

# The Scoop

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UCI Scholarships

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**T**he Student Outreach and Retention Center (SOAR) was founded in 2011 to create a safe and inviting community to all students with particular programming focused on first-generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students. The center is a space that was created by students, for students, and is funded by students. The initial idea for the creation of the center began in 2004 when students attempted to pass a referendum to establish the center, but it failed to succeed because it did not meet quorum for campus elections. In 2011, then Chancellor Drake and Vice Chancellor Parham provided initial funding for three years to set in motion the establishment of the center. In 2014, students passed the referendum to secure funding to maintain the space.

The center has seen

many changes and transitions including the creation of the food pantry & the dream center. When SOAR transitioned to the Office of Student Life & Leadership, FRESH and DREAM became their own centers. SOAR's goal is to create a community that students can utilize to improve their college access, address educational inequities through their K-12 Outreach Program, provide support to student-initiated retention efforts on campus, and help students navigate campus resources so that they can excel and succeed in higher education.

SOAR works to empower and strengthen students' academic wellness and success. The center provides an abundant number of services and programs for UCI students to utilize. UCI students can utilize the center's Pathfinder Peer Educator Program which provides

peer-to-peer consultations to help navigate their needs in the areas of academic success, mental and emotional health, financial wellness, professional development, and campus engagement and belonging. They support registered campus organizations through grant funding and advising for student-initiated K-12 outreach and retention programs. SOAR also has a partnership with Student Success Initiatives (SSI) to support transfer students that identify as Black/African American in their transition to the university, through their Umoja Peer-mentoring program. The center also has a partnership with the DREAM Center to support the Immigrant Resilience Fellows through LARC scholarships and peer mentorship. During the pandemic, SOAR's students also voted to create a SOAR Scholarship and book grant to support students going through financial hardships. For more information on what SOAR has to offer, please stop by their center at 106 Gateway Study Center to learn more.

## CONTACT

106 Gateway Study Center  
University of California, Irvine  
Irvine, CA 92697 – 2505  
(949) 824-5762  
<https://soar.uci.edu/>

# NIKA NIKOPOUR FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

*Content Warning: The following content may contain discussions regarding bullying and self-harm and may be difficult and/or upsetting to some readers.*

**N**ika Nikopour was a bright and energetic young teenager whose interests included science, sports, history, and had a passion for violin. Nika also had autism, experienced bullying, and eventually would be taken by suicide. Founded in memory of their son, Aryo and Marjan Nikopour established the Nika Nikopour Foundation in 2020 which is dedicated to increasing Autism awareness through outreach and training, changing the outcome for youth who are bullied and outcast because of



*Nika Nikopour*

dates which are: education and awareness, youth empowerment through musical arts, and funding a research chair. With these mandates, the foundation hopes to bring more awareness, empowerment, and research to the areas of autism, depres-

nization's work. Aryo stated, "I always say, support your community first". The foundation has been supporting California State University, Fullerton for the past two years and has extended their agreement for another five years. To extend their

*With one act of kindness,  
you can save a life - Aryo Nikopour*

autism and who are at risk for depression and suicide. Through the foundation they hope to bring awareness to these issues through the organization's three man-

sion and suicide in children and teens.

We recently spoke with Aryo Nikopour from the Nika Nikopour Foundation to learn more about the orga-

outreach, the foundation has recently entered into an agreement with the University of California, Irvine to provide \$16,000 in scholarships over five years.

Aryo Nikopour stated, "It's a very prestigious university and people from all walks of life come to UCI. People with lots of money, people who are struggling. For example, last year, one of the two recipients from UCI, one of them was the first person attending the university, so they were struggling financially. So my responsibility really is to look at my neighbors first. I want to make sure those people are taken care of. I want to really connect our foundation with a well-established university because I'm sure someday you guys will be able to help us to find some educators who are willing to inform the community through our outlet."

After what Aryo and his family went through, they could have become angry at the world, but instead they responded with kindness: "If I have one mission in life, I'm going to save a life." For the Nikopour family, the scholarship is more than just a monetary award. It's their way of effecting change within the community with the goal of radiating awareness and understanding to reach other communities and beyond. Through this partnership with UCI, the family wants to "help other young people to become prosperous, to become active members of this society" and most importantly, "to make them feel that they're not alone".

Aryo lives by the three pillars of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. He believes spend-



*Nika received a black belt in martial arts*

ing time with people to truly understand them can make a difference in their lives. In the future, he strives to grow the Nika Nikopour Foundation Scholarship and offer internships to UCI students to assist with their research and outreach efforts. He hopes the scholars and interns will become ambassadors of kindness to pay it forward to their own communities. To learn more about the Nika Nikopour Foundation, please visit:

[nikanikopourfoundation.org](http://nikanikopourfoundation.org)

**If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of harming self or others or are experiencing crisis, please call 24/7:**

**UCI Crisis Care:  
(949) 824 – 6457**

**or**

**Suicide & Crisis Lifeline  
Call or Text 988**

*Scholars of UC Irvine!*

# DULCE LOZANO

**DREAM Project Fellow  
Psychological Sciences, B.S.  
Senior  
Class of 2023**



**Dulce Lozano is currently a senior studying Psychological Sciences in the School of Social Sciences. She is currently a DREAM Project Fellow in the UCI Scholarship Unit. We recently spoke to her about her fellowship and experience at UCI.**

## **Describe your journey to and at UCI**

I did not expect myself to go to college because I am a first generation college student and there is not a lot of experience with the college process in my family. I have not had anyone in my family say, "this is the way to get to school and these are the steps." My whole journey has felt lonely, and I have learned to do everything myself. Getting involved in the Undocumented Scholars and DREAM Scholars communities has helped me feel as if I did belong in college. It has helped me find the motivation to go and to continue my higher education. At UCI, my journey has been very eye opening. I have seen dif-

ferent careers I might take an interest in, and it has made me a bit more sociable. It has allowed me to interact more closely with people who are professional such as my professors. It feels really nice being a student at UCI.

