

The Center for Community Engagement presents
VOICES of CI

*Stories of service, activism, and social responsibility at
California State University Channel Islands*



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California State
University

Center for
**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**
C H A N N E L
I S L A N D S

The CSUCI Center for Community Engagement dedicates this inaugural issue of Voices of CI to all the students, staff, administrators, and faculty who selflessly gave their time and service and shared their stories with us. This booklet is a compilation of stories collected since 2015. We are sharing it in celebration of CSUCI's 20th Anniversary.

The CCE would like to thank the Student Assistants who helped collect these stories since 2015. Special thanks to AmeriCorps VIP Fellow, Laurie Geier, who helped create this issue and former VIP Fellow Jennifer Raymond.

Thank you for twenty years of service!

ABOUT VOICES OF CI

Inspired by Brandon Stanton's *Humans of New York* photography project, the California State University (CSUCI) Center for Community Engagement (CCE) wanted to highlight stories of service, activism, and social responsibility within the CSUCI community. Thus, the **Voices of CI** initiative was born.



Finding its roots in 2015, the CCE began a campaign to interview service-minded individuals. Student assistants at the CCE posted these stories weekly on Facebook to celebrate service and inspire others. Over the years, these stories have been shared through Instagram, the CCE newsletters, and other publications.

What began as a small idea expanded into a multi-year initiative, bringing an awareness to student, faculty, staff, and alumni efforts to connect with and support the local community. The CCE hopes you find joy and inspiration in the following stories of CSUCI's growing legacy of service.



Center for
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President Richard Rush

CSUCI Founding President, 2001-2016

President Richard R. Rush was the founding president of CSUCI, serving from June 2001 to May 2016. Rush built the framework of CSUCI, pioneering its creation and path to success. In building this framework, Rush and CSUCI's founding members established four pillars in which our University's mission and values are based upon.

"Interdisciplinarity was something I wanted right from the very beginning," Rush explained. "Disciplines in silos do not connect all of the perspectives that students are going to need as they go forward in developing creative and critical thinking. We put together a program so students could see how questions

or problems could be addressed from a number of different perspectives rather than simply one. Having required interdisciplinary general education courses is one way that students can become more creative in their critical thinking and expand their views on various subjects--and be more prepared for the real world."

The other three Mission Pillars were derived from an observation of the world around us. Multicultural, International, and Community Engagement reflect the type of experiences and skills students need to be successful in a diverse world, as technology connects our world and introduces us to an endless number of ideas and perspectives. Looking at education through an international

lens allows students to gain skills that will allow them to compete professionally and live wholeheartedly. Studying internationalism inevitably leads students to cross paths with multiculturalism. "We are enriched by the various cultures that are on our campus and in the world, and if we embrace them we are better for it." Being exposed to different cultures and ways of life will open students' minds, peak curiosity about differences, and help individuals towards embracing diversity at a local and international level.



Community Engagement makes up the fourth pillar, connecting the University's founding values of interdisciplinary studies, multicultural engagement, and international affairs to the local community. CSUCI is here to serve students and the community--the community who has greatly supported CSUCI since its creation. Now, students

return that generosity through service-learning and volunteerism.

President Rush has always been involved in the public. In his immediate circle, Rush gave back to his daughters' schools and participated in a service club where they performed a number of generous activities such as can-drives, serving at non-profit Christmas tree lots, and other community efforts.



"I felt great satisfaction in giving back to a community that supports me. This testimonial is still true today. We all volunteer in one way or another to help the community."

With this mindset, it is no wonder why community service plays such a large role in CSUCI's education today.

President Erika Beck



“I’ve always been motivated by the opportunity to create a more equitable and inclusive society. Service and volunteer work are most certainly a great way to see this done. Taking a small amount of time out of your day for service and volunteer work can make a large and lasting impact in the community.”

- Erika Beck

Erika D. Beck, serving as CSUCI’s president from 2016-2021, believes that holistic student development is an essential component of a college education. In her view, holistic student development includes fostering civic engagement and a commitment to paying it forward. As a university leader, she aimed to create the circumstances that would allow everyone to realize their greatest potential.

erving children and animals. She also likes to include her family in service. Every year, she and her sons pick a service project to do together. In 2019, they chose Casa Pacifica’s Holiday Giving Program where they fulfilled holiday wishes for young people. President Beck says that she is teaching her boys that **“To those whom much is given, much is expected.”**

One of the projects President Beck is most proud of is the Restore sat’wiwa service event, beginning in 2019. Over 150 campus and community volunteers came together to restore an ancestral Chumash trail to the top of the rounded, free-standing mountain: sat’wiwa. **“Seeing our community come together for the common goal of honoring our native Chumash partners was truly a privilege to be a part of.”** She hopes to facilitate additional campus-wide volunteer events in the future. In October of 2020, Beck was named president of California State University Northridge, where she currently serves.

