

# The SEES Informer

Science Educational Enhancement Services



VOLUME XXII 2023 - 2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

## THE LEGACY OF SEES FOUNDER – DR. PAUL HIEMENZ

JUNE 23, 1936 - NOVEMBER 8, 2023



It's with tears and a lot of sadness that we learned Dr. Paul Hiemenz, creator of SEES and Emeritus Chemistry Professor, passed away. Dr. Hiemenz created the SEES program in 1987 and mentored hundreds of students who felt the direct impact of his guidance, love and dedication. His influence is felt 37 years after the program's creation as it has helped launch thousands of students into their careers and has helped students during their Cal Poly Pomona journey by offering a community, mentoring, advising, academic support, professional development, financial support, and a home. Dr. Hiemenz was awarded the Outstanding Professor Award by the University in 1970.

Dr. Hiemenz was a very-loved and dedicated professor in the College of Science for 36 years from 1965 to 1999. He was the author of two Chemistry textbooks, and a generous philanthropist to future generations attending his beloved academic institutions. He was the benefactor of the Paul C. Hiemenz Award, which continues to be awarded each year to the SEES student that best demonstrates academic excellence, leadership and contribution to the program. He enjoyed reading, and loved traveling to all parts of the world, especially Hawaii and Mexico. He nurtured his artistic side creating pastel drawings of his favorite trip locations, attending plays especially at the Ahmanson and Pasadena Playhouse, and jazz concerts at the Hollywood bowl. Dr. Hiemenz will be missed greatly and we are indebted to him for the incredible contributions he made to the Cal Poly Pomona community.

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## A Pillar of Student Success

For nearly four decades, the SEES program at Cal Poly Pomona has been a driving force behind the academic and personal growth of underrepresented minority (URM) students in the sciences. This comprehensive initiative has stood the test of time, providing a multifaceted support system that has proven instrumental in fostering student success and retention.



SEES was established in fall 1987 by Dr. Paul Hiemenz to increase the retention and the number of URM students graduating from Cal Poly Pomona with degrees in the sciences and mathematics. Currently, the program serves 700+ students. The program maintains a support structure comprised of various components, each of which address a barrier to success in college.

## 37 Years Strong

### A Pillar of Student Success

Over the course of 37 years, the SEES program has proven its enduring value, facilitating the success and retention of URM students within the sciences by providing a comprehensive umbrella of support services. As it continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of its students, the program remains a beacon of hope and empowerment, ensuring that the next generation of STEM leaders has the resources and guidance necessary to thrive.



At the heart of this comprehensive support system are the program's Director, Dr. Alas (2013-present), and Coordinator, Kristen Urias, who serve as pillars of support and problem advisors. Students consistently turn to them for guidance on academic, professional, family, financial, and emotional issues, finding in the SEES program a center of resolution amidst the challenges they face.

At its core, the SEES program offers a peer mentoring program and a faculty-alumni-student mentoring program, fostering a sense of community and guidance that is invaluable for navigating the rigors of STEM fields.



# Student Spotlights

TO HIGHLIGHT SOME OF OUR MANY OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

## *Astrid Ardon-Lopez*

### **BIOCHEMISTRY**

I'd love to provide opportunities for people from underdeveloped countries like mine, Honduras, to get involved in STEM.

SPIRES | SEES MENTOR



## *Christian Jimenez*

### **BIOLOGY**

I aspire to pursue a career as a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. I hope that I can make a positive impact in the world by being a dedicated physician to my community.

SPIRES | SEES MENTOR

## *William Salazar*

### **PHYSICS**

Conducting research has allowed me to really learn what life in an astronomy based career looks like, and has opened new experiences for me to explore.

SPIRES | SEES MENTOR





## *Julia Zazueta*

### **BIOLOGY**

I developed a passion for understanding the human body and I plan on using that to pursue my dream of becoming a physician.

