

UCI OCEAN

Winter 2026 Quarterly Newsletter



UCI OCEAN Associate Faculty Director's Welcome

Hey everyone,

Happy New Year and welcome to the Winter 2026 quarter!

I hope you all had a restful break and are feeling recharged for the months ahead.

Building on the momentum from our fall sessions, our **bi-weekly seminar series** continues this quarter. We look forward to seeing you there as we dive into new discussions and continue to learn from one another's expertise.

Winter quarter is often a pivotal time when projects move from the planning phase into deep implementation. As you navigate your research and community partnerships, please keep us updated on your journey. We want to celebrate your **milestones** and provide a space to troubleshoot any **challenges** you encounter. Sharing these experiences—both the wins and the hurdles—is what keeps the OCEAN community so supportive and connected.

We are excited to continue highlighting the impactful work coming out of this group. Thank you for your dedication to collaborative research and for making this such a vibrant community.

Wishing you all a productive, insightful, and rewarding Winter quarter!

Best,

Symone Gyles, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Associate Faculty Director, UCI OCEAN

OCEAN Winter 2026 Seminar Series



We are collecting [registration](#) for the OCEAN Winter 2026 Seminar Series.

All School of Education graduate students, faculty, and interested community partners are invited to attend.

The Winter 2026 Quarter Seminar Series will be led by OCEAN faculty, graduate students, and community partners.

2026 Winter Quarter Sessions:

- January 15 from 12 - 1 p.m.
- February 12 from 12 - 1 p.m.
- February 26 from 12 - 1 p.m.
- March 12 from 12 - 1 p.m.

[Register here.](#)

OCEAN Faculty Fellow Spotlight



Paola Guerrero Rosada, Ph.D

Dr. Paola Guerrero Rosada's research is defined by a co-design model that treats the Puerto Rico Department of Education and local coalitions, such as *Todos a Leer* and the *Flamboyant Foundation*, as active partners in developing and validating early learning instructional frameworks. By collaborating with local stakeholders, this RPP utilizes in-site coaching and culturally relevant, Spanish-language materials to improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes in high-vulnerability pre-K through 3rd grade settings. Her ongoing research agenda aims to validate these essential practices within the Puerto Rican context, specifically exploring how sustainable, co-designed quality improvement interventions can close opportunity gaps for children in low-income environments.

OCEAN RPP Dissertation Fellow Spotlight

Patricia Fuentes Acevedo

My dissertation is an equitable collaboration for family math with caregivers and teachers in an elementary school serving predominantly Latine communities. In this context, I study our design cycles, the redistribution of epistemic authority in mathematics when caregivers, teachers, and researchers interact in our meetings, and the implications for teacher learning. The OCEAN RPP Dissertation Fund has been crucial in ensuring the sustainability of our work. With this support, we were able to hold a summer institute where veteran caregivers on our team mentored new caregivers, enabling them to continue the family math initiatives in the school. I will also use the funds to host meetings where we can collectively make sense of my emergent findings with caregivers and teachers.



FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Alianza MX Summit



This past November 2025, UCI OCEAN hosted an incredible and productive 2-day Alianza MX Summit at UC Irvine School of Education. We brought together amazing partners including UANL Tigres Foundation, Ricky Martin Foundation, La Academia Santa Ana, and Universidad de Granada to advance a shared vision for early childhood and youth development.



The goal of the Alianza MX Summit was to collaboratively develop an adaptable framework for a pro-social, community-based model for youth development and empowering families. We left with a clear action plan, defined timelines, committed roles, and a funding strategy to ensure a successful project launch! We are so excited for the future impact of this powerful partnership!





Engagement in Research-Practice Partnerships with Indigenous Communities



During our Fall 2025 OCEAN seminar series, Naomi Knox facilitated critical discussions on Indigenous educational epistemologies and the role of research-practice partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The seminar examined the historical timeline of California's First Peoples, specifically addressing the persistent effects of erasure within the Mission system and its impact on Orange County's Indigenous populations. We engaged in dialogue regarding the preservation of Native American history, the significance of land and plant restoration, and the integration of Indigenous languages and plaque acknowledgments in public and academic spheres.

Naomi Knox is the President of the Santa Ana Canyon Historical Council, an educator decimated to strengthening community understanding of California Native history and culture.

We also want to express our appreciation to our OCEAN Community Research Fellow and Ph.D student, Aakriti Bisht, for leading the coordination of these exciting seminars.



2025 Story of Impact



ORGANIZING COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT NETWORK

IRVINE, CA

FOUNDED 2018

JOINED NNERPP 2022

MISSION

Creating initiatives and partnerships with the UCI School of Education that positively impact local partners, with a focus on Orange County, CA but also across other regions.

