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State lawmakers visit campus to show solidarity with Latino-focused research projects

California legislators have invested \$15M in the Latina Futures, 2050 Lab and \$1.5M in the Hollywood Diversity Report



David Esquivel/UCLA

From left: UCLA's Veronica Terriquez and Sonja Diaz with state lawmakers Wendy Carillo, Maria Elena Durazo, Sabrina Cervantes and Luz Rivas

Jessica Wolf | November 8, 2022

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There was a celebratory air as lawmakers from the state Latino Legislative Caucus visited UCLA recently to award state funding to the Latina Futures, 2050 Lab and the Hollywood Diversity Report.

California lawmakers have invested \$15 million in the [Latina Futures, 2050 Lab](#), which will be run by Sonja Diaz, founding executive director of the [Latino Policy & Politics Institute](#) and Veronica Terriquez, director of the [Chicano Studies Research Center](#). Latina Futures is a project to support research, collect and analyze data, and provide insights on the experiences of Latinas across the country and the policies that affect their lives

"We are here today to imagine a future that is healthy, that is safe, that is vibrant and that's sustainable," Diaz said. "Latinas need a seat at the table. But we also have to redefine what the table is. And for that, I'm so excited that UCLA has continued to allow applied research, research rooted in community partnerships with leaders, so that the public research institution that is number one in the United States is open to everybody."

Support from the state is helping set a path forward, she said.

"The path forward is really the way in which we need to see people everywhere. It's not just about political power, it's not about just Latino-majority districts," Diaz said. "It's about a leadership that understands the nuances of the country that we live in, and is able to adequately afford women and those identifying as women the right to dignity and position, to power and influence."

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Veronica Terriquez, Darnell Hunt, Ana-Christina Ram6n, Sonja Diaz and Paul Barragan-Monge.



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Several speakers at the event noted that while Latinas make up a growing part of the U.S. population, they are wildly underrepresented in halls of congress, corporate boardrooms, medical schools, law schools, in engineering and computer science, in film and television. Meanwhile Latinas are overrepresented in low-wage jobs in the garment, restaurant and agricultural industries and often bear disproportionate unpaid work as caregivers and caretakers in their own homes.

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"The impact of Latinas cannot be underestimated," Terriquez said. "Latinas are mothers to over half of the children in the state of California and they are the majority of childcare workers. Their well-being and success is really tied to the success of the next generation of all races and ethnic groups."

That means path forward is also intersectional, Terriquez said, noting that forthcoming projects from Latina Futures will be rooted in research and systems of solidarity that support Asian American, Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ and transgender communities.

"This is a historic investment and it will have historic impact," she said. "We are deeply grateful to the legislators who are committed to advancing racial justice and gender equity here in California and beyond."

California Senator Maria Elena Durazo said UCLA's Latina Futures, 2050 Lab dovetails with the Unseen Latinas Initiative launched in October 2020 by the state's Latino Caucus to address the continued and growing inequality Latinas experience in economic outcomes, career and leadership opportunities, and education in the state.

"The mission is to solve, not just address, but solve the growing inequality Latinas experience in economy, leadership and careers," Durazo said. "Government can and will and must take action. A lot of work needs to be done, especially in research. We knew we had an academic powerhouse right here in our own backyard and Latina Futures is the perfect vehicle to lift the veil on our unseen Latinas, help them inform future policy making."

During the event, the speakers also formally announced \$1.5 million in funding for the Hollywood Diversity Report. The Hollywood Diversity Report is now housed in the new Entertainment Media Research Initiative, which is led by Ana-Christina Ramón, an affiliated scholar with the Latino Politics & Policy Initiative. Year after year the Hollywood Diversity Report reveals just how deeply underrepresented Latino communities are when it comes to key creative jobs in the film and television industries.

"I am so honored to be working with these amazing Latina change-makers that are definitely making a difference, and extend our deepest gratitude for the state legislature for supporting our Hollywood Diversity Report and the research that comes out of it," Ramón said. "We are very grateful for Assemblywoman Wendy Carrillo's leadership in this area, and we look forward to continuing to hold Hollywood accountable for its hiring practices."

The Hollywood Diversity Report is an important tool that helps lawmakers understand dimensions of representation in one of California's most influential industries as they support projects that are funded through state tax dollars, such as the California Film and Tax Credit, Carrillo said.

"We want to see ourselves not only in reflected in the small and large screens, but we also want to make sure that people of color are the ones creating those narratives, those dramas, those stories, and actually pushing those stories to a larger scale," Carillo said. "Only we know what our community can sound like. Only we ourselves can tell our own stories. It's about creating those pathways and ensuring funding for research that gives us the data necessary to ensure that through the legislature that we're able to create policies that actually ensure those state dollars are a reflection of the people of our state."

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