



September 2026

Starting a Year of Excellence



Photo by Heidi Green, SSHA Staff

Welcome to the September issue of the SSHA Spotlight, your source for news from the [School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts \(SSHA\)](#).

We begin the new academic year with extraordinary momentum. We welcomed more than 1,300 new students this fall, a 75% increase in just one year. More than three-quarters of these students are the first in their families to attend college. These numbers reflect SSHA's central role in UC Merced's mission of expanding opportunity and social mobility.

This Spotlight issue shows that our growth is matched by our research excellence. SSHA faculty are pursuing ambitious projects through the Chancellor's Catalyst Awards, connecting global challenges such as climate change to the experiences of communities in the Central Valley, and earning recognition for scholarship that has real-world impact.

We have much to look forward to as we build on the school's growing momentum. I am excited to see what our students, faculty, and staff will achieve together in the year ahead.

Leonardo Arriola
Dean, School of Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts

A New Year, a Growing University

UC Merced welcomes students for its 21st academic year

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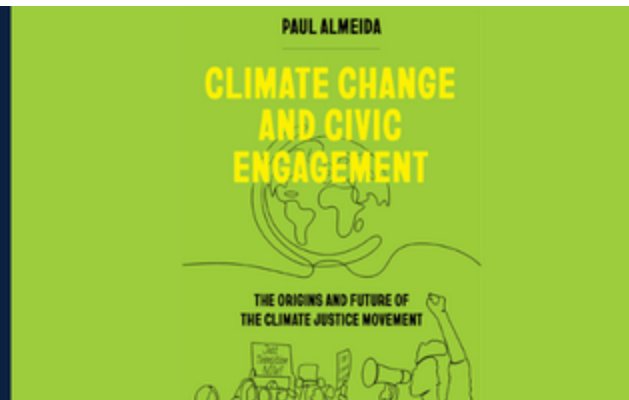
Research That Sparks New Ideas

Catalyst Awards fuel innovative research across our disciplines

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Expanding the Climate Action Conversation

UC Merced professor works to broaden participation in climate action

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Awards & Honors



Community Impact Recognized

Professor Ed Flores honored for advancing Central Valley communities

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Celebrating Faculty Excellence

Five SSHA faculty named to endowed chairs

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ENDOWED CHAIR APPOINTMENTS



Christina Baker



Hong Lin



Zoraida Aguirre Muñoz



Courtney Morano



Joann Kim

UC MERCED

Public Events



Sep 21: Honoring Christina Lux

An Academic Roundtable on Her Legacy and Impact



Sep 30: Faculty Author Series

Author talk featuring Assistant Professor of Literature, Mai-Linh Hong



Sep 30: S4 Seminar Series Bruce Link

Bruce Link, UC Riverside, Fundamental Causes of Health

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