PARTNERS

University of California Irvine
Several schools, districts, and cities across Orange County and across the United States

oceaneducationuci.edu/

[@uci_ocean](#)

KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Anti-racism
- Computer Science
- Curriculum and instruction
- Early childhood
- English Learners and/or Dual Language Learners
- Non-cognitive or behavioral outcomes
- Poverty, equity, or achievement gaps
- School leadership or governance
- STEM

Update on the Monroe UC Irvine Community School

Building upon the landmark launch of the Monroe UC Irvine Community School in 2024, we recently formed the Community-School Leadership Council that is led by Monroe Elementary families, education, and students with support from UCI OCEAN leadership. The OCEAN team led by Andrea Buttsman, Ph.D., Sydney Gales, Ph.D., and Adam H. Lee, Ph.D. and collaborating with the newly hired Alvaro Pineda, Monroe elementary school coordinator, and Principal Fernando Davis, Ph.D., The Community-School Leadership Council, made up of parents, families, teachers, administrators, UCI representatives, community partners, and SAUSD leaders, will set and guide partnership priorities, meeting regularly throughout each academic year. Monroe will also be undergoing a full reconstruction, which includes a new building, classroom building and a remodeled section of the original structure, with an expected completion date in Fall 2027. The new building is being designed in alignment with the goals of the Monroe UC Irvine partnership and community school model, including, but not limited to, flexible learning spaces, outdoor learning environments and support for STEM, literacy, and play-based learning. We launched our first research project of the partnership with 3rd grade science and Monroe innovation leader, Jesse Skay, focused on co-designing community-based science units that integrate literacy with Monroe families. UCI doctoral student Diana Romo will serve as a graduate student in residence at Monroe supporting the community-based science effort under the mentorship of Assistant Professor and OCEAN Associated Faculty Director Sydney Gales.

OCEAN Faculty Fellows

OCEAN awarded three faculty fellowships this year, supporting early career scholars in developing new research practice partnerships to address pressing problems in educational practice. **Rafael Acosta-Domenech, Ph.D.**, is partnering with the Latinx community organization QUICCA and the non-profit organization Academic Intersections to examine the role of Latinx communities in shaping community school policy in various districts. **Jane Wu, Ph.D.**, is partnering with Casa Lauda Academy to examine the impacts of embedding career coaching into a college course curriculum on students' academic and employment outcomes. **Paula Guzman-Rosado, Ph.D.**, is partnering with the Puerto Rican Ministry of Education on a full-spectrum Caribbean focus on equitable collaboration for family math with caregivers and teachers in elementary and secondary schools.

OCEAN Graduate Student Dissertation Awards

In 2023, OCEAN awarded two graduate student dissertation awards to support their research practice partnerships. **Reilly Fitzhugh** is examining institutional structures and pedagogical practices education leaders use to support multilingual learner students in US public secondary schools. **Patricia Cecilia Ramirez Arredondo** research focuses on equitable collaboration for family math with caregivers and teachers in elementary and secondary schools.

2025 NNERPP Annual Meeting & CA Subnetwork Convening in 2026

OCEAN sent two OCEAN faculty Adam Lee and Rosaly Santiago and three graduate students, Asael Bello, Maria Garcia, and Tuyen Williams to the 2025 National Network of Educational Research-Practice Partnership (NNERPP) Annual Forum in St. Louis, MO. The team led the collaborative learning sessions, the first session centered on how to equitably engage youth in Research-Practice Partnerships, and the second session focused on promoting development while navigating power dynamics, district priorities, and equity goals. We are also excited to be hosting the NNERPP California Subnetwork Convening in January 2026 at UCI Irvine.

Subscribe to the UCI OCEAN Newsletter!

[Click here to review the entire NNERPP 2025 Yearbook](#)

2025 Story of Impact

Check out our [2025 Story of Impact](#) on the [National Network of Educational Research Practice Partnerships \(NNERPP\)](#) Yearbook!

From local classrooms to global partnerships, we are proud to share our latest milestones in educational equity and collaboration.

Here's a look at what UCI OCEAN has been up to:

Monroe UC Irvine Community School: We've officially launched the Community-School Leadership Council! This partnership between families, educators, and UCI is guiding priorities as we look forward to a brand-new, reimagined campus in 2027.

Research in Action: We've kicked off our first research project at Monroe Elementary School (Santa Ana Unified School District), co-designing community-based science units that integrate biliteracy.

