Leaders are not born, they are made. Today’s undergraduate students belong to “Generation Z”, a generation defining itself by an idealistic desire for change, including protecting the world’s oceans. Most applicants for the CSUMB Ocean Sciences Research Experience for Undergraduates program described mitigating humanity’s impact on marine ecosystem health as their reason to study ocean science, however, this desire was almost always uninformed, unfocused, poorly communicated, and ultimately, uninspiring. Intention alone does not equal change. To become ocean leaders, students need meaningful professional training through which they can activate their intentions, as well as a community in which to develop. At CSUMB, both the REU and Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center use a cohort model, which includes an authentic research experience and additional development through in-class and extracurricular cohort-building activities such as peer-reviewing partnerships, journal clubs, peer-to-peer mentoring. The programs and their impact in creating ocean leaders will be discussed.