HAYDEN A. VEGA

haydenvega@ucsb.edu

Website: haydenvega.github.io

EDUCATION

University of California Santa Barbara | *B.A. Marine Science* | 2021-2025 | GPA: 3.96 | Highest Honors

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RESEARCH & TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Bren School of Environmental Science & Management: *Santa Barbara, CA*

Shark Analyst (January 2025 - Present)

● Compile a dataset of fin measurements for 522 shark species to inform finning vulnerability models

UCSB Ocean Recoveries Lab: *Santa Barbara, CA*

Research Technician (January 2022 - Present)

● Led a project to characterize predation on coral reefs in French Polynesia

● Led a project to study the effect of fish-coral mutualisms on a coral physiology in French Polynesia

● Led a project to predict ecosystem functions of California seaweeds using herbarium specimens

Marine Science Department, College of Creative Studies: *Santa Barbara, CA*

Teaching Assistant (January 2025 - June 2025)

● Assist instruction of upper-division marine science data courses in R programming language.

Bren School of Environmental Science & Management: *Santa Barbara, CA*

Data Research and Communication Outreach Intern (June 2022 - September 2022)

● Synthesized graphs and maps of marine debris impacts in California and Hawai'i

● Drafted media and communication materials to inform the public about the dangers of marine debris

UCSB Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration: *Santa Barbara, CA*

Laboratory Coordinator (August 2021 - March 2023)

● Led an independent study of invertebrate stratification in sediments as a restoration efficacy indicator

● Organized, trained, and supervised volunteers performing invertebrate collection and analysis

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PUBLICATIONS

(In prep) H Vega, L M Feitosa, S Gaines. **A Complete Dataset of Fin Morphometrics for Sharks**

(In prep) H Vega, N Munk, C Osenberg, A Stier. **Coral-dwelling Fish Help Corals Recover from Wounds**

(In prep) A Bui, H Vega, E Donham, A Stier. **Macroalgal Herbarium Specimens Can Predict Historical Ecosystem Functions in Kelp Forests**

(In prep) L M Feitosa, H Vega, S Gaines, **Fin Morphometrics Predicts Finning Vulnerability**

Acknowledged, **Debris Free Seas: Assessing Economic Losses and Impacts to Fishers, the State, and the Environment from Lost Fishing Gear**, Masters Project 2023

H Vega, A Sanford. **Deadliest Bycatch: Summarizing and Mapping a Debris Free Sea**, Poster 2022

H Vega, A Grinstead, J Huitema **Aquatic Invertebrate Monitoring at Devereux Slough**, Poster 2022

PRESENTATIONS

Fish are Friends and So Are You! *Worster Symposium, Goleta, CA, (May 2025)*

    ● A fifteen minute talk on work funded by the Worster Foundation and its impact on DEIJ

Fish are Friends: Fish Help Corals Heal *UC Undergraduate Research Symposium, Goleta CA, (April 2025)*

    ● A ten minute talk on the role of coral-associated fish in coral lesion healing

Fish are Friends: How Fish Help Corals Heal *Western Society of Naturalists, Portland, OR (Nov. 2024)*

    ● A fifteen minute talk on the effect of coral-fish mutualisms on coral recovery

Approaches to DEIJ in Environmental Science *Bren Mantell Symposium, Goleta, CA (Nov. 2022)*

    ● Panelist speaker about BIPOC experience in marine and environmental science

A Whale of a Problem: Mapping Fishing Debris, *Bren Mantell Symposium, Goleta, CA (Nov. 2022)*

    ● A poster on the locations of southern california whale entanglements and marine debris

Invert Monitoring at Coal Oil Point *UC Undergraduate Research Symposium, Goleta, CA (April 2022)*

    ● A fifteen minute talk on macroinvertebrate populations within brackish wetlands

MEDIA & OUTREACH

Featured, **[Real-world coral studies spark future in ocean conservation](#)**, The Current, 2025
Featured, **[Hayden Vega: A First Generation, Triple Major Undergraduate](#)**, *UC Santa Barbara*, 2025
Featured, **[Extraordinary Paths: Celebrating CCS Class of 2025](#)**, UCSB Creative Studies, 2025
Artist, **[Coal Oil Point: A Seaweed Mosaic](#)**, *UC Reserve System*, 2025
Featured, **Blue Future: Citizen Science and Activism**, *Patagonia*, 2024
Co-author, **[Diving in to REEF Safe Sunscreen: Meet the Scientists](#)**, *Avasol*, 2023
Author, **ODA: Twenty Years of Debris Free Seas**, *Ocean Defenders Alliance*, 2022
Author, **[Safe Boating and Fishing Practices](#)**, *OC Coastkeeper*, 2020
Author, **[How our Intern Brought Fishing Line Recycling to Seal Beach](#)**, *OC Coastkeeper*, 2020

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

Princeton EEB Scholar (2025)
STEMSEAS Oceanographic Fellow (2025)
UCSB Environmental Studies Academic Achievement Award (2025)
Honorable Mention: Best Fifteen Minute Talk (2025)
Arnhold Climate Collaborative Fellow ($6000) (2025)
Schmidt Foundation Mentorship Award ($4500) (2025)
Worster Foundation Research Grant ($4500) (2024)
UCSB Career Catalyst Award ($2000) (2024)
College of Creative Studies Travel Grant ($1500) (2024)
UCSB Environmental Studies Research Grant ($1000) (2024)
Tom Rogers Scholar ($4500) (2024)
SACNAS - California Sea Grant Pathways to Inclusive Research Fellow (2023)
Shoreliner Scholar ($2500) (2023)
Tom Rogers Scholar ($4500) ((2023)
Coastal Fund Research Grant ($12739) (2023)
DIVErsity in Diving Fellow (2022)
Bentson Scholar ($15000) (2022)
Bren Environmental Diversity Leaders Fellowship ($5000) (2022)
FUERTE Undergraduate Fellow ($5000) (2022)
Hispanic Scholarship Scholar ($5000) (2021)

SERVICE

UCSB FUERTE Mentor *Santa Barbara, CA* (January 2024 - Present)
- Mentor undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds during field research experiences

UCSB Diversity in Diving Mentor *Santa Barbara, CA* (January 2023 - Present)
- Chaperone and support new divers as they complete their scientific diving certifications

Goleta Surfrider Foundation *Santa Barbara, CA* (October 2021 - Present)
- Sample and publish bacteria content of UCSB beaches

Orange County Coastkeeper *Costa Mesa, CA* (August 2020 - September 2021)
- Draft blog reports about safe boating and angling practices

Seal Beach Fishing Line Recycling Program, *Seal Beach, CA,* (August 2020 - Present)
- Founded a community program to recycle fishing line in Seal Beach, CA

Skills

AAUS Diver, Rescue Diver, Nitrox Diver, CPR & First Aid, RStudio, ArcGIS, ImageJ, EDNA, French biliteracy