



**Director Michael Rodriguez builds new networks in Panama**

In November, UCLA Blum Center Director Michael Rodriguez was invited by the **Inter-American Development Bank** to travel to Panama and participate in the first regional learning event of the **Salud Mesoamérica 2015 Initiative** "SM2015 Collective Impact: Successes, Failures & Challenges."



UCLA Blum Center Director Michael Rodriguez with the Minister of Health of Costa Rica, Dra. María Elena López Nuñez

Dr. Rodriguez had the opportunity to meet with policy makers and representatives from health ministries from throughout the region, and participate in strategic discussions around approaches to solving the

Seasons greetings (Contact First Name),

With many wishes for a peaceful, joyful and happy holiday, we are happy to bring you news of the Center's activities in this past month and year. In this issue you'll find:

[The United States normalizes relations with Cuba](#)

[Separating facts from fiction: public health implications of child migrants from Central America](#)

[The Sacramento Bee OpEd: "Those safe from deportation now need access to affordable health care services"](#)

[Team Guardian wins UCLA Blum Center first place prize at 2nd Annual UCLA Inventathon](#)

[New research in 2015: case studies of social cohesion in Latin America](#)

[Center strategic planning sets the stage for 2017](#)

[The United States normalizes relations with Cuba](#)

The President's announcement this past Wednesday to restore full diplomatic relations with Cuba represents a tremendous shift in United States foreign policy that have major implications for US relations throughout Latin America. A **December 18 article** published in the New York Times documents some initial responses from leaders and governments from around the region, many of which mark a significant shift in tone from prior statements about US relations. The UCLA Blum Center will look forward to monitoring what are anticipated to be significant economic, political, social and cultural shifts in the region and explore new learning and collaborative opportunities available to examine social determinants of health and health systems in Cuba.

[Separating facts from fiction: public health implications of](#)

## child migrants from Central America

This past month, the UCLA Blum Center and the UCLA Latin American Institute hosted a panel discussion attended by more than 100 faculty, staff and students to address the complex issues surrounding the recent wave of tens of thousands of child migrants from Central America to the United States. Expert panelists discussed both truthful and false claims around the surge of immigrants to the US, legal complexities, public health realities and strategies, and local community responses in Los Angeles. Photos and podcast from the event are available on [our website](#).



Photo courtesy of UCLA Latin American Institute

## The Sacramento Bee OpEd: "Those safe from deportation now need access to affordable health care services"

UCLA Blum Center Director Michael Rodriguez co-authored an **opinion piece** calling for improved access to health services for undocumented immigrants. While the President's November 20th announcement to protect 5 million undocumented immigrants from deportation is a positive step, it does not do enough to grant access to health services. The OpEd appeared in the November 25th edition of The Sacramento Bee.

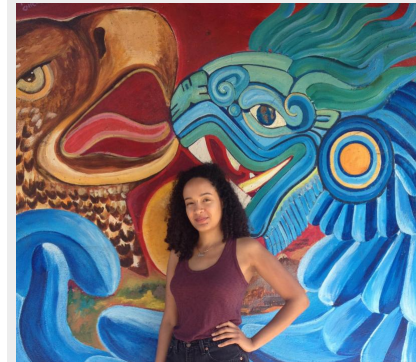
## Team Guardian wins UCLA Blum Center first place prize at 2nd Annual UCLA Inventathon

In October, the UCLA Blum Center co-sponsored the UCLA Business Science Center's 2nd Annual UCLA Inventathon. **Team Guardian's innovative concept** for a device that measures abnormal brain signals to better monitor chronic kidney disease took home the first place prize, courtesy of the UCLA Blum Center.



approaches to solving the most pressing health challenges throughout southern Mexico and Central America.

## Brie Ortega, MSW named Administrative Specialist for Center



Brie Ortega, MSW

The UCLA Blum Center welcomes Brie Ortega, MSW as our new Administrative Specialist. In addition to supporting administration and operations for the UCLA Blum Center, Brie also supports operations and programming for the UC Global Health Initiative's Center of Expertise on Migration and Health.

Brie brings cross-cultural and mental health perspectives to the Center, which are of great value to all facets of our work. She graduated in 2014 with an MSW from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, where she was a leader in campus diversity and campus climate initiatives. Welcome Brie!

## Student spotlight: Poverty and Health in Latin America Cluster Course





Astred Castro (L) and Rachel Mernoff (R)

Freshmen Astred Castro and Rachel Mernoff **recently shared with us** highlights and reflections from their first quarter experiences enrolled in the UCLA Blum Center's Poverty and Health in Latin America course.

## New research in 2015: case studies of social cohesion in Latin America

In January 2015, the UCLA Blum Center will launch a year-long study with the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) to examine the implementation of social cohesion policies and programs in Latin American countries. The Center's research will help inform the RWJ **Culture of Health Initiative** by providing insights on how policies and programs that promote social cohesion to improve health outcomes have been implemented in low-resource settings. Through the exploration of case studies, the Center will have an opportunity to build new networks and collaborations with communities in Latin American countries that are engaged with innovative thinking and strategies for promoting health that engage all voices within the community.

## Center strategic planning sets the stage for 2017



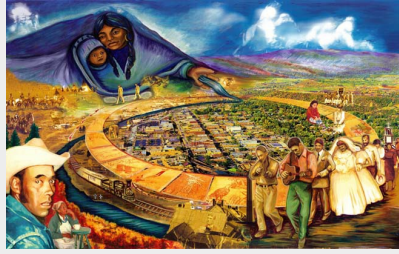
UCLA Blum Center staff and Steering Committee members (L to R): Steven Wallace, Jenny Binstock, Brie Ortega, Michael Rodriguez, Stephen Commins, and Adey Nyamathi

During the fourth quarter 2014, the UCLA Blum Center engaged in strategic visioning process that reflected on the Center's progress-to-date while informing the Center's priorities for the next three years. The

UCLA Blum Center's 2017 Strategic Plan, Positioning the Center for Impact and Growth, will drive the Center's activities in the coming years, and will position the Center to achieve its vision to improve health for Latin American communities throughout the Americas. The plan established and began to lay the groundwork for the Center's four essential priority areas: 1) organizational and leadership expansion; 2) development of a research program grounded in a multi-disciplinary, action-oriented approach; 3) advancement of a cross-disciplinary training program that prepares a new generation of leaders; and 4) implementation of a policy impact agenda with a focus on both short- and long-term policy solutions that drive effective practices.

Por salud y prosperidad,

## Stay in Touch with the UCLA Blum Center



Like us on **Facebook**

Follow us on **twitter**

Join Our Mailing List

Subscribe to receive our monthly newsletter and email updates

Visit Our Website

[blumcenter.ucla.edu](http://blumcenter.ucla.edu)

Michael A. Rodriguez, MD, MPH

Director, UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in  
Latin America

Professor, UCLA Department of Family Medicine