## **What do you hope to gain from the DREAM Project Fellowship?**

Being a part of a fellowship from the UCI Scholarships has brought awareness to what I want to do, and I am thankful for that. I would pick professionalism since I have not been in any settings like that before. It has helped me communicate better in emails and other forms of communication. Being a part

of the DREAM Scholars has given me a sense of acceptance and overall encouragement to help students in my position.

### **How would you say this fellowship is helping you?**

The scholarship has helped me economically. I can afford my books and other things on the side. The fellowship overall has helped me become a lot more professional. I used to dislike sending emails or staying in contact with any of my mentors, but I find myself with more motivation to reach out to people and talk. Working on research on the impact of Summer Scholarship, has made me think of ways that I can help my fellow peers at UCI and it has helped me to become more professional.

### **What field study & what are you researching?**

I am currently working with the PrisonPandemic Research Lab. We focus on helping to advocate for the inmates by receiving letters from them which speak to their experiences. With these letters we advocate for inmates by bringing awareness about their circumstances in the prison setting during the pandemic (i.e. how they were treated). We had an art exhibit recently to showcase their art, their letters, and to bring awareness to their situations.

### **What do you hope to achieve with your degree? Any career goals and aspirations?**

There are so many different career paths that I would like to take. My main one is HR management. I have always wanted to go into HR management because as a worker, I have seen how important it is to be in an environment that feels safe and comforting. I have always wanted to join higher management to provide safe environments for workers. Working with the UCI Scholarship Unit has opened my eyes to another pathway. In the future, I want to work for a university and in a department like this. I have always wanted to work with people and just help them.

### **Is there anything you want to share with us?**

When I first started at the university I struggled with impostor syndrome. I did not think I belonged in my first quarter. I struggled and I had thoughts about dropping out. I am so happy that I did not because I found communities that made me feel that I belong. It is a bittersweet moment being a senior now. I am sad that it is coming to an end. I am enjoying it and making the most out of my last few quarters here at UCI.

I would advise others to not be afraid to look for resources, because that is what I struggled with. Getting

involved in school helped me find those resources and the different communities that are meant to help me and other students. I came to UCI as a transfer student, and I would recommend the Transfer Center to new students since they helped me to adapt to a new environment at UCI. Undocumented Scholars and the DREAM Scholars also made me feel a lot more welcomed at UCI and they provided me with different resources for graduate school, tutoring, and overall things to help me feel as if I am not alone.

# SCHOLARSHIPS NEWS

An update on UCI Scholarships



## New Scholarships at UCI

OIE Latinx Thriving Alliance Scholarships  
(Corporate Director's Roundtable of Orange County)

OIE Latinx Thriving Alliance Scholarships (Pacific Life Foundation)

OIE Latinx Thriving Alliance Scholarships  
(Experian)

OIE Latinx Thriving Alliance Scholarships (Edward LifeScience)

OIE Latinx Thriving Alliance Scholarships (Monster Energy Cares)

Fischer-Fedman Family Endowed Scholarship

Nevonen Family First and Second Chance Scholarship

Nika Nikopour Foundation Scholarship

Forouz Firoozi Endowed Memorial Scholarship

# 22-23 Academic Year



Dispersed over **3 million dollars** in scholarships



Over **500 scholarships** awarded



**9355 applications** submitted

# STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF

Courtesy University of California, Irvine

As pandemic-related student support comes to an end, the Biden-Harris Administration and the U.S. Department of Education announced a three-part debt relief plan to help borrowers transition back to regular payments. The plan aims to extend the loan repayment pause, provide targeted student debt relief, and make the student loan system more manageable for current and future borrowers.

**Part 1:** In response to the economic challenges brought on by the pandemic, students received emergency relief funds and all federal loan payments and interest accrual were put on pause. As we ease out of the pandemic and emergency funding ceases, this first step of the plan extends the loan repayment pause one final time through December 31, 2022.

**Part 2:** The second part of the plan provides for one-time federal student loan debt relief based on income. Individual borrowers earning less than \$125,000 or \$250,000 for households are eligible for up to \$20,000 in debt relief for Pell Grant recipients and up to \$10,000 for non-Pell Grant recipients if their first federally held undergraduate, graduate, and Parent PLUS loan disbursement was on or before June 20, 2022. Additionally, borrowers employed by non-profits, the military, or federal, state, Tribal, or local government may be eligible to have all of their student loans forgiven through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

**Part 3:** The third part of the plan includes a forthcoming proposed rule for a new income-driven repayment plan that would require borrowers to pay no more than 5% of their discretionary income on undergraduate loans, raise the amount of income that is considered non-discretionary income, forgive loan balances of \$12,000 or less after 10 years, and cover unpaid interest as long as borrowers make their monthly payments.

The application for Federal Student Loan Debt Relief is now live and takes about five minutes to complete. For more information, please visit:

<https://studentaid.gov/debt-relief-announcement>