

# Apply now for fall 2023 at SDSU Imperial Valley

San Diego State University Imperial Valley is now accepting applications for fall 2023 with more majors than ever, including a new bachelor's degree in mathematics. In addition, there are many new student services and amenities to enrich the college experience.

Eligible students who apply to attend SDSU Imperial Valley can expect small class sizes, access to an increasing number of majors, and at a nationally ranked research university at an affordable price.

"This is the place for students who aspire to go higher with their education, careers, and opportunities in life," said SDSU Imperial Valley Dean Guillermina Gina Nunez-Mchiri.

Increasingly students are taking advantage of the growing number of opportunities available at SDSU Imperial Valley. The recently released university student census for the current fall semester shows enrollment up to 1,021. The goal set by SDSU



President Adela de la Torre and Nunez-Mchiri, nevertheless, is to increase enrollment here to 2,000 students over the next few years.

They are working to achieve the goal by increasing the opportunities for students at SDSU Imperial Valley.

Among new options for students is an accelerated pre-licensure Bachelor's in Nursing (BSN) degree for first-year and transfer students.

This program is in addition to a BSN degree for

students who hold a Registered Nurse (RN) degree.

The BA in math is the first STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) degree offered locally. Additionally, SDSU Imperial Valley now offers a public health degree program for which three research faculty have been hired.

Now there are 11 bachelor degrees and three master degrees available at SDSU Imperial Valley.

A newly implemented "SDSU Archway Program"

makes even more majors available. The program is a four-year university bridge that allows students at the Imperial Valley campus to declare a major and requirements in San Diego if the courses are not available in the Imperial Valley.

A recently launched university shuttle service provides free transportation to link the Imperial Valley and San Diego campuses. For information and to enroll, go to <https://imperial-valley.sdsu.edu/admissions>

### New MSW cohort to start at SDSU Imperial Valley

An hourlong Zoom information session will be held at 12:30 p.m. Oct. 21 for individuals interested in applying for the next cohort of the Master of Social Work program at SDSU Imperial Valley, which will begin in the summer of 2023.

Applications for admission to the program will be accepted through Feb. 1. The Zoom link and passcode are:  
**Meeting ID:** 959 0999 0738  
**Passcode:** 566501  
**Or join by calling:** +1 669 900 6833

For more information, contact SDSU School of Social Work Admissions Director Kellie Scott at [kscott@sdsu.edu](mailto:kscott@sdsu.edu) or Ernie L. Zuniga, MSW, SDSU Imperial Valley coordinator, at [ezuniga@sdsu.edu](mailto:ezuniga@sdsu.edu)

## SDSU Imperial Valley a turning point for Renato Montaña

For Renato Montaña, deputy superintendent for the Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE), San Diego State University Imperial Valley represents more than a high-quality education available locally. For him, the university is a symbol of opportunity and success. Of family success.

He and four of his brothers graduated from SDSU Imperial Valley. Montaña and another brother also earned their master's degrees there. A sixth brother completed his education at a technical school.

"I have a special place in my heart for SDSU Imperial Valley," Montaña said. "It changed the course of my life, of my family's life."

Today, Montaña works to design, lead and administer programs to improve the lives of some 37,000 students in schools throughout Imperial County using skills he learned while pursuing his bachelor's degree ('94) and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership degree ('97) at SDSU Imperial Valley.

Over the years, he taught in Westmorland and El Centro schools and was named principal at McKinley School and then Kennedy Middle School, both in the El Centro Elementary School District.

In 2008, he was named associate superintendent of the El Centro Elementary School District. During his tenure, he was

recognized as the Association of California School Administrators Administrator of the Year for Curriculum and Instruction for 2011-12.

He served as superintendent for the Central Union High School District from 2015 until he joined ICOE as deputy superintendent in 2019.

Yet, when he graduated from Calexico High School, Montaña didn't initially plan to major in education in college.

"There weren't many college graduates in my family," he said. First, he decided to major in criminal justice, like his one cousin who had graduated from college. Later he decided an education degree better suited his love of working with people and teaching.

The fifth of six sons in a family that immigrated from Mexicali to Calexico when he was an infant, Montaña said he always planned to go to college.

"My parents always instilled in us that higher education was the way to be successful," he said. "It was an expectation that we all would graduate."

Growing up in a large family with a stay-at-home mother and a father who was a feedlot foreman, Montaña knew finances were limited. That made attending Imperial Valley College and then transferring to SDSU Imperial Valley a logical choice.

"I always thought SDSU Imperial Valley would be a good option," Montaña



Renato Montaña

said. "But it turned out to be the best possible option."

Montaña felt an immediate bond with the campus and he appreciated the personal connection that the faculty and staff had with students.