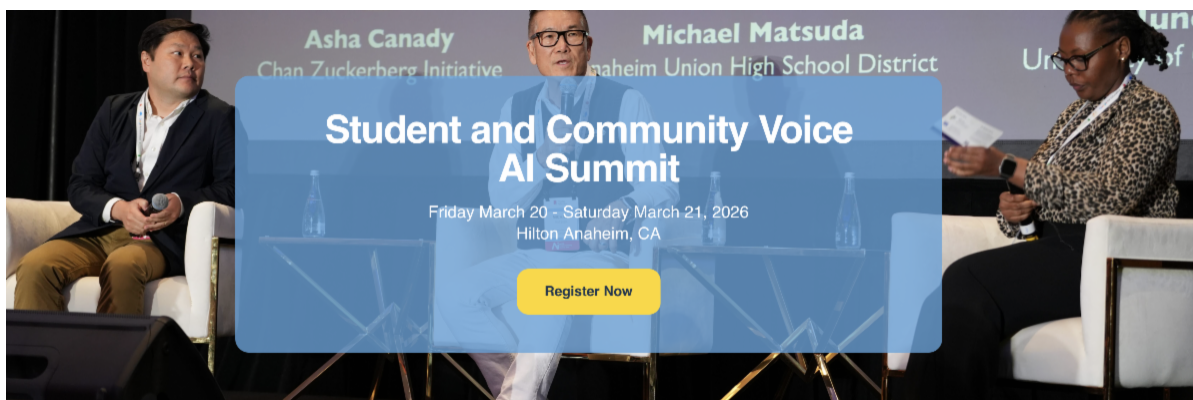
Empowering Scholars: Congrats to our three Faculty Fellows and two Graduate Dissertation Award winners! Their work spans from career coaching and Latinx community advocacy to family math and literacy practices in Puerto Rico.

NNERPP CA Subnetwork Convening: We are thrilled to be hosting the NNERPP California Subnetwork Convening in January 2026!

Upcoming Events

Student & Community Voice AI Summit

Friday March 20 - Saturday March 21, 2026
Hilton Anaheim, CA



Learn how educators, students, and communities can frame and use AI to advance equity, deeper learning, and civic leadership—and then decide which tools and learning processes fit.

The [Student and Community Voice AI Summit](#) will be both practical and inspirational. You'll learn from education leaders who are tackling real challenges and creating new opportunities with and for students, educators, and families.

The Summit will offer a range of professional learning and networking opportunities, including:

- Interactive workshops with innovative educators, students, community members and administrators
- AI to Action "Sandbox" Sessions where you will learn how to take action using AI and how to take action on AI policy development
- Unique, inspiring speakers at plenary sessions
- Networking and learning sessions with affinity groups

[Register here.](#)

2026 NNERPP California RPP Subnetwork Convening

January 29-30 2026

NNERPP
Subnetwork

California RPPs



The National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) and California Education Partners (Ed Partners) joined with 13 California-based NNERPP members to create the California RPP (CA RPP) Subnetwork — a regional learning community of research-practice partnerships (RPPs).

The Subnetwork aims to advance RPP research focused on policy and systems change in California's schools and educational organizations, drawing on shared state-level contexts and conditions that shape their work.

UCI OCEAN is honored to host the 2026 CA RPP Subnetwork Convening at UC Irvine on January 29-30, 2026.

The convening is being organized by California Education Partners (Ed Partners), the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) and UCI OCEAN. Also in attendance will be 13 other research-practice partnerships (RPP) involving other school districts and universities from across California that are working together to strengthen their collective work.

The objective of the event is to further the our work to engage in a partnership that helps school districts achieve their goals.

2026 UCI OCEAN Fellowships

Faculty Partnership Seed Fellowship

We are excited to announce the 2026 UCI OCEAN Faculty Partnership Seed Fellowship Application! UCI OCEAN will be awarding fellowships for faculty who are interested in planning and writing grants for research-practice partnerships (RPPs) with an established partner.

To learn more or if you have any questions, please reach out to [Dr. Adam M. Lara](#).

RPP Dissertation Fellowship

We are excited to announce the 2026 UCI OCEAN Research-Practice Partnership Graduate Student Fellow Dissertation Fund application.

The UCI OCEAN Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Dissertation Fund provides financial support to OCEAN Graduate Student Fellows conducting dissertation research in collaboration with partners. The RPP Dissertation Fund is designed to strengthen collaboration between researchers and communities, organizations, and school districts.

We hope that through this support, OCEAN Graduate Student Fellows can strengthen the practical applicability of their dissertation research while also building valuable professional relationships with their community and organizational partners.

To learn more or if you have any questions, please reach out to [Dr. Adam M. Lara](#).

UCI OCEAN

Catalyzing Research-Practice Partnerships

UCI OCEAN is a network of research-practice partnerships between K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and the UCI School of Education. We engage in actionable scholarship to positively impact the diverse communities that we partner with. Our mission is to help develop community partnerships that foster: collaboration, mutual respect, community needs and priorities, and the use of research to improve learning and education. Our core capacity at OCEAN is to conduct research that can inform the decisions and improvement efforts of our partners.

To learn more about OCEAN, our learning community, and how we engage in research-practice partnerships, and how we can support your efforts in cultivating community-centered research practice partnerships, please reach out to our Associate Director, Adam M. Lara, Ph.D at adam.lara@uci.edu and visit our [website](#).

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

Follow UCI OCEAN on Instagram!



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)