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Fall 2025 Internal Newsletter

New Hires



Negin Kaykha, Assistant Editor, Encyclopaedia Iranica

Negin Kaykha is a multilingual educator and scholar specializing in contemporary Persian and Arabic literature. She holds two master's degrees, Comparative Literature from the University of California, Davis (2023), and Persian Language and Literature from Shiraz University (2015). Her academic research focuses on contemporary Persian literature and translation, including her M.A. thesis on translating the novel *Ro'aye Tabbat* (The Dream of Tibet). Negin has served as a Teacher Assistant at UC Davis, lecturer, and Persian editor in Iran. She has published peer-reviewed articles and is committed to fostering critical thinking and a passion for Persian literature. Negin is a recognized scholar, having received a FLAS scholarship for Arabic language (2022). Negin was also the top-ranked student in her master's program at Shiraz University in Iran. She is proficient in English and Persian (Farsi), with intermediate proficiency in Arabic.

Angel Munoz, Development Analyst, Humanities Development Office



Biological Sciences in 2024. During his undergraduate studies, Angel focused on courses with a biological emphasis, however, he loved his Writing 37 Course in the School of Humanities' English Department which revolved around online horror folklore and found footage. Angel is a huge horror movie fan and loves the Halloween season so he may watch his favorite movie series, Scream. Angel has a Chihuahua named Milo who is nearly 10 years old.



Leah Popoff, Academic Counselor, Humanities Undergraduate Office

Leah Popoff earned her B.A. in English with a minor in Psychological Science from UCI in June 2025. Before stepping into her Academic Counselor role, she worked with the Office of Undergraduate Study as a Peer Academic Advisor, where she developed a passion for supporting students on their academic journeys. Outside of her work in the School of Humanities, she enjoys reading fiction, travelling, and delving into the poetry of song lyrics through her love of music.



Layah Ziaii-Bigdeli, Associate Editor, Encyclopaedia Iranica

Dr. Layah Ziaii-Bigdeli holds a Ph.D. in Visual Studies from UC Irvine, an M.A. in Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies from Rutgers University, and a B.A. in Art History and Archaeology from Columbia University. An art historian specializing in the visual and material cultures of late antique and early Islamic Iran, she brings extensive curatorial and museum experience from institutions. Layah oversaw the Sasanika digital humanities project at UCI, leading its redesign and expansion to enhance accessibility and scholarly engagement.

Staff announcements

Arya Moknat was promoted to **Operations Manager, Encyclopaedia Iranica**. Congratulations to Arya!



AJ Lipscomb, Advancement Office Administrative Specialist

Branch and years served: United States Marine Corps (USMC)

What is a skill you learned as a member of the US Armed Forces that translates to your role today (or to the work environments more generally)?
I wouldn't call it a skill, but there was a phrase that was constantly repeated during my time in the marine corps. It was "hurry up and wait" where we were required to rapidly respond to commands and situations, but then realized there was a level of patience that was called upon as well because of the long wait times before execution of actions. I try to respond as quickly as possible to requests of me and have a very high level of patience when needed.

What is one thing you wish more people understood about military life or being a veteran?
It is an experience like nothing else in life that can be experienced by every citizen of this country. You are not only "serving your country – but are willing to fight and give your life in its defense. Even though I had a specific admin MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) and the job was done Monday-Friday 7:30am-5pm, in the military are never really off duty – during the entire time of your enlistment you are expected to respond to your unit whenever you are called - 24/7. To me the only thing that has come close to this was realizing I would hold the label of being a "mother" for my entire life. For me, being a marine was not something I did — it is an experience that has contributed to who I am.



Colin S. Andrews, Director of Facilities and Space Planning

Branch and years served: United States Marine Corps 4/20/1987 - 12/15/1995
Sergeant /Crewchief (Flight Engineer) CH-53E, Helicopter Crew Chief Instructor, Plane Captain Instructor, Night Systems Instructor, Turf Instructor, Crew Chief Evaluator, Plane Captain Evaluator, Collateral Duty Inspector.
Operations Participated in: Cold Winter 89 (above the Arctic circle Norway) Desert Shield/ Desert Storm (Saudi Arabia/ Kuwait) Continue Hope/ Quick Draw (Somalia) Deny Flight/ Provide Promise (Bosnia/ Former Yugoslavia) Support Democracy (Haiti) Joint Task force 129 (Central and South America)

Awards: Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), United Nations Medal, Navy Arctic Service Ribbon, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (4) Humanitarian Service Medal (2), Southwest Asia Service Medal (3), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal (2), Navy Unit Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Achievement Medal, Naval Air Crew Wings, Naval Combat Aircrew Wings. Special Award- Marine Corps Aviation Association Marine Aircrewman (Helicopter) of the Year- 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (1993).