CLUB PRESIDENT | SEES MENTOR

## *Bryan Orellana de la Cruz*

### **COMPUTER SCIENCE**

I enjoy programming and finding solutions to problems through programming. My career goal is to go into software development or IT.

SPIRES | SEES MENTOR



## *Karly Camacho*

### **KINESIOLOGY**

I chose this because I really want to have a job where I can help people while also having a lot of freedom of where I can live and continue my career in the future.

SEES OFFICE ASSISTANT | SEES MENTOR



## *Morgan Saunders*

### **BIOLOGY**

Molecular biology has always been fascinating to me. Currently, I'm in biomedical research and will be enrolling as a PhD student in the fall.

SPRES | SEES MENTOR



# SEES Annual Picnic

Hosted on the lakeside of Bonelli Park



Saturday, September 23rd marked the return of our beloved Mentor-Mentee, in San Dimas. Around 80 mentors, mentees, and their families gathered for the highly anticipated annual Mentor-Mentee picnic. The event, which has become a cherished tradition, provided a delightful opportunity for attendees to strengthen their bonds, create lasting memories, and celebrate the power of mentorship.

The picturesque park setting served as the perfect backdrop for a day filled with excitement and camaraderie. Laughter echoed through the air as attendees engaged in various outdoor activities, including kayaking, biking, volleyball, soccer games, and a spirited round of piñata. The energy and atmosphere of the event was of pure joy and unity.

# Alumni/Mentor Luncheon

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Nov. 18th  
2023

It was an afternoon of making connections and building relationships for students in Cal Poly Pomona's SEES (Science, Engineering & Engineering Service) Learning Community. On Saturday, November 18th, 2023, over 20 SEES students gathered at the Dave & Buster's in Ontario Mills for a mentorship matching event.



## Insider Thoughts

**Here's what one of our students who attended the event had to say...**

"Finding a mentor can be huge change in perspective. I know that when I met my mentor, Karly, I learned not only about my future career aspirations but also about how to navigate life," said 3rd year Biology major, Natalie Sorensen. The event allowed current SEES students to be paired up with alumni mentors working in their desired fields.

The mentors came from a variety of STEM backgrounds to share their experiences and guidance. This event connects our talented students with advisors who have been in their shoes and can offer personal insights. The venue of Dave & Buster's provided a relaxed setting for the one-on-one mentor pairings to meet over food and games.

## Bonds Strengthen

The mentorship pairings will continue to strengthen over time, with mentors guiding students on areas like resume development, networking, and interviewing skills. For the SEES alumni volunteering as mentors, it's a way to give back. With a successful inaugural event, the SEES Learning Community plans to continue offering career mentorship opportunities to facilitate connections between current students and alumni in the future.



# PUMPKIN PATCH SOCIAL

WITH SPIRES / LSAMP RESEARCH STUDENTS



As the leaves began to change color and crisp autumn breezes blew through campus, the research scholars at Cal Poly Pomona took a well-deserved break from their academic pursuits. The group of hardworking students ventured off for an annual outing to the university's beloved Pumpkin Patch.

Surrounded by the sights, smells, and activities of the fall

festival, the NSF scholars were able to relax and enjoy each other's company. They sipped on sweet seasonal drinks, indulged in sticky popsicles,



and savored savory meats hot off the grill while chatting and getting to know one another better. "The pumpkin patch trip is always a highlight for me," said senior

Natalie S., a biology major. "It's a nice break from the lab and library to just kick back with my fellow researchers and make some fun fall memories."

As the sun set on the picturesque pumpkin patch, the research scholars headed back to campus with their pumpkins in tow and full of delightful fall memories. A welcome tradition to look forward to again next year.



