

Channel

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS / 2023 Spring Magazine

A photograph of two women harvesting raspberries in a greenhouse. The woman on the left is wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and a dark blue baseball cap. She has a white bucket hanging from her waist. The woman on the right is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black pants. She also has a white bucket hanging from her waist. They are standing in a row of raspberry plants, reaching up to pick the fruit. The greenhouse structure is visible in the background.

20 years of growing community engagement

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Channel

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CSU Channel Islands Mission Statement

Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.



Channel Islands

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY



CULTURAL AND AFFINITY COMMENCEMENT CELEBRATIONS

TOP TO BOTTOM Dolphins of Turtle Island for Indigenous students; Black Student Stoling Ceremony; Student Veteran Medallion Ceremony; Sí Se Pudo for Chicana/o Latina/o students and their supporters.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A past and future rooted in community engagement

I'll never forget attending a United Way of Ventura County banquet honoring people for their service soon after I started working at CSUCI in 2018. Looking around the room, I could see how strong the community was that I had just moved into from Las Vegas, where I felt valued after investing almost 25 years of service. At that banquet, I was surrounded by people who had long demonstrated their commitment to making this area a better place. I felt like I didn't belong, and that I would have to earn my spot on this remarkable team.

There are no shortcuts to becoming a valuable community partner. You must be engaged. You have to continually look for ways to serve and then show up, solve problems and overcome challenges. Luckily for me, I was working, first as Vice President for Student Affairs and then as President, for an organization with a track record of community engagement. From its beginning 20 years ago, CSUCI worked with organizations and companies to develop academic programs that meet workforce needs and to provide service-learning, research and internship opportunities for students that benefit the community.

We continue to engage in the important issues facing this region, as many of the stories in this issue of Channel demonstrate. The Farmworker Immersion Project enables students to learn firsthand about the challenges faced by agricultural workers who care for the fields surrounding our campus. An effort to save an endangered fish involving federal, state and local agencies relied on in-depth ecological studies conducted by our Environmental Science & Resource Management students. And a new partnership will enable the Santa Barbara Zoo to build a needed wildlife conservation center on campus and provide valuable learning experiences for students in many majors.

I want to strengthen existing partnerships and cultivate new ones over the next decade. While our mission always will remain rooted in service to the region, how we put that into action will change as we move forward. The community's needs 20 years ago differ from those today, and the problems to solve will be different in another 20 years. New challenges emerge, and best practices evolve. So, CSUCI needs to continually reassess the region's needs and the ways we address them while projecting what they might be a decade from now. It is a tall order, but one I feel confident we can achieve together, in collaboration with our community partners.

Sincerely,

Richard Yao, Ph.D.
President



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ON THE COVER Students Stephanie Turcios and Anamaria Fuerte learn about Ventura County farm work.

BELOW CSUCI students volunteer to build housing.

Smithsonian exhibition provided hands-on learning experiences

by KARIN GRENNAN

WALKING THROUGH THE SMITHSONIAN exhibition “Dolores Huerta: Revolution in the Fields/Revolución en los Campos” at CSUCI during spring semester was an educational experience in and of itself. But that was just one part of it for many students.

“We wanted to offer hands-on, high-impact learning opportunities to CSUCI students — opportunities that help bridge what they are learning in the classroom in a real-life context,” said Georgina Guzman, Faculty Director for the Center for Community Engagement. “Students got to install the exhibit. Students got to write the biography of Dolores Huerta and tell her story. Students got to give tours to elementary and high school students. Students got to create art projects inspired by Dolores’ activism.”

A large percentage of students already felt a connection to Huerta’s work advocating for farmworkers. Many have family members who are farmworkers; some have worked in fields themselves. With CSUCI nearly surrounded by farms, everyone drives past farmworkers enroute to campus.

The father of Cristian Trujillo, a member of the Chicana/o Studies capstone class that organized a student bus tour of murals in Oxnard and Ventura in conjunction with the exhibit, was a farmworker in Mexico before he came to the United States.

“I don’t really have the full story of it, though,” the San Jose native said. “My dad is pretty quiet and doesn’t like to talk much. But over the years, I would often ask him questions



Hannah Lovett, Rebecca Hyde Gonzales and Catherine Cervantes pose in front of the exhibit that they helped install.

“The lasting impact this project had on me is that I look to the arts to understand more perspectives regarding the injustices that occur in this world.”

—Nathan Ramos Rodriguez

about his life before meeting my mom and before coming to the U.S., and he would share with me his experiences about working in the fields and how he never really had a chance to get an education like me because he was basically forced out of it to work the fields.”

In Guzman’s Chicana/o literature class, 10 of the 16 students had farmworker backgrounds. So, when she asked them to gather testimonies on farmworker conditions today and the impact of gains made

by Huerta and others with United Farm Workers (UFW), most didn’t need to go far.

“My students interviewed their parents and grandparents and included their testimonies alongside Dolores’ story,” the Assistant Professor of English said.

They also read and watched everything they could find on Huerta to write a 20-page handbook for exhibit docents and visitors. The goal was to tell stories that show Ventura County residents why Huerta’s story should matter to them.

“They learned to see that in her life lies the untold story of their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers — women whose life stories were never told and whose achievements were never recognized. Students were



CLOCKWISE, STARTING AT THE BOTTOM LEFT A student-organized bus tour included a stop at a Dolores Huerta mural in Ventura; Student Lisa Marie Ruiz speaks during a tour of the exhibit; a screenprint designed by student Jose Galvan Martinez dries; Galvan Martinez shows Jessica Carranza how to print the image.

able to connect to the women and farmworkers in their family and value their stories and lives in a way they had not done so before," Guzman said.

The grandparents of Lisa Marie Ruiz of Oxnard picked crops, and she did the same during summers. She knew a lot about Huerta before she started preparing to lead tours of the exhibit. A Chicana/o Studies and Psychology major, Ruiz is a Co-Chair of MEChA de CI, and she calls Huerta one of her "all-time idols." But she learned personal stories she didn't know that motivated her.

"I've gained more insight regarding Dolores Huerta's activism and legacy and how important it is to stand up for what is right, even when it means immense personal sacrifice," said Ruiz, a grandmother who is preparing for a second

career as a federal attorney specializing in employment discrimination.

Trujillo and Nathan Ramos Rodriguez both learned Ventura County history they didn't know while organizing the mural tour. For Ramos Rodriguez, a Santa Paula High School graduate whose father is a seasonal farmworker, researching the art also opened his eyes to new points of view.

"The lasting impact this project had on me is that I look to the arts to understand more perspectives regarding the injustices that occur in this world," Ramos Rodriguez said.

Screenprinting students were asked to create two-color works inspired by Huerta's life and work. After Art major Jose Galvan Martinez toured the exhibit and heard about Huerta, the Oxnard resident

felt inspired to convey the vibrancy and impact of the protest movements. Ripples on Huerta's shirt and the protest sign she is holding in his design illustrate how social movements grow. Repetitions of "Viva la causa!" surrounding her image call to mind the chanting of protestors. Liking the Native American and pre-Hispanic patterns he saw in the triangular UFW logo, he turned it into a diamond shape that runs along the border.

"This assignment was quite impactful for me because I feel I have a further appreciation for farmworkers," Galvan Martinez said. "I also feel that while not having a direct connection to a specific narrative, there are always multiple layers to every issue, and we can all find a common ground that we can all find relatable."

Team Tidewater Goby aids return of endangered species

Students spend a year finding the best spots in Malibu Lagoon for the fish

by KARIN GRENNAN



Gray-brown in color, rarely more than two inches long and living only about a year, tidewater gobies aren't the most impressive of fish. But Brenton Spies fell hard for them 13 years ago.

“The more I learned about how special and important this species is to our coastal estuary and lagoon habitats throughout California, the more I fell in love with it and its unique story,” the CSUCI Environmental Science & Resource Management Lecturer said. “I’ve been focusing my research on this species and its coastal habitats ever since.”

