the Reel Angler Network. He advocates for marine education and inclusion, hosts the Reel Anglers Fishing Show and Reel Radio podcast, and consults for the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife and NOAA. He’s also a Channel Islands conservation leader.

Emily Campagna (she/her) is the Disability Accommodations & Support Services (DASS) Case Manager at CSUCI, where she supports students with specialized disability needs. With a background in special education, she is also a graduate student pursuing a Master’s in Higher Education Policy. Emily is deeply passionate about how intersectionality shapes student experiences and is committed to advocating for holistic support and progressive change in higher education.

Heidi Coronado, Ph.D., is a Professor at California Lutheran University’s Counseling Department. With experience in K-12 and higher education globally, her work focuses on educational access, historical and generational trauma, trauma-informed practices, resiliency development, and Indigenous/Latino/a mental health and healing practices. As a professor, researcher, consultant, counselor, and coach, she fosters holistic, decolonial spaces for empowerment and transformation.

Esmeralda Delgado is earning a Master of Science in Counseling with a PPS Credential at California Lutheran University. Passionate about advocating for K-12 students, she strives to provide guidance and resources they need to thrive. Committed to inclusion, she embraces a culturally proficient approach to promote student growth and empowerment.

Jessica Dorado has a background in Sociology, and experience working with the General Education and Special Education population. The goal Jessica has with her students is to build strong relationships in order for them to feel seen and heard as well as engaging and intriguing students in showing appreciation to different cultures.

Dr. Ramon Flores, born in Mexicali, Mexico, received dual degrees in mechanical engineering from CSU, Northridge, and his Doctorate degree in Educational Technology from Pepperdine University. Dr. Flores is a registered professional engineer. He is in his 17th year as a trustee on the Ventura County Board of Education.

John Gonzalez is in his 18th year as a teacher at Adolfo Camarillo high school, currently working as a classroom teacher and Learning Instruction and Technology Coach. He is currently studying systemic approaches to implementing equitable grading practices and nontraditional methods of identifying students for intervention and support.

Matthew Haber has supported math education for 26 years. He taught English learners and coached teachers in the inner cities of Los Angeles for many years before leading initiatives in San Joaquin County. Under his leadership, student achievement in mathematics increased, specifically that of marginalized learners. Currently, Mr. Haber is the Mathematics Manager for Oxnard School District, committed to the district's mission to ensure all learners are provided with equitable learning opportunities and equipped to thrive in the 21st Century. Mr. Haber is the author of two books dedicated to supporting parents and educators with the teaching and learning of mathematics. His vision is for all learners to have opportunities to deepen their math knowledge and practices through cognitively demanding and engaging mathematics experiences.

Kelly Hatton is the mom of an amazing teenage son, & the wife of a guy who loves her to bits. She is a middle school English teacher, and has been a teacher and administrator for almost 30 years. Kelly has worked overseas, and throughout California, in both elementary & secondary settings.

Stephanie Hernández-Jarvis is a formerly undocumented immigrant from México. She earned her bachelor's in Chicana/o Studies from UC Santa Barbara and her master's in

Urban Education from Loyola Marymount University. She teaches Dual Language Immersion, with an unwavering passion for teaching about cultures, languages, visual arts and social justice.

Dr. Milena Hurtado, a Spanish professor at Oxnard College, has over 20 years of teaching experience in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and California. She holds a Ph.D. in Hispanic Languages and Literature from UCSB and is committed to inclusive education. She is currently developing a Zero Textbook Cost path for the Spanish program.

Maripas Jacobo, born and raised in Oxnard, CA, developed a deep connection to her community through environmental and community activism from a young age. A CSUCI alumna with degrees in Environmental Science and Chicano Studies, she now serves as a Community Outreach Specialist at the Port of Hueneme, fostering education, workforce development, and community engagement.

Matt La Belle is currently in his sixth year as the Principal of Adolfo Camarillo High School. He has been an innovator in creating new, exciting, and successful educational movements, has spoken at multiple ACSA Summits, and has been published in the ACSA Leadership Magazine.

Danna Lomax currently serves as a Dual Language Teacher Specialist in Ventura Unified School District and Lecturer and Online Course Service Faculty Lead at CSUCI. Danna is interested in culturally sustaining pedagogies and Peace Education, both of which encourage students to create peace with themselves, each other, and the planet.

Kristin Majda has worked in the field of education for more than 20 years and currently serves as the science instructional specialist for Oxnard School District, as well as adjunct faculty for the School of Education at CSUCI. Her credentials include masters degrees in biotechnology and business administration, and anticipated completion of a doctorate in educational leadership in May of 2025. Kristin serves in leadership roles for the California Association of Science Educators (CASE) and Gold Coast Science Network (GCSN) and is a staunch advocate for equity in STEM education. She was awarded the 2018 VC STEM Champion Award for her extensive commitment and contributions to helping build Ventura County into a nationally recognized STEM ecosystem.