# CHRISTMAS PARTY

DECEMBER 8TH 2023



## HERE'S THE DEATS

The Kellogg House provided a cozy venue, full of rich history as one of the original buildings constructed by the founders of Cal Poly Pomona. It was the perfect atmosphere for students to unwind before buckling down for end-of-term exams. The food for the evening was provided by the campus's own

## ANNUAL PARTY!

As the semester winds down and finals loom, SEES students at Cal Poly Pomona were treated to a welcome respite on the night of December 8th, 2023. SEES hosted its annual Holiday Student Celebration, a neatly decorated affair held in the historic Kellogg House.

Kellogg West Restaurant, known for its exceptional cuisine. Live piano music filled the air furthering the celebratory ambiance. In one of the evening's highlights, students were led in caroling by Dr. Alas and senior class members, boosting the holiday spirit. The joyful singing reverberated through the Kellogg House.

From the SEES Office: We were delighted by the lovely festive energy and look forward to welcoming students back next holiday season!



# DINING WITH BRONCOS

*Hosted by Dr. Alas*

Saturday, February 17, 2023

As a Cal Poly Pomona alumni, Dr. Alas generously hosted current students for dinner as part of the annual Dining with Broncos social event. This event serves as an opportunity for students to network with alumni in a nonacademic, informal setting, to connect and build mentor-mentee relationships with one another.



# AQUARIUM

## RESEARCHER'S SOCIAL

### *Out for Lunch*

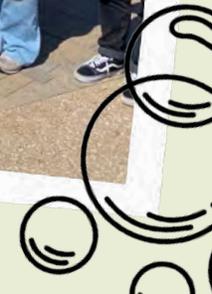
Researcher's packed their bags early in the morning to board the travel bus. After filing in, sitting for sometime on the road, the students arrived at their first destination, a restaurant of their choosing in beautiful Long Beach

### *Aquarium of the Pacific*

After a delicious lunch, our research scholars walked over to the Aquarium of the Pacific. Here they got to spend valuable time bonding and connecting while also looking at various sea life.

### *CSU Researcher's Dinner*

After a long day of fun, the student researchers hopped on the bus once again, and made their journey to Dave and Buster's in Orange. Here our SPIRES/LSAMP researchers met with other CSU campus's LSAMP members. At Dave and Buster's, they enjoyed chatting, eating, and learning more about others in a similar position as them.



# 2024 SEES & LSAMP

## *Awards & Dinner Reception*



The SEES program at Cal Poly Pomona awarded its highest honors to several exceptional students. Among the most prestigious were the Dr. Paul Hiemenz Award and the Dora Anderson Award, representing an impressive history and

named after the program's founding director and a pioneering figure, respectively. These accolades celebrate students who demonstrated outstanding academic performance, research contributions, and leadership within environmental and earth sciences.



The Dr. Paul Hiemenz Award honors the program's first director who served from 1987 to 1999, recognizing students fostering excellence in these fields. The Barbara Burke Award honors the most contribution back to the program by a student. The Dora Anderson Award pays tribute to a trailblazer, celebrating students excelling in studies while advancing environmental and earth sciences through exceptional research and advocacy efforts. In addition, the LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation) PROUD award winners chosen for outstanding achievements, research contributions, and dedication to promoting diversity and excellence in STEM. The SEES program takes great pride in nurturing and celebrating the accomplishments of its remarkable students who represent the future leaders and pioneers in SEES.