What is a skill you learned as a member of the US Armed Forces that translates to your role today (or to the work environments more generally)?
I was privileged to serve with a very diverse group of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions. I learned very quickly that we all had many things in common and by working together we could face and overcome any challenge presented before us. The school of Humanities has always felt like home to me as we embrace diversity, have respect for different opinions, and look for ways to understand the world we live in and make it better. I also have a good understanding of the cultures and some of the languages that we teach about having been deployed to many of these areas and experiencing them first hand. In my current role, my understanding of how our building systems work can be directly related to how aircraft systems work. The logistics of deploying aircraft across the world has prepared me to understand the logistics of the many projects we undertake.

We all have different reasons for joining the military, but all have a strong belief of being in service to others. All who have served made incredible sacrifices in many ways that are unseen to those not in service.



Tomas Figueroa, Assistant Dean

Branch and years served:U.S. Army, Staff Sergeant, 8 years of service

What is a skill you learned as a member of the US Armed Forces that translates to your role today (or to the work environments more generally)?
Listening is a critical skill in the military. A leader is a good and attentive listener. It comes in handy in many situations, from following directions (perhaps it was a little easier to listen with Drill Sergeants screaming words at you, LOL), mechanical inspection, in the woods to understand your environment, in civil affairs listening to the members of the community whom you are working to collaborate, and an area I find most important in my role, as a leader, to better understand the individuals I serve. In listening you understand their needs, their challenges, their motivation, their level of understanding, all of which to better lead your team.

What is one thing you wish more people understood about military life or being a veteran?
What we see on the screen is not always the true and actual experience of every military servicemember. We are unique in many ways, though our experiences may be similar. Our experience shaped us all in different ways to generate unique stories. If you know a veteran, see if they are willing to share their story.

Advancement

Following the close of the publicly announced Brilliant Future campaign which began in 2019, the School of Humanities reached an elevated goal of $35 million. This has meant the

Also included are support to projects such as aid from the James Irvine Foundation and the Historic Origins Project (HOPE-OC) which studies the origins of economic and racial inequality in Orange County.

Gregory Pierre Cox
Executive Director of Development

Communications

Website
As the new academic year begins, it's useful to remind all staff and faculty that if you have any website questions or needs, including new access to the website, please reach out to sohwebmaster@uci.edu.

Branding
Yes–we have new SOH branding to share with everyone! If your department is interested in working with the Comms team to design custom branding as part of this (we have many options to choose from, and would like to tailor what we create to suit your aesthetic sensibilities as much as possible), please reach out to Kelly and Erica to set up a 30-minute consultation.
The SOH portal has been updated with the following branding (and related) documents:

1. New branding style guide (to give you a sense of what we're creating)
2. New SOH letterhead
3. New SOH PowerPoint

What are we missing? If you have ideas for other assets, please contact Kelly.

Alumni
We're gearing up for our December alumni newsletter issue. Know of recent publications by our alumni? Have a lead on former students doing interesting things? Know of alumni who have been involved in elected offices? Please let Kelly know!

Halloween Party



Staff had a hauntingly good time at this year's Halloween party! Congratulations to Hannah Kanenbley for winning first place in the costume contest as Shock from The Nightmare Before Christmas. Sofia Barsan, dressed as Coraline, won second place.

Kelly Anne Brown
Director | Media Relations and Communications

Facilities

RECENT PROJECTS

- **History Faculty Office Renovation**
  Renovations have been completed on KH 334 and 340 to transform the multi-occupant workspace and small office into two full-sized faculty offices.
- **KH & HIB English Composition Renovation**
  - HIB 420 has been split into one staff office and one meeting space, with a new door connecting HIB 418.
  - In Krieger Hall, a wall was removed between 500 and 500A to create a large multi-occupant space for instructors to meet with students.
- **HH Provisions on Demand (POD)**
  The POD was removed over the summer.

