

# Underground Scholars Initiative (USI)



Advocating for the success of formerly  
incarcerated and system-impacted  
individuals at the  
University of California, Riverside (UCR)



## WELCOME

You are future forward, looking ahead with hope and expectation.

We'll show you how to share your story, thrive in your studies, and make a lasting impact on our world and in our community.

Get started today with USI at UCR!

## USI: Opportunities for Success

USI is a student-led organization at UCR. We provide opportunities to all prospective and current students who have been formerly incarcerated and/or have been impacted by the criminal justice system.



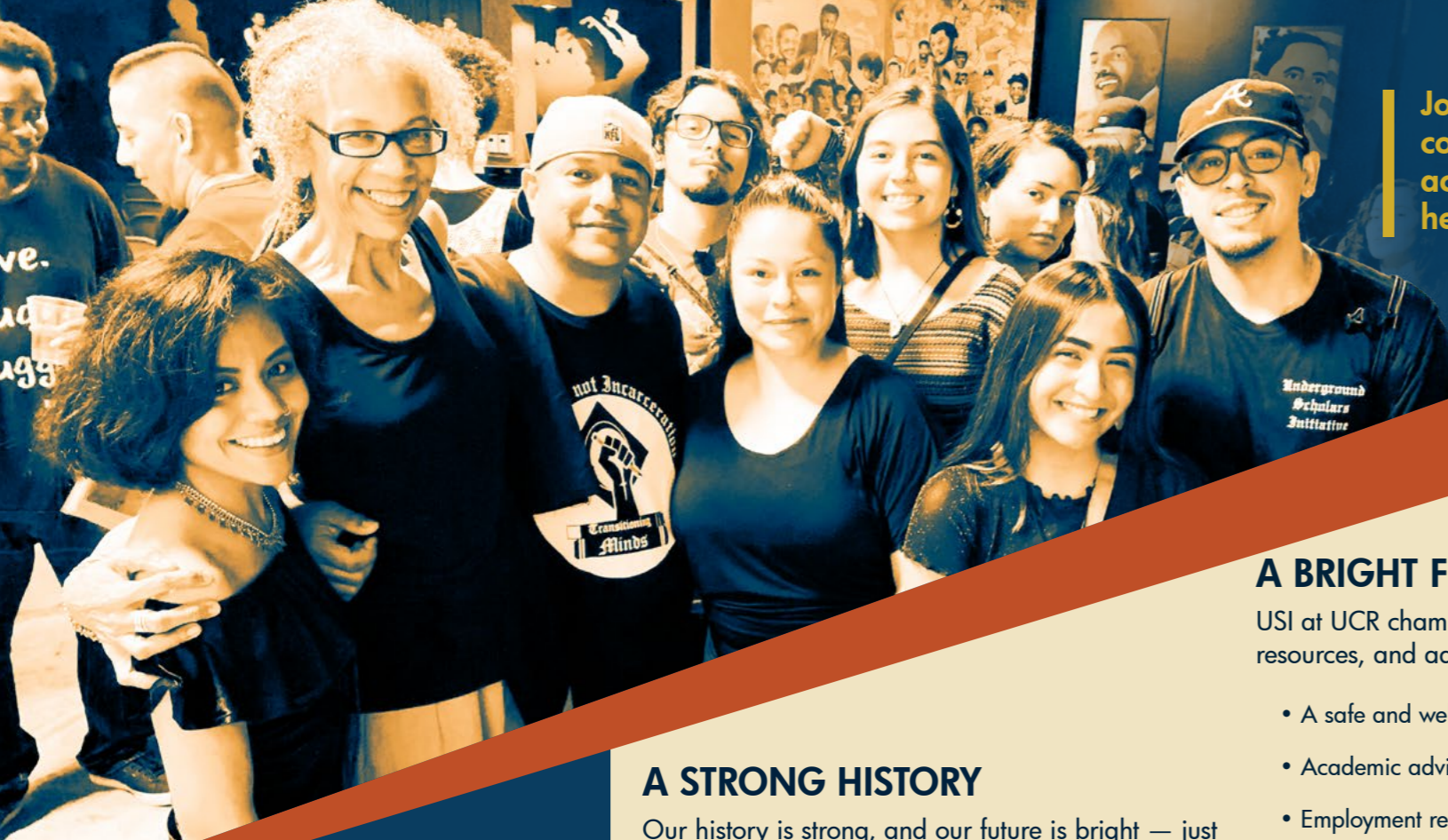
// One of the best decisions I made during my undergrad at UCR was to join USI. “Throughout my years in academia, I heard ‘You can do it!’ and ‘If you study hard you will make it!’ — but I received no support or resources.” This changed when I joined USI. They welcomed me with open arms, supported and uplifted me, and showed me ways to use my voice to amplify voices that are silenced. //



