



Center for Community Engagement Presents

SPOTLIGHTS ON SERVICE

*Building a culture of service, activism and social responsibility
at California State University Channel Islands*



2024-25

Acknowledgments

The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) would like to thank the California State University Chancellor's Office, President Richard Yao and the CSUCI Provost's Office for the support that makes our work possible; Joanna Murphy for graphic design support; the CCE Advisory Board for their invaluable guidance; and all of our service-learning students, faculty, and community partners with whom we share our passion for community service and engagement.

www.csuci.edu/communityengagement/servicelearning/

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*A Note from
The Center for Community Engagement*

At CSUCI, service is more than an activity—it's a defining part of who we are. Rooted in our unique place-based mission, we transform education into an experience that connects classrooms with communities, knowledge with action, and learning with purpose. Through service-learning courses and community-based research, our students don't just study theory—they apply it in ways that strengthen neighborhoods, support organizations, and create lasting change. These opportunities allow students to grow as community scholars and leaders while addressing real challenges close to home.

This past year alone, CSUCI students contributed over 17,000 hours through service-learning and community projects in collaboration with 77 community partners, directly involving over 500 students. Together, their efforts generated an estimated \$700,000 in economic impact—underscoring the power of learning that serves both students and community.

From students deepening their understanding of geometry while inspiring local middle and high school students through classroom support and hands-on STEM events across Ventura County to working one-on-one with a community partner to write a grant to help fund a project to students partnering with immigration attorneys at Swap Meet Justice in Oxnard College to use Chicano-Teatro Campesino-style plays to teach community members about their constitutional rights, these spotlights on service showcase the very best of CSUCI.

We hope you enjoy these stories of students learning by doing, communities strengthened through collaboration, and an education that prepares graduates to make a difference wherever they go.

In community,

Georgina Guzmán
Faculty Director

Pilar Pacheco
Director

Jennifer Raymond
Community Partnership Lead

ABOUT

The Center for Community Engagement

The CCE is part of a California State University system-wide community engagement initiative and one of CSU Channel Islands' Four Mission-Based Pillars. The Center leads academic and co-curricular initiatives that build a culture of service, activism and social responsibility. This work is actualized through service-learning, volunteerism, and community service programs that prepare students to be socially responsible and civically engaged.

Our vision is that we play a role in advancing the university's mission by deepening students' ability to contribute to improving and strengthening the community and educating them for civic and social responsibility. So that our students live and learn through the university mission.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Service-Learning: A Bridge from Classroom to Non-Profit Career Success

In today's rapidly evolving workplace, employers demand entry-level employees who possess highly developed competencies that go far beyond basic academic knowledge to include the ability to quickly convert learning to real-world applications, navigate complex organizational dynamics, and demonstrate global citizenship in increasingly diverse communities (Careers UTPB, 2024; Kalofonos, 2023; Scott & Perkins, 2022). Research highlights the positive relationship between service-learning and workforce development, suggesting these experiences can significantly enhance students' preparedness for the professional world. (Ramson, 2014). Service-learning uniquely combines service in the community with academic goals while requiring structured reflection, creating a "high-impact" practice (Kuh, 2008) that develops critical workplace competencies through direct engagement with community members and real-world problem-solving.

For students drawn to careers in the non-profit sector, service-learning offers preparation by fostering the very skills that make professionals successful in mission-driven organizations: the ability to work effectively with diverse populations, demonstrate cultural competency and empathy, and understand the complex social issues that non-profits address daily.

The following profiles of three California State University Channel Islands alumni illustrate how service experiences during college translated into successful careers in the non-profit sector.

KALIE WRAY

2019 B.A. BUSINESS

*By Diana Alfaro,
Volunteer Engagement Ambassador*



Kalie Wray took an unexpected yet fulfilling journey into the world of service and nonprofit work. Initially uncertain about her career path, Kalie explored multiple fields before discovering her passion for purpose-driven work. With a degree in Business from CSU Channel Islands in 2019, she gained experience in the maritime industry before finding her place at the Search Dog Foundation (SDF). Now serving as the Administration & Volunteer Manager, Kalie plays a vital role in connecting volunteers with life-changing service work, demonstrating the profound impact of service in her career and community.

Journey to Service

Kalie's journey into service was not a predetermined path but rather a result of exploration and self-discovery. While she always aspired to work in a meaningful field, she did not initially envision a career in nonprofit work. After graduating from CSUCI, she held various roles in the recreational maritime industry, where she developed essential skills in administration, customer service, and problem-solving. However, she felt a lingering desire to find her true purpose. This search led her to SDF, an organization dedicated to rescuing and training dogs for disaster response.

Starting as an Office Manager, Kalie supported multiple departments, including human resources, technology, and administration. This role introduced her to SDF's volunteer network, where she witnessed the dedication of individuals committed to a greater cause. After two years, she transitioned into the role of Administration & Volunteer Manager, where she now recruits, onboards, and manages volunteers nationwide, ensuring that their efforts align with SDF's mission.

Influential Experiences & Community Impact

One of the most meaningful aspects of Kalie's work is seeing the direct impact of SDF's mission on both animals and people. The organization rescues dogs from shelters, training them to become search-and-rescue animals ready to deploy during disasters. Many of these dogs, deemed unadoptable due to their high energy and drive, find a renewed purpose in life-saving work. Knowing that these dogs, once at risk of euthanasia, now contribute to critical disaster relief efforts worldwide has reinforced Kalie's belief in the power of service.

Additionally, Kalie has taken steps to strengthen the connection between CSUCI and SDF by recruiting student interns. Kalie finds immense fulfillment in providing students with opportunities to gain experience in nonprofit work and discover their own passion for service.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Kalie's transition into nonprofit work was not without its challenges. Adjusting from a for-profit industry to a mission-driven organization required a shift in perspective. Unlike traditional business settings, success in the nonprofit sector is measured not just by financial growth but by the tangible impact on communities.

One of the biggest lessons Kalie has learned is the importance of adaptability. In her role, she juggles administrative responsibilities, volunteer coordination, and community outreach. Each day brings new challenges, whether it be managing logistics for volunteers or ensuring SDF's operations run smoothly. However, she has embraced this dynamic environment, finding motivation in the knowledge that every task contributes to a larger purpose.

Mentorship & Inspiration

Kalie draws inspiration from Wilma Melville, the founder of SDF. Wilma, who started the organization in her 60s, recognized the urgent need for search dogs in disaster response and took action. Now, at 91 years old, she remains a powerful example of perseverance and dedication. Her story serves as a reminder to Kalie that it is never too late to make a difference and that one person's vision can create a lasting impact.

Advice for Students Interested in Service

For CSUCI students considering a career in service or the nonprofit sector, Kalie emphasizes the value of hands-on experience. She encourages students to seek out volunteer opportunities and internships, as these roles provide a gateway to the industry. Many of SDF's current employees, including former interns and volunteers, were able to showcase their skills and dedication before being hired full-time. Kalie believes that taking initiative and getting involved in service work can open doors to fulfilling career paths.

Finding Purpose in Service

As the Administration & Volunteer Manager, Kalie finds the greatest satisfaction in being the voice of gratitude for SDF's volunteers. She recognizes that the organization's success would not be possible without the dedication of those who give their time and energy to its mission. Whether coordinating volunteers, expressing appreciation, or fostering a culture of service, she takes pride in encouraging others to continue making a difference in their communities.

Through her work, Kalie has not only found her career path but also her purpose: to inspire and empower others to engage in service. Her journey serves as a testament to the unexpected ways in which one can find fulfillment and meaning by contributing to a cause greater than oneself.



ERIKA FERNANDEZ

2013 B.A. PSYCHOLOGY and SOCIOLOGY

*By Diana Alfaro,
Volunteer Engagement Ambassador*

Erika Fernandez, a first-generation college student and graduate of CSU Channel Islands in 2013, double majored in Psychology and Sociology with an Emphasis on Institutions. She embarked on her academic and professional journey with a deep commitment to helping others. Her desire to pursue higher education was largely influenced by her parents, who, as immigrants, emphasized the importance of attending college to avoid a life of limited opportunities. They wanted more for her than the hard manual labor they experienced. Her initial goal was to become a parole officer, driven by personal experiences growing up in a community where many of the people she loved and cared about struggled with substance abuse, with some losing their lives due to it. She wanted to help others steer clear of this path and make a positive impact in their lives.

Academic Journey & Challenges

Her academic journey was not without its challenges. As a first-generation student, Erika's parents encouraged her to go to college but couldn't provide specific advice on how to navigate the application process or her path to a career. She found support in programs like TRIO Upward Bound at Pacifica High School, where she received guidance on higher education and helped her feel less isolated in her pursuit of higher education. One of the major obstacles she was struggling with was the SATs and failing three English courses in high school, which threatened to delay her graduation. However, TRIO helped her get back on track by recommending courses at Oxnard College, where she thrived in a different learning environment and found success. She credits this pivotal moment to Gabriela Torres, a key mentor from TRIO Upward Bound, who played a substantial role in helping her graduate high school and transfer to CSU Channel Islands.

