

The logo features the word "UCLA" in white, bold, sans-serif font inside a dark blue rectangular box.

UCLA

School of
Theater, Film & Television

2026 COMMENCEMENT

COMMENCEMENT PROGRAM

Friday, June 12, 2026

PROCESSIONAL

NATIONAL ANTHEM

MATTHEW SMITH

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER UNDERGRADUATE, CLASS OF 2026

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION RECOGNITION OF MARSHALS

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU

DEAN, UCLA SCHOOL OF THEATER, FILM AND TELEVISION
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION & DIGITAL MEDIA

INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT SPEAKERS

FABIAN WAGMISTER

CHAIR AND PROFESSOR OF FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

JEFF BURKE

CHAIR AND PROFESSOR OF THEATER
ASSOCIATE DEAN, RESEARCH AND CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

CLASS OF 2026 STUDENT SPEAKERS

MOHAMAD LINDA RABIH HASSOUNA

DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA UNDERGRADUATE

VICTORIA ELIZABETH ATILANO

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER UNDERGRADUATE

INTRODUCTION OF DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

GRACE LEE, ALUMNI SPEAKER

INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER; CLASS OF 2002

JONAS RIVERA, KEYNOTE SPEAKER

EXECUTIVE VP OF PRODUCTION, PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

RECOGNITIONS

FACULTY, PH.D., LATIN HONORS

CONFERRAL OF THE DEGREES

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU

CLASS OF 2026 DEPARTMENT OF THEATER MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

“BRAND NEW DAY”

BY LUTHER VANDROSS

PERFORMED BY DEPARTMENT OF THEATER UNDERGRADUATES:

QUENTIN CHRISTOPHER KELLEY, MAISIE TAYLOR MCPEEK, ALI QADIRI, EDWIN ZHA, HADLEY ROSE CONNOR,
WHITNEY HISAKO MOORE, MATTHEW SMITH, MIREYA ZOÉ NEVEL AND CAITLIN DEVENNEY

ALMA MATER

CAITLIN DEVENNEY

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER UNDERGRADUATE, CLASS OF 2026

CLOSING REMARKS

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU

RECESSIONAL



LETTER FROM THE CHANCELLOR

JULIO FRENK



Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

Today, we celebrate your extraordinary accomplishments and the journey that has led you to this moment. We also celebrate the loved ones, friends, teachers, mentors and coaches who helped you reach this milestone in your life.

Graduation marks both a culmination and a new beginning. It is a moment to reflect on your time at UCLA and the many ways you have grown — in mind, in creativity and in character. It also provides a chance to examine the path before you with renewed purpose.

Your graduation comes at a complex time in our history. Uncertainty can make it tempting to narrow your ambitions, even as the world needs you to expand them. I urge you to meet this moment with humanity. Your UCLA education has prepared you to navigate an evolving landscape and to turn uncertainty into opportunity.

The values you have cultivated here — kindness, integrity, curiosity, a commitment to service, and a respect for diverse perspectives — will serve as your foundation as you move forward to lead in your communities and professions. You now join a global network of more than 680,000 Bruins who are making a meaningful difference across every field and in every corner of the world. Stay connected to your classmates, and stay connected to this university.

You will always be a part of UCLA. And UCLA will always be a part of you. On behalf of the entire UCLA family, I extend my warmest congratulations. We look forward to all you will accomplish and to the kindness you will bring to your communities in the years ahead.

We are One UCLA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Frenk'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a thin horizontal line.

JULIO FRENK
C h a n c e l l o r

LETTER FROM THE DEAN

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU



Dear Graduates,

Congratulations to you, the UCLA TFT Class of 2026!

To study film and theater is to study humanity itself — to wield storytelling as a technology of empathy that crosses the distances between us, in a world where screens increasingly isolate rather than connect us.

You are ready to deploy the power you gained here. The LA Rebellion at UCLA TFT showed you how — the OSCAR®-winning, Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow Charles Burnett and Julie Dash, whose *Daughters of the Dust* was among ten LA Rebellion films inducted into the Library of Congress National Film Registry, formed a multiracial coalition who transformed cinema and performance by channeling the river, not waiting for the flood. Their courage, their refusal, their collective making: you carry their legacy forward along with other TFT alumni Carol Burnett, Francis Ford Coppola, Justin Lin, Alexander Payne, Gina Prince-Bythewood, and Tim Robbins.

