

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Bill Schlotter

UCSB to Establish Nation's First Chicano Studies Ph.D. Program

The University of California has approved a proposal by UC Santa Barbara to establish the nation's first doctoral program in Chicano studies.

The graduate program, which will also include a master of arts track, will be offered by UCSB's Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, long a pioneering department in ethnic studies. Founded more than 30 years ago, the department was one of the first in the nation dedicated to Mexican-American history and culture and is the only department of its kind in the UC system.

"The approval of our Ph.D. program reaffirms UCSB as the premiere university in the nation and in the world in the field of Chicana and Chicano studies," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "This is a historic moment for the discipline. UCSB is honored to have the first Ph.D. program in the field and proud of its nationally and internationally recognized scholars in this important area of study.

"Additionally, I wish to thank Chela Sandoval, the present chair of the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, as well as María Herrera-Sobek, former chair of the department and chair of the committee that developed the proposal, along with the other members of the department for all their hard work in achieving their goal - a goal that brings prestige to our campus," Yang said.

"I congratulate them on their success in taking their program to a new level of academic excellence."

Herrera-Sobek, acting associate vice chancellor for academic policy and the Luis Leal professor of Chicano Studies, said approval of the graduate program marks a major advance for Chicano scholarship.

"This is a historic moment since it is the first program of its kind in the nation and definitely makes UCSB a leader in the field," she said. "My colleagues are all ecstatic about the news. We in the Department worked very hard to make this dream come true."

In proposing the graduate program, the UCSB committee noted that of the 35 million Americans of Latino heritage, about 21 million identify themselves as being of Mexican descent. Such a large group certainly merits a doctoral program to study its culture and history, the committee said.

The addition of graduate classes will bolster the already strong Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, which currently serves about 150 undergraduate majors and hundreds more students from other departments. The department currently has 12 full-time faculty members.

The program's first graduate students are expected to be admitted and enrolled for fall quarter 2004.

"I'm proud of and happy for my colleagues in Chicana and Chicano studies who have worked so hard for this special moment," said John Woolley, acting dean of social sciences in UCSB's College of Letters and Science. "The new Chicana and Chicano studies graduate program adds great luster to our distinguished social science departments. This program will be a great resource for the entire university."

UCSB is planning a fall event that will bring together the campus and local communities to celebrate the approval of the new graduate program.

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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.