



# THE SEES INFORMER

## DORA ANDERSEN, the face of SEES, retires after serving program 21.5 years

Over the past 21.5 years, Dora Andersen has been the program coordinator for more than a dozen programs under the SEES umbrella that focused on the success of first-generation, low-socioeconomic students in the STEM fields. Her incredible efforts won her Cal Poly Pomona's most prestigious award in 2012, the Staff Provost Award. The student support programs that she has been the backbone for have been SEES, the Academic Excellence Workshop (AEW) program, BIOQUEST, BioTIER (NSF), California Wellness Health Professionals Program, Discovery Camp program, Faculty Student Mentoring Program (FSMP), Hearst Apprentice Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Mentoring Program, Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), National Science Foundation S-STEM Scholars program, SPIRES (NSF Scholars Program in Research, Education & Science), STEMpire & STEM success program, and the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) program. She demonstrated a tremendous amount of effort to support the needs of thousands of underrepresented minority (URM) students across 3 colleges (science, engineering, agriculture) & several departments. Dora's diligence and outstanding performance ensured that students of historically URM backgrounds gained the most of their college experience.

Dora was the first person you saw when you entered the SEES office and hundreds of students came to love her. Dora helped plan events throughout the years to support a sense of belonging. She was the co-founder of the Discovery Camps, which fund SEES events during the school year. Her assistance of hundreds of families attending the camps was pivotal in their overall success. Dora has been a dedicated advocate who was driven by the population of students that SEES serves in all of its student-success programs. She took it upon herself as a personal goal to lift our SEES program participants over financial, academic and personal hurdles. The number of programs that Dora has supported over time demonstrates an extraordinary

Provost Award -  
The University's highest honor



effort and their effective execution would not be possible without the hands-on and hard-working effort of Dora Andersen. We will miss her tremendously and her footprint on the program will be unmatched. Thank you for the remarkable work and the love you put into your amazing tenure in SEES.

- Love,  
Every SEES Director and  
generations of SEES  
students



# COVID-19 Pandemic disrupts SEES traditions and student engagement

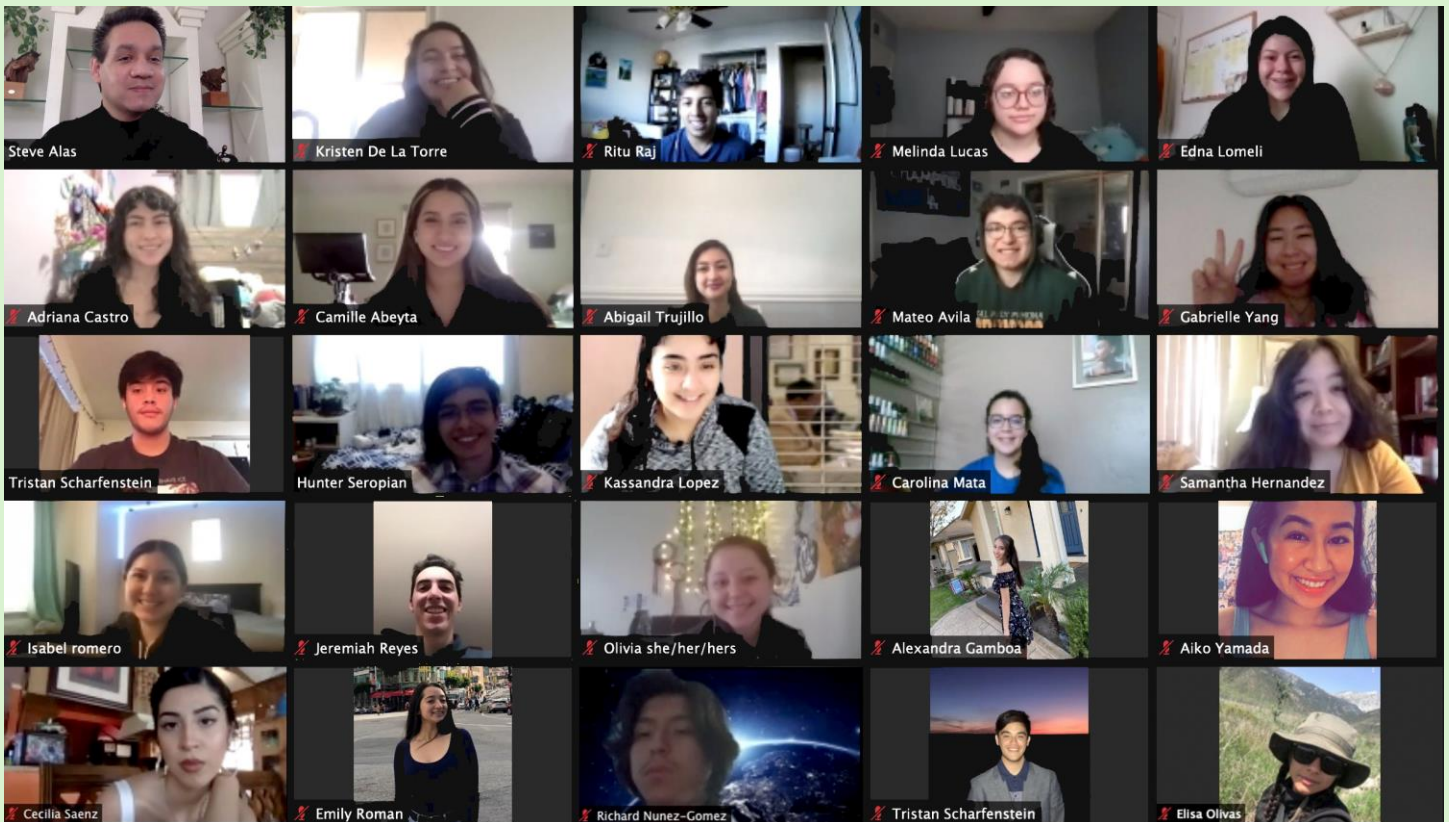
On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. In response, universities across the country implemented significant changes to mitigate the spread of the virus. To safeguard students, faculty, and staff, many higher education institutions transitioned entirely to online instruction and closed their campuses for the spring 2020 semester. Cal Poly Pomona followed suite, relegating our program to online support of students and cancelling socials that had been part of the SEES tradition for decades. SEES adapted to ensure continuity of student engagement with the limited online tools that existed. The program utilized Discord and Zoom to bring its students together. Professional development workshops were entirely online, doing away with one-on-one student interactions and the warmth of each SEES hug that was so common in our gatherings. Gone were the annual events such as the Mentor-Mentee picnic, the SEES Christmas Party, the Dinner & Awards Reception and many additional events that were typical for the program. We also did not see those amazing student faces populate the SEES community room, computer lab or 24-hr quiet room. The hallways were silent and the campus a ghost town. The SCI course that had welcomed incoming SEES freshmen was a spread of black boxes on a computer screen. The mentors did their best to reach out and engage the first-year students, but without the benefit of in-person socializing and campus exploration. The Discovery Camps during the summer went dormant. This pandemic, too, shall pass and SEES awaits the day when it can once again embrace its program members and give them a sense of belonging at Cal Poly Pomona.



