

Kimberly Tolentino – External Co-Chair Personal Statement

My first experience with FSA was when I came up on ASF 12 and was introduced to the community as a high school senior. Still deciding on which college to choose to pursue my higher education, I was inspired by the passion of the FSA community and the familial feeling that each member had toward each other. Never had I ever experience a deep connection to a new setting in which I barely knew anyone. But I was in awe of these students who had an enthusiasm to genuinely want to inspire others through their student leadership. Since then, I have challenged myself to break out of my shell and expose myself to possibilities that I never thought I would be capable of.

FSA has changed me in so many ways since first arriving into college. I am no longer the timid, close-minded girl who first arrived at UCSC. I owe so much to this community for who I am now and how I've grown as an individual and as a leader these past three years. I stand for the organization stood for and the work that it puts in as students of color on this campus.

Needless to say, I have since then pushed myself to new heights with my involvement in FSA. I have been a Kuya Ate Mentorship Program participant for 3 years (2 years as a KAMP co-head), was a member of Kasama my first year, Pagkakaisa Dance Troupe my second and third years, got the lead People Power role in PCC XX, which was my third Pilipino Cultural Celebration production. I volunteered for this year's Queer Pin@y Conference and attended the Filipino Unity Conference my first and third years. After volunteering for ASF my first year, I had the pleasure of interning for ASF 14 and co-coordinating ASF 15.

This might seem like a lot to some, but I honestly feel like it isn't enough because I have such passion for this community and the work and the events that we put on. I've never felt so compelled to be a part of something that is so worth my entire being. I have put an ample amount of time and energy into FSA during my entire college career and with my final year coming around, I don't have any intention of slowing down. I am running for FSA co-chair because I have a vision for FSA and how it can be so much more than an inspiration to only members of our community but to other organizations on campus as well.

I've had the hardest time in my life trying to find something that I have a passion for. I do not consider myself a musician, dancer, actor, or athlete and so finding something aside from schoolwork that I can invest my time into I thought would be extremely difficult. Coming to UCSC, I did not expect myself to ever coordinate one of the most important events that FSA puts on each year, let alone be one of the leaders of an organization.

This year, I had the honor of being one of the three coordinators for A Step Forward 15. I was given the opportunity to have first hand experience on what it takes logistically, physically, and mentally to put ASF together. It has slowly helped me to grow as a leader and taught me to understand what sacrifices must be made in order to ensure the success of the weekend. One of the greater things I have learned through ASF is how to foster a unique and safe space that is open for everyone which is one of the most valuable assets that our community can provide.

Our community is consistently growing, evolving, with members joining and graduating, I think that it is important that each individual to continually feel the importance of their presence in the

community. Spring quarter has been known as "Inspiration quarter" in our community. With the ASF and PCC seasons bringing our members together, the sense of togetherness and unity of FSA is strong and exciting during these times. However, I want the community to feel that

inspiration all throughout the year. By maintaining a strong core, a strong bond between aspects, and providing support for leaders and potential leaders of FSA, there is no reason for FSA's feeling of inspiration to ever come down from its high.

I am presently a member of the Board of Directors for Engaging Education and sitting on the Personnel and Hiring committee for Engaging Education, I have been given the privilege to work with many other student leaders of the other ethnic organizations on campus. Together with a diverse group of student leaders, I worked on the E² campaign for the Chancellor's Permanent Funding for Student Initiated Outreach programs. I learned a lot about strategic planning and the work that goes into fighting for something that is essential for Students of Color to have on our campus.

I think that my past experiences and positions makes me a good candidate for FSA co-chair to begin to branch out and become more involved throughout the entire UCSC campus. As students of color, it is important that our organization have a say in much of the measures taken that can affect our campus climate. We are the biggest ethnic organization on campus and I know that our voice is extremely valuable in the midst of budget cuts and the lack of diversity at UCSC. One of my other goals for FSA would be to work closely with SUA and the progressive students to give FSA the opportunity to be heard because we can be powerful in terms of numbers and we can be the change that we want to see on our campus if we had the chance to voice ourselves in all aspects of our student/student leader lives.

My goals for this position include establishing and expanding on an FSA alumni network. So many successful individuals have come from this FSA community and can serve as valuable connections for our members. I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with two of FSA's past leaders of this community a couple of weeks ago and I was able to really see how much they feel FSA has allowed them to get where they are today. By establishing this network, we can better build a bridge between past, present, and future FSA leaders to ensure that we are all taking care of each other because we are all connected by the space that FSA provides, no matter what generation of leaders we are a part of.

I am so proud of our community and what it stands for as an ethnic organization on this campus. As one of the co-chairs, I think it is important to be a resource for the entire community as well as an outlet to organizations that go beyond UCSC. Establishing ties with other Filipino organizations can open up a wide range of opportunities for FSA to network and become a resource for other school's organizations. We can be a support for other Filipino organizations and also have the support of other schools.

The Santa Cruz FSA community has been my home away from home and like any other home, I've never felt so myself in a space with so many unique individuals. And as FSA co-chair, I hope to continue to spread this feeling of community, family, and support to its members and beyond.