CURRENT PROJECTS

- **Safety On Site (SOS)/ Workplace Violence Prevention Program (WVPP)**
  We are currently going department to department to identify hazards and unsecured furnishings in our workspaces and correct them. Separately but related, we are evaluating building safety issues—such as evening lighting, accessibility, and access to emergency resources—on an ongoing basis as part of the WVPP.
- **EH&S Building Inspections**
  EH&S will soon be conducting our annual building inspections.

Colin or Jeremy to arrange for old office phones to be picked up as eWaste.
For more information on the phone retirement project, visit OIT's page here: OIT Phone Retirement Project

- **HG Network Cable Replacement**
  HG will undergo a network cabling overhaul, possibly during Winter Break 2025, to replace cabling affected by this year's HG flood.
- **HG Chilled Water System**
  Initial planning has begun for the replacement of "V" band clamps on the chilled water supply and return lines—the type that failed and caused the HG leak earlier this year.
- **HIB 135 Renovation and Reservations**
  - HIB 135 is now reserved through the Dean's Office.
  - Renovations include lighting and a tech upgrade to match HG 1010 and HG 1030.
  - Official capacity: 68
  - Reservations can be made via the SOH Conference Room Reservation Form
- **HIB Fire Alarm System Replacement**
  The fire alarm system has been replaced; additional work discovered during replacement will be scheduled soon.
- **2025-26 Small Capital Improvement Project Proposal**
  Proposal submitted to upgrade tech in:
  - HH 342, HH 344
  - KH 374, KH 400D
  - HIB 208, HIB 220, HIB 246
    We are awaiting funding decisions.
- **HH and MKH Fire Alarm Systems Replacement**
  Initial planning is underway in coordination with Facilities and Design & Construction Services.

EVENTS

- **Conference Room Updates**
  A new video resource is now available in the Facilities section of the SOH portal, providing an overview of conference rooms, capacities, layout options, and recommended uses.
- **Conference Room Guidelines**
  As a reminder, when submitting a reservation, try to be as detailed as possible:
  - If submitting a request for a weekend event, include a KFS account in the description so we can order HVAC and restroom unlocks. Restroom unlocks must be scheduled at least one week in advance through UCIPD/CSA.
  - If you are reserving for someone else, include a contact name and verify they are familiar with the guidelines.
  - For anything that might be ambiguous, we will reach out but including these details in the description helps us plan more efficiently.
- **Event Safety**
  For events involving sensitive topics or potential security concerns, notify our office and

- The guidelines also include UCI's Disruption Guidance for managing potential event disruptions.

Supplies
SOH Facilities has a limited supply of cleaning products and hand sanitizer available. Reach out if you need assistance.

Colin Andrews
Director, Facilities and Space Planning

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SOH Trivia Break: Congratulations to Stephanie Wijetilleke and Nikki Babri, winners of a Summer Newsletter Trivia Break!

The National Humanities Medal honors individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities and broadened engagement with history, literature, languages, philosophy and other related fields. ***Which Humanities faculty member has been recognized with this honor and in what year?***

Answer: Vicki Ruiz, 2014-15

Fall SOH Trivia Break Question: In the new curricular cycle from 2025–2028 under the program direction of Professor Rebecca Davis, Humanities Core will focus on the theme of:

Be the first to send the correct answer to Haleema Sood (hsood@uci.edu), with the Subject line: SOH Fall Newsletter Trivia, by November 14 for a chance to win a gift card.
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Finance

New Meal Maximums per Person Rate:
The maximum amount per person that can be reimbursed for allowable meeting and entertainment occasions varies depending on the meal.

Meal type	Maximum per person rates (on or after 9/1/2025)
Breakfast	$34
Lunch	$59
Dinner	$103
Light refreshment	$24

meal reimbursements.

Receipt Requirements for Non-Cash Gifts & Awards:
University of California policy specifies receipt requirements for the reimbursement of non-cash gifts and awards given to employees and non-employees. According to UC Policy G-41 and UC Policy G-42**, the original itemized receipt — which includes the name of the payee, the amount of the charge, transaction date, and the form of payment — is always required for a gift expense of any amount.**

Please ensure that a description of the gift and the full name of the recipient are provided. If the person receiving the gift card is a UC employee, their Employee ID number must also be included.