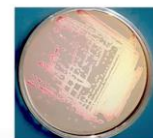
# SPIRES/LSAMP Research Scholars Programs

Due to the virtual status of students at Cal Poly Pomona, our scholars programs expanded their online offerings to the students in our program. During the school year, we offered a series of workshops that were either Graduate School Preparation or Workplace Psychology.

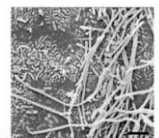
The research component for the scholars was switched to online research projects. Some students worked on strategies for a CPP Duck Pond water restoration project, while others were tasked to develop an approach for using genetic engineering to solve a problem of importance to society. Yet another research to worked to analyze a microbiome to solve a problem of importance to human health. Others worked with their own professors on projects of their own design. Although the nature of the research was purely data analysis and experimental design, the students took away knowledge from their projects and analytical skills.



What is the differences between Genome and Metagenome?



Genome



Metagenome (Microbiome)



# SEES Award Winners



**Marycruz Fernandez**  
(Hiemenz Awardee)

Reflecting on her deep bond with her aging grandmother, her resilience and care have inspired Marycruz's journey toward becoming a primary care physician. Witnessing her grandmother's struggles and accompanying her to frequent doctor appointments sparked her passion for medicine. Marycruz's commitment was further solidified through leadership roles in the Pre-Medical Student Association, where she helped organize a Pre-Health Conference, and founded a chapter of the Delta Epsilon Mu pre-health fraternity to inspire and support peers pursuing healthcare careers. Mentoring freshmen in SEES has allowed her to guide others in navigating the challenges of the pre-medical path. Her dedication to serving others drives her dream of becoming a physician, and she seeks financial support to pursue medical school and advance her career in primary care.



**Edna Lomeli**  
(Burke Awardee)

Edna, a first-generation Mexican American woman, reflects on her journey of resilience and determination in pursuing a career in STEM. After struggling academically at UC Santa Barbara, she rebuilt her confidence and passion for science at San Bernardino Valley College before transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. At CPP, she has thrived as a mentor and advocate for under-represented students through programs like SEES and PolyTransfer, while gaining valuable research experience as an NSF SPIRES fellow. As a SEES Discovery Camp Counselor, she shared her passion for biology with kids. Despite facing personal and financial challenges, like transfer shock and housing insecurity, she remains committed to becoming a research scientist and inspiring others. She seeks to complete her education and serve as a role model for first-generation, low-income students.



