



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

College of Letters & Science

UCSB

Alumni Spotlight

This month's Spotlight features Angélica, a former History of Public Policy major who is now shaking up the state government, innovating ways to better serve the people of California.



**Angélica Quirarte:
Policy Analyst
California Government
Operations Agency**

What are you up to now, post-graduation?

I am an innovation strategist and advisor for the California state government. I work with governor's appointees on a range of initiatives with the mission of reforming the way government runs so it can deliver better services to the public when, how, and where they need it. I do everything from drafting policy to briefing the Deputy Secretary of Innovation and Accountability on whether the administration should support a bill or not, to developing pilot programs and training curriculums for state employees.

My agency oversees the state workforce—about 230,000 employees. This includes over 100 departments

like Food and Agriculture, CHP, Health and Human Services, the Department of Corrections, and careers like scientists, doctors, engineers, analysts, and on and on. I also hear from public stake holders. For example, the Civil Rights Coalition regularly meets with us to discuss whether the people in positions of leadership fairly reflect the diverse population of the state. We take that feedback and look at how we can make improvements to our talent-hiring strategies.

I also collaborate with the private sector to learn what practices we might apply to government operations. For example, we have partnered with Google to develop a new leadership training curriculum for supervisors, managers, and executives, and to develop a statewide leadership philosophy to combat the ten-

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dency for state government to silo itself off. We want to remind everyone of what it means to be a public servant. With that information, we're revamping how we hire, train, and retain our state workforce.

I recognize that I'm part of a changing generational workforce in the state and it's part of my duty to bring that voice to the table when assisting leaders or when influencing policy changes.

For this position, you need strong communication skills—everything from how you deliver a message to how you listen to what different parties have to bring to the table. I'm a convener, I'm a collaborator, and I think that, in and of itself, has really helped me start conversations between separate agencies that are trying to solve similar problems. You also need patience as you challenge people to think in a different way. Government is constantly trying to adapt to change, which can be

hard for people who are used to things being a certain way.

How did you get to where you are?

When I was at UCSB I was really involved in student organizations that focused on serving the greater good and disadvantaged communities. For example, I started the book bank and two mentorship programs (one for UCSB students and for high school students) through SIRRC, A.S.'s Recruitment and Retention Committee that helps low-income and under-resourced students. I also led a couple of delegations to come and lobby here in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. on education policy. I knew I was interested in making a difference. I'd started out as a Sociology major, but found myself drawn to my history classes and eventually switched to the History of Public Policy major, which was a natural fit. I'm fascinated by learning from people's pasts and applying those lessons to the present as

we try to not repeat the same mistakes. History of Public Policy also required you to write a senior thesis to be able to graduate and as a person who likes to challenge herself and who likes to learn, I wanted that extra rigor to my college education. I became fascinated by how the rise of the victims' rights movement contributed to the defunding of education in the state of California in order to build prisons, all promulgated by Proposition 13. I researched how the victims' rights language was used and sometimes manipulated in politics. I have friends who are incarcerated and I had interactions with the justice system through legal programs and internships, and wanted to learn more. I walked out of college with something I could show people when I applied to jobs and with knowledge I wouldn't have gotten just by sitting in classes.

My senior year, I knew I didn't want to go to grad school right away, so I applied to one- to two-

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year fellowship programs. I got into the Capital Fellows Executive Fellowship Program and was placed at the Government Operations Agency. As a fellow, you work at the highest levels of state government for ten months and at the same time you earn units toward a graduate school program. It’s a competitive program that ranks among top ten internships lists, including Forbes, for the last few years. It was an incredible opportunity. Before the fellowship, I had never considered a job in state government, but before the program ended, I was pulled aside and asked if I wanted to stay. I told them yes and was hired right out of the program.

What was the best thing you did as an undergrad to help you get to where you are?

In my very first quarter as a freshman, I took a Chicano Studies class. I was a very shy kid growing up, but one of my professors challenged me during the first or second week of school to get up in front of the class of about 500 people and explain something. And I thought, “You know what? This is an opportunity. I’m new to this place and I am here to learn so that’s what I’m going to do.” I took him up

on his challenge. From then on, I was very curious about what else I could do. I joined different programs like LEAP, a leadership program run through Student Affairs. There, I met peers with similar interests. I joined El Congreso, A.S., EOP, and even started my own programs. I also worked as a tutor in Santa Barbara for a couple of years and, through that, learned about the community outside of the university. I’m someone who enjoys bringing something to the table, bringing people together, and finding a common goal for us to achieve something. I can definitely say I took advantage of the opportunities given to me while I was in college.

I’m a first generation college graduate. I’m an immigrant. I’m the oldest and only girl in my family. My entire extended family is all back in Mexico. We moved here from Mexico on September 11, 2001. I was ten and my parents sacrificed everything, took the risk coming to a country amidst chaos and uncertainty. We didn’t know if the U.S. was going to break into war or not, yet they still decided to take the step forward. So I’m making the most of the opportunity that they granted me by being

here and learning. Very few family members back in Mexico are college educated, so I feel it’s really up to my siblings and me to start a new trend in a new country. I feel so much was given to me, it’s only fair to give back. This is why I really immersed myself in the student organizations that served others. And I really think doing that and building those networks was the most valuable thing besides the quality college education.



“You never really know where you’re going to end up in life.”



For articles like these, reminders of important deadlines, and more, like our Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/AskJoeGaucho

If an alum's story is meaningful to you, consider reaching out with questions using the contact information provided.

What do you wish you had known while you were in undergrad?

Really, just put yourself out there. Try new experiences. At that time, I had no idea that all the work I was doing would actually end up being extremely valuable for when I applied to the fellowship and even now. As an undergrad, I managed a \$100K budget, I ran an organization, I started programs, but at the time, you're living in a bubble of UCSB and you don't always see how the work you're doing there will apply to "real life" after college. Even today, I'm constantly thankful for the lessons that I learned. My friends and family always asked why I was doing all this stuff and I didn't know, but I didn't shy away from the opportunities when they came.

What was the best thing about being a Gaucho?

Being in a community where everyone really takes care of one another.

It feels great to not only learn from my peers in the classroom, but also outside the classroom, and knowing that we're actively building our community. We were neighbors, we were classmates, we were friends. Being immersed in that experience, I felt safe. It's a strong community of individuals who are doers and game changers in every single way. I take a lot of pride in that.

Any final words of wisdom for the current Gaucho generation?

You never really know where you're going to end up in life. Life is not linear—as much as you plan, things are going to get in your way and change your direction. Every lesson you learn, inside or outside the classroom, will be extremely valuable after college. I would strongly encourage people to get involved, get involved, get involved. You're giving back to your community, but you get so much more back in return.



Angélica welcomes Gauchos to contact her via email for mentorship and with questions about her journey. Requests to review resumes will not receive responses.

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