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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PUENTE Project Student Leadership Conference comes to CSUSB**

Nearly 800 Southern California ninth-graders and their parents will participate in the  [PUENTE Project Student Leadership Conference and Feria Educativa](https://coe.csusb.edu/lead/events/puente-project) (Education Fair) at Cal State San Bernardino in partnership with the Puente Project on Wednesday, March 18.

Award-winning screenwriter and independent filmmaker Peter Bratt will give the keynote address. Bratt’s latest production is “Dolores,” a feature documentary about the life of social justice activist, Dolores Huerta – a film he co-produced with Grammy Award-winning musician Carlos Santana.

The Feria Educativa, which is part of the university’s Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD) project, will be held from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the university’s Santos Manuel Student Union Events Center.

Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes and CSUSB Vice President of University Advancement Robert J. Nava will serve as the event’s honorary chairs. Affectionately known as Madrina and Padrino de Honor, respectively, the titles are a symbolic status bestowed upon these selected individuals due to their passionate community work, long-standing community involvement and leadership in the Latino community.

The PUENTE Project Student Leadership Conference/Feria Educativa is intended to involve, engage, inspire and inform students and their families along their educational journey, and cultivate a college-going and career-readiness culture for all students to be prepared for a full range of post-secondary options.

As first-generation college hopefuls, the ninth-grade students will learn about the pathway toward higher education by attending workshops on college requirements and financial aid, and will also focus on learning about their leadership potential. A major element of the leadership conference is to have students identify themselves as current leaders, further develop their leadership potential, commit to giving back and making a positive impact in their schools and local communities.

Latino parents and families of the students will also participate in the conference serving as a critical component in believing that their children are “college material” and offer opportunities to understand their role in the college process, as well as other career opportunities.

The  [PUENTE Project Student Leadership Conference and Feria Educativa](https://coe.csusb.edu/lead/events/puente-project) planning committee consists of Enrique Murillo, executive director and founder of LEAD and a professor in the CSUSB College of Education; Olivia Rosas,

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CSUSB associate vice president, Student Success and Educational Equity; Rob Garcia, CSUSB Information Technology consultant, LEAD Projects webmaster and web services liaison; Ann Romero, statewide Puente conference coordinator; Melinda Martinez, Puente statewide teacher coordinator, and Josefina E. Canchola, associate director of Partnerships for the Puente Project.

Filmmaker Bratt’s film, “Dolores,” premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and has garnered a number of awards, including Best Documentary Feature at both the San Francisco and Seattle international film festivals, and a prestigious 2018 Peabody Award. Bratt is currently in production on a documentary exploring guns and the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Bratt’s first feature film, “Follow Me Home,” premiered in competition at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival and won the Best Feature Film Audience Award that same year at the San Francisco International Film Festival.

In 2009, he and his brother, actor Benjamin Bratt, produced, “La Mission,” a feature film shot on location in their hometown of San Francisco. “La Mission,” which Peter Bratt wrote and directed, premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and was the opening night film at the 2009 San Francisco International Film Festival, the 2009 New York International Latino Film Festival, and the 2009 Outfest Film Festival in Los Angeles.

For his work on “La Mission,” Peter Bratt received the prestigious Norman Lear Writer’s award and was one of 10 American independent filmmakers selected by Sundance and the President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities to launch Sundance Film Forward – a program that uses film and conversation to excite and introduce a new generation to the power of story.

Bratt is also a San Francisco film commissioner and a long-time consultant for the Friendship House Association of American Indians, a nonprofit serving the Bay Area’s Native American population.

Assemblymember Reyes was elected to the California State Assembly in November 2016 to represent California’s 47th Assembly District, which includes the communities of Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Rialto, San Bernardino, and the unincorporated communities of Bloomington and Muscoy.

Reyes, a proud daughter of immigrants, has been a champion for her community throughout her career. She graduated from Colton High School and received an associate degree from San Bernardino Valley College. After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California, Reyes went on to earn her law degree from Loyola Law School and became the first Latina to open her own law office in the Inland Empire. Reyes also served as the Madrina de Honor for the LEAD Summit & Week in 2017.

CSUSB Vice President Nava has spent 35 years in higher education advancement leadership roles, including 18 years in the inland region prior to now. He most recently served as vice president for university advancement at San Francisco State University, and before that at the University of Texas, El Paso. He also enjoyed a long and distinguished tenure at UC Riverside.

Nava holds a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from UTEP, a law degree from Western State University College of Law and was a member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Institute for Management and Leadership in Education. He is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and is a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE), a credential attained by demonstrating success in fundraising and supporting professional standards in philanthropy. He was one of the co-founders of the Latino Network in Riverside, has also been a volunteer for the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project (CLYLP), and also served many years on the Puente Project’s Advisory Board.

For more information on this event, contact Enrique Murillo at emurillo@csusb.edu or Josefina Canchola at Josefina.canchola@berkeley.edu.

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**About Cal State San Bernardino**

[California State University, San Bernardino](https://www.csusb.edu/) is a preeminent center of intellectual and cultural activity in Inland Southern California. Opened in 1965 and set at the foothills of the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains, the university serves more than 20,000 students each year and graduates about 4,000 students annually. The university offers more than 70 traditional baccalaureate and master’s degree programs, education credential and certificate programs, and a doctorate program in educational leadership. Every one of its academic programs that is eligible has earned national accreditation. CSUSB reflects the dynamic diversity of the region and has the most diverse student population of any university in the Inland Empire. More than 80 percent of those who graduate are the first in their families to do so.

For more information on Cal State San Bernardino, contact the university’s [Office of Strategic Communication](https://www.csusb.edu/advancement/strategic-communication) at (909) 537-5007 and visit [inside.csusb.edu](https://inside.csusb.edu/).

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