Dalila González Mejía

IDEA Center's Spotlight on
UC San Diego's Engineering Mentors

Quick Facts

Grade: Senior Transfer Student

Major: Bioengineering

Outside Interests: Baking, Sewing my own clothes, Spending time with my family

Questions about your experiences:

You have been involved in multiple mentoring experiences. Why is mentoring so important to you?

When I started community college, I was totally lost. I had just barely graduated high school, and nobody in my family had experience navigating the path to higher education in science. Thankfully, there was a lot of community support at Cañada college, and I had many mentors and role models that helped build my confidence and cultural capital about education. I feel so grateful to everyone that helped me get to where I am, and mentoring is an opportunity for me to pay it forward and create a positive feedback loop of support and success! I'm especially passionate about sharing my experience with fellow first gen women of color in STEM.

Can you share your favorite moment of mentoring fellow transfer students?

I love introducing peers to resources on campus. Transfer students have so little time to get acquainted with campus, and that can lead to them missing out on the opportunity to take advantage of all the amazing services on campus. My favorite example is introducing fellow transfers to the therapy puppies that come to campus around midterms and finals! I loved being a part of adding a little extra joy to their day by sharing UCSD resources.

What makes you interested in your specific field of research? How has the Smarr Lab at UC San Diego shaped this interest?

When I was in high school, my mom went in for a biopsy on a breast lump. They told her she didn't have cancer. Three months later, we got a call that they made a mistake and we had to take her in for an emergency mastectomy (breast removal surgery). Around the same time, I was having a lot of women's health issues that ended up in finding out I was born with two uteruses! So much exposure to medicine at such an impactful age should have left me with PTSD, but instead I knew I had to have more. Since then, I've been really interested in women's health, especially when it comes to my comunidad of latinx women, and women of color. My current research focuses on using data from a wearable device called Oura ring (like fitbit, but in a ring!) in order to study the changes people undergo during pregnancy. I'm excited to use this data to get more insight on the diversity between women's pregnancies and how we can potentially reduce racial disparities in women's health. This research could not have been possible without my mentor, Dr. Ben Smarr. He took me into his lab even though I had zero data science experience, and is consistently supportive and encouraging of my goals. The Smarr lab has allowed me to learn more about the data science in medicine space, and reach out of my comfort zone to learn about this side of women's health research!

As a transfer student, do you feel supported by UC San Diego/Jacobs School of Engineering? What could they do better?

As a transfer student, I feel grateful for UCSD and JSOE's resources for transfer students. Two programs I highly recommend are the Transfer Year Experience (TYE) course and the Transfer Prep program put on by the IDEA Engineering Center. These experiences were pivotal to my transition to UCSD, helping me meet fellow transfers and giving me the chance to warm up to the school and its culture. I do wish there were more resources invested in opportunities for transfer students to connect beyond the initial transition. I love the growth I've seen in the Triton Transfer Hub, and would love to see it grow and provide more 1:1 support for any students that may feel like they're falling through the cracks of this massive university.

Transfer students are very busy and have limited time at UC San Diego. Why is it important for them to prioritize mentoring in their academic journey?

This answer will be different for everyone– for me, it just feeds my soul. Helping people makes me happy, and I like knowing that I'm lifting up those around me. If that's you, use mentoring as an opportunity to recharge your emotional batteries with some human connection and feel-good giving back! If that's not you, mentoring also looks amazing on job applications. (;