John Bodenschatz
Director, Finance

Humanities Center

Updates from SOH Centers and Research Development

Food and Nurturance



The UCI Humanities Center kicked off our collective exploration of the annual theme, “Food and Nurturance” on Friday, October 24. We featured:

- **Ping-Chen Hsiung,** the CIPSH (International Council for Philosophy and Humanities Studies) Chair in New Humanities at UCI who is also a Professor of History and Director of the Taiwan Research Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong
- **Alyssa Paredes,** Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Michigan and co-editor of *Halo-Halo Ecologies: The Emergent Environments behind Filipino Food*
- **Dana Collins,** Professor of Sociology at California State University, Fullerton and author of “‘Eat That Nostalgia’: Filipino Foodways and Food Consciousness in LA”
- **Yong Chen,** Professor of History, Associate Dean, at UCI and author of Chop Suey, U.S.A.: The Rise of Chinese Food in America

Join us throughout the year as we explore the following questions:

What sustains our bodies and our well being?
What does food mean and symbolize for us?
With whom do we eat and commune?
What rituals do we perform while eating and practicing care?
How do these meanings and practices travel across borders?
Whose labor is expended in order for us to eat and maintain our health?
What impact do we have on our environment and our communities in order to feed and nurture ourselves?

Hope-OC Postdocs

Irvine Foundation. The project examines how histories of land, race, and Indigeneity—including the development of the Irvine Ranch and The James Irvine Foundation—shape current economic and racial inequality. Aron Montenegro, who earned his Ph.D. from UCLA, recently completed a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at UC Irvine, focusing on ethnic studies, environmental humanities, and oral histories. Stephanie Y. Martínez, who earned their Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from UC San Diego, brings expertise in environmental futures research, feminist science studies, and anti-colonial, queer, and feminist of color cultural production.

Encyclopaedia Iranica
UC Irvine and the Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation (EIF) have established a long-term collaborative agreement for the publication of the *Encyclopædia Iranica* that designates the renowned Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies as the new home for the *Encyclopædia*. Professor Touraj Daryaee, Maseeh Chair in Persian Studies & Culture and the Director of the Center, has been appointed as the new Editor-in-Chief. EIF welcomes a new editorial team, including Laya Ziaii-Bigdeli as Associate Editor, Arya Moknat as Operations Manager for both the Persian Center and EIF, and Negin Kaykha as Assistant Editor.

Please visit our website for more information on Encyclopaedia Irancia.

Judy Tzu-Chun Wu
Associate Dean for Research and Director of the Humanities Center

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Human Resources

Open Enrollment
The **2026 Open Enrollment** begins October 30 (8:00am) and ends November 21 (5:00pm). Changes made during **Open Enrollment** take effect January 1, 2026. Open Enrollment is your annual opportunity to review your UC benefits and explore your options for you and your family to make sure you have the best coverage for 2026. Please act early! UCPath is used to record Open Enrollment choices. We expect heavy traffic the final week and especially the final few days of enrollment.

Helpful resources: https://hr.uci.edu/partnership/oe/

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Employee Experience Center (EEC) at 949.824.0500 or eec@uci.edu.

It's Retirement Season!
If you are considering retiring in 2026, please visit the UCI Human Resources Retirement website. You will find many helpful resources here.
https://hr.uci.edu/partnership/benefits/retirement.php

Monthly Virtual Retirement Help Desk

by our retirement experts who will help you with your individual questions and concerns in real time. https://hr.uci.edu/partnership/benefits/files/Retirement-HelpDesk-Flyer.pdf

The next virtual session will be **Thursday, November 20, 11:00am-12:00pm.**

To join any session, please click on this link: https://uci.zoom.us/j/91250708645

Support During Uncertain Times
The Life Resources Program, provided by ComPsych Guidance Resources, offers monthly live webinars to support your overall wellbeing and resources to help promote mental health awareness. Join an upcoming live webinar, view a past on-demand webinar, or schedule a custom session for your team.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Trainings
The Faculty & Staff Support Services and HR Wellness team are offering Mental Health First Aid Certification Courses. This is a full certification course, where all participants will receive a certification as a Mental Health First Aider. Participants will learn how to recognize, understand, and respond to signs of mental health or substance use challenges. It builds confidence to start conversations, offer initial support, and connect people to appropriate help. The trainings are available by request for groups/teams of 5 or more. Visit the MHFA trainings webpage for more information.