Influential Experiences

Once enrolled at California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), Erika participated in a Liberal Studies service-learning class called, Juvenile Justice System Service (LS200-01), which combined community service with academic work. One experience that profoundly impacted her occurred during a visit to a juvenile detention center, where she tutored the young residents.

She worked with a fifteen-year-old boy who was struggling to complete his essay. In talking with him, Erika learned that he had completely lost hope in his future and no longer saw the importance of learning to read or write. Despite being bright and well-mannered, the boy felt that his dream of becoming a teacher was far gone. He believed that once he was transferred out of the detention center to finish his sentence, he would be permanently labeled a felon, closing the door to his aspirations. His story deeply moved Erika and solidified her desire to pursue a career in community service. This experience, along with her studies in psychology and social institutions at CSUCI, helped her better understand the complexities of the individuals and communities she was determined to help.

Skills & Mindset Gained

Her time at CSUCI was crucial in building the skills and mindset necessary for her current work in community service. The small class sizes and personalized attention at CSUCI were instrumental in her academic success. Additionally, her role as a peer advisor and the community service experiences she had, especially her work in the juvenile detention center and Casa Pacifica, played a key role in shaping her desire to work in community-based settings. Her experiences with youth reinforced her passion for helping individuals turn their lives around.

Current Work and Future Aspirations

Today, Erika Fernandez works with Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) in Substance Abuse Prevention. Through her role, she has expanded her outreach to the community. She also runs a podcast focused on substance abuse prevention called, “Platica con Cafe”. Erika is passionate about the work she does, especially providing information to families and communities who need it most. Her work involves engaging with local communities to talk about substance abuse prevention and working to ensure that crucial conversations are happening, particularly in cultures where such topics can be taboo. Erika’s work regarding community service has shaped her belief that success is connecting to people. She finds meaning in conversing with people and being a resource for them, even if it is just for a brief moment. She says it’s about planting seeds of knowledge and awareness to create positive change in people’s lives before substance abuse even begins.

Reflection and Lessons Learned

Along the way, Erika has learned the importance of perseverance and adaptability. While her original career goal of becoming a parole officer was rejected by unforeseen circumstances, she found fulfillment in other areas of community service. Her belief that “things happen for a reason” has been central to her journey. She also continues to be motivated by the opportunity to help others and make a real difference in her community.

Future Goals

Looking ahead, Erika is focused on expanding her work in substance abuse prevention and continuing to make a difference in Ventura County. She also aspires to further her education, with interests in pursuing a master’s degree in public policy and administration or attending law school. She wants to make a lasting impact in her community by advocating for policy changes that can help people at risk, and she remains dedicated to working toward solutions that will benefit those struggling with substance abuse and related issues.

JESSICA RODRIGUEZ

2019 B.A. CHICANA/O STUDIES

*By Jennifer Raymond,
Community Partnership Lead*

Jessica Rodriguez’s journey into the mental health field was shaped by her academic experiences, family values, and deep commitment to community service. Graduating in 2019 with a degree in Chicana/o Studies and a minor in Communication from CSUCI, Jessica found profound guidance in professors like Drs. Jose Alamillo, Jennie Luna, and Nicholas Centino. Their mentorship and courses, particularly CHS 383 Chicana/o Latina/o Identity and Empowerment class with Professor Centino, instilled in her a strong sense of belonging and the understanding that genuine love for the community is essential to making a difference.



Current Work

Initially, Jessica considered becoming a social worker, but her path ultimately led her to the field of mental health. Her upbringing played a crucial role in this decision—her family regularly served food to those in need, teaching her that service does not have to be grand; even a small act, like offering a smile, can be meaningful.

Her path to Pacific Clinics, where she began working in October 2021, was not immediate. She first gained experience working in a school district, a dentist’s office, and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Oxnard and Port Hueneme, where she saw firsthand how much children struggled. The COVID-19 pandemic solidified her desire to enter the mental health field, as she recognized the growing need for support in her community.

At Pacific Clinics, Jessica provides peer-to-peer support, helps individuals navigate insurance, find doctors, and secures employment. Her work is fulfilling but also mentally draining. She has learned the importance of setting boundaries, ensuring she does not bring work home, and prioritizing self-care. She understands that her role is not to do everything for her clients but to empower them to take control of their own lives.

Reflection and Lessons Learned

Her education at CSUCI deeply influenced her approach to service. The university’s focus on community engagement, particularly through University Studies and Communication service-learning courses, where she served at Community Roots Garden, taught her patience, humility, and the value of giving back. Jessica believes that a sense of identity and belonging is crucial in mental health, and having professionals who understand a person’s cultural background can make a significant impact on their well-being.

Future Goals

Looking ahead, Jessica is certain about her future in mental health. Regardless of where she lands, one thing remains clear—her commitment to helping others is unwavering. Inspired by the kindness and love demonstrated by her professors and family, she continues to embody the belief that true service stems from a genuine love for the community and oneself.

INITIA

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featuring

STUDENT INITIATIVES

CSUCI Corps (p. 9)

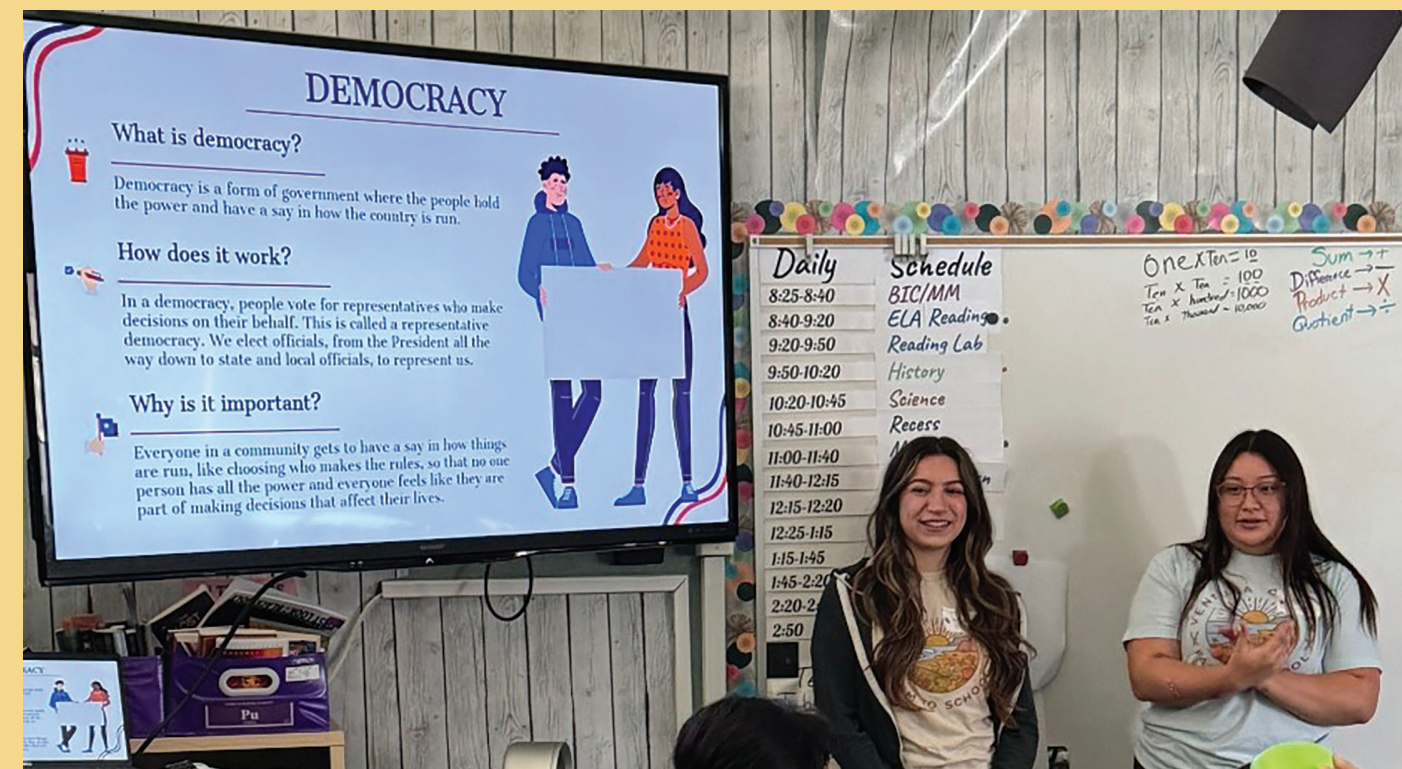
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Engaged Department Initiative (p. 29)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT CSUCI
INCLUDING CSUCI CORPS PROGRAM, AND
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

CSUCI Corps



Bridging Purpose and Possibility:

The CSUCI Corps Program at the Heart of Community Impact

The CSUCI Corps Program is an established community service initiative rooted in access, equity, and real-world learning. Each year, a cohort of student leaders serve in roles that tackle some of the region's most pressing issues: food insecurity, educational access, STEM education, health and climate justice, and trail restoration. These students are more than volunteers — they are emerging community leaders, carefully matched with non-profit organizations and/or schools and supported with professional development, reflective practice, and financial support.