The tidewater goby is a native California fish that maintains the food-web balance in disappearing bodies of water.



Jada Gaines, left, and Meagan Najera, far right, lift a net out of the water to count the tidewater gobies.



Adalhia Estrada takes water quality measurements while Bryan Loya Acevedo pulls a net through the Malibu Lagoon.

Few species can handle the extreme changes in salinity, temperature and oxygen levels found where the fresh water from streams meets with salt-water from the ocean, Spies said. But this California native fish thrives in this brackish environment, making it critical to maintaining the food-web balance in these disappearing bodies of water.

Loss of habitat, drought and introduction of non-native predators have taken a toll on the tidewater gobies. In the 1980s, researchers noticed they were vanishing from many estuaries, and they were listed as endangered in 1994.

Tidewater gobies likely had swum in Malibu Lagoon for thousands of years, Spies said, but they disappeared in the 1980s. Biologists moved some gobies from the Ventura River to the lagoon, a process called translocation, in the early 1990s, but the population started to decline again in 2005.

From 2012 to 2013, the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains improved the quality of Malibu Lagoon and its water, but the gobies didn't bounce back. In 2017, Spies and representatives from state parks, the resource district, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and UCLA began strategizing how to reintroduce tidewater gobies. This time, they set their sights on moving some from Topanga Lagoon, which had many.

In Fall 2021, Spies asked Environmental Science & Resource Management majors Bryan Loya

Acevedo, Adalhia Estrada, Jada Gaines and Meagan Najera to join Team Tidewater Goby for their senior capstone research projects. The students conducted in-depth ecological studies of the two lagoons to determine the best places to place the gobies after moving them. They spent the academic year assessing the water quality and surveying the types of fish, aquatic invertebrates, insects and vegetation in each lagoon.

"This required the team to conduct a full diet analysis of tidewater gobies in Topanga Lagoon and potential predators and competitor fish species in Malibu Lagoon to see what types of food tidewater gobies preferred in Topanga, where that food was found in Malibu and if any other fish species were eating that type of food," Spies said.

Gaines and Najera loved the field days, which were spent collecting samples and data at the lagoons. Getting all the lab work done was the biggest challenge for the Camarillo natives. They learned to organize copious amounts of data and adapt when processes took longer than expected.

"We spent probably hundreds of hours in total in the lab sifting through bio push samples and dissecting fish," Gaines said.

After graduating in May 2022, Gaines and Najera started using what they learned as field scientists for Santa Rosa Valley-based Forde Biological Consultants.

When it came time for the big move, the duo jumped at the chance to help

Spies and the state and federal scientists. Over about six hours on a day in September, the crew pulled seine nets, which have floats along the top and can be closed at the bottom around fish, through Topanga Lagoon. Selecting the 500 healthiest adults was the longest part of the process. They put the chosen ones in small coolers with air stones, which produce tiny oxygen-filled bubbles, and drove them to Malibu.

They acclimated the gobies to Malibu Lagoon's water by adding small portions of it to the coolers at five-minute intervals until the water matched the oxygen and temperature levels of their home-to-be. Then the team released the gobies into the three spots the students had decided would be best.

"The day the gobies were moved was actually one of the easiest days of the entire process," Spies said.

This summer, Spies and his state and federal partners plan to return to Malibu Lagoon to assess the success of the translocation and see whether the gobies have started reproducing.

"It was an extra special experience for me because since I was a little kid my biggest dream was to help species that were threatened with extinction," Najera said. "I don't know yet if we picked the correct places for the gobies or whether they survived or not, but the fact that I have completed a project that has potentially helped the gobies' population increase made my younger self so proud and just solidified that I was on the right path doing the right thing."



Farmworker program harvests understanding and advocacy

by KARIN GRENNAN





An hour picking raspberries at Lennox Ranch in Oxnard took a toll on Sociology student Vicky Ortega. “It felt like you were in a sauna,” Ortega said. “It was tiring. My back was hurting. And then worse, one of the workers came and was like, ‘You missed all of these.’ And I was like, no way, and I had to go back and start over.”

The consensus among the 20 CSUCI students who participated in the Farmworker Immersion Project in April was that harvesting and packing berries at the Reiter Affiliated Cos. ranch was difficult. Along with “hot,” “grateful” was the most popular response from students when asked to reflect on the day.

“You learn to appreciate where you are in life right now and appreciate them as well for what they do,” said Ortega, an Oxnard resident who graduated in May. “I was able to leave, and that was it. But they have to go back day in, day out to do this all over again just to support their families.”

CSUCI’s Center for Community Engagement started the annual program in 2012 to enable students to learn firsthand about farmworker issues in honor of Cesar Chavez Day.

“Creating opportunities for future health care workers, teachers and nonprofit employees to understand our own community members is very impactful for our students,” said center Community Partnership Lead Jennifer Raymond.

Many students who sign up are children of farmworkers and often the first generation that hasn’t needed to work in the fields. This year, that included Business major Jesus Avila, an Oxnard resident who has had to help support his family because his father broke three discs in his back working in the fields in the 1990s.

“I, luckily, was privileged enough not to have to go through that,” said Avila, who graduated in May. “But I’ve also wanted to immerse myself on the very tip, and I mean the very tiniest tip of the iceberg, of what their life would have been like.”

For Karla Diaz, the experience drove home the point that her parents, who picked crops when they first immigrated to the United States, have made so many times — that she should work hard in school, so she doesn’t have to work in the fields.

“It was a very humbling experience,” said Diaz, a Fresno native who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Sociology in May. “I am very blessed and grateful to have the opportunity to continue my education.”

A vice president, ranch manager, crew leader and puncher, who ensures quality control, talked about farming operations before the students began harvesting berries alongside the professionals.

“They’re really fast. They can do like two hands at a time and just kind of like scale up the vines,” marveled Ventura resident Niko Ford, one of several Nursing students who participated before graduating in May. “I was picking one at a time.”

After lunch, the students visited Oxnard’s Villa Cesar Chavez Apartments for farmworker families managed by Cabrillo Economic Development Corp. Attorney Barbara Macri-Ortiz recounted the 20-year struggle to replace leaking shacks with

the affordable and manicured development, and House Farm Workers! representatives shared additional information. Student Adriana Diaz, a daughter of farmworkers who used to pick strawberries alongside them, talked about her work translating conversations between agricultural inspectors and workers into English, Spanish and Mixteco to ensure pesticide application rules are being followed.

Residents also told their stories. One previously lived in a garage.

“You could just see it in her eyes and the way she talked about it, how thankful she was for this opportunity that she has to live with her kids,” Ortega said. “I can’t even imagine being in that situation where you don’t have enough money to live anywhere.”

Assistant Professor of Sociology Rachel Soper and one of her capstone students, Fabiola Sanchez, shared their findings that Indigenous migrants from Mexico are by far the most food-insecure among local farmworker families. Seventy-eight percent of them reported lacking consistent access to enough food compared to 48% of non-Indigenous farmworkers.

The Nursing students said learning about farmworkers’ food needs, physical labor, long work hours, low pay and housing difficulties will enable them to better serve them in their careers. For Yareli Moreno, a daughter of Delano farmworkers who finished her bachelor’s degree in Biology in December, participating in the 2022 program made her double-down on her plan “to enhance the health of farmworker communities” as a physician assistant.

“As a community, we need to support each other because we depend on each other,” the Port Hueneme resident said.

The program ends with a discussion about how to support farmworkers. Ortega said the experience showed her that people need to speak up for them because they often can’t.

“Regardless of whether we are in the same situation or not or it affects me directly or not, just be an advocate for them,” she said.



LEFT FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE Vicky Ortega '23, B.A. Sociology, picks raspberries at Lennox Ranch; Yolanda Melendez, a ranch crew leader, guides participants through warmup exercises; Center for Community Engagement Community Partnership Lead Jennifer Raymond, fifth from right, takes an advocacy photo with other Farmworker Immersion Project participants at Villa Cesar Chavez Apartments. ABOVE Jesus Avila, left, picks raspberries as Melendez walks down the row.



