

# ARELY LIZETH ACUÑA AVILEZ

## CURRICULUM VITAE

3470 Trousdale Parkway, WPH 502, Los Angeles, CA 90089  
arely.acuna@usc.edu

### EDUCATION

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- University of Southern California (USC)** Los Angeles, CA  
*Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Urban Education Policy* Aug 2015 – Present  
Concentration: Higher Education  
Advisor: Adrianna Kezar, Ph.D.
- University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** Los Angeles, CA  
*Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Student Affairs* Aug 2014 – Jun 2015  
Advisor: Linda Sax, Ph.D.
- University of California, Irvine (UCI)** Irvine, CA  
*Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in International Studies* Sept 2010 – Jun 2014  
*Minor in Management*  
Advisor: Jeanett Castellanos, Ph.D.

### RESEARCH INTEREST

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Educational experiences of undocumented college students; student organizations; student organizing; campus climate; educational equity and social justice; student leadership development

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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- Aug 2015 – Present **Doctoral Research Assistant**  
Pullias Center for Higher Education – University of Southern California
- Serve as a research assistant and collaborate on projects geared towards improving postsecondary education
  - Currently working on a longitudinal, \$6.2 million, mixed methods study funded by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation that examines how the experiences of students in a comprehensive college program translate to greater success for participants who are predominantly first-generation and low-income
- Aug 2014 – Jun 2015 **Graduate Assessment Intern**  
Residential Life – University of California, Los Angeles
- Assisted in the development and implementation of assessment and evaluation of UCLA's Residential Life programs
  - Created summary reports of survey data for the Theme & Learning Communities to support the continual improvement of the program
  - Performed various tasks including: literature reviews, data analysis in SPSS, presented survey findings, and consulted staff on assessment strategies
- Sep 2013 – Jun 2015 **Lead Researcher**  
“*Educational Micro-Success: Cultural Images Reflecting Latina Undergraduate Experiences*”  
Department of Social Sciences – University of California, Irvine  
Supervised by Jeanett Castellanos, Ph.D.
- Conceptualized and conducted a qualitative study incorporating a psychosociocultural (PSC) framework to explore the psychological, social and cultural factors that contribute to

Latina academic progress and success through the collection of photographs and blogs via Tumblr

Sep 2012 –  
Jul 2013

**Peer Researcher**

*“Latina/o Undergraduate Experiences”*

Department of Social Sciences – University of California, Irvine

Supervised by Jeanett Castellanos, Ph.D.

- Designed a qualitative study to examine how Latina/o undergraduate students’ psychological, social, and cultural experiences influence their academic success in college
- Led data collection and analysis for female participants for a comparison with male participants
- Presented findings at the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Symposium (UROP)

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**TEACHING AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT**

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Aug 2017 –  
Dec 2017

**Teaching Assistant – EDHP 551 Applied Educational Ethnography**

Rossier School of Education – University of Southern California

Lead Professor: Zoë Corwin, Ph.D

- Served as Teaching Assistant for a master’s level course designed to familiarize students with qualitative approaches of inquiry for the social sciences
- Developed and led lectures, created lesson materials, advised students on their research projects, and offered feedback on written assignments

Jan 2014 –  
Jun 2014

**Intergroup Dialogue Facilitator**

Bruin Resource Center (BRC) – University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Supervised by Sylvia Hurtado, Ph.D. and Anna Yeakly, P.D.

- Co-facilitated weekly intergroup dialogues in a 10-week long class for undergraduate and graduate students focused on racial/ethnic and gender identity
- Developed a curriculum designed to provide participants with a safe and brave space to engage in open constructive discourse on gender, race, and ethnicity-related issues through class readings, activities, and weekly journal assignments
- Trained to design and facilitate intergroup dialogues as part of the social justice education practice model

Sept 2012 –  
Jun 2014

**Statistics Tutor (Peer Assisted Learning Leader)**

Learning Academic Resource Center (LARC) – University of California, Irvine

- Taught 5 classes of 10-15 undergraduate students twice a week on probability and statistics methods in Social Science research
- Developed lectures and study materials on topics including: probability, correlation, regression, ANOVA, t-tests, and chi square

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**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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Sept 2013 –  
Jun 2014

**Leadership Development Programs Intern**

Student Life & Leadership – University of California, Irvine

- Facilitated and promoted Passport to Leadership certificate program to support students’ leadership skill development
- Developed curriculum and study materials associated with five success modules of the program

- Connected students with campus resources, training programs, and internship opportunities tailored to their leadership needs and interests

Jun 2012 – **Resident Advisor & Coordinator**  
Jul 2012  
California State Summer School for Math & Science (COSMOS) - University of California, Irvine

- Developed a comprehensive 4-week residential program for high-achieving high school students from California interested in pursuing STEM majors
- Facilitated a workshop series for first-generation college students to provide them with insight about college life and skills

Jun 2011 – **Leadership Development Program Manager**  
Jun 2012  
Social Science Academic Resource Center (SSARC) – University of California, Irvine

- Supervised and led a leadership development certificate program for undergraduate students
- Mentored and advised undergraduate students on various academic-related areas including: graduate and professional schools, professional development, research opportunities, and leadership development

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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Perez, R. J., Acuña, A., & Reason, R. D. (under revision). Pedagogy of validation: Autobiographical reading and writing courses for first-year, low-income students.