In Melnitz and Macgowan, with the guidance of the world-class faculty, dedicated staff, celebrated alumni and stellar peers across cohorts, you learned to know yourself and each other; to fabulate ethically; to actualize ideas and finish what matters. The discipline of the craft produces the miracle of your work.

You are graduating into a world being remade — by AI, by inequality, by climate change, and by the fracturing of public discourse. Our social problems demand the analytic minds that UCLA TFT produces: in how you read images as evidence, contextualize representation within history, achieve technological literacy, understand structures of feeling, and deploy creativity in the service of justice and beauty.

Now show up — in the room, at the podium, on set, on every screen and every stage — with everything you carry from here: your stories, your methods, your faculty, your advisors, your cohort, and your community. Show up for what matters. Launch us to the creative futures we deserve.

Today belongs to you — and to every family member, friend, and community who believed in you to help you get here. This is one of the happiest days of all our lives. We celebrate you! Go forth as UCLA TFT alumni into the world that needs you.

Your voice. Our story.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Celine". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a thin horizontal line.

CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU

Dean and Distinguished Professor
UCLA School of Theater, Film & Television

ALUMNI SPEAKER

GRACE LEE ('02)
Independent Filmmaker



Grace Lee is an award-winning independent filmmaker whose work lives at the intersection of storytelling, activism, and community. Graduating in 2002 with an MFA from UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, she has built a career defined by curiosity, social impact, and a commitment to amplifying underrepresented voices across film, television, podcasts, and digital platforms.

Her acclaimed documentary *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* received a Peabody Award and explored the life and legacy of the legendary activist and philosopher. She also directed the landmark PBS series *Asian Americans*, which examines the history and impact of Asian Americans in the United States. Her most recent film, *Forever We Are Young* (2025), explores the global fandom surrounding K-pop superstars BTS and was released in theaters worldwide.

Grace's additional directing credits include *And She Could Be Next*, a two-part PBS series about women of color transforming American politics, as well as feature films such as *Janeane from Des Moines* and *American Zombie*. Her work also extends into digital storytelling, including *K-TOWN '92*, a web-based documentary project examining the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest. She is also the host and executive producer of the podcast *Viewers Like Us*, which investigates systemic inequities in public media.

Her films have screened at major festivals including Sundance, Toronto, SXSW, Busan, and CPH:DOX, and have been broadcast on PBS and Sundance Channel. Her work has received two Peabody Awards, as well as Emmy and NAACP Image Award nominations, in addition to numerous audience awards. She has been supported by organizations including the Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Sundance Institute, ITVS, and Chicken & Egg Pictures.

Grace is a co-founder of the Asian American Documentary Network (A-Doc) and a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Documentary Branch.

Returning to TFT as this year's alumni speaker, Grace embodies the power of storytelling as a tool for connection and change. Her work reflects the values of the TFT community—rigor, creativity, and a deep commitment to telling stories that matter—and serves as an inspiring example for this year's graduates as they begin their own journeys.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

JONAS RIVERA
Executive VP, Production
Pixar Animation Studios



Jonas Rivera is an Academy Award®-winning producer and Executive Vice President of Production at Pixar Animation Studios, where he oversees all feature film and streaming production. Since joining Pixar in 1994 as the studio's first production intern, Jonas has played an integral role in shaping some of the most beloved animated films of the past three decades.

Over the course of his career, Jonas has contributed to nearly every Pixar feature, holding roles across the studio including art department coordinator on *A Bug's Life*, marketing and creative resources coordinator on *Toy Story 2*, art department manager on *Monsters, Inc.*, and production manager on *Cars*. His deep understanding of storytelling and production culminated in his work as producer on *Up* (2009), which received an Academy Award® nomination for Best Picture, only the second animated film in history to earn that distinction.

Jonas went on to produce *Inside Out* (2015), directed by Pete Docter, which won the Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature and was nominated for Best Original Screenplay. He continued that success with *Toy Story 4* (2019), which also received the Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature. For his work across these films, Jonas was honored with the Producers Guild of America Award for Outstanding Producer of Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures.

A Bay Area native, Jonas grew up in Castro Valley and earned his degree in film production from San Francisco State University. His career reflects a deep commitment to storytelling that resonates across generations, combining emotional depth with technical innovation.

As this year's keynote speaker, Jonas brings a perspective shaped by decades of collaboration, creativity, and leadership at the forefront of animation. His journey, from intern to executive, stands as a powerful example of what is possible through curiosity, persistence, and a passion for storytelling.