Commencement 2023

CSUCI CELEBRATED COMMENCEMENT WITH FOUR in-person ceremonies held over two days on Saturday, May 20, and Sunday, May 21, at the South Quad of the campus. Thousands of parents, families, and friends cheered for more than 2,600 graduating students who received bachelor's or master's degrees, and credentials, during the morning and afternoon ceremonies.

During the Saturday morning ceremony, an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters was awarded to Hannah-Beth Jackson, a former state senator who co-authored the 2001 bill that provided CSUCI with the land where the main entrance was built. At the Saturday afternoon ceremony, an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters was posthumously awarded to Carmen Ramirez, who passed away in August 2022. Ramirez advocated at the state level for the creation and funding of CSUCI. Her husband, Roy Prince, accepted the degree on behalf of her family. **To read more about the honorary doctorate recipients visit: go.csuci.edu/HD2023**

Student speakers selected to provide remarks during the ceremonies were Spooner Greenbird, Psychology; Alegra Grace, Business; Maria Arenas, Biotechnology & Bioinformatics; and Ilien Tolteca, Chicana/o Studies and Art. Alumni Joanne Vo, '14 Biology, and Gabby Vignone, '16 English, also provided remarks.

Students who sang the national anthem were Justin Wiredu-Agyepong, Psychology; Nelisha Louise Cobarubias, Psychology; Jasmine Mearns, Liberal Studies; and Vivica Perez, Liberal Studies. Students who offered a welcome in Spanish were Stephanie Reyes Cervantes and Michelle Landeros.

To read more about Commencement 2023 visit: go.csuci.edu/ch-comm23



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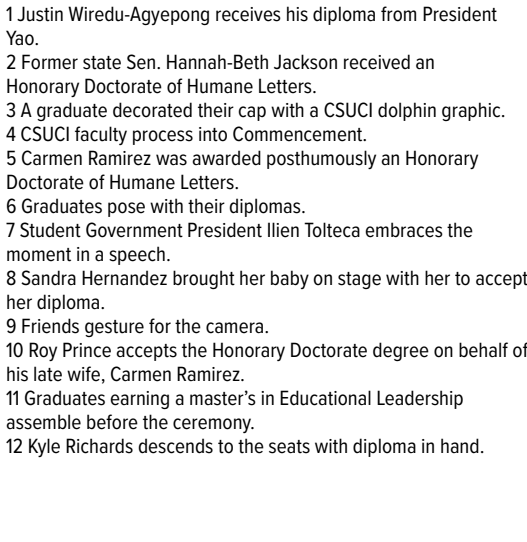
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- 1 Justin Wiredu-Agyepong receives his diploma from President Yao.
- 2 Former state Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.
- 3 A graduate decorated their cap with a CSUCI dolphin graphic.
- 4 CSUCI faculty process into Commencement.
- 5 Carmen Ramirez was awarded posthumously an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.
- 6 Graduates pose with their diplomas.
- 7 Student Government President Ilien Tolteca embraces the moment in a speech.
- 8 Sandra Hernandez brought her baby on stage with her to accept her diploma.
- 9 Friends gesture for the camera.
- 10 Roy Prince accepts the Honorary Doctorate degree on behalf of his late wife, Carmen Ramirez.
- 11 Graduates earning a master's in Educational Leadership assemble before the ceremony.
- 12 Kyle Richards descends to the seats with diploma in hand.

The Class of 2023 crossed the stage during Commencement on May 20 and 21, then set off in hundreds of different directions. Some graduates will go into business, research, medicine, education, theater or politics, or pursue an advanced degree. Some stay close; others travel far. To get an idea of what's possible with a CSUCI degree, consider four 2023 graduates who are going in four different directions to begin their next chapters. *by* KIM LAMB GREGORY

CODY GREGG — PHYSICS

If you had told Physics major Cody Gregg that he would graduate, marry, relocate and land his dream job all in the space of one month, he wouldn't have believed it.

But that's what happened thanks to a chance meeting at an air show at Edwards Air Force Base and his CSUCI education. Gregg is now helping to design and build rockets for Northrop Grumman in Maryland.

Gregg's interest in robotics and aeronautics began when he was going to middle school in Bakersfield.

"I had a class where I was able to design, build and program robots," Gregg said. "I loved learning about the planets. I love NASA, and I like to watch rocket launches."

Aiming for a career as an aerospace engineer seemed perfect for Gregg, so he entered CSUCI as a Physics major. Then, during his final semester, Gregg met a representative from Northrop Grumman at an air show in Kern County.

"The lead engineer handed me his business card, and within two months I had the job," Gregg said.

In December, Gregg started the move to Maryland, and his girlfriend, Megan, pulled together a wedding in the span of a month. By the beginning of 2023, the couple was settling on the East Coast.

The couple flew home in May so Gregg could graduate with the rest of the Class of 2023, then returned to Maryland so he could continue working on his current project: a 110-meter rocket named Antares.



Cody Gregg aimed for a career as an aerospace engineer. He majored in Physics at CSUCI.



LYZETTE CORNEJO — CHICANA/O STUDIES

Growing up in Santa Paula as the daughter of immigrant parents, Lyzette Cornejo belonged to a community whose voice was often not heard. Now the first in her family to attend and graduate from college, Cornejo plans to change that.

"When you get an education, it gives you a voice," Cornejo said.

After spending 11 weeks in Washington, D.C., as a Panetta Institute Congressional intern, Cornejo learned her voice can and does matter, as do the voices of others underrepresented in the seats of power.

During her last semester at CSUCI, Cornejo accepted a hometown fellowship with Americorps in which she worked with the City of Santa Paula, once becoming the guest speaker for the Rotary Club of Santa Paula.

Cornejo is spending the summer completing graduate school applications with hopes of getting a degree in educational leadership and someday teaching at a university.



Lyzette Cornejo spent time in Washington, D.C., as an intern and found her voice as an advocate for those lacking representation and power.

We will check in with these four graduates as they set out on their diverse journeys over the next year and post updates on CSUCI's social media.

FOUR GRADS, FOUR DREAMS, FOUR DIRECTIONS



TRACEY CANALES — GLOBAL STUDIES

Growing up in Santa Clarita, Tracey Canales always knew she wanted to make a difference in the world. Traveling cemented her career goals, especially when visiting developing countries.

“My twin brother and I were able to visit Guanajuato, Mexico,” she said. “It was my first time out of the country and flying on a plane. I saw things I didn’t like. It was such a journey for the people just to get water every day. I think children shouldn’t be walking in the heat in order to drink out of a river.”

Global Studies felt like the perfect fit for Canales when she and her twin, Angel, enrolled at CSUCI as the first generation in their families to attend college. During her senior year she traveled to the United Nations in New York to participate in the Model U.N. competition.

In August, Canales will join the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic with hopes of becoming a U.N. diplomat.



Tracey Canales traveled to developing nations and visited the U.N. in New York. She now will be a Peace Corps volunteer.



ARIANA CASTELLANOS-RODRIGUEZ — BUSINESS

Like most students who are part of the first generation to attend college, Ariana Castellanos-Rodriguez and her three siblings didn’t hear about college while growing up in Oxnard.

“My grandparents immigrated from Mexico and my parents came when they were very young,” she said. “My dad is a landscaper and my mom works at a school.”

But once she learned about college while attending Pacifica High School, Castellanos-Rodriguez excelled.

She won a Martin V. Smith scholarship, which is for first-year, high-achieving students interested in studying Business or Economics at CSUCI, and later founded the University’s first Women in Business club.

Castellanos-Rodriguez and her brothers, Andrew and Alexander, all attended CSUCI this year. Their sister, Amanda, is pursuing a master’s degree at another university.

Andrew was awarded his Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the same ceremony in which Castellanos-Rodriguez accepted her undergraduate degree in Business.