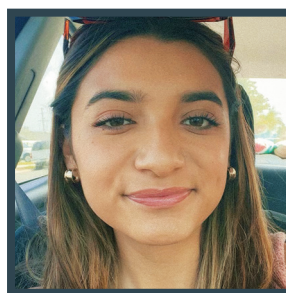
"The Climate Corps intern has been an integral member of the sustainability team here at CSUCI. They have been incredibly responsive to our needs and assisted with timely and engaging materials to share critical sustainability tips and waste prevention information with the campus community."

~ Roxane Beigel-Coryell, CSUCI Sustainability office, Climate Corps Supervisor

A Two-Way Street of Impact

The community impact is tangible. In the 2024–2025 academic year alone, CSUCI Corps members contributed over 3,000 hours of service. They staffed after-school literacy programs, supported health fairs, and oversaw campus sustainability events. These partnerships are not one-off service projects, but semester- and year-long placements rooted in shared goals. Organizations benefit from consistent, skilled support, while students receive mentorship and a rich learning experience within the non-profit sector.

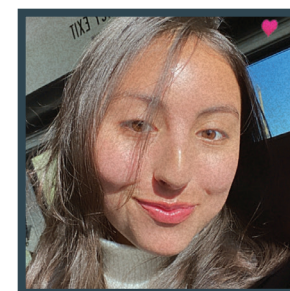
But what makes CSUCI Corps truly transformational is its student impact.



Alexa Palafox



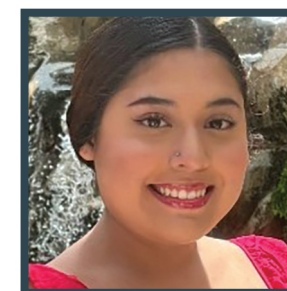
Marcos Farias



Jacqueline Manriquez



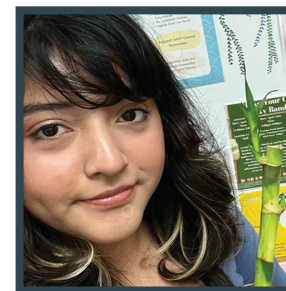
Jasmine Gomez



Josselyn Rodriguez



Maria Tellez Mendoza



Maricarmen Guillen



Miranda De La Cruz

"This program has impacted me personally by showing me the roots of this community. And how we start and grow these roots. It's truly beautiful and inspiring. I have never been so motivated to show up to a community as much as Somis Union School District!"

~ Jasmine Gomez, Class of 2026, Liberal Studies, Edu Corps, Somis Union School District.

Corps members report increased self-efficacy, stronger career clarity, and a deeper connection to their communities. The experience becomes more than a résumé booster—it becomes identity-shaping.

Students in the Corps program have consistently shared they feel more connected to the university and to their off-campus community. They are learning leadership skills and gaining practical experience while also learning how to get involved in community issues.

~ Jennifer Raymond, Community Partnership Lead

Building A Public Purpose

The CSUCI Corps Program is inspired by national models like Peace Corps and AmeriCorps. But it's grounded in the local—meeting the needs of Ventura County while shaping a new generation of public problem solvers.

With continued investment from state allocations, federal work-study, philanthropic grants, and university partnerships, the program is expanding access to paid service opportunities for students from all backgrounds.

CSUCI Corps Program is creating a culture where community engagement is not extracurricular—it is who CSU Channel Islands is. The CSUCI Corps Program is helping us realize a campus-wide commitment to the public good.

CSUCI Corps Impacts	2024-2025
Economic investment by CSUCI & donors	\$71,361
Number of hours served by students	3,288
Number of students hired	24
Number of community partners involved	13



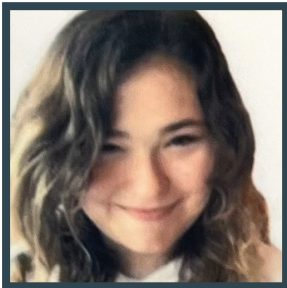
Cassandra Espinoza



Jisell Camarena Ramires



Angela Batoon



Audrey Byrd



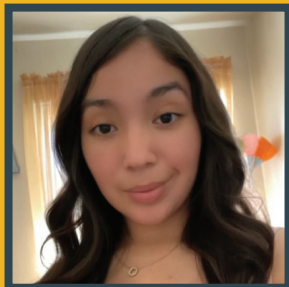
Luna Huitron



Haley Langness



Hailey Martinez



Julia Mendez

STEM Corps



CSUCI STEM Corps Expands Its Impact in Second Year with Amgen Foundation Support



In the ever-evolving landscape of education, where access to engaging science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programming remains unequal, the CSUCI STEM Corps stands out as an example of opportunity and equity. Now in its second year and funded once again by the generous support of the Amgen Foundation, the STEM Corps program continues to enrich young minds and inspire the next generation of scientists and researchers.

What began as an innovative initiative, during COVID-19, has grown into a robust program that connects CSUCI students with underserved youth in Ventura County. The goal is simple but powerful: make STEM learning fun, accessible, and impactful.

A Second Year of Support from the Amgen Foundation

With renewed funding from the Amgen Foundation, a long-standing supporter of STEM education and equity, STEM Corps entered the year with even more momentum. The funding enabled the CCE to train and support a cohort of undergraduate/graduate

students from STEM disciplines—future scientists, engineers, educators, and health professionals—who are eager to give back to their community through service.

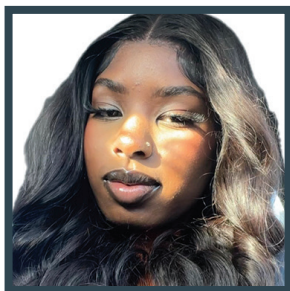
Empowering CSUCI Students Through Service

STEM Corps provides a dual-impact model: while children in the community benefit from engaging STEM activities, CSUCI students gain invaluable experience designing and assessing STEM curriculum, practicing science communication, and serving as mentors.

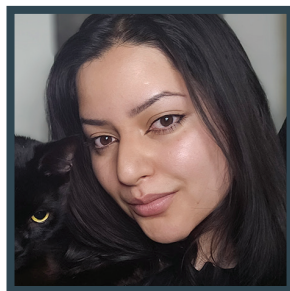
Over the 2024–2025 academic year, the program trained 10 CSUCI student leaders who worked collaboratively to develop age-appropriate, interactive STEM activities.

Bringing STEM to the Community

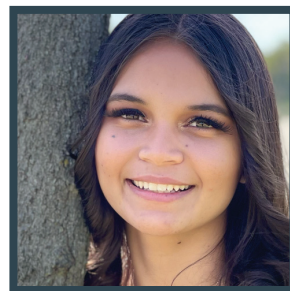
The heart of the CSUCI STEM Corps lies in its community engagement. Over the past year, the Corps brought their enrichment activities to multiple sites, creating, hands-on learning experiences for children who might otherwise have limited exposure to STEM.



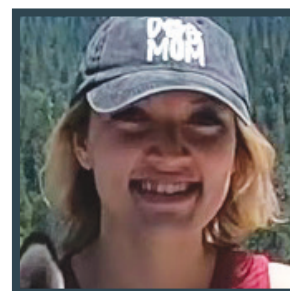
Aliya Atkins



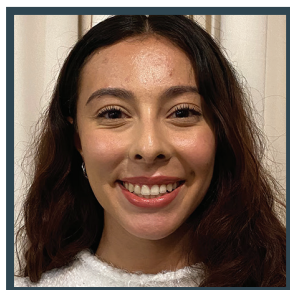
Diana Alfaro



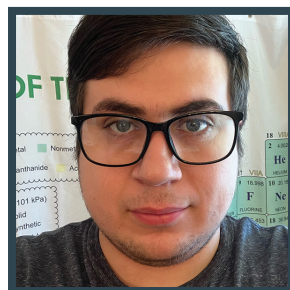
Haley Anglin



Liz Ayala



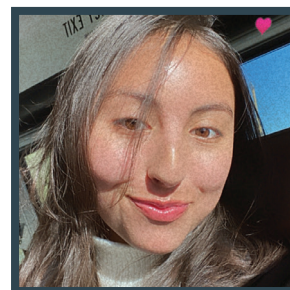
Isabella Jackson



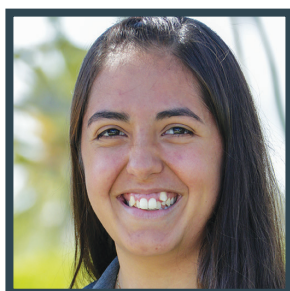
Jacob Kritzer



Leannah Ortiz



Jacqueline Manriquez



Natalie Leon



Saisree Kalikota



STEM Corps members served at the Boys and Girls Club of Camarillo and the Center for Community Engagement. The program also extended into housing communities, Camino Gonzalez, Meta Street, Paseo Del Rio/Paseo Santa Clara, and Villa Victoria, managed by the Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation (CEDC). At these sites, STEM Corps members met children and families where they lived, often transforming community rooms into mini science labs.

A Highlight: The CSUCI STEAM Carnival

One of the year's widely attended events was the School of Arts and Sciences STEAM Carnival, an annual celebration that blends science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. This year, STEM Corps students played a role in hosting a table for two activities, Oobleck and Air Ball Bowling, helping to host over 3,000 attendees from across the region.