CHANCELLOR'S MARSHALS

Recognized for outstanding academic achievement and identified by the Blue and Gold Fourragère

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MOHAMAD LINDA RABIH HASSOUNA

MARGARET M. KONECKY

SEUNGYEOP LEE

THEATER

VICTORIA ELIZABETH ATILANO

LUCY DALE BALLINGER

SCOTTY CULLEN

MOLLY WOLFLICK

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Degree Candidates

SAMUEL L. HUNTER

Dissertation Title: Digital Queerdom: Utopian Desire and Queer Computation, 1992-2010

KRYSTAL CATALINA CARDENAS LEDESMA

Dissertation Title: Manifestations of Mexican Americanness: 1940s Activism, Cinema, and Representation During Hollywood's Classical Era

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THEATER

Degree Candidate

QIANXIONG YANG

*Dissertation Title: Exhausting China: Technoculture and the Work of
Politics in Postsocialism*

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Degrees Conferred

DANIELA DIANA LÓPEZ MELÓN
ESTHER OKOROCHA
MAXIMILIAN ABRAHAM URIARTE

Degree Candidates

JIMI ADELEYE	SOPHIA ALYSA KAWAGUCHI
LISSY ASCHIERIS	MARINA KLIMANN NUNEZ
MARÍA PAULA ÁVILA VERA	AMANDA LEE
LAURA BERMEJO ABELLAN	CODY CAMERON LEE
CORY ALEXANDER BISHOP	JUNGSU LIM
JAZMYNE RENAÉ BLACK	TIAGO LIMA CUNHA
MAYA SOPHIA BRASLAW	ERICA LING
GABRIELLE MARGARET BRIGHT	YUJIE LIU
CAITLIN ELIZABETH CARMICHAEL	OLIVIA LONDON MACDONALD
ANDREW CHILD	HANNAH BEVERLY MASON
SAMUEL EDWARD COCHRAN	ISABELLE MCKELVEY
JOSHUA WILLIAM DAVID	SHAZIA R. MIAN
YAYABELL DEBAY	TRENT MILLER
YIRU DENG	HANNAH MUTZ
MADELEINE DEPIETRO	BENJAMIN SASPORTAS
JOSEY CLARA DUNBAR	HARSH VARDHAN SINGH
MARIIA EGOROVA	YANZHANG SONG
RYAN ANDREW FAJET	ZIYUE SONG
ANNE FARRELL	JACOB CLARENCE SULLIVAN
ADEKUNLE RILWAN FASASI	WENDY XINRAN TONG
REBS FISHER-JACKSON	OSEWANNE UWADIALE
THEA BELLE FLANZER	MATTHEW JAMES VOLLRATH
ANNA CAROLINE FOLTRAN	SHUYI WANG
OLIVE SAMUEL GREENSPAN	WAVERLY LI-TING WANG
NOVA GUTIERREZ	GINA ANTOINETTE WHITNEY
SIMON WANG HERNANDEZ	ARAM PAUL WINTER
JUWAN RASHAAD HOWARD	GREYSON TULL WYATT
JESSY SHERIF IBRAHIM	ZORA XU
ALINA AMIR ISLAM-HASHMI	YI YU
JADE ALISON JOHANN	
AMAN MILES JOHNSON	

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

THEATER

Degree Candidates

TAYLOR ARAGON

CAYLA NICOLE BAUGHNS

NATALIE GRACE LAMBERT

EM MOORE

JIMENA SOTO MEJIA

ERIC MATTHEW SWARTZ

MALCOLM WILSON

LEI XIA

YIYI YANG

DOWON YOON

NALA ZINNGRABE

MASTER OF ARTS

FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Degree Candidates

JASON ARGUETA

GRACE MOON GERELY

CHARLOTTE STOUT

XIANGJI ZHAN

LINN ZHENG

BACHELOR OF ARTS

FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Degrees Conferred

JASMINE GAYNIER §
AMBER SIMONE PAYNE
VIVIAN SUN

§ SUMMA CUM LAUDE

‡ MAGNA CUM LAUDE

^ CUM LAUDE

Degree Candidates

MAYA NAWAL ABDALLAH
RACHANA KALLADIGOLI AITHAL*
NINA ROSETTE BAEZA
TALIA OLUFOLAKE BALOGUN
LHIANNAN SIDHE BUCK-GAY
KAITLIN CARLOS
CRUZ ELIAS CARRATALA
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BIBI SHOGOFA SEDIQI
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THEATER