Castellanos-Rodriguez is now considering several career possibilities.

“One of my biggest dreams is to start my own business — I love baking, so I’m thinking maybe my own bakery,” she said.



Ariana Castellanos-Rodriguez learned about college in high school and studied Business and Economics at CSUCI.

The Gift of EDUCATION

\$5.2M from The Jeff T. Green Family Foundation to expand scholarships

by KARIN GRENNAN

THE JEFF T. GREEN FAMILY FOUNDATION has given CSUCI \$5.2 million to significantly expand the generous four-year scholarship program launched in Fall 2022 for potential first-generation college graduates with average high school GPAs.

“Improving access to high-quality education is one of the most meaningful things we can do to improve life-long opportunity for all,” said Jeff Green, founder of the nonprofit Dataphilanthropy. “Working with the highly engaged leaders from CSUCI, we’ve built a data-driven scholarship and mentorship program that provides opportunities for students who might not otherwise think they have a path to higher education. The program also addresses and mitigates key issues that might derail a student’s path through education. I’m very encouraged at the measurable improvements we’ve seen since we initiated this program, and I look forward to even more progress as we scale it across the University and beyond.”



Scholarships allow students to focus on learning.



CSUCI students study in the Broome Library. The scholarship money provided by the Jeff T. Green Family Foundation will support many scholars and improve retention.

In 2022-23, 35 freshmen with financial need each received a \$6,000 Jeff T. Green Family Foundation Scholarship. After an initial donation of \$1.05 million, the foundation will extend additional funding to enable CSUCI to expand the program to up to 250 more freshmen in Fall 2023. If students continue to qualify for the scholarships, they will receive \$6,000 as sophomores and \$4,000 as juniors and seniors.

Green, who uses data to determine how digital advertisers can best spend their budgets to reach consumers as the founder and CEO of The Trade Desk, wanted to fund scholarships that reflect what statistics show would most improve retention.

CSUCI data indicates that students with GPAs below 3.0 who received scholarships outperformed those with higher GPAs who did not receive scholarships, so recipients must have high school GPAs between 2.50 and 3.25. The awards’ renewable nature and amounts, which will cover 88% of tuition for freshmen and sophomores in 2023-24, are based on statistics demonstrating that larger and more frequent awards are significant predictors of improved retention. Recipients are required to meet with academic advisers twice a year, participate in a Learning Community their first year and receive career counseling as seniors to further support success.

Miryam Barba, an English major from Hemet, said the scholarship lessened “the challenge of having to pay out of pocket, which has helped me and my family tremendously.”



From left to right in front of the Santa Barbara Zoo “Help the Kelp” marine debris art exhibit created by CSUCI students: Zoo President Richard Block; Jennifer Perry, Executive Director of Regional Educational Partnerships at CSUCI; Joe Forrest, CSUCI Santa Rosa Island Research Center Coordinator; Christy Kehoe, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program Mid-Atlantic regional coordinator; Michaela Miller '16, B.S. Environmental Science & Resource Management, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation conservation manager; CSUCI Professor of Art Matthew Fumanski; Karly Kennedy '23, B.A. Art; Kenny Neal '23, B.A. Art; Zoo Director of Education JJ McLeod; CSUCI President Richard Yao.

CSUCI and Santa Barbara Zoo launch educational partnership and campus conservation center

by MARYA BARLOW

A NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CSUCI AND THE Santa Barbara Zoo will enrich academic opportunities for students and enhance wildlife conservation, education and research throughout the region.

President Richard Yao and zoo President and CEO Richard Block signed a memorandum of understanding in April, paving the way for future collaboration and a zoo-owned-and-managed conservation center on the CSUCI campus.

“By partnering with a world-class zoo right here in our backyard, we are strengthening our commitment to be a ‘conservation campus’ on the Central Coast,” said Yao. “We are excited about the opportunities for our students to work side by side with zoo personnel and CSUCI faculty to protect and reestablish threatened species in our region and to develop vital skills in conservation education and management. It is our hope that students and faculty from all disciplines and majors will have a chance to make an impact through our partnership with the zoo.”

“We are excited to partner with CSUCI to establish the first zoo-owned-and-managed facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums on a university campus,” Block said. “Through this alliance, we look forward to expanding our zoo conservation programs and providing a learning laboratory where students can

assist in the important work of wildlife conservation, education, zoo management and marketing, animal husbandry, guest services, and more. The opportunities to align our programs and resources with CSUCI are limitless.”

The partnership resolves the zoo’s need for more space in which to expand its wildlife conservation efforts. At its 28-acre Santa Barbara site, the zoo is running out of room to house a growing collection of threatened and endangered species, including Western snowy plovers, California red-legged frogs, California condors, and Western pond turtles, which it hopes to shift to the CSUCI conservation center.

Work for the conservation center will begin later this year on a 60,000-square-foot site on the western edge of the campus near Modoc Hall. In the meantime, collaborations between the zoo and CSUCI’s varied disciplines are being explored. The Performing Arts program is working with the zoo on live performances for visitors. Students in a Spanish capstone course are translating the zoo’s educational materials into Spanish. And CSUCI is teaming up with the zoo’s Early Explorers Preschool to bring its bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Studies to Santa Barbara County in Fall 2023.



Community benefits *from two decades* OF CSUCI SERVICE

by KARIN GRENNAN

CSUCI HAS BEEN PROVIDING LEARNING experiences for students that benefit the community as a core part of its mission since its founding in 2002, and the number of participants and projects and the organization behind them have increased dramatically over the last two decades.

“It has grown from the early days of 200 students a year to 2,000 students a year,” said Center for Community Engagement Director Pilar Pacheco, who joined its staff in 2005.

The annual number of hours students spend on service-learning projects each year has increased from about 400 to 40,000. Today, the annual value of the volunteer time is about \$1.7 million. And that doesn’t even count students who are engaged in volunteering, student teaching, or Nursing clinical hours.

CSUCI’s impact extends beyond state boundaries, said Environmental Science & Resource Management Chair Sean Anderson. His “Service Learning in New Orleans” course alone has contributed more than \$600,000 worth of restoration and conservation work to that region since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005.

The University has been nationally recognized for its service-learning efforts, earning Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and a regular spot on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll when it existed.

CSUCI’s role as a community partner is in its DNA. Developing the University with the help of many public-private partnerships, its leaders reached out to the County of Ventura, its cities, Naval Base Ventura County and others before it even opened, recalled Oxnard Mayor John Zaragoza, who has served 14 years on the City Council and 12 years on the Ventura County Board of Supervisors.

“Since its inception two decades ago, CSUCI has consistently developed and maintained relationships across the entire educational continuum, from early childhood education through college and careers,” said Stan Mantooth, who served as Ventura County Superintendent of Schools for 13 years and is now a Ventura Community College District trustee. “Beyond academia, CSUCI has also built enduring partnerships with local government, municipalities, non-profit agencies and the military.”

The University’s support of nonprofits and other community organizations has been particularly valuable, said Irene Pinkard. For example, CSUCI partners with the Oxnard-based Pinkard Youth Institute to present the week-long African American Enrichment Program for high school students on campus.

“The fact that CSUCI has partnered with the Pinkard Youth Institute and other nonprofits and local organizations over the past 20 years exemplifies the institution’s desire to be a part of the fabric of the community,” Pinkard said. “It is invaluable to have an institution in your own backyard that can be accessed by a phone call or a 10-minute drive.”

Anderson thinks CSUCI’s service-learning tradition has become more intentional and structured through the years.

1 Barbara Christianson '17 works in a trailer clinic set up by Nursing students.

2 ESRM students do restoration work in New Orleans.

3 Psychology student Martina Ortouste presents research to the Oxnard City Council.

4 Students help restore sat'wiwa in 2019.

5 Volunteers gather for a photo during the CSUCI Veterans Day of Service.

“Initially, they were pretty haphazard. ... We sort of did everything under the sun,” said Anderson, who joined the faculty in 2005. “It was like, ‘Oh, hey, we could do something like this.’ Or, ‘We could do that.’”

