

Social Justice & Change Agent Award
Abigail Murillo

My mother sacrificed so much for her children to have a better education by coming to this country. I grew up facing multiple barriers as a minority woman, raised by a single mother who could only work with her hands. I know how it feels to have everything going against you, and I knew then I wanted my life's work to be for the betterment of vulnerable populations. I learned firsthand that life can bring many difficulties, yet many opportunities if you have someone to guide you through them. Being a social worker is my opportunity to become both an advocate and a member of a larger group of professionals striving for social justice.

Thanks to the BSW Program's professors and staff, being a student at UHD has helped me grow in confidence and performance. Everyone genuinely believed in me, and I know no other campus could have given me this opportunity to gain so many wonderful mentors that pushed me beyond what I thought I could accomplish. My fondest memory will always be the founding of the UHD organization, Cosplay for Kids, which helped me build leadership skills, and allowed me to engage with my community. Since its founding, Cosplay for Kids has been able to meet and bring cheer to over 2,000 children and older adults around Texas. I look forward to continuing my education in a MSW advanced standing program, to building new platforms for social change, and to continue to be an active leader in my community.

I would like to thank the UHD Social Work Program for their unconditional support through my field work experience, Hurricane Harvey, and any obstacles their students faced this year. I would like to thank Dr. Heather Goltz and Dr. Dana Smith for personally guiding me and helping build my confidence. I had the privilege of finding a mentor in Professor Joshua Reynolds, who not only encouraged me and supported my development of Cosplay for Kids, but also understood the mission.