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An all-time, top Peace Corps volunteer-producing university

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At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Peace Corps in March 2020 suspended global operations and evacuated nearly 7,000 volunteers from more than 60 countries. The evacuation included 29 UC Santa Barbara alumni. And when Peace Corps volunteers once again returned to overseas service, 10 UC Santa Barbara alumni were in the first wave.

Now, based on an annual list issued by the Peace Corps between 2003 and 2023, UC Santa Barbara has ranked No. 13 among the agency's all-time top volunteer-producing colleges and universities. More than 1,738 UC Santa Barbara alumni have served abroad as Peace Corps volunteers since the agency's founding in 1961.

Among them is Maximiliano Torres '22. Dispatched in that first return-to-service wave in February 2023, he will volunteer in Costa Rica's education sector.

"I was motivated to join the Peace Corps in order to help other communities while seeing the world," said Torres, who earned a bachelor's degree in linguistics. "I hope to gain more experience in teaching and a better perspective in global affairs. I'm

excited to adapt to a different environment and create new bonds.”

The volunteer cohorts are made up of both first-time volunteers and volunteers who were evacuated in early 2020. Upon finishing a three-month training, volunteers collaborate with their host communities on locally prioritized projects in one of Peace Corps’ six sectors – agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health or youth development – and all will engage in COVID-19 response and recovery work.

Eric Alvarado ’19 is serving in the West African nation of Benin. Inspired by his parent’s longtime dedication to volunteer work in their community, he credits UC Santa Barbara with solidifying his own philanthropic goals.

“UCSB inspired my service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin through its encouragement to students to reach our highest potential and give back to the world,” said Alvarado, who earned his degree in history. “I bring UCSB’s hard-working work ethic and lively atmosphere to the Peace Corps community and the larger global community, school and village where I volunteer.”

All University of California schools offer Peace Corps Prep, a partnership program dedicated to preparing undergraduates for service abroad.

The state of California in 2020 ranked No. 1 among all states and territories with the highest all-time number of Peace Corps volunteers; over 31,891 Californians have served since 1961.

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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.