The Center for Community Engagement has provided support for faculty, leading more to participate.

“Having the Center for Community Engagement really helps onboard more people into service-learning, and thus invites more diverse voices,” Anderson said.

Faculty members work with nonprofits to develop a wide range of service-learning courses where students use what they have learned to solve real-world problems. Anderson said most projects now support social justice.

Students have tutored and mentored incarcerated youth and young adults, recommended ways to meet the needs of foster youth transitioning from high school to college and helped those needing access to library resources. They have researched the child care needs of Ventura County farmworkers, developed at-home science and math activities for families, and documented oral histories of the multi-ethnic community in Oxnard’s former Wagon Wheel neighborhood. During the Spring semester, the center’s Faculty Director, Georgina Guzman, helped coordinate several public-serving projects tied to the Dolores Huerta Smithsonian exhibition on campus (see page 4). Students also have written grant applications, drafted business plans and provided economic data for nonprofits.



An Environmental Science & Resource Management capstone class spent a year monitoring oil and gas seeps after the 2017 Thomas Fire at the request of Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas.

The center also coordinates paid community-service internships for students at nonprofits throughout Ventura and Santa Barbara counties and service days where students and staff volunteer in the region.

Anderson said one of CSUCI’s specialties is helping government agencies and nonprofits in the early stages of a project. An organization’s leaders may see a need, but they don’t have the staff or money to address it. A team from the University will do the early work of conducting research or collecting data needed for the organization to justify funding and staffing for the project to move forward.

For instance, four of Professor of Sociology Dennis

Downey’s students compiled a report examining gender-based inequality in the area for the Ventura County Commission for Women. The commission used the report to procure \$20,000 to conduct a second phase of the study. Other times, students have

See Community Service, Page 20



Dennis Downey, center, poses with Professor of History Jim Meriwether and Pilar Pacheco after receiving an award for his service as Faculty Director of the Center for Community Engagement in 2018.

20 years of overcoming challenges built CSUCI's unique campus

by KARIN GRENNAN

"THE BELL TOWER IS ICONIC," SAID HOLLY Calan-Alfano '16, B.A. Communication.

True, says the man who has been helping to guide the development of CSUCI throughout its 20-year existence.

"The Bell Tower is an important building because it was the first," said David Carlson, who joined the staff as Associate Architect two months before CSUCI opened

in 2002 and is now Director of Planning, Design & Construction. "If you Google 'CSUCI' and you look at images, the first image that is going to come up is going to be the Bell Tower building."

Like most of CSUCI, the Bell Tower was part of the 1930s-era Camarillo State Hospital. One of only two California State University campuses established by repurposing buildings, CSUCI was fortunate to inherit the expansive, Spanish-style structures, said former President Richard Rush.

"We had a ready-made university," said CSUCI's President from 2001 to 2016. "If you didn't know what was inside but just took a snapshot of the outside, you'd say, 'Oh, what a beautiful university campus.'"

The insides, though, have posed significant challenges.

"The thing that we learned from the Bell Tower project is that the old hospital wings do not make for the best classroom layouts," Carlson said. "They're long and narrow — basically bowling-alley rooms."

The project also revealed that walls, ceilings and the sloped floors contain 10 inches of concrete and another few inches of hollow clay tiles that make renovation and technology installation difficult.

Aliso Hall, the science building that opened in 2003, was the first construction from the ground up. John Spoor Broome Library blended old with new when it opened in

2008 with a striking mix of glass, steel and concrete that replaced the center of a building and sides that were renovated to house classrooms.

The hospital's individual patient rooms make good offices so that's constituted the bulk of renovations, including Madera Hall, which opened in 2012. Sierra Hall, which opened in 2016 with mostly classrooms and labs, was originally intended to be a split of renovation and new construction, but staff determined that demolition of the old building and all new construction would cost less.

Scheduled to open in 2025, Gateway Hall will be a massive mix of renovation of the empty buildings between Santa Bar-

bara Avenue and the North Quad and a new three-story building.

"It is going to be the new front door to the campus," Carlson said. "It's going to have an entry paseo that looks right into North Quad as people arrive along University Drive and will become another exciting, iconic location."

See building illustration on next page.



TOP Renovations in the Bell Tower begin. ABOVE Classrooms in the Bell Tower are narrow.

Campus Buildings



Gateway Hall (under construction; scheduled completion 2025)



Early Childhood Care and Education Center
(planning phase underway)



John Spoor Broome Library



“I love Sierra and Del Norte buildings! They are modern and at the same time blend among the historical campus. The Zen garden on the second floor in Sierra Hall is beautiful, especially in the evenings. Magnificent views from both of the building balconies.”

– DHRUV PANDYA '17



Sierra Hall Garden

Community Service, continued from Page 18

conducted research that nonprofits are required to do after receiving grants.

Downey, who joined the faculty in 2007, has engaged his students in dozens of community-based research projects like these over the last decade. He helped others do the same for many years as the former Faculty Director of the Center for Community Engagement.

“These projects usually help an organization be more efficient and effective in serving the community and are generally doing something they don’t have the expertise or the capacity to do on their own,” Downey said. “We are helping our partners do more and better.”

Two of Downey’s former students, who were both foster youths, conducted research to develop a plan to get volunteers at Casa Pacifica Centers for Children & Families more engaged in mentoring foster youth. Staff then drew from the report to revamp training practices.

Christina Cabral '11, B.A. Sociology & History, conducted research for Ventura-based Project Understanding,

which empowers at-risk populations to live independently, for her capstone project. As a case manager at Project Understanding a few years later, she worked with a group of CSUCI students to interview clients who were homeless.

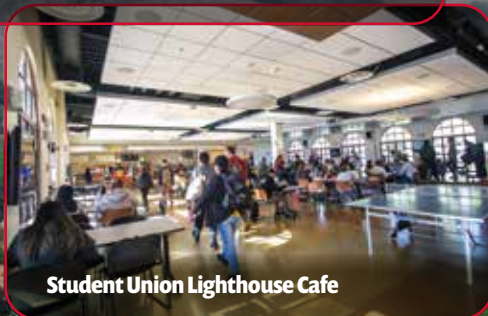
“Service-project work can really help organizations and nonprofits better understand the community they serve. It may also bring awareness to services that might not be offered yet,” said Cabral, now a social worker for the County of Ventura Homeless Services Program.

Collaborations often grow over time. An Environmental Science & Resource Management capstone class spent a year monitoring oil and gas seeps after the 2017 Thomas Fire at the request of Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas. Students are now working with the organization, the Port of Hueneme and others to monitor air quality in Ventura County to improve understanding of the pollution being generated, its impact on people and the effects of mitigation measures.

Through the years, CSUCI also has forged formal alliances with multiple government and industry partners

“I always liked the Student Union café. I sat there every week getting work done. It was perfect with the bustling background noise and near snacks. Also the cozy Library lounge spots and sitting under the trees in the main quad when it was sunny.”

– GABRIELLA HOLST '23



Student Union Lighthouse Cafe



Aliso Hall

that serve community needs while providing valuable experiences to students. CSUCI works with the National Park Service to run the Santa Rosa Island Research Station. The University launched the Channel Islands Boating Center with the help of several partners. And a partnership with Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital provided the region's first practice-based bachelor's degree in Nursing.

“One of the greatest examples of CSUCI partnering with the business community was the establishment of the Nursing program,” said Nancy Lindholm, president of the West Ventura County Business Alliance. “The medical industry was experiencing extreme challenges finding qualified employees, so they met with Dr. Richard Rush and established the curriculum to meet the needs of our local hospitals and medical practices. This was prior to COVID-19. Can you imagine what our health care system would have been like during the pandemic had the CSUCI leadership not had the insight to address the problem when they did?”



Yeneth Renteria holds the screen while Karisa Smathers unloads a soil sample from the auger.

