

## 2021-2022 Outstanding Project Award Winner Diana Ramirez



Diana Ramirez's social work project, *Barriers to the Use of Palliative and Hospice Care among the Latino Population*, explores the language and cultural barriers that inhibit access to palliative care among Spanish-speaking patients and their families. Research shows that hospice and palliative care services are underutilized in the Latino community; Diana theorized that the services were literally misinterpreted when explained to Spanish speakers. In her role as an interpreter for the UCLA palliative

care program, she suspected that the word 'hospice' in particular was often interpreted wrongly by those less knowledgeable about the nuances of the language and culture.

"It is hard to interpret the word 'hospice' in Spanish," Diana said. "My literature and my participants proved my theory. The word is often translated wrongly and has a very negative connotation. My research also showed that there is a lack of bilingual providers and interpreters who are native speakers. It is important because end-of-life care is a very delicate conversation to have."

It was during one of these conversations that Diana decided to go back to school to become a social worker. "While serving as an interpreter in the school's palliative care program, I realized that I wanted to be the one in the social work role. It became my inspiration to go back to school."

Diana juggled working full-time at UCLA Health as an administrative assistant while pursuing her master's in social work. Since she needed a program that fit her busy schedule, she enrolled in CSUSB's online Social Work Pathways Distance Education program.

"It worked out beautifully. I am a full-time employee, so this was the only way I could pursue my masters. I am beyond grateful for the Pathways program."

Diana has recently landed a part-time position at a hospice. After gaining more experience in the social work field, she plans to continue her education.

"My next goal is to pursue a Ph.D.," she said. "While doing my research, I realized that Latinas are not represented in the research field. I also feel there is a lot more I can continue with my topic."

Diana encourages others to take the next step in their education: "I came to the U.S. at age 13 and English is my second language. I was scared of writing a thesis, but I now have my master's and won the outstanding thesis/project award. I have also presented at national conferences. My advice: Don't be afraid, and do your best. If I can do it, anyone can do it."