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XIANG LI
BROOKE ASHLYN MCCREE

CLAUDIA SOFIA ORTIZ LUNA
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ANTONIA YANG

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‡ MAGNA CUM LAUDE

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ALLISON MEISTER

CAMERYN BAILEY MITCHELL
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MOLLY ANNE WOLFLICK
BENJAMIN ELLIOT YAWN
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PAUL GIRARD

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WHITNEY

DEBORAH WIDENER

RICHARD WOLPERT

MARISA ZUCEK

PAST HONOREES

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

1990	June Wayne
1991	Bella Lewitzky
1992	Jack Valenti
1993	James Earl Jones
1994	Peter Guber
1995	Quincy Jones
1996	Debbie Allen
1997	Warren Littlefield
1998	John Frankenheimer
1999	Annette Bening
2000	Joe Roth
2001	Eva Marie Saint
2002	Martha Coolidge
2003	Terry Semel
2004	Sherry Lansing
2005	Fay Kanin
2006	George C. Wolfe
2007	Larry Gelbart
2008	Colin Callender
2009	Oliver Stone
2010	Peter Guber
2011	U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer
2012	Ron Meyer
2013	Cathy Schulman
2014	Jane Fonda
2015	Kevin Beggs
2016	Channing Dungey
2017	Ava DuVernay
2018	Carl Franklin
2019	Pierce Brosnan
2021	Nilo Cruz
2022	Troy Kotsur
2023	Gina Prince-Bythewood
2024	Tarell Alvin McCraney
2025	Dustin Lance Black

ALUMNI AND HONOREES

2000	Army Archerd
2001	Louis J. Horvitz
2003	Moctesuma Esparza
2004	Gregory Nava
2005	Geoffrey Gilmore
2007	Gene Reynolds
2008	Fred Roos
2009	Ellen Geer
2010	Felicia D. Henderson
2010	John Rando
2011	Charles Burnett

2011	Mariska Hargitay
2012	Shirley Jo Finney
2012	Penelope Spheeris
2013	Dustin Lance Black
2013	Kristin Hanggi
2014	Wendy C. Goldberg
2014	Darren Star
2015	Donna Deitch
2015	Sarabeth Grossman
2016	Robert L. Friedman
2016	Gina Prince-Bythewood
2017	Justin Lin
2017	Michael Stuhlbarg
2018	Judy Kaye
2018	Allison Anders
2019	Julie Dash
2019	George Takei
2020	Patricia Cardoso
2022	Amy Aniobi
2023	Rachel Hauck
2025	Brian Kite

COMMENCEMENT DEDICATION

2012	Gilbert Cates
2015	Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.

UCLA MEDAL

1985	Carol Burnett
2009	Haskell Wexler, A.s.c.
2017	Peter Guber

CHANCELLOR'S MEDAL

1993	James Earl Jones
1994	Francis Ford Coppola
1995	Quincy Jones
1996	Neil Simon
1998	Edie Wasserman
2002	Kirk Douglas
2005	Sir Anthony Hopkins
2006	Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

2017	Nadja Swarovski
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

2026 COMMENCEMENT

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CRYSTAL SANTANA
CHRISTINA VACCHIANO

ANNOUNCER

MIEBAKA YOHANNES

AUDIO SUPERVISOR

AUSTIN TAYLOR

ASSISTANT AUDIO SUPERVISOR

EVERETT WALL

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JUDY RAYOS
LISA REEVE
MELINDA ROBLES
GAYLE SERGEI
TORI STEWART
THAI SUKRACHAN
ANNA WATTS