Anthropology students preserve history on construction sites

by KIM LAMB GREGORY

As CSUCI workers improve the campus for the future, an archaeology team of undergraduates keeps a watch on the past.

Every time a spade hits the dirt for a construction project, the Cultural Resource Management Team supervised by Professor of Anthropology Colleen Delaney makes sure buried historic artifacts or other remnants of regional history are protected.

“We’ve found shells, some beads, buttons from some of the Camarillo Hospital patients, old medicine bottles — lots of colored glass,” said senior Anthropology major Daniela Valenzuela. “When we find something, we take it back to the lab where it has to be catalogued, measured, weighed and placed in a bag with a note about where and how it was found.”

The team was formed in 2021 to train students in archaeology while helping the University comply with laws mandating that cultural resources be protected. Delaney said it could be the only undergraduate archaeology team of its kind in the nation.



A student searches through soil for artifacts or evidence of human activities.

President's Circle a driving force behind CSUCI

by MARYA BARLOW

LONG BEFORE THERE WAS A PRESIDENT'S Dinner – or even a CSUCI campus – there was a 1999 barbecue in Linda Dullam's backyard that brought together dozens of supporters intent on founding a four-year public university in Ventura County.

"It was wonderful," said Dullam, who remains one of CSUCI's most loyal supporters. "We had this great group of people who cared deeply about building this University, and we loved every minute of it."

Dullam's backyard would be one of many places where CSUCI Planning President Handel Evans convened the indispensable group that became the President's Circle.

"My charge from the CSU Chancellor was to start a university with no money, no students, and no staff," Evans said. "The President's Circle became sort of an early fundraising arm. It was a way of getting out into the community and creating excitement for the University. We talked to different groups and found community members and friends to donate \$1,000 a year. By the time I left (in Spring 2001), there were over 200 members."

Today, President's Circle members, who contribute \$1,000 or more each year to the University, remain an integral part of CSUCI's growth. The group serves as a partner to the CSUCI Foundation, helping to bridge the gap between state funding and the private donations required to support a rapidly growing university. Members enjoy invitations to special events with the President throughout the year, including receptions with students, faculty and guest speakers, and the annual President's Dinner.

"The President's Circle is CSUCI's core group of most-loyal donors," said Eva Gomez, Director of Annual Giving and Special Gifts. "They've been instrumental to support-



President's Circle members Patty McMillan, Linda Dullam and Norma Maidel pose at an event in the early 2000s.

ing our highest-priority needs and the overall growth of the University. We have some that have been giving every year since 1999."

Today, you'll find many of those founding President's Circle members are still hard at work championing CSUCI.

"CSUCI is part of my life," said Doug Off, president of Ojai Oil Co. and founding member of the President's Circle. "It has given back to me the chance to speak to MBA classes and the ability to guide others around the campus. More often than not, I'm meeting very talented young people that have degrees from CSUCI. Quite a few of my employees and my friends' employees can now say, 'We have a graduate from CSUCI.'"

"I am overcome with gratitude that I was part of the creation of this University," said Pat Richards Dodds, a founding Chair of the CSUCI Foundation Board and a recipient of the Robert J. Lagomarsino Award. "The campus is now alive with students, and careers are being created and lives changed forever because of a dream that took over 30 years to become a reality. This is the best investment that I can imagine for my community."

To learn more, contact Eva Gomez, Director of Annual Giving and Special Gifts, at eva.gomez@csuci.edu or 805-437-3271.



The President's Circle founding members wall at CSUCI features dedicated tiles.



Members of the Retiree Association pose during a gathering.

CSUCI establishes Retiree Association

by MARYA BARLOW

THE CSUCI RETIREE ASSOCIATION recently formed to help retired faculty and staff stay connected with colleagues and the University, provide social and educational opportunities, promote and protect retirees' rights, and improve the retirement program. The association is the newest affiliate of the CSU Emeritus and Retired Faculty & Staff Association (CSU-ERFSA). CSUCI retirees can join the association by becoming a member of CSU-ERFSA at <http://csuerfsa.org>.

Professor Emeritus Dan Wakelee, who serves as the association's president, says that more than 300 CSUCI retirees are eligible to join.

"We are trying to reach out to as many retirees as possible, let them know we're here and that we'd love to have them come back to the campus," Wakelee said. "I watched the campus grow from the begin-

ning and formed a lot of strong connections to the people there. Since I retired (in 2017), I've lost touch with a lot of those people. For me, this is a way to remain involved and try to pick those relationships up again."

The CSUCI Retiree Association is holding frequent events, both on- and off-campus, ranging from lectures and socials to volunteer opportunities and excursions. At "Research on Tap," its first public event in March, which was co-sponsored by the John Spoor Broome Library, guests enjoyed presentations from Assistant Professor of Biology Hugo Tapia, Professor of Anthropology Colleen Delaney, and Anthropology Lecturer Marc Abramiuk.

For the association's second event in April, participants headed to Santa Rosa Island Research Station for a tour, hiking and lunch. Wakelee says an annual retiree recognition event

is also being planned by University Advancement for June.

In the meantime, more than 25 members of the fledgling organization are working to spread the word to their fellow retirees.

Jerry Clifford, who taught Physics and astronomy at CSUCI and still teaches in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, started a newsletter for the association. In it, he shares recent retiree news, upcoming events, and profiles of CSUCI retirees.

"Hopefully other retirees, both staff and faculty, will appreciate the benefit of being part of our continuing CI community – with its fun and opportunities, and without the stress of work and politics," he said.

To learn more, visit the CSU Channel Islands Retiree Association Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CIRetirees>) or email dan.wakelee@csuci.edu.



Channel Islands Boating Center sails into 10 years

by MARYA BARLOW

If there's one thing that Kinsey Cohen loves most about her college experience at CSUCI, it's the Channel Islands Boating Center (CIBC).

"The CIBC meant so much to me while I was a student," said Cohen, who graduated in 2019 with a B.A. in Psychology. "It's a community treasure. Where else can you get free sailing lessons or go for a moonlight kayaking excursion? I encourage every single CSUCI student to take advantage of all the amazing things it has to offer."

The Boating Center is where Cohen first joined the Sailing Club, made "a ton" of friends, and fell in love with sailing. She went on to be the Sailing Club's president, captain of the competitive sailing team, and a student employee at the CIBC.

"I got to spend my days on the water teaching other CSUCI students, kids and community members how to sail and learned how to be a good leader," she said. "It honestly didn't feel like work most of the time."

This year, the CIBC celebrates 10 years as a community gem that's intro-

duced more than 15,000 children and adults to water sports, worked with area schools and the University on educational programs, and served as a model for community engagement.

The center opened in 2013 as the result of a joint effort among CSUCI, Ventura County, the Channel Islands Harbor Department, the Channel



CSUCI students finish a sea kayak training class at CIBC in 2023.

Islands Marine Sanctuary, the California Department of Boating and Waterways, and the Channel Islands Harbor Foundation. The center is operated by CSUCI's Campus Recreation within the Division of Student Affairs.

Located in the Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard and open six days a week, the Boating Center is free to all CSUCI students and offers

classes and meeting spaces to the public for a small fee. Participants of all skill levels can enjoy individual or group instruction in kayaking, sailing, and stand-up paddleboarding (SUP). Anyone can join in a relaxing sunset kayak or a SUP harbor cleanup. CIBC's popular summer water sports camp offers weeklong programs in

kayaking, sailing, SUP and marine science for children ages 8-15.

The Boating Center staff also work with CSUCI professors, classes and school groups to bring marine-based and environmental learning to life.

"Our goal is to remove the barriers to being on the water and show people you don't need a lot of resources to

participate in our programs," said Josh Wade, Assistant Director of Campus Recreation – Outdoor Adventures and Waterfront. "We love showcasing the benefits of being on the water and seeing how people's confidence builds as they get to enjoy a water sport."

