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University celebrates diversity at Commencement events

The honorable Hilda Solis, former Secretary of Labor under President Barack Obama and a former U.S. Congresswoman, will be honored during Fresno State's 37th Annual Latino Commencement Celebration, 6 p.m. Saturday, May 18 at the Save Mart Center.

The event is the oldest and largest of four Commencement celebrations of diversity at Fresno State that will be held after the University Commencement 9 a.m. Saturday.

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) will celebrate at noon in the Satellite Student Union and the International Commencement Celebration will be at 1 p.m. in the Music Building Concert Hall.

At 2 p.m., Judge Shelyna V. Brown, a Fresno native who now serves the Santa Clara Superior Court, will speak at the 28th African American Recognition Program also at the Save Mart Center.

Latino Commencement Celebration

The Latino Commencement Celebration is considered among the largest of its kind in the United States, says Dr. Luz Gonzalez, dean of the College of Social Sciences who coordinates the event, which will honor 730 graduates this year. More than 11,000 guests are expected to attend.

"Our Latino Commencement Celebration attendance is not only the largest in the nation and on campus, but perhaps the most beautiful and colorful as well," Dean Gonzalez said, noting that it now draws more than the university's Commencement Ceremony that morning. "The event has been attracting a growing number of participants in the last several years."

According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Fresno State, last year 1,124 Latino students earned their undergraduate degrees, and 269 earned graduate (masters or doctoral) degrees – totaling 31 percent of all degrees awarded in 2011-12. This year's totals are not available until final records are official this summer but are expected to be higher, reports Angel Sánchez, OIE director.

"Our data depicts a steady increase of Latino graduates the past 10 years," Sánchez said. "In 2001, less than 25 percent of all degrees awarded were to Latino students. Today, Fresno State is within the top six of the 23 CSU campuses in number of degree awards to Latinos."

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The Latino celebration Saturday begins with entertainment at 5:30 p.m. before the grads begin their processional at 6:15 p.m. to the lively tunes of mariachi music, marching in groups under the banner of their home country.



Honoree Solis is a fellow CSU alumna, earning her undergraduate degree from Cal Poly, Pomona and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California.

She is a nationally recognized leader on the environment and was the first woman to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award in 2000 for her work on environmental justice issues. Her California environmental justice legislation, enacted in 1999, was the first of its kind in the nation to become law.

While representing California's 32nd Congressional district in Washington, Solis authored the Green Jobs Act, which provided funding for "green" collar job training for displaced workers, at-risk youth, veterans and individuals in families under 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

Solis served in the California State Assembly from 1992 to 1994, and in 1994 made history by becoming the first Latina elected to the California State Senate. She worked in the Carter White House Office of Hispanic Affairs and was later appointed as a management analyst with the Office of Management and Budget in the Civil Rights Division.

She was confirmed as Secretary of Labor on February 24, 2009 and is hailed by President Obama as "a tireless champion for working families."

INFO: González at 559.278.3013 or luzg@csufresno.edu or Kent Karsevar, director of Development for College of Social Sciences at 559.278.4381. Online: [Latino Commencement Celebration](#).

African American Recognition Program

At the 28th African American Recognition Program, 107 graduates will participate in the traditional African "Rite of Passage" ceremony and be presented with "kente" cloth, a ceremonial African dressing signifying the meaning of "mmeeda" or something that has not happened before.



They will hear Judge Brown who was raised on Fresno's West side where she became interested in law with a desire to help those who weren't being treated fairly. She declared at an early age that she was going to be an attorney and after the Fresno native graduated from Edison High School in 1988, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from UC Davis and her juris doctorate from Santa Clara University School of

Law.

In 1997 she served as an attorney in the Santa Clara County Public Defender's Office until 2012 when she became one of four African American judges for the Santa Clara County Superior Court. She is among the youngest jurists on the Bay area bench.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness reports that in 2012, 156 African American students earned their undergraduate degrees at Fresno State and 34 earned a graduate degree.

INFO: Tawanda Kitchen at 559.278.5364 or tbowers@csufresno.edu.

Migrant Student Graduation Luncheon

The College Assistance Migrant Program's Migrant Student Graduation Luncheon honors 60 graduating students and their families that come from migrant or seasonal farm working backgrounds.

Three Dean's Medalist nominees will be honored: Gonzalo Nava-Perez, with a master's degree in counseling and student services; Glafira Alejandre Zamudio with a master's degree in Spanish and Elizabeth Reyes with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

The luncheon highlights the students' academic success and acknowledges the sacrifices that migrant families make in supporting higher education for their children, said Ofelia Gamez, the CAMP director.

CAMP is a federally funded program providing support and retention services to university students who are migrants or from farm-working families.

INFO: Ofelia Gamez at 559.278.4768 or ofeliag@csufresno.edu. Online: [CAMP](#).

International Commencement Celebration

The International Commencement Celebration will honor approximately 54 graduates from 33 countries and will be streamed live with captioning to families throughout the world at [Commencement](#).

The broadcast will be available again on the Fresno State You Tube page next week.

Refreshments will be served prior to the celebration from 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

INFO: Paul Hofmann, director of International Student Services and Programs, at 559.278.2782.

Parking for all commencement events at the Save Mart Center and on campus is free.

Related Links:

- [Solis BIO](#)
- [Brown BIO](#)
- [Commencement Release](#)
- [Complete schedule of Commencement events](#)

(University Communications student news assistant Alejandra Garcia contributed to this copy.)

By [Tom Uribes](#) | May 15th, 2013 | Categories: [PRESS RELEASES](#) | Tags: [Commencement](#), [community](#), [event](#) | [1 Comment](#)

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