



Sandra Núñez, right, is a LIFT (Learning Independence for Transition) South Teacher from Alhambra Unified School District who was awarded the Academy of Special Dreams Micro Business Grant 2019. Academy of Special Dreams President and CEO Michael Dergar is on the left.



Local high school students compete in a robotics competition as part of Cal State LA's LAUNCHpad, a two-week hands-on program that aims to encourage young women to pursue careers in STEM. (Photo by J. Emilio Flores/Cal State LA)

Academy of Special Dreams Foundation awards Micro Business Grant, serves less fortunate community in Mexico

The Academy of Special Dreams Foundation announced its global project of serving a less fortunate community in Mexico and the launch of a micro business for artists with disabilities in Alhambra.

"Thanks to the generosity of Helen Woo, of the Woo Educational Foundation, and many other supporters of the Academy of Special Dreams Foundation, we were able to provide our first micro business sponsorship to a local transition group in the City of Alhambra," said Michael Dergar, president and CEO of the Academy of Special Dreams.

"We again supported the annual Christmas Posada in the small fishing town of Escuinapa, Sinaloa, where a warm dinner, dessert, goody bags, and games were provided to more than 250 underprivileged children and elderly. I must give special thanks to our yearly supporters and friends,

in particular our volunteers in Mexico, for their yearly dedication, generosity, and passion."

About the Academy of Special Dreams Foundation

The Academy of Special Dreams Foundation believes that all persons, regardless of their disabilities, should have equal opportunities to express their talents and to be successful in the arts. As a tax-exempt IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the primary mission of the Academy of Special Dreams Foundation is to bring awareness to artists with disabilities by showcasing their artistic talents on its website, www.specialacademy.org. With more than 200 artists in residence, the foundation continues to increase its online collection of visual art, paintings, short film, photography, creative writing, and other works of art by artists with disabilities.

Cal State LA receives \$525,000 grant from Weingart Foundation to boost STEM student achievement

Cal State LA has been awarded a \$525,000 grant from the Weingart Foundation to accelerate the achievement of students pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The three-year grant will allow Cal State LA to establish the Acceleration Initiative, which will prepare students from groups who are underrepresented to succeed in STEM. The goal is to produce more diverse STEM graduates who are prepared for the workforce and ready to contribute locally and globally.

"This generous grant from the Weingart Foundation for the Acceleration Initiative will allow the college to provide the best possible first-year experience program for our students, strengthening students' commitment to excellence, engagement with their community, and accelerating their academic success and career prospects," said Emily Allen, the grant's principal

investigator and the dean for the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology (ECST) at Cal State LA.

Through the Weingart grant, Cal State LA will hire a director who will integrate the university's already existing STEM programs for middle school, high school, and first-year college students. The university will also leverage the funding to expand and improve the programs and to attract individual donors and private funders.

The Acceleration Initiative will bring together four programs: MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement), LAUNCHpad, STEP (Summer Transition to ECST Program), and FYE@ECST (First-Year Experience at ECST).

"Cal State LA transforms lives — of students, their families, and our community. We appreciate the commitment of the Weingart Foundation to help us in this work," Ms. Allen said.