"I thought the culture was very positive and the campus was very university-like," he said.

His courses were stimulating and "game-changing" in terms of the knowledge and skills he gained.

Beyond the academics, Montaña said the campus community inspired learning. He was impressed by the faculty and staff's character, compassion, and leadership. They became his role models and inspired his personal growth.

Always a quiet student, he decided to run for — and was elected Associ-

ated Students president. "It really drew me out of my shell," he said. "It gave me my first experience of public speaking outside of a classroom and leadership," he said. "It allowed me to interact with others in a new way and to make a difference."

Today, Montaña encourages students he works with, and his own children to consider attending SDSU Imperial Valley.

"The greatest gift we can give kids isn't material things," he said. "It is an education. It opens the door to so many opportunities."

"SDSU Imperial Valley changed my life by teaching me the educational, leadership, and people skills that allow me to make a difference in the lives of my children and the lives of all children."

## Food Bank gala returns to its SDSU Imperial Valley roots

When the Imperial Valley Food Bank holds its 11th annual Harvest Bowl gala on Saturday, Oct. 8, at San Diego State University Imperial Valley, it will be doing much more than raising funds to fight food insecurity. The Food Bank will be returning to its roots.

The impetus for today's Imperial Valley Food Bank goes back more than 30 years to a session held on campus that brought together students and community members to explore the issue of hunger.

Richard Ryan, then a professor of political science at SDSU Imperial Valley and now a professor emeritus, vividly recalls what transpired, though he was quick to downplay his involvement.

"It wasn't just me," Ryan said. "There was a group of people who really worked to make it all happen."

Yet, the 1991 session he set up provided the spark that led to the creation of a nonprofit organization, access to grant funding, and the increasing warehouse space needed to provide food to an increasing number of people facing hunger.

Today, the Imperial Valley Food Bank works in a 28,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility in Imperial, complete with the refrigeration and freezer capacity to hold the commodities and fresh foods now available for distribution.

The Food Bank monthly distributes food to more than 20,000 people facing food insecurity.

For SDSU Imperial Valley Dean Guillermina Gina Nunez-Mchiri, the evolution of the Food Bank is just one example of the impact the university can have on the Imperial Valley.

"We are here to transform lives through teach-

ing, research, and enriching experiences," she said. "What we do helps transform our community for the better."

Yet back in 1991 the issue of hunger was not that clear. Ryan said he reserved a classroom on campus for students and community members to view a U.N. televised World Food Day program in 1991. The program triggered a discussion about the inequity of hunger existing in the Imperial Valley, one of the most fertile agricultural regions in the state.

Several community meetings followed. Initially, with limited space and funds, Ryan said the group focused on collecting canned food to feed the hungry. Soon service clubs helped by competing to collect the most food. Some establishments, including a popular bingo hall, assisted by giving discounts to those who brought canned food.

However, more was needed to make a dent in the problem of hunger. Ryan said he worked with two prominent members of the farming community, Carl Bell, then an ag adviser at the UC Cooperative Ag Extension in Holtville, and Shirley Augusta, whose family farmed in the Brawley area, to form a nonprofit in 1992. In 1997, the Food Bank opened its first 5,000-square-foot structure in rural El Centro.

Ryan, who retired from teaching in 2014, lives in El Centro. He remains an enthusiastic supporter of both SDSU Imperial Valley and the Food Bank, which now work together in a new way.

Today, the Imperial Valley Food Bank supplies the SDSU Imperial Valley Food Pantry to meet the needs of students facing food insecurity.

## Aztec of the Month September

Ivanna is a Chicana student here at San Diego State Imperial Valley.

She recently completed her Bachelor's in Liberal Studies Elementary Education this past spring and is currently pursuing her teaching credentials.

She hopes to continue advocating for education for people in the

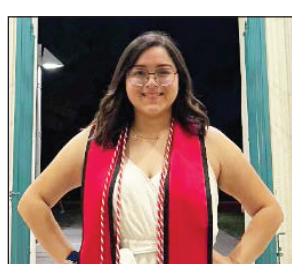
Valley, including her future students.

Ivanna has worked with the Chicax Sin Fronteras Club at SDSU Imperial Valley since 2021 and is the president this fall.

She's also currently working alongside the Cross Cultural Center in a Student Success Fee Project that focuses on empowerment in education.

Ivanna wishes to continue her education with a Master's degree in History.

Outside of SDSU, she's a member of the Imperial Valley Jazz band, which hosts yearly concerts and collects donations to create scholarships for students in music programs around the Imperial Valley.



IVANNA AVALOS (she/her/hers)

Multiple Subject Teaching Credentials Finishes: 2023