PRODUCTION STAFF

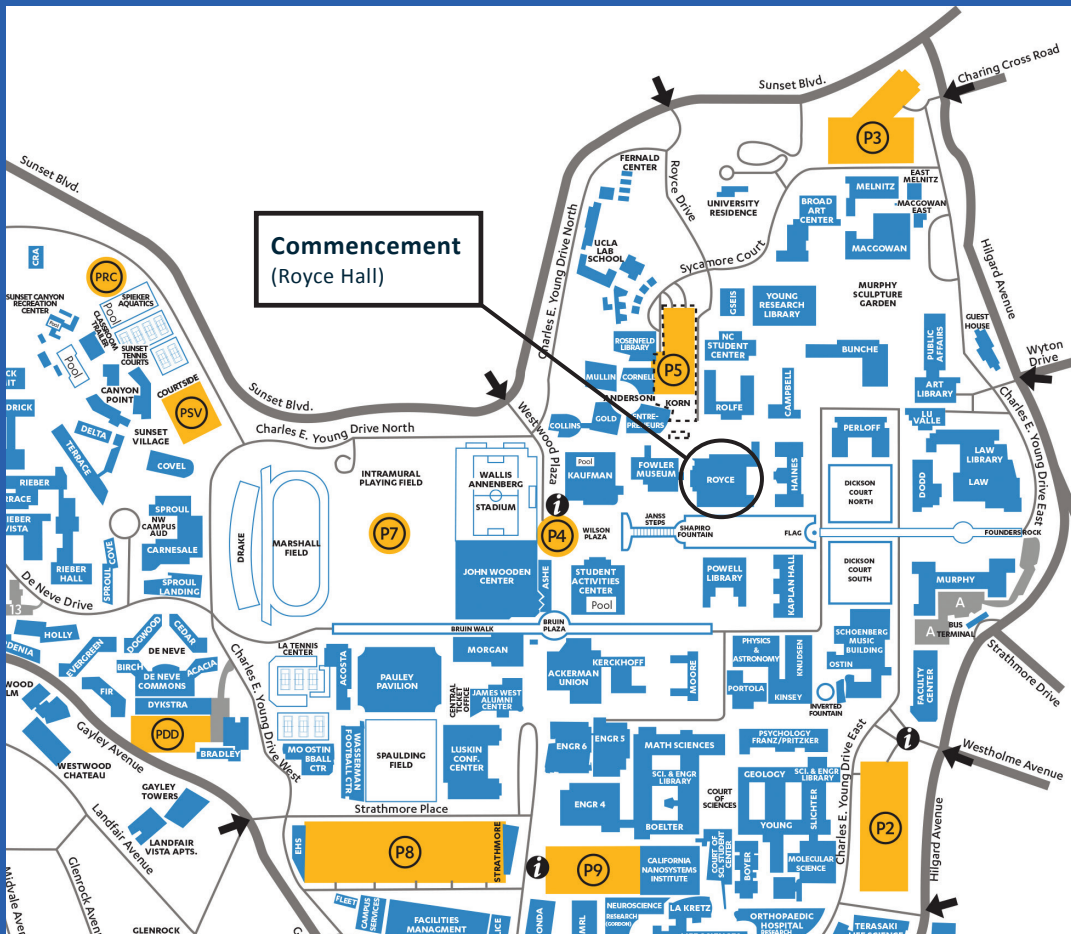
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JONATHAN BURKE
AUSTIN TAYLOR
CHRISTINA VACCHIANO

THEATER MANAGEMENT SERVICES

TOM COLEN
MELIH ERCAN
ANTHONY JONES
CHRISTINA MONTANO
VICTORIA PEREIRA
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PIA SHEKERJIAN
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SPECIAL THANKS

ACADEMIC PERSONNEL
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DEPARTMENT OF THEATER
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
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“Hail to the hills of Westwood
 to the mighty sea below;
 Hail to our alma mater,
 she will conquer every foe.
 For we’re loyal to the Southland,
 her honor we’ll uphold,
 We’ll gladly give our hearts to thee,
 to the Blue and to the Gold.”

– Jeane Emerson ’29

WELCOME, NEW ALUMNI!

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026

Welcome to the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television (UCLA TFT) alumni family! We are thrilled to have you join our vibrant community of Bruin alumni. Please keep us updated with your exciting journeys and achievements — we can't wait to see you at our programs and events, and share your successes with pride! Stay connected with us to make the most of your alumni experience:

- Email devo@tft.ucla.edu to update your email and mailing address to receive communications, news and alumni event invitations.
- Find us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. The Facebook UCLA TFT Alumni Affairs Group keeps our alumni connected for networking, social engagement and job opportunities.

Join the UCLA TFT community on BrightCrowd, our online alumni directory. To register, please scan the QR code below or email us at devo@tft.ucla.edu.

We eagerly look forward to celebrating your accomplishments in the days, months, and years ahead. Congratulations and welcome!

Warm regards,



AARON DANIEL CERVANTES, J.D.
Executive Director of Development



The UCLA logo consists of the letters "UCLA" in white, bold, sans-serif font, set against a dark blue rectangular background.

UCLA

School of

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