

UC Davis Latinx Health Internship, Oaxaca, Mexico 2025



The Chicana/o/x Studies Department at UC Davis, in collaboration with Global Hub Learning and the Internship and Career Center, offered the Latinx Health Internship in Oaxaca during fall 2025. The program is made possible through a partnership with Child Family Health International (CFHI), an NGO recognized by the United Nations, and the Becari Language Center in Oaxaca. The Alianza MX seed funding, played a crucial role in supporting 12 undergraduate first-generation, minoritized students who participated in the internship in Oaxaca, Mexico. The financial support provided by the Alianza grant allowed the program to offer additional activities, expand its existing curriculum, and facilitate extra workshops in Oaxaca City and Puerto Escondido, further enriching the experience for the students and the local community. The financial assistance for the students participating in the program covered crucial expenses such as travel, program fees, living costs, and additional program activities that were essential to the success of the program as the students shared on the testimonios below:

The Alianza grant has helped me immensely during this program. It has helped me with the expenses that come with the program, such as transportation and food. When I decided that I wanted to attend this program, one thing that really worried me was the financial aspect of this program and how I would afford everything. If it weren't for the help from this grant I do not think that I would have the financial ability to enjoy the program the way that I did. I think that the continuation of this grant is vital for students in the future. I hope that this grant can continue to help students the way it has helped me. I think without this help, my experience would not compare and I would want future students to have as much fun as I did. Finally I want to thank those who gave us the grant, because I definitely think that my experience has been better because of it. A., first gen Latina student interested in medical school from a family of immigrants from Oaxaca



When I first heard of this program through a friend of mine, the first thing that came to mind was “too expensive.” Growing up, money was always a concern, I didn’t grow up well off, and for the longest time this was the norm, all my friends were in the same economic class. So I didn’t take the offer of this program too seriously. My account had a bill that read “alianza grant” this really helped me out, it wasn’t the most I was given by people but it was what I needed. Thanks to it, I was able to experience the culture of another state, learn about medicine, help kids in need in a school and give them encouragement, learn about the history of the country, and decide what my future will be. So in the end, all I have is gratitude for the grant which gave me the opportunity. M, student interested in medical school immigrant from Sonora, Mexico.

The Alianza grant, allowed me to attend to program with a reduced need to take loans to cover the full cost of the program. It was important for me to get this financial support because of allowing me to achieve my goal of studying abroad in my undergraduate, and to be able to obtain a minor in Chicax studies. I am thankful for Alianza to provide grants for programs such as this one for students like myself who had the struggle to fully cover the cost of the program. Without this grant, I would have been more stressed with the cost out of pocket on my behalf and was able to enjoy the program to its fullest extent. E, Latina first gen student interested in PA school



The Alianza Grant is essential for first-generation and low-income students, making the Oaxaca study-abroad program financially accessible. The grant reduces financial stress, covers key expenses, and allows students to fully participate in cultural, academic, and community-based

learning experiences. It enriches their understanding of medicine, public health, and cultural identity while supporting their personal growth and career goals. For some, the experience was even emotionally healing. Students consistently express deep gratitude and emphasize that the continuation of the Alianza Grant is vital for ensuring future students can benefit from these transformative opportunities.



Program activities

Throughout the Fall 2025 quarter, students completed 20 units of academic coursework centered on transnational health issues affecting the U.S. and Mexico, along with Spanish language classes. In addition, students participated in a series of key activities supported by our Oaxaca City team (Dr. Maggaly, Dra. Martha, and Maestra Sandra) and our Puerto Escondido team (Dr. Isabel and Soledad). In Oaxaca city, students were placed in hospitals and clinics where they completed approximately 180 hours of clinical rotations. These experiences allowed students to observe and interact with healthcare professionals and patients in real-world settings, gaining insights into the healthcare system in Oaxaca and how it compares to that of the U.S. The Alianza Grant also helped cover transportation costs to and from clinical sites, ensuring that all students could fully participate in these rotations.