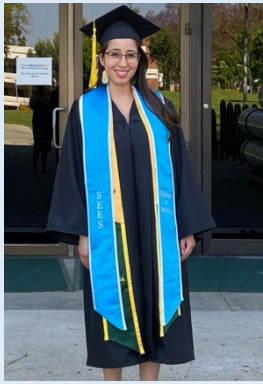
**Carolina Mata**  
(Burke Awardee)

Carolina reflects on her transformative journey at CPP, crediting SEES for helping her overcome initial doubts & imposter syndrome. Through active participation in SEES, she grew into a confident and accomplished STEM student, serving as a Discovery Camp Counselor, Academic Excellence Workshop Facilitator, and an NSF LSAMP/SPIRES fellow. Recognized for her academic excellence, she has earned several scholarships and consistently made the President's and Dean's Lists. Her passion for research, particularly in analytical methods and quantitative analysis, was nurtured by Dr. Kathryn McCulloch and culminated in acceptance to two REU programs. Planning to pursue a PhD in Chemistry, she aims to benefit under-served communities & inspire future students. Grateful for the support by SEES, she is committed to ensuring that science and research remain accessible to all.



# SEES Class of 2021

Due to the on-going pandemic, traditional commencement ceremonies for the 2021 class were not held on campus. The University held drive-up ceremonies at the Pomona Fairplex. However, many of our SEES graduates were generous enough with their time that they posed with their SEES sashes and sent pictures in to us. We thank all the program members for the hard work and dedication that culminated in STEM degrees. The world may be going through strange times, but your degrees will last forever. We feed a deep appreciation to those who were SEES mentors, research scholars, camp counselors, workshop facilitators, summer orientation assistants and to those who lives in the SEES community rooms. We wish you that life grants you the desires of your hearts. SEES will always be somewhere you can return to for advice, reminiscing, hugs or imparting advice as alumni in the real world! Thank you and good luck in your careers!!!





# Student Accomplishments

## Acceptances into Graduate/Professional Schools

- Summer Blanco (SEES) – PhD Plant Biology, University of Georgia Athens.
- Esteban Castro (SEES) – Postbacc at Medical University of South Carolina.
- Kristen De La Torre (SEES) – MS in Biological Sciences at Cal Poly Pomona.
- Yanina Diaz (SEES Alumni) – UCLA School of Dentistry.
- Israel Estrada (SEES) - Chemistry MS at Cal Poly Pomona.
- Lucero Fernandez (SEES) - Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program at University of Saint Augustine for Health Science in San Marcos, CA.
- Cassandra Flores (LSAMP) - PhD program at UT Dallas for organic chemistry.
- Rogine Antonette A. Gomez (LSAMP) – PhD program at Ohio State University.
- Crystal Landa (SEES Alumni) – UCLA School of Dentistry.
- Kassandra Lopez (LSAMP) - Ph.D program at Irell & Manella Graduate School of Biological Sciences.
- Jennifer Lopez (SEES Alumni)- Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences, Charles Drew University.
- Carolina Mata (SEES) – PhD in Chemistry at Clemson University.
- Elisa M. Olivas (LSAMP) – UC Irvine in Chemistry Ph.D.
- Urval Patel (LSAMP) – PhD program in Biophysics/ Biochemistry at Iowa State University.
- Alessandro Pereyra (LSAMP) - accepted to PhD degree programs at UC Berkeley, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, the Georgia Tech University, and UC Santa Barbara. (for Materials Science and Engineering).
- Serena Perez (SEES) – Ross University for Veterinary School.
- Ritu R. Raj (LSAMP) – PhD program at CU Boulder for Chemical and Biological Engineering.

- Jrielle Sullivan-Giles (SEES) – REU at at Keck Graduate Institute in Claremont for Bioprocessing/Biopharmaceuticals.
- Adrian Torres (SEES) – Chemistry Ph.D. degree at University of Georgia, Athens.
- Cindy Toscano (SEES) – received PhD acceptances from offers from UC Davis, University of Iowa, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and USC School of Pharmacy in the Pharmaceutical and Translational Sciences Program.
- Michelle Woo (LSAMP) - MS Forensic Science Degree Program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and George Mason University.
- Zijie Zhang (LSAMP) - University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill for PharmD.

## Acceptances into summer programs

- Nicole Avila (SEES) - XSEDE Empower (Expert Mentoring Producing Opportunities for Work, Education, and Research ) summer program.
- Diego Garcia (SEES) - SULI program (Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship Program) at Argonne National Laboratory
- Nyckolaus Ledezma (SEES) – REU at Washington State University.
- Christopher Leon (SEES) - USC DIA Jumpstart Summer Research Program.
- Lenia Morales (SEES) - SUNY State College of Optometry: Eye-CARE Camp.
- Joel Pena (SEES) – REU at Vassar College for the TEU (teaching experiences for undergraduates) program.
- Giselle Sandoval (SEES) - Internship at Mojave Desert Land Trust WISDOM program.
- Sarah Sharif (SEES) - REU at Penn State Department of Nuclear Engineering.
- Laura M. Sierra (SEES) - REU program (Microbial Friends and Foes) at Cornell University.
- Gabrielle Yang (LSAMP) - REU at UC Davis Bodega Marine Laboratory with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.