

THE SCHOLARSHIP SCOOP

Winter 2021 | Volume 3

UCI Scholarships



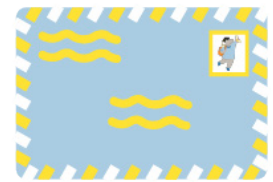
Scholarships Unit

Go behind the scenes of the Scholarships Unit! A few of the staff members explain how the unit operates and manages its scholarships.



Campus Resources: DREAM Center

The DREAM Center is a resource for undocumented students to ensure they have equal opportunities and representation on campus.



Editor's Note: 2021 Self-Care

Shift your focus from the hardships of 2020 to the needed self-care in 2021 in order for us to flourish in the future.



Behind the Scenes: Scholarships Unit

We hear from two staff members: Assistant Director of Scholarships, Fabian Firoozi, and Manager of Scholarship Portfolio Development and Marketing, Kuni Kondo. Fabian Firoozi leads the entire unit, while Kuni Kondo handles the marketing and scholarship development group. They will explain their roles within the unit, how the unit works, and the future of UCI Scholarships.

Fabian Firoozi

Assistant Director of Scholarships

1. What changes did you enact to improve the scholarships unit?

My position as Assistant Director of Scholarships was well timed with the creation of the Brilliant Future Campaign by University Advancement. The key to success was to quickly learn, be a change maker, and develop a highly effective team with emphasis on innovation, creativity, and technical expertise. I proposed a centralized scholarships platform to make it easier for students to apply, which was approved and rolled out for the 20-21 academic year. In addition, I received support from our visionary leaders, Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships Becki Sanchez and Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management, Patricia Morales, to transform the unit to manage an expanding scholarship portfolio. I established two functional groups; one group was tasked to engage in scholarship portfolio management and account management, while the other group engaged in scholarship portfolio development and marketing.

2. What do you see in the future for the unit?

Our 5-year plan is to significantly increase the scholarships portfolio in order to put UCI among the top 3 UC campuses in terms of scholarship fund disbursement. The Chancellor's matching program for new endowments has already had impact and has had great success. We also want to increase the 4-year graduation rate and academic strength of UCI through additional summer and research-based scholarships. We have designed a process to tie scholarships to projects in order to promote innovation, creativity, and academic excellence in collaboration with schools and centers. Our envisioned future plan is feasible and exciting.

Kuni Kondo

Manager of Scholarship Portfolio Development and Marketing

1. How have you collaborated with different departments to create more scholarships?

We have done a pretty good job of maintaining professional relationships with different departments on campus. Particularly at UC Irvine, I feel there is a very collaborative environment between departments, staff, and faculty. UCI is a close knit community, and

it helps that we are all dedicated to helping our students. I have built many of these relationships over the years as a student affairs professional and as a UCI Alum, so I am very pleased to be able to build upon these relationships further in my role in the Scholarships Unit.

2. What is the best way for students to stay informed of scholarship-related news?

The pandemic has definitely made things challenging this year since we can't engage with students in person. We are doing our best by doing outreach through social media, Zoom information sessions, live chats, and emails. We have also been working on updating our website and investing in new technology to assist with our outreach and application process. The best way for students to stay informed is to check their email consistently and follow our social media. We are pretty consistent with posting about important events on our social media, so I definitely recommend that students follow us for the most up-to-date information!

3. What advice do you have for students who want to earn a scholarship to afford college?

Apply, apply, apply! There are plenty of scholarships where the number of eligible applicants is surprisingly small, so be sure to provide as much of the important information about yourself as you can. Be sure to tell us why something is important versus just telling us what you did. Make sure you tell your narrative is told in an organized manner. It's also important to proofread and it can be helpful to have someone read over your answers as well.

4. Please explain how you select recipients after the application period ends.

We really look at students holistically and review students based on several factors. Academics and research, financial need, leadership, overcoming adversity, and community service. It's important that students share not only what they have done, but why these things are important for us to know. The better that they are able to engage the reviewer and share their narrative, the easier it is for the reviewer to be able to relate to them.

5. How do you create scholarships that address the needs of UCI's students?

The team meticulously researches to determine what populations on campus need assistance. We also work with a lot of campus partners that work with students every day to find out how students can be better supported through scholarships. It can be difficult sometimes as scholarships need to be created with Prop 209 limitations in mind, but we do our best to create scholarships that attempt to address those needs.