Children had the chance to interact with over 50 different hands-on STEAM activities. From making their own hair gel or lip gloss, searching for artifacts in a mock archaeological dig, to observing the dissection of an eye ball, and making slime – there was something for everyone!

Building a Pipeline of Future STEM Leaders

Beyond immediate enrichment, the STEM Corps program is also planting seeds for long-term interest and curiosity in STEM fields. Many of the children served by the program come from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM, and the presence of mentors from CSUCI plays a crucial role in changing perceptions.

For CSUCI students, the program offers real-world experience aligned with their academic and career paths—many plan to go into teaching, healthcare, or a related science-field, and STEM Corps gives them a platform to practice while making a difference.

A Community-Wide Impact

In total, the CSUCI STEM Corps served hundreds of children across multiple sites during the 2024–2025 academic year, offering over 800 hours of service. Whether through a simple chemistry experiment, a lesson in making UV bracelets, or a joyful day at the STEAM Carnival, the Corps program is demonstrating that STEM can be a force for equity, empowerment, and connection.

Thanks to the Amgen Foundation's belief in the mission—and the passion of CSUCI students—the STEM Corps is not just teaching science. It's shaping futures.

Examples of



ACTIVITIES

- Alka Seltzer Rockets
- Flubber
- Build a Lung
- Instant Snow
- CSI Fingerprints





Students spend a morning picking berries



Attorney and housing rights activist, Barbara Macri-Ortiz addresses students at Villa Cesar Chavez



FIP participants at Villa Cesar Chavez

Students
Experience
the Realities of
Farmwork in
Ventura County



FARMWORKER Immersion Program

Since 2012, the Center for Community Engagement has offered students a powerful opportunity each spring through the Farmworker Immersion Program (FIP) — a hands-on program that explores the realities of agricultural labor, community resilience, and social justice.

At its core, FIP connects students with farmworker communities to:

- Act in solidarity with workers, promoting human dignity and labor rights
- Raise awareness of the challenging living and working conditions faced by farmworkers and immigrants
- Reflect on the deeper connections between direct service and systemic justice
- Highlight grassroots leadership and community organizing efforts that are creating real change

What started as a local immersion trip has since expanded to include partnerships with key community organizations such as Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), House Farm Workers!, and Reiter Affiliated Companies. Together, they provide students with an immersive journey into the heart of Ventura County's agricultural system.

What Students Experience

Each year, participants engage directly with farmworker life through activities that include:

- Visiting a local ranch to learn how to harvest and pack berries by hand.
- Meeting representatives from the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program, who work to resolve workplace concerns quickly and fairly.
- Touring Villa César Chávez Apartments, affordable housing created specifically for farmworkers to hear stories about their housing journeys.
- Speaking with veteran attorney Barbara Macri-Ortiz, a fierce advocate for farmworker housing rights.
- Reflecting with House Farm Workers! on the day's events and their broader social impact.

A Deeper Reality: The Challenges Farmworkers Face

Farmworkers are the backbone of Ventura County's \$2.2 billion agriculture industry, yet many face immense social and economic hardships:

- **Wages & Living Costs:** The average berry farmworker earns just \$25,000 annually. But to rent a modest two-bedroom apartment in Ventura County, a household must earn over \$102,000 a year — the equivalent of \$49.31 per hour.
- **Housing Insecurity:** Due to sky-high rents, many farmworkers live in overcrowded housing, and some even reside in garages or sheds not meant for human habitation.
- **Workplace Hazards:** Long hours, exposure to pesticides, extreme weather, wage theft, and sexual harassment are just a few of the issues they regularly face.
- **Healthcare & Language Barriers:** Affordable healthcare is often out of reach, and with 53% of farmworkers speaking only Spanish, access to services is further limited.

Despite these challenges, the farmworker community remains strong — a testament to their resilience and the support of organizations working alongside them. With 70% of farmworkers living permanently in the county, Ventura's agricultural future is inextricably tied to their well-being.

Beyond the Fields

The Farmworker Immersion Program is more than an educational trip — it's a transformational experience. By walking alongside those who feed our communities, students gain a deeper understanding of the structural inequalities that exist right in our own backyard — and what solidarity, justice, and community empowerment truly look like.

Sources: Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner, National Agricultural Workers Survey, California Housing Partnership Coalition, and others.

FACULTY INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY BUS TOUR

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE FELLOWS

ENGAGED DEPARTMENT INITIATIVE

COMMUNITY BUS TOUR



Dr. Alarcon speaks to the participants about the Modoc Garden



Representatives from UFW share their work

The purpose of the Community Bus Tour is to introduce new and “not-so-new” faculty to the Center’s service-learning program, the surrounding community and its community partners. Faculty have the opportunity to meet various campus-community partners, learn about issues that impact our community and discover how they and their students can engage with and learn from the community through service-learning and community-based research.

On Friday, November 15, 2024, the Community Bus Tour took faculty from Early Childhood Studies, English, Health Science, and Spanish on an unforgettable adventure to explore the power of service-learning and community partnerships.

We kicked off the day with an inspiring orientation at the Modoc Garden behind El Dorado Hall. Here, Dr. Ruben Alarcon shared insights about the growing biology research garden, while Chris Amendt, Founder Native Monarchs introduced us to the vibrant pollinator garden. Dr. Jenn Perry then highlighted an exciting new collaboration with the Santa Barbara Zoo.

The tour continued to Cabrillo Economic Development Corp’s Villa Cesar Chavez farmworker housing community, where Cristina Heredia gave a compelling talk on affordable housing for farmworkers. The tour continued on through downtown Oxnard past the iconic statue of The Farmworker, honoring the legacy of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, at Clinicas del Camino Real Health Center. And drove by, murals of cultural icons like Anderson Paak, Carmen Ramirez, and Carmen Perez painted the streets with the history of the downtown Oxnard area.

The tour stopped for lunch at Community Roots Garden where Zuleima Jimenez and Adriana Diego gave us a tour of their incredible community garden, showcasing the power of local green spaces. The day wrapped up with powerful stories from community partners, including the United Farm Workers, Saticoy Food Hub, and One Step a La Vez, plus insights from Dr. Rachel Soper and Dr. Antonio Jimenez-Jimenez about their impactful service-learning projects.

This was more than just a tour – it was a deep dive into how the university and Ventura County is thriving through collaboration, community, and action!



Bus Tour participants in front of a mural at Villa Cesar Chavez

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Community Engagement and Social Justice Fellows Program is a development opportunity designed for faculty who seek to deepen their service-learning teaching and practice by pushing their thinking about social justice and, at the same time, create or refine a course that will allow students to engage with community issues through a social justice orientation (i.e. examining systems of power, privilege and oppression, questioning biases and assumptions, and working to dismantle the tools that perpetuate social and economic oppression and entrenched racial hierarchies), so they begin to see themselves as social change leaders and community advocates.

Through this program, the CCE aims to shape campus and community culture, to further develop students as agents of change, and to engage students in critical consciousness while actively processing issues of equity and justice in the community.

TIMNIT KEFELA ARAYA

Assistant Professor, Environmental Science & Resource Management



Dr. Timnit Kefela (ትምኒት ክፋለ) is an Assistant Professor in Environmental Science and Resource Management with a special focus on Environmental Justice. Her research primarily focuses on understanding the sources, pathways and fates of microplastics in urban soils and proximal marine environments and community-informed infrastructural interventions that mitigate their impact.

“Participating in this program connected me to an enriching community of faculty members who share a similar lens of social justice in their teaching and scholarship. This fellowship provided the opportunity to imagine new worlds in research and teaching through the interdependent learning process of my colleagues and the speakers invited to provide perspectives on impactful service-learning.”

VANINA MACHADO

Assistant Professor, Spanish Linguistics

Dr. Machado was born in Toronto but grew up in Malvin, Montevideo, where she developed her passion for the Hispanic Culture. Her research is on bilingual speech perception and production in Heritage Speakers and Bilinguals from Shared Linguistic Spaces in the Spanish-speaking world.

“I believe incorporating service-learning into my Spanish and Linguistics courses would be an incredibly enriching experience for students. I wanted to be part of this program to learn more about the community and how to engage with partners in the most effective way. This way, I will be able to truly support both students and the local community.”



CANDICE McKINNON

Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Studies

Dr. Candice McKinnon is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Studies at CSUCI. Her research focuses on educator and child wellness in early childhood, specifically on how educators use contemplative practices to support themselves and the well-being of children.

“The Social Justice Fellows program has given me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge of service learning through the lens of social justice. I now have foundational tools on how to provide my students with unique opportunities to engage in community well-being. It has been a pleasure to learn from previous fellows and to hear their approach on the intersection of research, teaching, and community engagement!”



**ENGAGED
DEPARTMENT
INITIATIVE**

The CCE is proud to share their newest program logo for the Engaged Department Initiative (EDI). Launched in 2021, the EDI supports academic programs in exploring how their department can be a hub for community engagement and social change.

The initiative aims to:

1. Help departments create plans to intentionally weave service-learning into teaching, scholarship, and even into tenure and promotion considerations.

2. Make service-learning courses a regular part of the curriculum—so that every major includes at least one course with a community-based learning component.
3. Build strong alignment within departments so they can lead by example in fostering social responsibility and community change.

