



David Esquivel/UCLA

Dozens of students entering the 2022 UCLA Latinx Welcome event held on Wilson Plaza.


STUDENTS + CAMPUS

UCLA's Latinx Welcome fosters community

A thousand students, faculty and staff attended the 'Sembrando Comunidad' event

Manon Snyder | October 10, 2022

Afternoon sunlight flooded Wilson Plaza as students, faculty and staff, including Gene Block, David Moguel and Adriana Galván, were accompanied by the sounds of Mariachi de Uclatlán, just about everyone at the 2022 UCLA Latinx Welcome was moving to the music as they lined up for tacos, horchata and dessert. All around the quad, familiar faces embraced and new faces mingled. Creating this type of environment was a big reason behind the event, which was meant to foster a sense of community for Latino students, faculty and staff.

The UCLA Latinx Welcome “Sembrando Comunidad,” which was held Oct. 4, featured several speakers, including Chancellor Gene Block, Dean Adriana Galván, a professor of psychology and the dean of undergraduate education in the UCLA College, and others. The event wasn't merely a celebration. It was also a part of UCLA's efforts to earn the [designation of Hispanic-Serving Institution, or HSI, by 2025](#). 

“As a public university in California, it's important that we represent the demographics of the state,” Block told the nearly 1,000 in attendance.

As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, UCLA would be eligible for a range of federal grants to bolster educational programs, research training and academic attainment for Latino, low-income and other underrepresented students. For UCLA to be designated an HSI, 25% of its students must identify as Latino and 35% of all undergraduates must be Pell Grant recipients.

“It's not just about the number of students,” Block said. “It has to be really an embracing, supportive culture for all of our students and faculty. And in that effort over the last few years we've engaged a number of new programs, including programs for adding faculty and postdocs working on Latinx issues, hiring staff to support Latinx students' success, and offering seed grants for scholarships tied to Latinx populations.”



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Gene Block, David Moguel and Adriana Galván

In her remarks, Galván talked about how the joyous vibe at the event reflected UCLA's overall efforts.

“UCLA has done such a wonderful job of ensuring that our students from Latin America and who identify as Latinx and Hispanic feel the love and support that we, many of us, feel from our family,” Galván said.

In addition to welcoming students to campus as the new year academic year gets underway, the welcome event also featured a resource fair. Clubs and organizations focused on helping Latino students build community, including the [Chicano Studies Research Center](#) and the [Academic Advancement Program](#), set up tables. Student-run organizations also had representatives at the resource fair to help show attendees all that UCLA offered Latino students.

“I love the music and also I like that there’s many organizations that have to do with Latinx people,” said first-year student Ana Luviano. “A lot of people aren’t aware of the resources here, so this gives me an opportunity of seeing more resources that have to do with my people and my culture.”



David Esquivel/UCLA

Mariachi de Uclatlán

The event was also an opportunity for faculty and older students help guide younger students at different stages in their education.

“Whether this was a welcome event or a mentoring event, we’re going to turn it into [a mentoring one], because we know that there’s not a lot of ourselves out there,” said Brian Zamora, a second-year doctoral student in education with an emphasis in social research methodology, who was there checking in with his mentees. “How many people are represented, for instance, in graduate school? How many people are represented in professional programs?”

Zamora said that events like afternoon barbecues and get-togethers are important in building a community of not just friends, but scholars, too.

“I like seeing faces that look like mine,” Zamora said. “Having mirrors around us [is important] to make sure we can ... succeed.