**SOFIA RIVAS**  
Class of '20  
(Ethnic Studies)

Enrolled in UCR's  
Graduate School of  
Education master's  
program





Join a supportive community and access resources to help you succeed!



**CYNTHIA AYALA**  
Anthropology/Law & Society Major

My first quarter at UCR was difficult because my partner was incarcerated, but then I discovered USI. It provided a safe space for healing, shared a variety of ways to make a difference in communities, and showed me the possibilities of higher education — regardless of one’s background! Being a part of this incredible coalition has presented me with many networking opportunities to pursue a career in social justice and go on to law school.

USI IS REPRESENTED AT THESE UC CAMPUSES:

- Berkeley UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
- UC IRVINE
- UCLA
- UC RIVERSIDE
- UC SANTA BARBARA
- UC SANTA CRUZ
- UC San Diego

### A STRONG HISTORY

Our history is strong, and our future is bright — just like the students we serve!

- USI began at UC Berkeley as a grassroots effort for those who were incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and/or system-impacted by the Prison Industrial Complex.
- UCLA brought USI to its campus, followed by UC Irvine.

USI became an official organization at UCR in August 2018, thanks to the efforts of students, alumni, administrators, and allies!



- UC Santa Barbara brought USI to its campus and created a prison-to-university pipeline.

### A BRIGHT FUTURE

USI at UCR champions its scholars with mentoring, resources, and advocacy.

- A safe and welcoming space
- Academic advising and resources
- Employment resources
- Opportunities to attend state/national events, network with politicians, and promote state legislation that supports our community
- Partnerships with campus departments and organizations, including UCR’s Guardian Scholars (for former foster youth), R’Kids (for student-parents), R’Collegiate Recovery (for students in recovery), and the Veterans Resource Center

### GAINING GROUND

Our events and activities empower USI scholars to make lasting impacts.

- LATTC Annual National Reentry Week Symposium on Mass Incarceration and the Challenges of Reentry

- Forgotten Population of Higher Education discussion, featuring student narratives
- Fundraisers to attend events, like the Beyond the Bars 2020 Conference at Columbia University and present “Creating Space for the Restricted: The Transformative Leadership of System-impacted Students in Policy, Voting, and Access to Higher Education” (an effort to create a prison-to-university pipeline)
- Participation in community protests
- Quarterly meetings
- Art workshops with panel discussions
- Tabling events at UCR for public awareness
- Merchandise sales to support USI at UCR

# JOIN, SHARE, COLLABORATE



**STUDENTS:**  
Become a USI scholar.

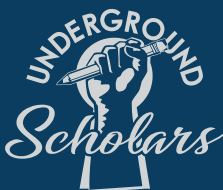
**ORGANIZATIONS:**  
Collaborate with us  
to share resources  
and advocacy.

**ALLIES:** Share your  
support via social  
media engagement,  
resources, and/or a  
financial donation.

VENMO



**YOUR DONATION MATTERS:**  
**@USI\_UCR**




**RIVERSIDE**

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Highlander Union Building (HUB) 229  
Riverside, CA 92521

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