The logo was designed in collaboration with Art Capstone student, Edith Taen, spring '25. The CCE wanted the design to not only represent the Center but also capture the EDI's mission and values. The final design reflects a shared identity and purpose, strengthens visibility of departmental community engagement, and signals a commitment to building a culture of community engagement across campus.

AWARDS

THE CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ORGANIZES AN ANNUAL
CELEBRATION OF SERVICE
POSTER SESSION AND AWARD CEREMONY
TO HONOR STUDENT,
COMMUNITY PARTNER, AND
FACULTY SERVICE-LEARNING AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
EFFORTS

Student Reflective Essay Award

This award recognizes a student reflective essay that exhibits particular depth of insight concerning the challenges and satisfactions of community service, the impact on student growth and learning, and with the greatest potential to inspire others to serve.

Hailey Martinez
Nicole Kouyoumdjian
Ana M. Hernandez



Engaged Faculty Award

This recognition honors a faculty member's commitment to the public good and advancement of service-learning/ community engagement within their discipline.

Aura Pérez-González
Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Studies



Community-Based Research Project Award

This award recognizes a faculty member and Community Partner that are involved in community-based research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change.

Daniel Sandoval and the
Ventura County Family Justice Center



Dr. Richard R. Rush Community Partner Award

This award recognizes a community organization that is significantly involved with CSU Channel Islands. This recognition honors organizations and individuals who contribute to student learning and support student engagement with the community in a curricular or co-curricular setting.

Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council



SERVICE- LEARNING

Service-learning is embedded in the CSUCI mission statement and defined as a high-impact teaching and learning strategy in which meaningful service addresses a societal and/or social justice issue and is a component of course curriculum and assessment of student learning. It is characterized by critical reflection and a collaborative partnership among faculty, students, and community, with a focus on both student learning and community impact*

**Adopted from the CSU Office of the Chancellor, Center for Community Engagement's definition of Community-Engaged Learning.*

"I GOT CHANCES TO ACTUALLY INTERACT WITH STUDENTS IN MEANINGFUL WAYS THAT HAVE BEEN LACKING IN MY OTHER EDUCATIONAL COURSES."

– B. GARDEN

"... MY ACTIONS HELPED [THE STUDENTS] TO SOLVE MATH CONCEPTS BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY BOOSTED THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THEIR MATH-SOLVING SKILLS."

– P. GOETZ

"I LEARNED THAT APPROACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT THEIR LEVEL IS KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT."

– J. WRIGHT

"... [AS A RESULT OF THIS EXPERIENCE, I WILL HAVE] MORE PATIENCE WITH THE STUDENTS, ASKING THEM 'WHY' QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF GIVING THEM ANSWERS, AND NOT ASSUMING WHAT THEY DO AND DON'T KNOW ABOUT MATH."

– F. CABANAS

HIGHLIGHTING
SERVICE-LEARNING AND
COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS

SERVICE-LEARNING

STEAM Carnival: Partnership with Camarillo Boys and Girls Club

Annie White, Professor, Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Studies 463: Creating and Supporting Reciprocal Family and Community Networks

During the Spring 2025 semester, students from the Early Childhood Studies (ECS) program, in collaboration with the university's Arts and Science departments and the Boys and Girls Club of Camarillo (BGCC), participated in a meaningful and impactful service-learning project. This project was designed to address a pressing community need: the lack of access to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) educational resources for children and families in the Camarillo area. The service-learning project culminated in a vibrant and enriching STEAM Carnival held on the CSU Channel Islands campus, a community-wide event aimed at increasing awareness and participation in STEAM learning among young children and their families.

The overarching goal of this service-learning initiative was to increase exposure to STEAM learning experiences for the children served by the BGCC. By providing engaging, hands-on activities, the project sought to promote deeper parent-child interactions while simultaneously raising families' awareness of the importance



of early STEAM education. This dual emphasis on both learning and family engagement was rooted in a broader commitment to equity in educational opportunity and access.

One of the key motivations behind this project was the recognition that many children and families in the local community face significant barriers to accessing STEAM resources. These barriers include both a lack of available community programs and a scarcity of materials and activities that families can implement in their own homes. The service-learning project was therefore designed not just as a one-time event, but as a model of replicable, home-friendly learning opportunities that families could take with them and continue to explore beyond the event itself.

The collaboration between CSUCI's ECS students, faculty, and the BGCC staff and youth leaders was a critical component of the project's success. ECS students worked alongside BGCC youth to design and facilitate sixteen different STEAM activity stations, which were presented at the Early Exploration area of the STEAM Carnival. Each activity was thoughtfully curated to be developmentally appropriate, interactive, and accessible to families with young children.

These activities ranged from simple science experiments and engineering challenges to art-infused technology explorations and math-based games. The emphasis was not only on introducing STEAM concepts but also on encouraging collaborative learning between children and their caregivers. This focus on co-learning served to strengthen child-parent relationships and reinforced the value of shared educational experiences in a family context.



Service-learning benefits student learning by enhancing course material through real-world application. This high-impact practice can provide students an opportunity to actively learn more about their community and the larger social, cultural and political issues while becoming civically involved. These learning experiences can be used to strengthen resumes, graduate school applications, career exploration opportunities, and forge professional networks.

In addition to the educational benefits, the STEAM Carnival also provided ECS students with a valuable, hands-on opportunity to apply what they had learned in their coursework to a real-world community setting. Students engaged in the full cycle of service-learning: they assessed community needs, collaborated on project planning, implemented the activities during the event, and then reflected deeply on their experiences. As part of the course requirements, ECS students participated in pre-event planning discussions, asynchronous online forums, and a variety of active learning exercises related to STEAM education and community engagement.

Following the event, students completed a comprehensive self-reflection essay, which asked them to consider what they had gained from the experience and how it had influenced their perspectives on service, education, and future professional goals. Many students noted that the project deepened their understanding of the challenges facing under-resourced communities and inspired them to continue advocating for accessible, high-quality education in their future careers.



Moving forward, many ECS students expressed a strong desire to continue their involvement in community service and to find new ways to integrate STEAM learning into early childhood education. They recognized that addressing educational inequality requires sustained effort and collaboration and that their roles as future educators extend beyond the classroom. By participating in this project, students were not only contributing to their community but also cultivating the values and skills necessary for lifelong service and leadership.



Reading with Heart: Latinx Stories Brought to Life in Preschool Classrooms

**Aura Pérez-González, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Studies
ECS/CHS 345: Latinx Children's Literature**

Latinx Children's Literature is a service-learning course where students explored Latinx children's literature for children from birth to age eight. Throughout the semester, students critically analyzed authentic Latinx picture books that reflected the intersectional identities and lived experiences of Latinx children. The course emphasized the socio-cultural, socio-political, and historical influences that shape young children's learning and development.

In partnership with Child Development Resources (CDR), CSUCI students engaged with young children at local CDR Head Start preschools across Ventura County. Through these reciprocal learning experiences, students supported children's language, literacy, social-emotional, and history-social science development while implementing culturally sustaining pedagogies into practice.

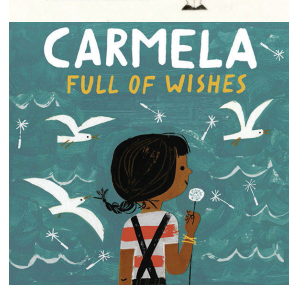
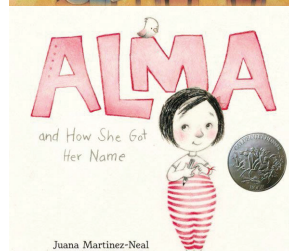
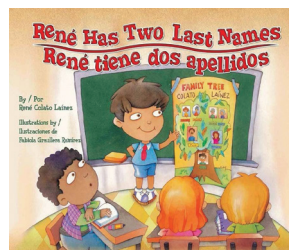
This collaboration helped young children affirm their identities, broaden their understanding of the world, and strengthen their foundational literacy skills. Focusing on early literacy is particularly important in Ventura County, where

data from the Ventura County Office of Education shows that only 10% of elementary students are reading at or above proficiency. One of the primary goals of this course was to support the literacy development of all young children in the region, especially those from low-income and Latinx communities. In these early education contexts, where access to resources may be limited, it is critical to nurture the language and literacy skills that lay the foundation for children to become confident speakers, readers, and writers.

Students learned how to critically analyze and

evaluate Latinx children's picture books for cultural authenticity. They also explored various pedagogical strategies to support young children's language and literacy development in preschool classrooms. After building this foundational knowledge, students began developing lesson plans for the children they worked with at their CDR service-learning sites. During the first half of the semester, CSUCI students observed and learned about the children and families at their service-learning sites. They also conducted informal assessments of the children's language and literacy skills to inform their future lesson planning. Midway through the semester, students designed interactive mini read-aloud plans using evidence-based literacy practices appropriate for preschool-aged children. These plans were grounded in California state standards for PK-3, such as the Preschool Learning Foundations and the California English Language Development Standards. In the final weeks of the semester, students reassessed the language and literacy skills of the children at their service-learning sites and reflected on their teaching practice. This reflection aimed to help them identify areas for growth and recognize that effective teaching involves ongoing learning and adapting practices based on lived classroom experiences. Lastly, these reflections also highlighted what students learned from their service learning experiences and the children and families they worked with. The student reflections highlighted the impact that working with children at CDR sites had on their teaching practices and working with predominantly Latinx children and their families.