Juanita P. Jackson
Director of Academic Personnel

Office of Graduate Study

All new, incoming Humanities Ph.D. students were invited to attend a “New Student Orientation” with OGS on September 23rd. The orientation focused on School of Humanities-specific policies, procedures, and funding opportunities, and a special presentation from the UCI Residency Office to domestic non-California resident students on how to establish California residency.

Graduate Admissions
The Graduate Admissions application is now open. Prospective students may access the graduate application at https://apply.grad.uci.edu/apply/

All program deadlines and contact information has been updated on the Graduate Division website. Please check this to ensure deadlines and contact information is correct. You may contact the Graduate Division directly at gradslate@uci.edu if you have any updates.

OGS will hold a Slate Training and Graduate Admissions Overview for program staff on Thursday, November 13th from 11:00-12:00 p.m. on zoom. Zoom link will be shared with Graduate Coordinators soon. Please join us if you manage admissions administration in your department/program.

admissions, please request “Grad Slate - Reader” access for them via KSAMS. A Slate Reader user guide will be emailed to Graduate Coordinators in November to share with their faculty reviewers. Please contact Geneva (lopezg@uci.edu) if you have any questions.

Timesheet reporting for ASEs and GSRs
Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs) and Academic Student Employees (ASEs) are required to report absences/leave monthly in TRS. If no absences/leaves were taken, ASEs/GSRs are still required to log in to confirm that they have not been absent from work for that pay period.

Reminders and resources
Email us at soh-grad@uci.edu if there are any changes in your students’ status (e.g., withdrawals, Academic LOA, In-Absentia) for the upcoming academic year.

- If a student plans to take a leave from employment, please work with them to initiate the Employment Leave form.
  - ASE and department should complete the "Employee" portion and sign off on the "Supervisor" line. OGS will complete the "Employer" section and sign off on the department line.

Send all DocuSign forms that need the Associate Dean signature to soh-grad@uci.edu
Submit your fellowship and GSR hiring and/or stipend award requests via this google form. Please note, GSR hiring requests that you upload a copy of the Written Notice of Appointment (WNA). Please contact Kimberly Pham (k.pham@uci.edu) regarding salary points for GSR hires and WNA template.

Check our OGS tab in the SOH staff portal for quick links to forms and graduate student related policies and information.

Geneva Lopez-Sandoval
Director, Office of Graduate Study

Office of Undergraduate Study

Curriculum reminders:

- **Topics Vary Courses** now have a limit of 4 offerings with the same title within a 4 year period per Academic Senate. Please reach out to Whitney Young at youngw@uci.edu if you have questions about topics vary course title policies.
- **Summer Session:** Summer Session 2026 course offering proposals are due Monday, November 17. Any new courses or courses needing online approval should be submitted as soon as possible. Please email Rachel Miller (millerre@uci.edu) if you have questions about summer session course offerings.

Fall Events:

- **Fall Book Exchange:** Stop by HIB 143 during the week of November 17-21 to take or donate a book. Donate books ahead of time by emailing Whitney Young (youngw@uci.edu) for pick up, or drop off books at HIB 143 between 9am - 12pm or 1pm - 4pm Monday through Friday.

Academic Advising Reminders:
Drop-in advising is available Monday through Thursday 10am - 11:30 am and 1pm- 3:30 pm except for University holidays. Remote and in-person appointments are available beginning Week 2. For information about how to connect with an academic advisor in fall quarter please direct students to the Humanities Office of Undergraduate Study Contact Us page.

For more information on undergrad events and important announcements follow us on Instagram!

Whitney Young
Director, Office of Undergraduate Study

Office of Undergraduate Study - Experiential Learning

On **Friday, November 14**, we will be hosting the first annual **School of Humanities Career Development Summit & Opportunities Expo** - a day-long event focused on enhancing the professional development skills of Humanities undergraduates. The day's programming will include two alumni panels; a graduate/professional school opportunities panel; and workshops on resume, interview, and LinkedIn skills. In the afternoon, we will hold an opportunities expo to introduce students to the wide range of experiential learning opportunities and resources available within the school. This event is open to all Humanities undergraduate majors, minors, and prospective Humanities majors and minors. Students can register for whichever sessions they would like to attend throughout the day. Please encourage your students to attend and reach out to Brittney Pinney (brittney.pinney@uci.edu) if you would like to participate in the opportunities expo!

The event website with the full schedule is here.

Brittney Pinney
Director of Experiential Learning



UCI School of Humanities

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