The Alianza Grant has made it possible for me to participate in such a wonderful study abroad opportunity and I am so grateful that I have had this experience. When I first arrived at UC Davis, studying abroad was definitely not on my list of goals to complete before graduation. The thought of taking out another loan to do so was overwhelming and I did not think it would be possible for me. Before signing up for this program, I learned about the Alianza Grant through my professors and other classmates on campus. Students from similar financial backgrounds as myself shared with me their wonderful experiences abroad thanks to this grant. With the support from the Alianza Grant, I was able to spend 11 weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico studying and interning in transnational public health, all while experiencing Mexico from a perspective that I could only dream of. My time abroad has been a once in a lifetime and I am extremely grateful that the Alianza Grant has made this possible for me. R. first gen Latina interested in psychology graduate school.



Extra Workshops supported by Alianza Funding

Thanks to the Alianza Grant, the program expanded its curriculum to include additional workshops such as guest speakers, a diabetes clinic session, and a serigraphy *taller* as well as a range of cultural learning experiences in Oaxaca City. Students participated in hands-on cultural activities, including tortilla-making during cooking classes, a cacao ritual, and a visit to a *mezcal palenque* owned by a Zapotec family. These experiences deepened their understanding of Oaxacan traditions and highlighted cultural values such as gratitude and respect for the land. The grant also strengthened group cohesion by enabling students to share meaningful collective experiences. In addition, it allowed the cohort to give back to local families and children. With Alianza support, students visited *Casa Esperanza*, an organization serving underserved families, where they were able to provide gifts and engage with children in the community. These moments fostered reciprocity, appreciation, and cultural understanding, reinforcing the program's commitment to ethical community engagement.

The grant helped enrich my stay in Oaxaca through guest speakers, cooking typical meals, traditional practices, and giving back to the community. The cacao ritual helped me feel closer to Oaxaca's traditions. I was able to give thanks to an abundant and rich nutrient. The mezcal palenque was also helpful in enriching my experience because it made me realize how grateful oaxaqueño culture is. Through this experience, my group was able to connect more and share our laughs. Through the grant, we were able to give back to the family that opened their homes to teach us about their mezcal and unique dishes. The grant also allowed us to give back by gifting kids toys that they could enjoy. It made me nostalgic seeing their smiles as they received a flute, Barbie, or Hot Wheels. Without the grant, I wouldn't have been able to fund these diverse and unique experiences. First gen Latina student interested in nursing school family of immigrants from Guanajuato.



Puerto Escondido Activities

For three weeks, students lived in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, where they engaged in a series of public health initiatives coordinated with the *Secretaría de Salud*. These included midwife nurse and *partera-herborista* training sessions, as well as vector-control fieldwork in Chacahua, an Afro-Mexican island community. Students also delivered presentations at two local schools on topics related to their clinical training and coursework. Thanks to the Alianza Grant, the program expanded its activities in Puerto Escondido by hosting a talk by an Afro-Mexican women community leader and a workshop led by the *Cooperativa de Mujeres Cuidadoras del Manglar*. The grant also supported school-based activities and donations for local children, strengthening ethical community engagement and fostering reciprocity.



These experiences in Puerto Escondido provided students with firsthand exposure to rural, Indigenous, and underserved populations, deepening their understanding of public health challenges in transnational and low-income settings. The workshops reinforced cultural humility, highlighted health equity issues, and demonstrated the interplay between cultural identity and community health practices. Topics in the academic component included interculturality, public health systems, reproductive health, and major causes of morbidity. Students also learned about Chagas disease and dengue through fieldwork and presentations from local health professionals, gaining knowledge on causes, transmission, symptoms, and practical prevention strategies, including community-level vector control. Academic instruction was further enriched by intensive Spanish language classes.



Cultural Immersion

Throughout the semester, students engaged in extensive cultural immersion activities that exposed them to Oaxaca's diverse Indigenous and Afro-Mexican heritages. These experiences helped students understand how cultural traditions influence community health beliefs, healing practices, and approaches to wellbeing.

I was able to attend the Latinx Health Internship in Oaxaca without the financial stress being placed on me or my family. The Alianza Grant played a major role in me being able to enjoy the trip to the full extent. Without the Alianza Grant, I'm unsure if I would've been able to go to Oaxaca in the first place. Coming from an impoverished city, I rely on financial assistance. Thanks to the Grant, not only was I able to go to Oaxaca, but I was able to connect with the culture and my family in Oaxaca. I was able to visit them throughout the program. Although they lived close to Oaxaca City, it had gotten eased my worries about transportation. Since Oaxaca is a special place for my family, it was important for me to come back with culturally significant items for them. Items like guayaberas and tiliches were gifts I was able to come back with, lighting up my family's faces when they saw what I brought them. O, First gen Latino student interested in medical school from a family of immigrants from Oaxaca.



