Land Acknowledgement – Mia Lopez, Amrah Salomón

For the English Department's Graduate Program end-of-year event, Mia Lopez of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation created a unique Land Acknowledgement that highlights the Department's engagement with narratives and language. The Land Acknowledgement was read at our ceremony by our newest faculty member, Professor Amrah Salomón.

"Before we begin, we acknowledge that the lands this University was built upon were founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose lands it is located, the villages and unceded territories of the Chumash people.

Join us in acknowledging the Chumash Peoples, their Elders, past and present, as well as their future generations, their poetry, living songs, and the winter harvest.

We take this opportunity to ask all to reflect on the work we do here today, in the English Department, and everyday. In our fields as educators, we affect these lands and the peoples of the lands that we work, play, and study upon.

As we work together to bring awareness of and give a platform to other voices, we remember that the Chumash peoples of this area are still fighting to have their voices not only heard, but included, in the creation of this society, upon their tribal territories.

As we enjoy the privilege and beauty of these lands and waters that support not only our livelihoods, recreation, lifestyles, research and education, we remember that the Chumash peoples of this area have been separated from these lands, unable to maintain livelihoods as they should, unable to recreate traditionally, unable to maintain their traditional lifeways freely, and unable to have the same access to their lands that we are provided, to do their own traditional research and educate their future generations.

The Chumash people are comprised of the descendants of Indigenous peoples removed from their Island of origin: Limuww (Santa Cruz), Anyapac (Anacapa), Wima (Santa Rosa) and Tuqan (San Miguel), and subjugated by five missions during Spanish colonization of the Central Coast, from Malibu to Morro Bay and inland to Bakersfield. Looking out over this lagoon, we can witness that these villages upon which this University sits were a safe haven for maritime travelers. It was a place alive with trading, hospitality and abundance. A place where knowledge of and from the surrounding areas, far and wide, was shared with all people of this place and its many visitors. A traditional place of sharing knowledge and education — a tradition this University has an obligation to remember.

Know that each Tribe, Council, Clan and Band is working hard to restore and continue their traditional stewardship practices on these lands and heal from this historical trauma.
Sharing these voices, the history and legacy of this place and others will not make communities whole again. But we can do better! As educators, friends and allies, together, we can move forward in remembrance and relationship with the local Chumash peoples and other Indigenous peoples. We advocate here at UCSB for the healing of these lands and waters. This acknowledgment, brief and in no way complete, demonstrates a commitment by this department and educators to begin the process of creating a relationship with the local Chumash and Indigenous Communities to work to dismantle the legacies of settler colonialism.

We come together today to acknowledge what education means, to be humble and to listen to the voices that speak, to hear the Chumash and this land that speaks. There are so many languages as you shelter in place. We hear you listening."