Clarissa Melgoza is a 5th grade Dual Language Teacher that is currently teaching in the Ventura Unified School District. Ms. Melgoza strives to empower student identity and culture through her classroom practices and pedagogy. She is currently involved in

VUSD's Anti-bias and Anti-Racism Research Project to improve her school site and community.

Joe I. Mendoza was born in La Colonia of Oxnard in 1932, the son of farmworkers, was among the first to attend Ramona School on the date of its opening. With the support of parents and grandparents, was able to attend high school and later the university. Graduated with a B.A. in Education and became a teacher. Later, was able to obtain a Masters' Degree and a PhD. Taught elementary school, middle school, high school, university, and then became a principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent. Then, completed 40 years as Director of the Migrant Education Program. Received many awards, among them the OHTLI Award from President Fox of Mexico, for leadership in working with migrant families. This was followed by an Honorary Doctor Degree from California State University, Channel Islands. Retired after 66 years in education and having reached the age of 91.

Heather Molloy is an adjunct professor at CSUCI in the School of Education, a Professional Service Provider at the Ventura County Office of Education and Learning Disabilities Specialist at Ventura County Community College District teaching both individuals with and without disabilities. It is at VCCCD she started examining the effect of trauma on learning.

Alejandra Navarro is a first generation Mexican-American educator. She attended UCSB where she obtained a BA in Spanish and Chicano Studies and a Master's in Education. She currently teaches 1st grade in a DLI school where she is enjoying teaching literacy in a culturally rich environment.

Araseli Navarro (She/Her) is a DASS Counselor at CSUCI with degrees in Sociology and Psychology. She advocates for students with disabilities, manages digital outreach, and raises awareness. Currently pursuing her master's at CSU Northridge, Araseli is passionate about community advocacy and fostering inclusivity.

Tommee Payan, M.A., serves as the ASSET Scholars Program Coordinator at CSU Channel Islands. With 6 years of experience in HSI grants and 10 years in Early Childhood Education, she is a first-generation college graduate from Oxnard, CA, dedicated to supporting students, advocating for educational equity, and healing communities through education.

Giselle Perez is earning a Master of Science in Counseling with a PPS Credential at California Lutheran University. She understands K-12 students' unique challenges and

is dedicated to guiding them through academic, emotional, and social hurdles. She is dedicated to empowering them to succeed and paving the way for future achievements.

Tess Potchen has been a Science educator in VC for the last 7 years and currently teaches middle school in Pleasant Valley School District. Her approach to Science Education focuses on connections between the natural world and the everyday personal experiences and interests of her students.

Dr. Ali Rahman is a teacher at The Thacher School in Ojai, CA. Ali completed his Ph.D. focusing on oral traditions and education in the digital age. He has taught internationally with refugee populations, the New York prison system, independent K-12 and boarding schools, and both public and private universities.

Ms. Oralia Razo, a native Santa Paulan, received her bachelor's degree from the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) and is nearing the completion of her Master's degree from National University. She is the former MESA Director and MESA Counseling Coordinator for 10 years at UCSB. She serves as the STEM Program Management Analyst at NSWC PHD.

Miguel Rodriguez, born in Mexico City, migrated to Oxnard in 1993. A UCLA graduate, he founded the area's first Latino leadership group, advocating for public transportation and farmworker housing. Now Director of Community Relations & Workforce Development at the Port of Hueneme, he connects community, global logistics, and environmental initiatives for community benefit.

Viridiana Rodriguez is in her 11th year of school counseling. During the last four years, she has been serving students as the Restorative Intervention Counselor. In this role she has been able to use data to her advantage to discover your non-traditional "at promise" student.

Angela Rowley, M.S., is a Senior Lecturer at California Lutheran University, Department of Counselor Education. As a co-founder of Strive Scholars, she works to support first gen graduate students. Her multifaceted background in academia and administration equips her with a unique perspective as she shapes the educational journey of those she teaches.

Vanessa Salas has a background in Early Childhood Education, Bilingual Education and Special Education. She is known to support students with engaging, meaningful and culturally relevant material as her goal is to instill the love of learning into her students. The meaningful work students produce is a reflection of this goal.

Dr. Tina Torres is the Director of the Sacramento State K-16 Project, with over 20 years of experience in education administration. She leads initiatives supporting adult learners. Dr. Torres earned her Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and Master's in Educational Administration from CSU, Northridge, and holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSU, Channel Islands.

Brittnee Veldman Ph.D. is a professor of physical and materials chemistry at CSU Channel Islands, whose research specializes in composite nanoparticle materials and inclusive and holistic teaching in upper division STEM courses.