This project models how to integrate culturally sustaining pedagogy into a service-learning project intentionally. ECS/CHS 345 centers Latinx children's identities, fosters reciprocal community relationships, and guides CSUCI students through a scaffolded process linking theory to practice—developing critical consciousness, affirming lived experiences, and cultivating reflective, justice-oriented future educators.



Teaching Tomorrow: Serving High School and Middle School Math Students

**Chrissy Soderlund, Lecturer, Mathematics
Math 318: Mathematics for Future Secondary Teachers**

Math 318 is an elective course for undergraduate math majors who plan to become secondary teachers of mathematics. The course covers an array of topics relevant to modern secondary school math curriculum. The service-learning project was designed to connect CSU Channel Islands' (CSUCI) future teachers of secondary mathematics with local high school math classes & middle school students.

Teachers at Rancho Campana High School (RCHS) identified a need in their math classes for assistance in addressing student questions and guiding students in the right direction during class. CSUCI students visited high school classes to help students with math and to improve their perceptions of math.

Math 318 students also served middle schoolers! At a Family STEM Night at R.J. Frank Academy, the CSUCI students facilitated games and activities for middle school students and their families. They also led STEM-focused campus tours for the STEM Educational Summit, an event that hosted 160 6th graders and their teachers at CSUCI.

The goals of the project were:

- to assist in the teaching and learning of mathematics among local secondary students,
- to demonstrate a culture of interest in mathematics beyond what is required of a student, and
- to experience and reflect upon the classroom experience for these future teachers.

Each of the Math 318 students visited RCHS on multiple occasions to serve and observe the high school's math classes. During each hour-long visit, CSUCI students were assigned to a math teacher and a math classroom.

CSUCI students served at the high school by providing in-class support. They walked around to assist with questions, offer guidance, and

encourage participation. They also encouraged the high school students on a social/emotional level by demonstrating a keen interest in mathematics and in the students themselves.

At the middle school events, CSUCI students facilitated interactive and fun math games designed to build confidence, joy, and a sense of belonging around math.

Through reflective essays, the CSUCI students evaluated their own strengths as mathematicians and educators. They reflected on how they might teach the topics presented at the high school and discovered new mathematical backgrounds and ideas pertaining to those topics. They also reflected on the ways in which their actions positively affected student learning.

This service-learning project has paved the way for many collaborative opportunities between CSUCI students and Rancho Campana High School. The faculty at RCHS were ever encouraging and welcoming. The high school students appeared responsive to the CSUCI students' presence and assistance. It was valuable for our future teachers to experience "the other side" of a classroom during their undergraduate career.



Service-Learning in Health Sciences

Melissa Gutierrez-Jimenez, MA
HLTH 492

HLTH 492 is designed to address concrete, real-world needs within local and campus-based communities. Students are placed in a range of organizations where their contributions directly support health and wellness efforts. Each partner site offers a distinct environment and purpose, but all share a commitment to improving the quality of life for individuals and families, especially those facing health-related challenges.

VC CAREGIVERS

Students assist with in-home elder care, manage the organization's call center, and support food distribution to senior clients. Through this work, they learn the significance of compassionate, respectful care for older adults and the systems that support aging in place.

Camarillo Health Care District

Here, students support community nutrition programs and adult day centers. They receive training on HIPAA regulations, elder abuse prevention, and client care, gaining essential public health and ethical competencies in the process.

CSUCI Basic Needs Program

Students help their peers navigate food insecurity, access hygiene supplies, and connect with emergency and housing services. This role provides valuable insight into the social determinants of health and encourages advocacy for health equity on campus.

Moorpark College Health Center

Students take on leadership roles by organizing health fairs, conducting wellness campaigns, and guiding fellow students to campus and off-campus health resources. This experience offers exposure to public health education and outreach for young adult populations.

CSUCI Recreation Center

At this site, students develop and promote fitness and wellness programs aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles across campus. The emphasis is on preventive care and holistic health practices in a diverse community setting.



CSUCI Boating Center

Combining health promotion with outdoor education, students support water safety instruction, assist in CPR and first aid training, and help coordinate boating events that promote both physical activity and recreational health education.

These placements offer direct, meaningful involvement in community health while addressing vital service gaps. Students support the operational needs of each organization and enhance the well-being and resilience of the populations they serve.

HLTH 492 integrates classroom learning with real-world engagement, underscoring that health professionals are not just clinical experts—they are also community leaders, advocates, and educators. By working with diverse organizations, students encounter the multifaceted nature of health and the deep interconnection between social systems and individual outcomes.

Beyond skill-building, students consistently report that HLTH 492 is transformative. They begin to see themselves not just as future healthcare workers but as integral parts of the communities they hope to serve. Exposure to cultural, socioeconomic, and age diversity strengthens cultural competence and fosters soft skills—communication, teamwork, time management, and ethical decision-making—crucial for success in the healthcare field.

HLTH 492 bridges theory and practice, cultivating informed, compassionate, and culturally responsive professionals who leave with knowledge, purpose, and readiness to serve.

Know Your Rights! Through Teatro Campesino

Georgina Guzmán, Professor, English
ENGL/CHST 353: Chicana/o-Latina/o Literature

Along with reading Chicana/o-Latina/o immigration memoirs, students in this class learned about the historical, literary, and aesthetic use of Chicana/o dramatic performance to address immigrant/laborer communities' conditions and pressing needs. Students learned about Teatro Campesino's craft and purpose and—as part of the service-learning component for the course—how they could use creative performance pieces to promote social justice for local communities today.

Teatro Campesino (Farm Worker Theater) was the creative branch of the UFW (United Farm Workers) which developed and performed improvisational plays during agricultural labor strikes of the 1960s. Founded in 1965 by Luis Valdez, Teatro Campesino started on the picket lines of the Delano Grape Strike. Actors performed short skits, called “actos,” on flatbed trucks and in union halls. The acting troupe took the “actos” on tour to shed light on farm workers' plight as well as educate them about their rights.

Given the looming threat of deportation that many people face today and the need for legal literacy and trusted advice, students' service-learning project sought to help inform those community members most at risk. With the partnership of Immigration Attorney Vanessa Frank, students received workshops on civil rights and constitutional law. Students then incorporated what they learned through the literature and the workshops into their own plays that they developed and performed at Swap Meet Justice—a community resource fair held at Oxnard College—with the goal of informing community members about their civil rights in the US.

Students developed Teatro Campesino-inspired plays that addressed 3 themes:

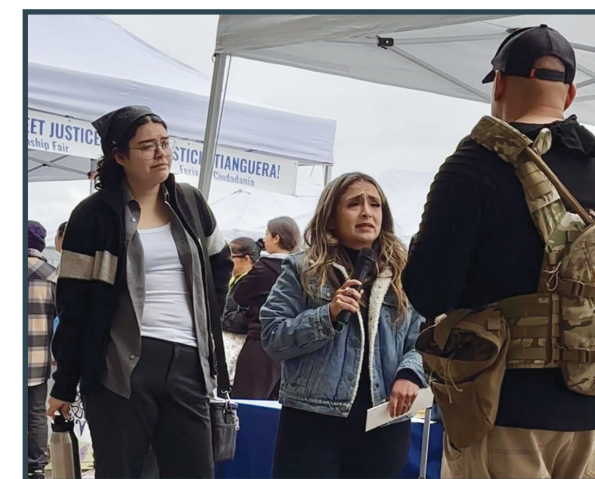
- Know Your Rights (How to interact with ICE if they stop you)
- Family Preparedness (How to prepare your family in case ICE detains a family member)
- Fraud Prevention (Sharing trusted legal resources and knowing who to reach out

to so you do not get defrauded by notaries and other agencies pretending to be able to dispense reliable legal advice)

Students then performed their plays on the last Sunday of each month at the Swap Meet Justice resource fair in Oxnard College. As community members waited to meet with lawyers at Swap Meet Justice, students performed their informative plays before them. Some students also recorded their plays and put them on a digital QR code.

This experiential service-learning project moved students beyond the classroom to become active participants in their learning and develop civic knowledge and communication skills. Students worked with a local non-profit and public organization to deeply learn and practice course content by working on a real, community-identified need. Students learned the course material, got to work directly on an issue facing the community, and learned about their communities in the process.

In a course about literature, students also got to witness firsthand how literary and dramatic cultural productions can make a real impact in addressing Latinxs' legal, economic, and political struggles in the U.S. They were able to see how literature can challenge injustice and build coalitions between diverse peoples. They also learned firsthand about the history and tradition of performance activism in the Latinx community.



Grant Writing as Reciprocal Service-Learning: Building Skills and Supporting Community Organizations

Rachael Jordan, Lecturer, English
ENG 480: Introduction to Grantwriting

In today's nonprofit landscape, applying for grants has become increasingly essential. As federal and state funding continues to shrink, nonprofit organizations face growing pressure to secure alternative sources of support to maintain and expand their services. Donations and volunteer hours—though vital—are no longer sufficient on their own. Stable and diversified funding streams have become a necessity for organizational sustainability.