# Award Winners



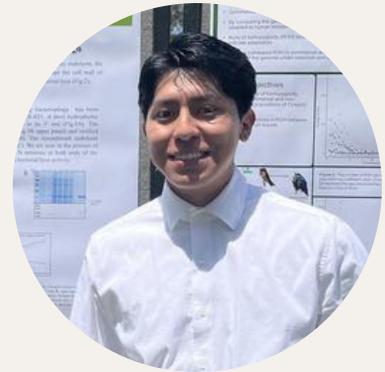
**Christian  
Jimenez**

Paul C. Hiemenz  
SEES Award



**Ximena  
Corona**

Dora Anderson  
SEES Award



**Richard  
Nunez-Gomez**

Barbara A. Burke  
SEES Award



**William  
Salazar**

LSAMP PROUD  
Award



**Bryan Orellana  
De La Cruz**

LSAMP PROUD  
Award



**Astrid Ardon  
Lopez**

LSAMP PROUD  
Award



**Diego Miguel  
Ochoa**

LSAMP PROUD  
Award

# Julia Chaidez

## 2023 Hilda Solis Scholarship Winner

### Congratulations!

The SEES program was very proud of Julia Chaidez for winning the 2023 Hilda L. Solis Scholarship. The Scholarship is in honor of Cal Poly Pomona Alumna, Hilda L. Solis, who served as the

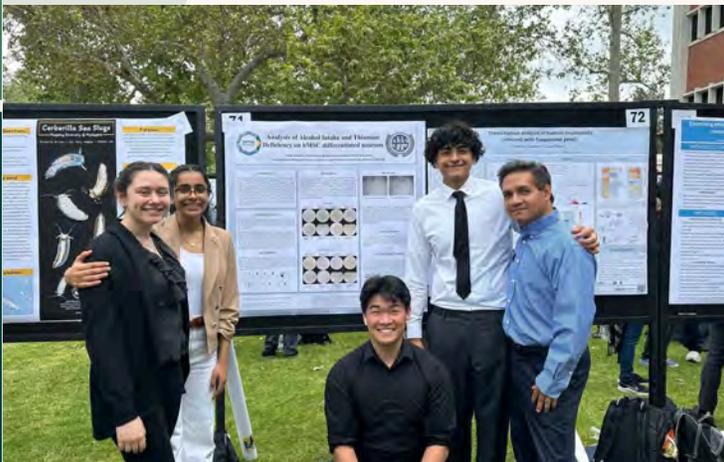
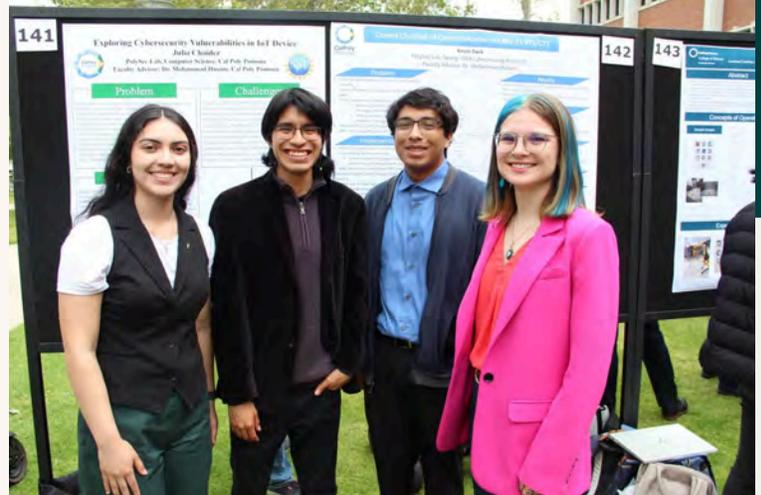
Secretary of Labor under President Barack Obama, making her the first Latina to serve as a United States Cabinet member.

The Scholarship and Reception recognizes high achieving students who have succeed academically, while finding significant ways to give back to their community. The scholarships serve to recognize and support Cal Poly Pomona's Latino population. This event is sponsored by the CPP Alumni Association.



# Cal Poly Pomona's Annual Science **RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM** Spring 2024

In March of 2024, our amazing SPIRES/LSAMP Scholars and other SEES students got the chance to present their STEM research projects and all of their cumulative efforts from the previous year at the Spring 2024 Research Symposium.





# END OF YEAR EXCURSION

Each year, the SEES program takes students who have given back to the program on an excursion. This year, mentors and camp counselors got the opportunity to visit Catalina Island, eat and snorkel. The trip is a THANK YOU by SEES for those students who contribute to the program's success.