MEET OUR SCHOLARS

John Tolipani

- Howard B. Lawson Memorial Scholar
Strauss Scholar
Michael B. O'Donoghue Veteran Scholar
- Film and Media Studies Major
- Senior



John, explain your journey from serving in the military to attending UCI?

After high school, there weren't any scholarships being tossed my way. I started working as a cook and planned to enlist in the military in late 2014. My experiences in the Navy opened my eyes to the fact that I'm not better than anyone. We all have different skill sets, come from different backgrounds, and have drastically different world views, but at our core, we're all human. I believe that it is our character and our intentions that determines one's worth. Overall, the military has made me a more well-rounded individual. After an eventful 4 years in the Navy, I finally got out and reentered the civilian world. I didn't want to return home, so I made my way down to California. I began my time at Orange Coast College as a first-generation college student. Just the simple fact that nobody in my household attended college made it seem like it wasn't even an option. After a year, I transferred to UCI to study film and media, something that had interested me ever since I was teenager. Now here I am, in my fourth year at UCI, about to graduate with a film degree.

What organizations are you involved in on campus?

I participated in Zotfilm during the Fall 2019 quarter. I'm currently a content creation intern for Anteatr TV.

Carol Luong

- Womxn's Hub Dynamic Scholar
- Economics Major
- Senior



Carol, please describe your journey to and at UCI.

My mother and father left my sister and I around the age of 5. From then on, our grandparents raised us. Being a first-generation immigrant was difficult because I had no one to help me through high school to college. After attending UCI for a year, I had to withdraw for a year. I then worked full-time as a sales associate for Google, while also taking community college classes. I discovered my passion for technology and sales, which is what I will be pursuing for my career. I recognize that technology is the gateway for success, so I want students to be able to have it in order to succeed. I returned to UCI and will graduate at the end of this year!

What advice do you have for other students struggling to afford college?

Set up appointments to talk to UCI staff. It requires bravery to be vulnerable about your situation. I was not used to talking about myself, but by opening up to UCI staff and OFAS, I was able to find the help I needed. It gives more perspective and allows opportunities for success to come. Asking for help is how I was able to establish my action plan.

What do scholarships mean to you?

With scholarships, I could afford groceries and have a roof over my head. I was immediately grateful because I know the process is highly selective. But the simplicity of one application that allowed me to apply to many scholarships at once was a huge help.

Resource: DREAM Center



The DREAM Center serves as a beacon of light for undocumented UCI students, providing essential services. Not only does it assist students with academic and professional development, but the center serves as a safe space and integral social hub for students. It is the backbone of the undocumented UCI student community.

Its director, Dr. Angela Chen, shares a personal connection to the center. She was an undocumented student, so she understands the struggles that these students face. While pursuing her undergraduate degree, she witnessed the inequity of academic and professional opportunities that students in her position experience. She then became dedicated to advocating for students and collaborated with institutions to better support all students.

The DREAM Center focuses on its community's assets. It recognizes that its students are nearly all first-generation BIPOC. They are in majors across campus, including a large segment in STEAM fields with a growing number of graduate students. Many are highly involved in student leadership roles, research, teaching, and civic engagement. It celebrates diverse backgrounds, including race and ethnicity. The center also acknowledges that its students play supportive roles with their families. Ultimately, it believes that students' lived-experiences add to UCI's learning environment.

Compared to the average college student, undocumented students face additional hardships and stressors. Firstly, undocumented students in the country are ineligible for federal financial aid, which most UCI students rely on to afford a college education. Many students at UCI cut down on basic needs like food, rent, and clothing. It can also be difficult for undocumented students to find a warm community where they feel welcomed. Anti-immigrant sentiments and a lack of representation on campus can prevent them from finding a place of their own. They also experience inequitable access to academic and professional opportunities. Undocumented students may be unable to participate in research or be compensated for their work due to their status, even though they are just as capable, deserving, and eligible. Lastly, with all the additional stress, these students struggle emotionally and mentally. Studies have shown that undocumented college students experience heightened anxiety compared to their fellow students.