Learn more at go.csuci.edu/cibc2023

DONORS SUPPORT INTERNSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, NEW POSITIONS, AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Pozzi family endows Disability Services case manager and student scholarship

by MARYA BARLOW

Victoria Pozzi of Camarillo has established the Bruno Pozzi Case Management Fund and the Bruno Pozzi Scholarship Endowment to honor her late husband, Bruno Pozzi. A native of Italy who lived and worked in Ventura County for nearly 50 years, Bruno Pozzi passed away in March 2021 at the age of 82. As founder of American Tooth Industries, he transformed the company from a small dental supply business into a global leader in dental manufacturing.

“Bruno Pozzi was a Renaissance man with great business acumen and a lifelong passion for the study of history,” Victoria Pozzi said. “Bruno’s own zest for life and learning brightened the lives of others. A gentleman with incomparable savoir-faire, Bruno was quick to make friends and engage them in spirited discussion. We hope this gift of learning will support CSUCI students in Bruno’s honor and memory.”

The Pozzis’ gift of \$100,000 supports the creation of a new, dedicated case manager position for Disability Accommodations & Support Services (DASS) at CSUCI.

A gift of \$50,000 through the Bruno Pozzi Scholarship Endowment will support students with double majors or demonstrated campus activity that displays varied interests.

TOLD FOUNDATION SUPPORTS STUDENT INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A \$100,000 gift from the TOLD Foundation will enable CSUCI to expand vital internship opportunities for students.

“We are delighted to support CSUCI internships, as we recognize the importance of co-curricular activities in enhancing student success,” said Rod Gilbert, president of the TOLD Foundation. “Plus, the University’s partnership with the Museum of Ventura County gives these students real-world experience while archiving some of our region’s historical engineering records.”

The TOLD Foundation’s gift will be matched with \$100,000 from a historic \$15 million gift awarded in June 2021 to CSUCI by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. The

donation will enable the hiring of a new full-time faculty internship coordinator who will facilitate the development of internship opportunities and also oversee interns across academic programs.

The TOLD Foundation gift will also support a partnership between CSUCI and the Museum of Ventura County to engage students in meaningful internships at the museum.



Bruno Pozzi was a Renaissance man.

LIVERMORE LAB FOUNDATION SUPPORTS MECHATRONICS ENGINEERING CAPSTONE STUDENTS

After working with Assistant Professor of Computer Science Scott Feister and his students to develop a demo system for autonomous laboratories, the scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) were so impressed they approached the lab’s philanthropic partner, the Livermore Lab Foundation (LLF), about supporting students’ capstone projects.

“In recognition of the exceptional work by these students, Livermore Lab Foundation would like to make a one-time donation to help the project teams pay for small supplies beyond what the CSUCI department can provide,” noted LLF Board Chair Dona Crawford.

The foundation gave a \$5,000 gift to help CSUCI’s Spring 2023 Mechatronics Engineering capstone students purchase supplies such as Raspberry Pi and BeagleBone controllers, LEDs and sensors.

Last year, Feister and student researchers worked on a project funded by LLNL’s National Ignition Facility and plasma physicist Tammy Ma. The research team built prototypes for the next generation of control systems and mechatronics automation that could be used at large, high-power laser facilities like LLNL.

For more information about the Livermore Lab Foundation gift, visit go.csuci.edu/llnl-student-funds.

To learn how you can support students or programs at the University, contact Richard LeRoy, Vice President for University Advancement, at richard.leroy@csuci.edu or 805-437-1662.

CSUCI experiences ‘transformed’ publishing editor

Zach Valladon || '16 B.A. English

by KARIN GRENNAN

ZACH VALLADON LIVED IN OVER a dozen cities as he bounced around among family members until his aunt and uncle in Camarillo adopted him at 15. After a childhood filled with chaos, adversity and mostly lackluster grades, the future didn't look great to him when he started applying to college. Then, amid a stream of rejections from universities, a provisional offer of admission from CSU Channel Islands changed everything.

“I was this punk-rock kid who was disillusioned with authority and the world when I came to CI,” said Valladon. “I was a completely changed person when I left my undergraduate experience — it was profound. CI truly transformed me.”

At CSUCI, Valladon felt empowered and trusted to take on many roles. He served as Editor-in-Chief of *The CI View* student news for three years and as a tutor in the Writing & Multiliteracy Center for a year. He was on the Associated Students Inc. (ASI) Board of Directors and helped the Student Programming Board organize events. He gained professional skills and confidence from the experiences, and ASI staff members became role models and advisers to him.

Heading up the student news gave Valladon a lot of face time with then-President Richard R. Rush, whom he considers a life-changing mentor.

“Dr. Rush famously said, ‘It doesn't matter what you're like when you come to Channel Islands; it matters what you're like when you leave,’” Valladon said.

Valladon received the Silver Dolphin award as the top student leader in April 2016. A month later, he graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in English.

He immediately went to work as an editorial assistant for Sage Publishing in Thousand Oaks. He moved up to senior



Photo by Paige Pappas

editorial assistant, transitioned to sales and then moved to the company's Oklahoma City office as an account executive. Valladon, who earned an MBA in 2022, now serves as an acquisitions editor in criminal justice and criminology.

“I've had the opportunity to connect with famous scholars, brilliant researchers and very impactful teachers all over the United States,” Valladon said.

Looking back, Valladon largely credits his embracing of opportunities at CSUCI for his success.

“If you're willing to have the ride of your life, CI can give it to you,” Valladon said. “But you must ask for it.”

NATALIE YANEZ '14 MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Building relationships to electrify the future

NATALIE YANEZ ENROLLED in CSUCI's MBA program to advance her career after a decade working in the financial sector.

"CI captured my heart from the beginning," she said. "There was something inexplicable about its energy that made me want to be a student there."

William P. Cordeiro, the now retired Director of the Martin V. Smith School of Business & Economics, proved to be an invaluable resource. After accepting his offer to be the gradu-

ate liaison on the school's Business Advisory Council, she expanded her professional network immensely. This enabled her to switch industries and become a government relations manager for Southern California Edison (SCE) in Ventura.

Her duties range from customer education to emergency incident management. One thing is constant — connecting with people.

"My job is all about building relationships," Yanez



said. Whether she is working with key stakeholders or local governmental officials, she is helping to bridge the gap between the public and SCE.

Above all else, Yanez encourages clients to adopt more eco-friendly habits on both large and small scales.

For example, she is working to electrify local dredging and encourage electric vehicles and appliances.

"My goal is to provide a future for the generations to come."

— *Caleigh Tupy, '23 B.A. English, Communication & Public Relations Intern*

JELON PEAVY '15 B.A. LIBERAL STUDIES

Tackling challenges leads to rewarding military career

EMBRACING A RANGE OF experiences at CSUCI and receiving encouragement and support from staff and faculty enabled Jelon Peavy to challenge himself, learn new skills and work his way up the ladder in a career he loves.

"It showed me that I had the confidence to do more and the drive to do more with my life," Peavy said.

He went to work supporting the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Port Hueneme, first updating technical manuals and then transitioning into finance. The Camarillo resident began working for government contractors and is now an employee of the Naval Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center.



Peavy set his sights on reaching General Schedule-12, the top pay grade for mid-level positions, just as his mother had done. In 2022, he accomplished this goal when he became a program analyst. Peavy sees many opportunities for his future from here.

"It felt like a huge accomplishment," said Peavy, who attended CSUCI on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. "Now I can go into many different things."

Peavy manages purchase requisitions for equipment such as tanks that are shipped to Iraq.

"I am doing something way bigger than myself," Peavy said. "It is really an amazing experience."

— *Karin Grennan*

Alumnus uses research and advocacy to equip military

Robert J. Stukes '09 B.S. Mathematics & '12 M.S. Mathematics

by KARIN GRENNAN

OVERSEEING 156 WEAPONS AND combat-system programs valued at \$14 billion for the U.S. Navy means that CSU Channel Islands alumnus Robert J. Stukes is perpetually in research mode. The subject could be missile launchers, software, sensors, or ammunition.