Recognizing this urgent need, the Introduction to Grant Writing course reimagines its purpose and impact by aligning directly with the funding challenges faced by community organizations. The course asks: If students are going to learn how to write grants, why not have them write for actual nonprofit organizations that need them? That question sparked a dynamic course redesign rooted in reciprocal service-learning and asset-based pedagogy.

The semester consists of two primary phases, each designed to build students' grant writing knowledge, professional skills, and community engagement experience.

In the first phase, all students work individually to write a grant proposal for the same nonprofit partner and funding opportunity. This collective focus helps students master the structure, language, and research practices involved in grant writing. They gain exposure to key elements of the process, including identifying funders, interpreting criteria, writing letters of intent, and crafting narratives that align organizational goals with funder priorities.

The second half expands these foundations. Students select their own nonprofit community partners and work one-on-one to develop customized grant proposals based on each organization's specific needs. With support from the Center for Community Engagement

(CCE), the instructor, and peers, students communicate directly with nonprofit leaders to learn about organizational goals, challenges, and funding priorities. They practice professional communication skills, participate in virtual meetings, and engage in collaborative brainstorming to identify meaningful, fundable projects.

Each student creates a complete grant packet—typically including background research, a detailed letter of intent, a polished cover letter, a full-length narrative, a basic budget, and a list of future funding sources. Collectively, students write proposals requesting more than \$50,000 in total funding. Even if a grant is not awarded immediately, the value remains significant: each organization leaves with a thoroughly researched packet it can revise, reuse, or adapt for future opportunities, plus a curated list of other potential funders.

This model offers mutual benefit: students gain real-world grant writing experience, while community partners receive high-quality, no-cost services. The course is grounded in asset-based and reciprocal engagement, inspired by Tara Yosso's concept of Community Cultural Wealth, which recognizes and values the knowledge and assets students and community members bring.

Reciprocity is central. Community partners shape proposals and provide feedback, while students develop confidence, communication skills, and a nuanced understanding of nonprofit operations. Grant packets serve as living documents, supporting sustainability and ongoing collaboration long after the semester ends.

Connecting Families, Children & Community

Mari Estrada, Lecturer, Early Childhood Studies
ECS 221 Service Learning

As part of the ECS 221: Child, Family & Community course, students participated in service-learning experiences focused on supporting young children and families in the local community. The service goals were to provide developmentally appropriate and engaging activities for young children, offer families access to child development information and community resources, and apply course learning in real-world contexts that support equity, advocacy, and family engagement. These efforts addressed community needs for accessible early learning opportunities and family-friendly resources in an inclusive, culturally responsive environment.

In order to achieve these goals, students worked with:

- Oxnard College Family Festival Planning Team
- Oxnard College "Little Condors" Child Development Center
- Families and children from the community

Through hands-on roles, students connected theory to practice in meaningful ways. Students planned and designed interactive booths and activity stations for the Family Festival. They hosted activities for children, including arts & crafts, sensory play, and story time. Students spoke with families about child development and local resources, helped coordinate or participate in the Community Engagement Luncheon, and supported event set-up, outreach, and logistics. Families who attended the festival were able to



engage in fun, educational activities with their children and leave with take-home materials and information on child development and community programs.

Families who attended the festival were able to engage in fun, educational activities with their children and leave with take-home materials and information on child development and community programs.

Students reported gains in communication, collaboration, and confidence in working with children and diverse families. They deepened their understanding of family systems, cultural responsiveness, and the importance of advocacy and accessible community resources. This experience helped students see how early childhood professionals can support families beyond the classroom.

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Community-based research (CBR) is a collaborative research approach that actively involves both academic researchers and community partners in all phases of the research process. CBR is rooted in principles of mutual respect, shared decision-making, and co-creation of knowledge to address community-identified needs. The research is action-oriented with the intention to generate practical outcomes that benefit the community, advances scholarly knowledge, and enhances professional development among academic researchers.

CBR has long been a cornerstone of CSUCI's approach to service-learning and community engagement. Over the years, faculty and students have collaborated with a variety of community partners, both in and out of the classroom, on projects which identify and address local issues while also enhancing the capacity of our partners to continue doing the work they do. These projects have also given invaluable research experience to our students while demonstrating how such work can contribute to community good.

To highlight the incredible CBR work done on campus, CSUCI publishes a yearly collection of CBR reports titled CBR@CSUCI - the 2nd volume of the repository was published in late 2024, and a 3rd volume is currently in development with an anticipated publication date of December 2025. In addition, CBR projects are showcased via a poster session every year at the CCE's Celebration of Service. In this section, we summarize the projects showcased at the 2025 Celebration of Service, each of which is exemplary of best practices in CBR. We hope you enjoy reading and learning about these incredible projects.

Sowing Seeds of Change: Evaluating the Impact of the Saticoy Sowers Program on Food Access and Community Empowerment

Nien-Tsu Nancy Chen, Associate Professor, Communication
COMM/NRS 441: Health Communication

One of the core programs of the Saticoy Food Hub (a non-profit focused on creating a more equitable local food system in Saticoy) is the Saticoy Sowers Program, a 6-week course that teaches residents to grow food at home using sustainable practices. Participants attend hands-on workshops, learn about gardening and herbal medicine, and receive gardening tools to support their efforts.

In partnership with the Saticoy Food Hub, 21 students in a Health Communication class conducted a CBR project gathering feedback from Saticoy Sowers Program graduates to understand their successes, challenges, and overall experiences. The goal was to assess the program's impact and identify ways to strengthen future programming, ultimately supporting greater food sovereignty and self-reliance in Saticoy and surrounding communities.

Analyzing qualitative data from one-on-one interviews with Saticoy Sowers Program alumni, students developed data-informed recommendations to provide guidance to the Saticoy Food Hub on ways to enhance its program, including (but not limited to) adjusting the pace of the instruction (and providing additional materials to reinforce learning), extending post-program support, and strengthening communication channels.



Service Needs among LGBTQIA+ Older Adults in Ventura County

Ronald W. Berkowsky, Associate Professor, Health Sciences
2024 SURF Program; HLTH 494: Independent Research

In recognition of a need for local data to support LGBTQIA+ older adults in Ventura County, a team of 3 students participating in the 2024 SURF program (and who continued their work through the 2024-2025 academic year) collaborated with the LGBT+ Aging Coalition of Ventura County on a research project to identify community needs.

The SURF team collected individual interview and focus group data from Coalition members and from LGBTQIA+ older residents in the county to determine: (1) ways in which the Coalition can improve its LGBTQIA+ friendly business training, (2) what LGBTQIA+ friendly elder services

should be added or improved in the community, and (3) what social events the Coalition could consider offering to enhance intergenerational socialization and community.

Results from the students' work elucidated a need for additional Coalition members to alleviate volunteer strain, a local preference for increased educational programming pertaining to LGBTQIA+ issues and broad aging issues, and a need for safe spaces for aging LGBTQIA+ residents throughout the county. Results of this project were presented to the Coalition in February 2025 and have since been used to develop short- and long-term strategies for service expansion.

Victims of Violence: Outreach and Research

Daniel Sandoval, Lecturer, Sociology
SOC 496: Capstone II

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Dr. Sandoval and his Sociology Capstone students engaged in a number of service-learning and CBR projects in collaboration with the Family Justice Center, a program of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office that serves victims of domestic violence, child and elder abuse, and human trafficking.

Topics Dr. Sandoval's students addressed on behalf of the Family Justice Center included examining how housing status affects the safety of domestic violence victims, whether elder mistreatment and abuse among disabled older adults is underreported, and how governmental systems that address child abuse can be improved.



These CBR projects used secondary, de-identified data and challenged students to implement a variety of different statistical methods for analysis. Students presented their findings at a meeting of the California Family Justice Network.

The work Dr. Sandoval and his students, with guidance from the Family Justice Center, helped enhance and extend the ability of the Family Justice Center to address community needs and answer questions in a time- and resource-limited environment. In recognition of this work, Dr. Sandoval and the Family Justice Center were awarded the Community-Based Research Project Award at the 2025 Celebration of Service.

Impacts of Caregivers' Building Bridges Program among Youth Volunteers

Ronald W. Berkowsky, Associate Professor, Health Sciences
HLTH 499: Senior Capstone Project; HLTH 494: Independent Research

In Ventura County, the nonprofit Caregivers: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly provides and coordinates volunteer caregiving services, including an intergenerational program called Building Bridges which connects youth volunteers with older adults in need of socialization or assistance with household chores. In collaboration with Caregivers, 7 students in a senior-level Capstone course began coding and analyzing survey responses from Building Bridges volunteers to assess experiences and impacts of the program. This work was continued and completed by Spring 2025 by one of the original team members as part of an independent research project.

Results showed that the Building Bridges program significantly impacted youth communication skills, helped build a sense of altruism, and gave volunteers a better understanding and appreciation of older adults. Results also revealed a primary challenge for youth in balancing their volunteering and other commitments (e.g., schoolwork, extracurriculars).