The center works diligently to plan programs and

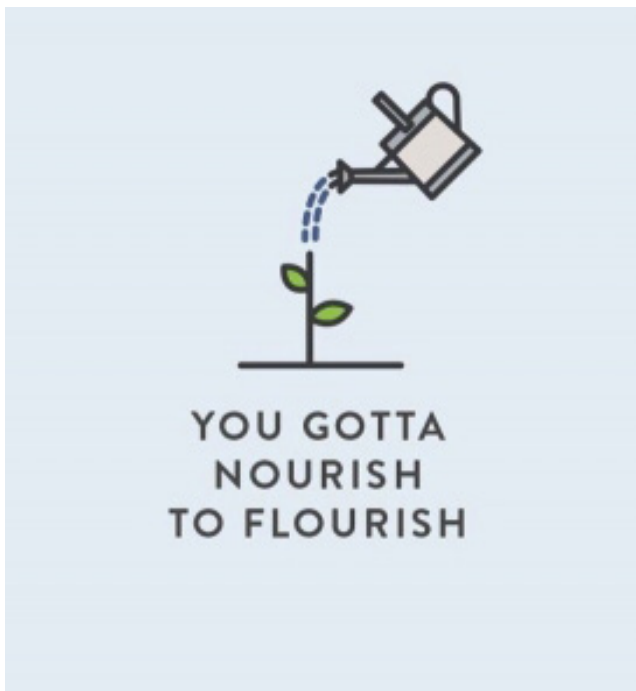
events that address students' struggles. Its DREAM Scholar class is for first-year or transfer undocumented students that focuses on building a community for them to rely on during their academic journey. Another popular program is the DREAM Project Fellowship. The fellowship provides academic and experiential learning, professional development, financial opportunities, and networking to undergrad and graduate students by pairing them with a project mentor. The center also has Scholars in Residence where graduate students host workshops and office hours to guide those that need assistance. When students face hefty legal fees to submit documents or applications, the DREAM Center helps to fund some of those fees to relieve the financial strain. Since many undocumented students struggle to afford college and basic necessities, the center also works with the FRESH Basic Needs Hub to ensure students can get what they need. To address mental health, it's creating a program that partners with the Counseling Center to prioritize students' mental well being.



The DREAM Center truly cares about serving UCI's undocumented student population. The center has a team of 3 professional staff and 19 student leaders working on community engagement and advising. It works tirelessly to provide much needed services to make sure its students have more equitable opportunities and resources at UCI. The center is a space dedicated to these students, so they can have a place and community of their own. Being an undocumented college student comes with these unprecedented challenges. But the DREAM Center is proof that these students don't have to do it alone. Reach out to the center's staff to find out more about its upcoming events and programs. It prides itself on being a key resource for undocumented students. They understand that affording college is extremely difficult. If you are an undocumented student at UCI and need assistance, please reach out to its staff. Even if you simply need a friend or support group, the DREAM Center has you covered.

Editor's Note: 2021, The Year of Self-Care

As we continue to deal with the effects of the pandemic, we should make time to also focus on what can help us get through 2021, self-care. 2020 left us stressed, frustrated, lonely, and exhausted. In order for us to continue to succeed and achieve together, we must take care of our wellbeing.



Self-care looks different for everyone. I like to think of self-care as whatever helps me to destress and enjoy the little things in life. For some, it may look like pampering oneself with a massage, bath bombs, face masks, etc. For others, it can be done through caring for one's physical health: running, walking, swimming, or lifting weights. Some would rather not do any sort of physical activity and prefer to lay in bed all day playing video games or watch movies. There is no wrong way to do self-care (following proper COVID-19 protocols of course). The great thing about it is you can make it whatever you want it to be. Self-care doesn't have to be some expensive trip to a spa. It's adjustable to anyone's time and budget restrictions.

[Here is an article](#) that explores the different types of self-care: physical, social, mental, spiritual, emotional. Many people do not realize that we need to pay attention to each of those five needs. Each plays an essential part in our lives and overall well-being.



Simply focusing on one area will lead to neglect of the other four. It is important to listen to yourself and replenish what your mind or body needs in all areas.



Whatever your preferred self-care method is, make that time for yourself. We've learned that life can be scary and anxiety-ridden. So when things start to get overwhelming and unmanageable, take a break and implement a self-care activity. It could even be 5 minutes of meditating or a 15 minute nap. I like to envision self-care as a restart button, a way to readjust your mindset and mood. I am not saying self-care will fix everything, but it can help you to calm down and enjoy a small pleasure in life.