

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE* **Current**

January 13, 1999

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## **UCSB ALUMS ARE IN THE PEACE CORPS FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE RED SEA**

UC Santa Barbara is ranked as the 14th top school overall for the most Peace Corps volunteers since the inception of the program. UCSB has historically held its own for the sheer number of volunteers with schools that have twice UCSB's population.

"Roughly 1200 UC Santa Barbara graduates have served in the Peace Corps since 1961," said Ann Gretter, public affairs specialist for the agency's Los Angeles office.

Three UCSB alumni who are back in the country are very enthusiastic about their Peace Corps experience:

"It was my ultimate dream to go to Costa Rica. The people were amazing, the work was rewarding---it was just really special," said Michele Zimmerman, who graduated in 1995 with a BA in communication and environmental studies. She worked in a village of 170 people on projects that ranged from organic agriculture to facilitating road and bridge work. The Santa Ynez High School graduate enjoyed her stint so much that she has signed up for the Crisis Corps, a group put together with former volunteers who are willing to work on short term projects and emergency relief efforts.

"Serving in the Peace Corps changed how I think---I am willing to go anywhere now," said Bill Chang, a 1992 alumnus with a BA in biological sciences, who served in Morocco for the standard two years and three months. Chang, who speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese, had hoped to serve in Asia, but found himself in Arab/Islamic North Africa because of his background in health education. "I wouldn't mind going back to Morocco, everything I saw was fascinating. I had no idea what it was going to be like and had no expectations. Americans don't know anything about the Middle East except for what they see on the news." The Carpinteria High School graduate will be on campus today through Friday as a recruiter for the Peace Corps, a job he has held for the past four years.

"Wherever you go in the Peace Corps is where you ought to be," added Alex Noce, who received a BA in environmental studies and anthropology in 1990. Noce, whose preference was French-speaking West Africa, served in Paraguay training teachers and national park rangers on how to incorporate environmental education into the schools. The Indio [Calif.] High School graduate ended up staying in Paraguay for five years, working for a conservation foundation there after his work for the Peace Corps was finished. Noce, a.k.a. Blue Planet, is a children's musician now with a ska/reggae CD titled "Fly with Butterflies."

UCSB students regularly volunteer in the community and the three graduates followed the status quo while attending UCSB: Chang volunteered in the emergency room and the operating room at St. Francis hospital; Zimmerman worked for CALPIRG; and Noce volunteered at the local UNICEF chapter and the Isla Vista Youth Project. "It's not surprising that UCSB is tops in the Southern California/Arizona recruitment area," said Noce, who is also a Peace Corps recruiter.

Currently 53 UCSB graduates are serving as Peace Corps volunteers in 34 countries, including Burkina Faso, Vanuatu, Uzbekistan, and Macedonia. Attached is a list of current UCSB alumni volunteers.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.