“Every day is something different — a new challenge, something I don’t know anything about that I get to learn by researching and talking to subject-matter experts,” said Stukes, a chief logistician of the Program Executive Office for Integrated Warfare Systems in Washington, D.C.

Stukes got started on research while studying Mathematics at CSUCI.

“During my M.S. program, my professors really drove research — it’s a combination of what you know and what others know — then sharing it,” Stukes said. “The Math and Computer Science faculty, aside from teaching me the material, taught me how to think critically, ask questions and collaborate with peers to produce comprehensive analysis and drive optimal solutions.”

Stukes attended CSUCI because it offered individualized attention close to his family in Thousand Oaks. He planned to teach high school math, so he completed an emphasis on Education with his bachelor’s degree

in Mathematics. He completed internships at local high schools and went on to earn his master’s degree while teaching undergraduate Mathematics at CSUCI.

After completing the graduate program, he served on the adjunct

Warfare Center in Port Hueneme as an operations research analyst. He used his math and computer science skills to develop cost-benefit models for air defense radar products and was part of the 2017 Naval Sea Systems Command Logistics Team of the Year.

Stukes, who moved to Washington, D.C., in 2017 and welcomed a baby daughter in 2022, now advocates for surface weapons and systems to Department of Defense leadership and helps request funding from Congress. While guest lecturing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and presenting at conferences have been some of his proudest moments, his most fulfilling work has been making it past roadblocks posed by government bureaucracy.

“If anybody is in my way, I do everything I can to ‘bust through’ and rally others to my cause because it’s the right thing to do,” Stukes said. “That is why I go to work every day. It’s not about me. It’s about making sure that our U.S. armed services



“It’s not about me. It’s about making sure that our U.S. armed services members have the best product available to defend the country, and that it works when they need it.”

– ROBERT J. STUKES

faculty at multiple colleges for two years before he began working full-time for the Naval Surface

members have the best product available to defend the country, and that it works when they need it.”



Dani Anderson 🌟 '16 B.A. Communication

Paving the way for accessibility in Ventura County

by CALEIGH TUPY

'23 English, Communication & Public Relations Intern

AS THE FIRST DISABILITY ACCESS manager for the County of Ventura, CSUCI alumna Dani Anderson '16 of Camarillo is paving the way for accessibility and inclusivity in Southern California.

Above all else, Anderson strives to ensure that Ventura County “is not just compliant, and not just ‘inclusive’ for people with disabilities but is welcoming” to those populations. Chief among her job duties is assessing and enhancing Ventura County’s architecture, public transportation, digital infrastructure, community programs, and emergency services.

While Anderson has only recently stepped into this role, she is no stranger to disability advocacy. Born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, the Thousand Oaks native has had to advocate for herself for a lifetime. However, it was only after a stint working for the state government in Sacramento that she decided to pursue disability advocacy professionally.

It was at that point that she decided to further her education and pursue a Communication degree at CSU Channel Islands.

“I just thought I’d be good at it considering I’ve always been good with navigating uncomfortable conversations, group work and interpersonal matters,” Anderson said.

Fortunately, CSUCI was the perfect fit for Anderson.

“A lot of times when people think of universities, they think, ‘How do I get started? How do I make this work?’ At Channel Islands, it’s somewhat easy,” Anderson said. “While it is an elite university, I felt like I could just roll over to the library and get help. Everybody is just super available and ready to help each other. That sense of community is really what allowed me to thrive.”

Anderson credited CSUCI Communication Lecturer and longtime mentor Vivian Henchey for her success in navigating the public-facing aspects of her job. As much of the success of disability advocacy hinges on effective



“With one in four Americans being disabled, if we’re not talking to each other, it’s going to be a really quiet world.”

– Dani Anderson

communication and education within the community, Anderson has made it a point to hold public forums, workshops and discussions on accessibility issues across the county.

“Many people don’t necessarily want to talk to people with disabilities because they’re afraid they’re going to do or say the wrong thing, so a big piece of my job is going into the community and asking people, ‘Tell me what you’re worried about saying and I’ll tell you the correct thing to say,’” Anderson said. “Many people may ask questions like, ‘Should I ask them if they need help at the grocery store? Should I open the door for them?’ ... Those little unknowns are what create awkward silences in society.”

“With one in four Americans being disabled, if we’re not talking to each other, it’s going to be a really quiet world.”



University helped software engineer turn his life around

Sam Mazarei || '22 B.S. Computer Science

by KARIN GRENNAN

BY THE TIME SAM MAZAREI OF SIMI VALLEY reached his early 30s, substance abuse issues and legal troubles had brought him to a place where he was miserable.

“I started thinking there’s got to be more. I can’t be doing this for the rest of my life.”

Having a knack for technology, the then-Solvang resident signed up for a math class at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria in hopes of becoming an electrician. He ended up taking classes for more than four years, earning a 3.92 GPA as he prepared to transfer to a university.

“I felt I had something to prove after a lifetime of making questionable decisions,” Mazarei said.

He turned down a full scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley because his wife couldn’t move there. After he then applied to and was rejected by Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, a California State University representative let him know three campuses still had spots available. He chose CSUCI.

The small class sizes, personal attention and close ties to industry ended up being exactly what he needed. He dove headfirst into his Computer Science courses, developed relationships with faculty members and built a social life

by becoming an officer in the CI NetSec cybersecurity club.

Mazarei also worked in construction, delivered hot tubs and returned to Nipomo every other weekend to pick up night shifts at bars and see his wife until she could move to Simi Valley. Being paid to write software for two semesters through the Hispanic Serving Institution STEM Model for Advancing Research and Teaching (HSI Smart) program enabled him to learn valuable skills and weather the scarcity of jobs during the COVID-19 lockdown.

He then found his passion in a winter session class on cloud architecture and went on to take two more classes featuring the Amazon Web Services Academy curriculum. The skills he learned and the recommendations provided by Computer Science faculty members won him an internship with GBL Systems Corp. in Camarillo. When he graduated summa cum laude with a 3.93 GPA in December 2021, GBL gave him a job he loves as a software engineer creating cloud-based products.

“I’m proud of myself because I went from absolutely nothing to something,” Mazarei said. “When it comes to turning my life around, I am a very grateful person. I know that most people don’t have the opportunity to get a do-over, and I effectively did.”

Class Notes

Dolphins are natural communicators, and we'd love to hear from our alumni so we can celebrate your noteworthy achievements and life changes! With over 26,000 Dolphins around the world, let's showcase our Dolphin pride by sharing your updates with the CSUCI community and beyond.

Submit a Class Note to: go.csuci.edu/class-note



2005

Manijeh Motaghy (B.A. Psychology) has authored a book to be published soon titled, "*Mindful Happiness Hack: A Game-Changing Manual for a Thriving Future.*"



2015

Jessica Chiang (B.A. Art) joined the Communication & Public Relations team at CSUCI as a Graphic Designer this past year and produced graphic design artwork for the 20th Anniversary, Smithsonian Huerta Exhibition and other initiatives on campus.



2006

Andrea E. Rodriguez (B.S. Business) is a CPA and partner at Vance, Thrift & Biller LLP.



2017

Jason Tsz Lok Lai (B.S. Business) in the past five years has advanced from a management trainee at Hertz to an operations manager at Amazon.




2009

Vince Mendoza (B.A. Liberal Studies) is the Enterprise Sales Executive for Navy and Marine accounts at Siemens Digital Industry Software. Vince currently serves on the CSUCI Alumni & Friends Association Board of Directors.



2010

Christina Thiele-Yancy (B.A. Art) has worked in dubbing at Netflix for the last six years, has been married for seven years and has two beautiful daughters, ages 4 and 10 months.



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Celebrating Super Sunday

CSUCI President Richard Yao, in the light gray suit, spoke at St. Paul Baptist Church in Oxnard in February as part of the CSU Super Sunday partnership with more than 100 predominantly African American churches.

