

This year's winner is Graduate Assistant for the Cross-Cultural Center Daniela Carreon.



Nomination Text:

I am nominating Daniela Carreon, Graduate Assistant of the Cross-Cultural Center (CCC), for consideration of the Graduate Assistant of the Year Award. Ms. Carreon has worked at the CCC for the past two years in addition to four years prior as an undergraduate student in a variety of capacities including social media specialist, program specialist and lead specialist overseeing the volunteer program. She has been instrumental in the continued growth of the center and is dedicated to the mission of the CCC of supporting the exploration and expression of identity. She consistently demonstrates a commitment to social justice work, diversity and equity, and inclusive excellence. In the waning months of Spring 2020 and this past academic year since the COVID-19 pandemic, Daniela has exhibited a resiliency and innovative approach to addressing the challenges of social distancing while maintaining the integrity of CCC programs. Additionally, she has been essential to the morale of the student assistants in our space by expressing empathy for their situation and encouraging creative ways to accomplish their goals.

One illustration of her commitment to the CCC was her ability to pivot from the disappointing cancellation of the Social Justice Symposium in Spring 2020. Only days from when the

symposium was to be held in person, the uncertainty of the emerging pandemic and concern for public safety forced the closure of the campus and the need to reschedule. Even during the chaotic early days of COVID-19, Daniela was optimistic and determined to see the Symposium still be successful. After deciding that we would shift the symposium to the following Fall 2020 term, she began to work all summer in consultation with myself and the other Student Life Center directors to identify a virtual platform, reach back out to selected workshop presenters, develop a new call for proposals, identify new keynote speakers because of budget uncertainty, and successfully achieve our first virtual Social Justice Symposium. Her blueprint will serve to sustain the CCC as we look ahead to a hybrid format for future symposiums.

Another example of Daniela's significance to the CCC was her idea of collaborating with the other Student Life Centers in developing a new social justice program - Social Justice Scholars - as an innovative way to connect with students who were grappling with the unrest and social reckoning of the summer after the death of George Floyd. Her passion for social justice resulted in Scholars being implemented this past Spring semester as an alternative to our Social Justice Summit retreat due to the continued pandemic restrictions. She, along with Alycia McGeever (Gender Equity Center) and Laura Lopez (Latin@/x Center), created an online curricular course, recruited students, and provided space for deeper conversations with participants to process how individuals can challenge their biases and produce social change. We are excited that this curriculum will be integrated into our social justice programs to support the ongoing mission of the university in developing global citizens who will make the world, particularly North County, a better place for all.

Lastly, because Daniela is a product of CSUSM, she has been able to support our undergraduate student assistants during this challenging time and enhance my supervision of them through regular meetings that provide a perspective of which she is all too familiar. She has been in their positions, literally, and shares a voice of encouragement, challenge and support, and shepherds them in finding inventive solutions during an unprecedented time. The Cross-Cultural Center has been a long-time beneficiary of her dedication to social justice work and she is an excellent example of the tireless devotion we have for student success in the Division of Student Affairs. I wholeheartedly nominate and recommend Daniela Carreon as the Graduate Assistant of the Year Award.