Kezar, A. & Acuña, A. (forthcoming). Gender inequality and the new faculty majority.

Tierney, W. G., Ward, J. D., Corwin, Z., Ngo, F., Cadena, M., Acuña, A., ... Lanford, M. (2017). *The university as a sanctuary*. Pullias Center for Higher Education, University of Southern California. Retrieved from [https://pullias.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/The\\_University\\_as\\_a\\_Sanctuary\\_Final.pdf](https://pullias.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/The_University_as_a_Sanctuary_Final.pdf)

Venegas, K., Cadena, M., Galan, C., Park, E., Astudillo, S., Acuña, A., ... Tierney, W. G. (2017). *Understanding DACA and the implications for higher education*. Pullias Center for Higher Education, University of Southern California. Retrieved from [https://pullias.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/understanding\\_daca\\_final.pdf](https://pullias.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/understanding_daca_final.pdf)

Kezar, A., Acuña, A., Drivalas, Y., & Wheaton, M. M. (2017). Building social change oriented leadership capacity among student organizations: Developing students and campuses simultaneously. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2017(155), 45-57.

## **PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

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Acuña, A., Wheaton, M.M., & Hallett, R. (2018) *Social media as a methodological tool in qualitative research*. To be presented at the AERA Annual Meeting. New York, NY April 13-April 17.

DePaola, T., Hallett, R., Kitchen, J., Perez, R., Reason, R., Rivera, G., Wheaton, M.M., & Acuña, A. (2018) *Scholars in the making: Using validation to foster positive college identities among traditionally underrepresented students*. To be presented at the AERA Annual Meeting. New York, NY April 13-17.

Perez, R. J., Acuña, A., & Reason, R. D. (2017). *Pedagogy of validation: Autobiographical reading and writing courses for first-year, low-income students*. Presented at the ASHE Annual Meeting. Houston, TX, November 10.

Acuña, A., DePaola, T., Wheaton, M.M., & Cole, D. (2016). *Using theory of possible selves to examine the contexts of postsecondary success*. Presented at the ASHE Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH, November 9-12.

Acuña, A., & Castellanos, J. (May 2013). *Latina/o undergraduate experiences*. Presented at the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), Research Symposium. University of California, Irvine.

## LECTURES & PRESENTATIONS

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- Mar 2018      **“The Current State of Undocumented Students in Higher Education: Policy Implications”**  
 Guest Lecturer  
 University of Southern California | Rossier School of Education | EDUC 630: Organizations & Policy
- Apr 2017,  
2018      **“El Camino a la Universidad: Planning and Preparing for Success in Higher Education”**  
 Adelante Mujer Latina Conference by Adelante Youth Alliance
- Apr 2014      **“Statistics for Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences”**  
 University of California, Irvine | Department of Social Sciences
- Mar 2013      **“Introduction to Research Statistics”**  
 University of California, Irvine | Department of Social Sciences

## SELECT AWARDS & GRANTS

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- Apr 2018      **Student Research Spotlight Award – University of Southern California**  
 Award presented by Rossier Student Organization (RSO) which recognizes research that impacts policy change
- Aug 2015      **Rossier Dean’s Ph.D. Fellowship – University of Southern California**  
 Awarded 4-year long fellowship to pursue doctoral studies
- Jun 2014      **Jeff Garcilazo Award – University of California in Irvine**  
 Recognized and awarded \$300 for best undergraduate paper on the Chicano/Latino experience
- May 2014      **Order of Merit Award – University of California in Irvine**  
 Received recognition for academic excellence, original research, leadership, and service contributions to the school of Social Sciences
- Apr 2014      **Chancellor’s Award of Distinction – University of California in Irvine**  
 Received recognition as an exceptional graduating senior exhibiting a commitment to cutting-edge research, leadership, and service
- Feb 2014      **Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Grant – University of California in Irvine**  
 Awarded \$800 to conduct and present a study titled “Educational Micro-Success: Cultural Images Reflecting Latina Experiences”
- Dec 2012      **Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Grant – University of California in Irvine**  
 Awarded \$600 to conduct and present a study titled “Latina/o Undergraduate Experiences”

## SERVICE

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**Board Member for Student Community of Ph.D.’s in Education (SCoPE)**

- Aug 2016 – University of Southern California  
Jun 2017
- Served as a board member for USC’s Ph.D. student organization which aims to provide educational opportunities and other resources for emerging educational researchers within Rossier School of Education
- Nov 2017 **Chair for ASHE Annual Conference**  
Sessions Chaired:
- “Complicating Nation and Citizenship: The Educational Experiences and College Choices of Undocumented Transnational and U.S. Domestic Black Students”
  - “Campus Climate and Institutional Responses”
- Aug 2016 – **I AM Mentoring Program**  
Present Mentor local high school senior through college preparation

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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- Aug 2015 – **American Education Research Association (AERA)**  
Present Graduate Student Member
- Aug 2015 – **Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)**  
Present Graduate Student Member
- Oct 2013 – **Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)**  
Jul 2015 Graduate Student Member

### **SUPPLEMENTARY SKILLS**

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- Spanish Proficiency (Read, Write, Speak)
- Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher)
- Adept in SPSS & STATA