

**2024  
Master's  
Commencement  
Ceremony**

**May 10th | 3:45 p.m.**

**USC Rossier**  
School of Education



Live captioning for all USC Rossier Commencement Ceremonies can be viewed on your mobile device by scanning the QR Code.



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# USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION 2024 MASTER'S COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

<b>Processional</b>	<b>Flag and Banner Bearers</b> <b>Kelly Michelle Amador</b> <i>Master of Arts in Teaching Candidate</i> <b>Keenan Anthony Kalaaualoha Kurihara</b> <i>Master of Education, Enrollment Management and Policy Candidate</i>
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Pedro A. Noguera</b> <i>Distinguished Professor of Education</i> <i>Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean</i>
<b>Student Address</b>	<b>Mariah Cassandra Lora</b> <i>Master of Arts in Teaching Candidate</i>
<b>Conferring Degrees</b>	<b>Master of Education</b> <i>Educational Counseling</i> <i>Enrollment Management and Policy</i> <i>Learning Design and Technology</i> <i>Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs</i> <i>School Counseling</i> <b>Master of Arts</b> <i>Teaching</i> <i>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</i> <b>Master of Science</b> <i>Marriage and Family Therapy</i>
<b>Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>Pedro A. Noguera</b> <i>Distinguished Professor of Education</i> <i>Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean</i>

A reception for graduates and guests will be held immediately following the ceremony on West Leavey Lawn.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Welcome to our graduates, friends, family and alumni. Today, the USC Rossier School of Education celebrates the Class of 2024.

When you cross the stage today, it will signify a tremendous accomplishment. After countless hours of research, writing and studying, you have achieved your goal of graduating as professionals from USC Rossier. Through hard work and perseverance, you have earned this honor. Today we celebrate your achievement and look forward to seeing the positive contributions to our society.

The word commencement literally means beginning. I want you to think about that for a moment. While your studies at USC Rossier have concluded, you are now beginning a new chapter of life. With your new degrees you are now prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges. This is an exciting time, and I hope that you feel a sense of joyful anticipation for what lies ahead. Whatever you decide to pursue next, we want you to know that you will always have the support and partnership of your fellow Trojans. We are here to help you realize your professional aspirations and make a positive difference in the field of education and beyond.

The cornerstone of USC Rossier's mission is to prepare leaders to advance educational equity through practice, research, service and policy. You have already displayed the exceptional drive and discipline necessary to realize this vision. Some of you worked full time while earning your degree. Now, as you embark on the next chapter of your career, we hope you feel well-equipped to dismantle the barriers that prevent others from receiving a quality education. I am confident that each of you will do what you can to make this a more just and equitable nation.

As Americans, we are grappling with the effects of political polarization, structural inequality, climate change and misinformation. As educators, you play a foundational role in addressing these threats to our democracy. As USC Rossier graduates, you are equipped to lead the difficult conversations and develop the reforms that will help us meet these challenges head-on.

We are also living in a moment when diversity, equity and inclusion practices are under attack. Under the guise of color-blindness, some are arguing that we should ignore past and current forms of injustice. These are difficult times, and no one knows what the future holds. However, it is important to remember that this is just a moment, and the pendulum swings in both directions. Regardless of the current opposition, with every generation, our nation grows more diverse, and diversity has always been a source of strength for our nation. By advancing equity and opportunity, particularly in historically marginalized communities, you will help clear a path to a future in which every student has the skills and knowledge not only to succeed in

life, but to contribute to the health of our democracy. We are confident that you will find ways to serve all constituencies in the organizations you work with, regardless of background or need.

Once you leave here, there will undoubtedly be challenges you will face. That is the nature of life. However, you have already demonstrated that you are capable of overcoming obstacles and rising to meet challenges with equanimity and grace. We encourage you to use your intellect, to never be afraid to ask rigorous questions, and to seek meaningful partnerships and collaborations with those who share your values. We know that you will stand up for what you believe in.

Please stay engaged in the USC Rossier community. You are now a member of the Trojan Family, so you will never be alone in this journey. We will support you every step of the way as you seek innovative solutions to our most pressing issues.

On behalf of USC Rossier's faculty, staff and alumni, I wish you good health, success and happiness in all your professional endeavors. You came to USC Rossier because you want to make a difference. We can't wait to see all that you accomplish in the years ahead as together we work to use education as a resource to address the complex challenges of our times.

Fight On!

**Pedro A. Noguera, PhD**

*Distinguished Professor of Education*

*Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean*

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## 2024 STUDENT SPEAKER



### **Mariah Cassandra Lora**

*Master of Arts in Teaching Candidate*

Mariah Lora, a first-generation college graduate, is dedicated to creating positive change through kindness, authenticity and a growth mindset. With a vision for an inclusive learning environment, she integrates diverse literature and learning opportunities to inspire students to embrace unique perspectives. After graduating magna cum laude with a BA in English from the University of La Verne, she was selected for the USC Rossier Teacher Preparation Residency program partnered with Ednovate Charter Network. As Miss California 2021, she championed her platform “Educate to Elevate,” encouraging youth to pursue higher education and follow their passions. Lora hosts community empowerment events and excels as an English Language Arts student teacher and athletic coach. Known for her leadership, Lora and her teammates received back-to-back basketball conference championships in at the University of La Verne and Cerritos College, where she also earned Academic-All State honors. Her coaching passion extends to basketball and volleyball, where she mentors youth to success. Committed to empowering others, Lora embodies excellence on and off the court, creating a lasting impact through education and sports.

# CONGRATULATIONS FROM YOUR GOVERNANCE CHAIRS



## Shafiqah Ahmadi

Professor of Clinical Education  
Chair, Master's Programs Governance Committee

*As faculty and staff of the Master's Program Office, we are delighted to join in your celebration as you transition into your chosen professional spaces. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to support your growth as scholar-practitioners and are confident that you will create positive impacts in schools, colleges, universities, clinical and other settings throughout the world. You are on the precipice of greatness, and we look forward to staying in touch as you put all that you have learned into action and advance educational equity for the communities you serve. As always, **Fight On!***



## Robert A. Filback

Professor of Clinical Education  
Chair, MAT-TESOL Governance Committee

*Congratulations! Today marks such a significant accomplishment! I encourage you to take a few moments to pause, reflect and appreciate what you have achieved. Some of you are entering the field for the first time, others are mid-career. Some of you left friends and loved ones to study here in L.A., while others completed some or all courses online. Despite your varied paths, you can now enjoy your shared identity as proud graduates of the USC Rossier MAT-TESOL program and members of the Trojan Family! As you reflect on this moment, consider the Five Traits of a Trojan: Faithful, Scholarly, Skillful, Courageous and Ambitious. May these ideals guide and inspire you as you continue on in your professional journey. **Fight On!***



## Fred W. Freking

Professor of Clinical Education  
Chair, MAT Governance Committee

*Congratulations to the graduates of the MAT program! We, as faculty and staff of the program, have enjoyed working alongside you and watching you develop into the educators that we know will make a long-lasting impact in the field. It is an honor to be here with you today and see your hard work being recognized. The countless hours in the field, the long nights of classes and never-ending planning have prepared you to take on the challenge of educating the next generation of scholars, leaders and innovators. Teaching is a lifelong journey of learning alongside your students and the school community. Enjoy the journey, reach out to others when you are challenged, celebrate the moments of joy with your students and remember, we are a Trojan Family and will be here when you need us. **Fight On!***







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