This project helped to highlight the positive impact of Caregivers among youth volunteers while also elucidating areas of improvement related to scheduling.

A Chrysalis in the Mountains: Assessing the Impacts of the SAMO Fund Milkweed Giveaways and Eco Restoration Internships

Dennis Downey, Professor, Sociology
SOC 495: Capstone I; SOC 496: Capstone II

Designed and conducted in partnership with and on behalf of the Santa Monica Mountains (SAMO) Fund and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), 15 students (supervised by Dr. Downey) conducted 2 CBR projects in the 2024-2025 academic year to assess programs offered by these community organizations.

For the first project, digital surveys were distributed and analyzed (of which over 500 were received) to assess the impacts and success of the Milkweed Giveaway Program, an SMMNRA effort (in partnership with milkweed distribution program throughout Los Angeles and Ventura County) to restore the milkweed habitat for the monarch butterfly. Survey results indicated that a majority of respondents felt the process of receiving the



milkweed was easy and enjoyable, while fewer felt the plants themselves were easy to grow.

For the second project, students conducted qualitative interviews with 15 past interns of the SAMO Fund's Ecological Restoration Internship Program (implemented over the past decade to engage community members to develop ecologically-oriented skills and career interests). Themes that were identified included preferences for more structured time, expanding access to other similar programs, and increasing pay. Taken together, these projects highlight the incredible work of the SAMO Fund and SMMNRA while providing recommendations and pathways for improving programs.

Community partners play an integral role as a co-educator in the academic careers of our students. Our partners have a unique opportunity to mentor CSUCI students about the larger social, cultural and political issues that make-up the world around them. They also have an opportunity to provide them with the knowledge and understanding of the community/population they are working with and the service they are providing.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

COMMUNITY PARTNER EVENTS
COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT
COMMUNITY PARTNER LISTING

COMMUNITY PARTNER EVENTS



ENGAGEMENT FAIR

September 2024

In collaboration with Student Organizations and Involvement, the CCE hosted 45 of our community partners, while SOI hosted 74 CSUCI clubs and organizations in Central Mall for the Fall semester Leadership & Involvement Fair: Get Involved, Get Engaged, Get Connected. Our community partners were able to connect with students about their volunteer, internship, and employment opportunities, as well as raise awareness for their organization.



WORKSHOP: MAKING SENSE OF FUNDRAISING: HOW TO THRIVE IN 25

November 2024

In collaboration with Cal Lutheran's Center for Nonprofit Leadership, the CCE brought 75 community partners from over 50 organizations across Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties to attend an in-person workshop called "Making Sense of Fundraising: How to Thrive in '25" with facilitator's Lynne West and H. Clay Buck. Lynne and Clay also host the podcast, Fundraising is Funny, where they share their insights on fundraising strategies and donor relations.



COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council (SMMTC) was founded in 1969 after a group of local equestrians were concerned the trails were in danger of being lost to development. Since then, SMMTC has been dedicated to establishing, preserving, and maintaining the public trail system through the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent areas through education, advocacy, and partnerships with the public and private sectors. They coordinate with government agencies to enhance and preserve the trail system, assist negotiations with property owners regarding trail alignments, promote public awareness, and build, monitor, and maintain trails.

SMMTC has worked with CSU Channel Islands for several years to create and maintain trail systems at the university. Jerry Mitcham and the SMMTC crew have been instrumental in continuing the work with sathwiwa, a sacred place to the Chumash people. They have been helping to restore this region of cultural significance, including trail restoration work, erosion control measures, removal of non-native plants, restoration of native plants, and raising awareness within campus community. They have also recently begun improving the trails at CI Park, which will enhance access to the community for hiking, running, biking, wildlife viewing, teaching,



research, habitat restoration, and more.

In the fall of 2021, the Center for Community Engagement partnered with SMMTC for the inaugural Trail Corps. Since then, SMMTC has mentored and led over a dozen students participating in constructing, repairing, maintaining, and restoring the public trail system throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and the Channel Islands. They also provide our Trail Corps with education and advocacy opportunities for local ecosystems, including a recent field trip to the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing at Liberty Canyon.

SMMTC has found working with CSUCI students to be immensely valuable to the mission of their organization and is committed to partnering with the university to further its vision. They have partnered with students in several Communication and ESRM service-learning courses, connecting students'

academic work to current community issues. This year, SMMTC provided a donation to the CCE to hire two Trail Corps members. They also awarded the inaugural Linda Palmer Memorial Scholarship Fund to a previous Trail Corps member to pursue environmental education. You can find out more about this wonderful organization by visiting <https://smmtc.org/>.

Our Partners

The Center for Community Engagement partners with over 100 area non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, libraries and schools. These partnerships address community needs such as: homelessness, housing, food insecurity, environment, immigration, youth development, literacy, senior issues, health, education, and community economic development. **We value their involvement as co-educators and their commitment to our students.**

A.I.M. Entrepreneurial Academy	Channel Islands Restoration
Agriculture Museum	Child Development Resources
AHA!	City of Agoura Hills
Alzheimer's Association of Ventura County	– Dpt of Community Services
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG)
American Red Cross	Coalition for Family Harmony
ÁNIMO Theatre Company	Communicare
Art Through Action	Community Advocacy Coalition
Arts Mentorship Program, Inc.	Community Roots Garden
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ventura County	Conflict Resolution Institute
Bike 4 a Cause	CSUCI – 16 departments
Boys and Girls Club of Camarillo	Diversity Collective of Ventura County
Brain Injury Center of Ventura County	DRAGG
BRITE: Building Resilience & Inclusion	Emily Shane Foundation
Through Engagement	Femme Futures Foundation
Buen Vecino	FirstSteps for Kids, Inc.
Cabrillo Economic Development	Focus on the Masters Arts Archive & Library
Corporation	FOOD Share, Inc.
Californians for Pesticide Reform	Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast
Camarillo Family YMCA	Girls Inc. of Carpinteria
Camarillo Health Care District	Girls Inc. of Santa Barbara
Camarillo Heights STEM Academy	Habitat for Humanity of Ventura County
Camarillo Public Library	Healthcare for the Homeless/One Stop
Camp Ronald McDonald for Good Times	HealthCorps, Inc.
Cancer Support Community	House Farm Workers!
– Valley/Ventura/Santa Barbara	Housing Opportunities Made Easier (HOME)
Canine Adoption & Rescue League (CARL)	Humane Society of Ventura County
CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the	Interface Children & Family Services
Elderly	Juneteenth Celebration of Ventura County
Casa De Vida Inc.	Justice for All Ventura County
Central Coast Alliance United for a	kidSTREAM Children's Museum
Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)	Lighthouse for Women & Children
Central Coast Climate Justice Network	Los Robles Children's Choir
Channel Islands Park Foundation	Lulapin Chumash Foundation

Many Mansions
 Mary's Mercy Center
 Mixteco/Indigena Community
 Organizing Project (MICOP)
 Moorpark College Student Health Center
 Museum of Ventura County
 NAMI Ventura County
 National Park Service Santa Monica
 Mountains Nat. Rec. Area
 Native Monarchs
 Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
 One Step a la Vez
 Operation Gratitude
 Oxnard Performing Arts Corporation (OPAC)
 Oxnard Union High School District
 Farm to School Program
 Pleasant Valley School District
 Project Access
 Rancho Campana High School
 Reel Guppy Outdoors
 Ride On Therapeutic Horsemanship
 Rodale Institute California Organic Center
 Ronald McDonald Family Room – Ventura
 Ronald McDonald House
 – Bakersfield/Los Angeles
 Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
 & Sea Center
 Santa Barbara Zoo
 Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council
 Santa Paula Parks & Recreation
 Saticoy Food Hub
 Saving Lives Camarillo
 School on Wheels
 Search Dog Foundation
 SEL4CA
 Social Justice Fund for Ventura County
 Somis Union School District
 Special Olympics Southern California
 Step Up Tutoring
 Storyteller Children's Center

Students for Eco-Education
 & Agriculture (SEEAG)
 Surfrider Foundation Ventura County
 Chapter
 Swap Meet Justice
 The Human Nature Center
 Thousand Oaks Library
 Turning Point Foundation – Growing Works
 UFW Foundation
 United Way of Ventura County
 Unity Theatre Collective
 University Preparation Charter School
 VCMC Dept of Auxiliary Volunteer Services
 Ventura County Area Agency on Aging
 Ventura County Community Foundation
 Ventura County Continuum of Care
 Ventura County Family Justice Center
 Ventura County Farm to School
 Ventura County Library System
 Ventura County Office of Strategy
 Management
 Ventura County Rescue Mission Alliance
 Ventura Land Trust
 Ventura Wild
 Westminster Free Clinic
 Women of Substance & Men of Honor
 Women's Economic Venture
 YAC Foundation (Young Athletes for
 Christ Inc.)
 Youth Pride Association

SERVICE-LEARNING

STATS

AY 24-25

17,010

Hours in the Community

22 Faculty Teaching

77 Community Partners Served

23 Courses Offered

567 Students Enrolled

\$682,781

Economic Benefit*

*California volunteer time valued at \$40.14/hour multiplied by total hours in the community



California State
University

Center for
**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

C H A N N E L
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