Results Achieved

Students reported major gains in Spanish proficiency, cultural humility, and clinical understanding. Immersive experiences allowed them to apply academic knowledge in real-world contexts, strengthening their grasp of transnational healthcare systems. The internship helped students refine their professional pathways. Many reported that the program affirmed their interest in pursuing healthcare careers—particularly in medicine, nursing, psychology, public health, and allied health fields—with a strengthened commitment to serving Latinx communities.



The Alianza Grant has opened a door for me to board an incredible and unforgettable study abroad experience. This fall quarter, I had the opportunity to participate in the CFHI-UC Davis Latinx Health Internship in Oaxaca, México. I remember first hearing about this program in my Chicax studies class and immediately feeling drawn to it because it perfectly aligned with my aspiration of pursuing a future career in medicine. The euphoric feeling quickly diminished when my thoughts shifted towards all the possible expenses. As a first-generation undergraduate student, the idea of studying abroad seemed out of reach for me because attending a college on-campus is already a financial challenge. Yet, I expressed my interest in joining the program to my professor because I could not let this opportunity go. Dra. Monica Torreiro-Casal reassured me that there was financial aid available including the Alianza Grant. During my clinical

rotations, I gained knowledge about medicine and made meaningful connections with medical professionals. I also learned about the importance of cultural competency to provide equitable healthcare. Exploring Oaxaca immersed me in a rich culture with various indigenous heritages from eight regions, as reflected in traditional foods, music, artisanal crafts, and archaeological sites. Our professor generously utilized a portion of the funds to empower children's learning. This gesture encapsulates a cultural custom that represents gratitude and appreciation towards the community for allowing our cohort to enter their spaces to work collaboratively. I am truly grateful for the Alianza Grant for granting me an invaluable experience! J, First gen Latina from Jalisco



Students experienced significant personal growth and development, including increased confidence, resilience, and cultural awareness. Exposure to diverse communities and health systems prepared them for future roles as culturally competent healthcare leaders.

If it wasn't for the Alianza grant, I wouldn't have been able to go to this Oaxaca program. This is because my family doesn't have money. My mom is on disability and she can't work. Neither could my dad because he was blind and was also living on disability. Unfortunately, my dad committed suicide on September 5, 2025. My world was absolutely shattered. The Alianza grant actually saved my life. If I weren't able to go on this Oaxaca trip, I would have definitely fallen into a greater depression, and who knows if I would have been able to finish school, especially because I struggle with mental illness like my dad. This Oaxaca trip was able to help me mourn my father's death in a healthy way due to Mexico's cultural connection with death. This program and the Alianza grant changed my perspective on death, which changed my life for the better. S., First gen student, interesting in psychology school with Nicaraguan roots.



Scholarly Papers and academic production

Students produced research papers and multiple class presentations based on their clinical and public health experiences. Topics included healthcare disparities, the role of cultural immersion in healthcare practice, and comparative analyses of U.S. and Mexican public health systems. Several students plan to build on their internship experiences for future capstone projects, senior theses, or graduate school applications. Additionally, three students conducted an interview-based research project on *parteras* (traditional midwives). Their findings will be presented at an upcoming academic event and are being developed into scholarly work that highlights the important role of *parteras* in community health.



Impact of Alianza MX Seed Funding

The Alianza MX seed funding was instrumental in the success of the 2025 UC Davis Latinx Health Internship. It made participation possible for students who might not have been able to afford study abroad opportunities. The grant also supported the expansion of program activities, including additional workshops, cultural experiences, and community-engagement projects, all of which enriched student learning. We are deeply grateful for the continued support of Alianza MX. With sustained funding, the Latinx Health Internship in Oaxaca will continue to grow, training future healthcare leaders equipped to address health disparities and navigate the complexities of transnational healthcare systems. This support ensures that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can continue to access transformative academic, clinical, and cultural opportunities. Thank you for your continued support.

