

I am a Latina, former foster youth and first generation college graduate. My interest is in helping disadvantaged students who come from a background similar to mine own, succeed in their educational pursuits. During the past seven years, I have worked with students of all capacities especially those from minority-based educational institutions. This experience has motivated me to want to find solutions to educational and economic inequities in order to better serve all students' needs. I would like to conduct research in this area with the goal of contributing to educational policy.

I have been afforded many opportunities but have had to work and fund my own education. During my undergraduate studies, I worked as an assistant track and field and cross country coach at Upland High school, and as an assistant to the coordinator of the Latin American Studies Department. I also worked as a tutor at the Reading and Writing Center at Riverside Community College, and as a program leader for a non-profit after school enrichment program called Think Together. It was also necessary to borrow funds from extended family and take out loans. The experience of finding my own resources taught me responsibility and time management skills, capabilities that, in turn, helped me to earn my bachelors degree.

I have been influenced by my studies in anthropology and my extracurricular activities on campus. Anthropology helped develop my thinking about issues affecting many international minority groups, and my curiosity has led to further interest in discovering these groups outside the classroom. I began by participating as a member of the Alliance of Students for an Equal Education, a group that advocated for issues affecting undocumented immigrant students. Then, as president of the Latin American Studies Student Association, I was able to educate CSU Fullerton students and community members about Latin American culture. While serving as the representative to the Association for InterCultural Awareness, I collaborated with other student organizations to promote diversity and education of the many cultural groups represented at CSU Fullerton.

In addition, I have been influenced by the work I have done with disadvantaged students in Spain and through my work at AmeriCorps, both of which have prompted an interest in comparative educational policy. While teaching in Spain, I observed many students struggle academically due to a lack of social welfare programs available to them and their families. Also, student's needs were not being met due to an integration of students of all abilities into one classroom. As an AmeriCorps VISTA employee, I am constantly learning about the lack of resources available to students from low-income communities. I am working to find solutions that provide equal opportunities for many of these deserving students and ensure their success.