President Beck has been an avid volunteer her entire life. In high school, she served as a youth soccer coach and camp counselor. During her undergraduate studies, Beck served as a mentor, or Big Sister, for youth outreach programs. Since then, she has volunteered with many organizations in various capacities. For example, she has been a board member for the Andson Foundation, the Santa Barbara Zoo, the Ventura P20 Council, Gold Coast Veteran Foundation, and other non-profits. President Beck said most of her volunteering is dedicated to

CSUCI President, 2016-2021



President Richard Yao



CSUCI President, 2021-Present

A young psychology student had a choice to make: present to his sociology class or engage in a service-learning project. This was a pivotal moment in Richard Yao's pathway to becoming a clinical psychologist and eventually the President of CSUCI.

Wanting to dive into his studies firsthand, President Yao took the opportunity to serve at a local food bank where he provided resources to those facing homelessness. "I was immediately drawn to serving that population, particularly to see the high rates of mental illness for those who experience homelessness," he recalls. "That experience—I had to volunteer a few weekends throughout the semester—reinforced my chosen major in psychology and what I wanted to do for a living; **and that really is, in service of others.**"

Inspired by that service-learning course, President Yao continued to evolve through service by spending his summers volunteering at Camp Anytown in Nevada. "It was truly transformational when you saw the students get off the bus, wide-eyed, like 'What's going on here?' [Campers] had to sit next to someone who was a different color from them, from a different background." Over the

course of four days, an eclectic mix of high school students came together to engage in complex conversations and activities that would equip them with the tools to address racial inequalities and break down structural barriers. "You saw where students were when they arrived and when they walked it that fourth day. [The growth] was remarkable."

President Yao remembers this experience as one of his first platforms to discuss race and reflect on his own experiences. "That was probably one of the most authentic and genuine moments for me—to be in those spaces. I think that helped me now, especially as a president, and I've grown over the years to feel comfortable in those very uncomfortable spaces."

Now as the CSUCI president, Richard Yao leads the University to evolve through equity so that students do not only succeed but *thrive*. The path to structural change is rarely simple or clear. And in times of uncertainty, President Yao recalls advice once given to him by his former Camp Anytown Mentor: **Trust the process.**

"Trust the process when you think you're not making progress, you're not developing, or things aren't moving along. With trust in the process, you can feel confident that you're doing your work with integrity, with compassion, and with empathy. You can be assured that it may not seem like it at the time, but that process is happening."

An enduring hope and trust in the process would come to be essential as Richard Yao stepped into the presidency during the uncertainty of the pandemic. "One of the things that keeps us going and enduring in these dire times, these challenging times, is that sense of place and that sense of purpose: Meaning in what we do. I truly believe that service-learning is an opportunity to develop that."

President Yao's process, fueled by his calling to serve others, sparked by his first service-learning experience, and ignited through his career as a clinical psychologist, has helped him develop the humility, compassion, and thoughtful determination that make him the perfect fit for his role as president.



President Yao serves alongside volunteers during the September 2021 Road to Restoring **sat'wiwa** event.

The students of CSUCI are the primary motivators for the Voices of CI Initiative. From service-learning courses to University service days to pioneering their own service projects and non-profits, the student population is the most essential component of fostering a culture of service at CSUCI.

“I know I cannot change everyone’s situation, but it would mean a lot to impact at least one person in a positive way.”

**- Crystal Altman
Class of 2020**

Student

In the following pages, we highlight quotes and stories from various students, past and current, who embody a spirit of service and activism.



“There was a rehab facility where people could join the program so they could stop doing drugs, and there was also a homeless shelter. [Serving there] really started my desire to help people and make a difference. It showed me a different way of lifestyle. It exposed me to a lot.”

Deja Simon
Voices of CI 2016-17



Stories

STORIES OF **SERVICE, ACTIVISM, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** FROM THE STUDENTS OF CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS (2015-2022)

Cameron Bartosiewicz

Voices of CI 2021-2022

Between tests, research, essays, and other coursework, assignments can seem like just another item to check off a student's to-do list. Sometimes, however, that work can light a spark that leads to a larger purpose. Cameron Bartosiewicz was researching for a Communication project in early 2020 when he stumbled upon an issue that would ignite his greater purpose: **"I kept coming across articles about the issues facing LGBTQ+ students, and it kind of aligned with my own personal experiences."** November of that very same year, Cameron would become the founding president of a local non-profit, Youth Pride Association (YPA).

What motivated Cameron to do this work? **"My most recent stint is motivated by a desire to improve the lives of the individuals preceding me—the students who are still suffering from a lot of this. The volunteer work done before me made it a lot easier. Conditions have kind of improved and I want to continue the trend."**

Cameron had been active in service-work well before entering middle school. In addition to participating in on-campus service events, he and his colleagues actively reach out to high schools to reduce the information gap on sexual orientation and gender identity. "At [YPA], we aim to promote and foster the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in schools. We go into high schools, and I guess colleges at this point, and run a couple of programs to educate everyone and support individual LGBTQ+ students."



The issues that YPA addresses are layered. Providing students with educational support and mentorship is YPA's approach to reducing the mental health and equity disparities between heterosexual-identifying individuals and individuals within the LGBTQ+ community.

- LGBTQ+ youth are 2.9x more likely to consider suicide, 4.6x more likely to attempt suicide, and nearly 5x more likely to require hospitalization after a suicide attempt.
- 95% of students heard anti-LGBTQ+ slurs and negative comments at school.
- The rate of substance abuse is 2-4 times higher for LGBTQ+ youths than their heterosexual peers.
- 9.4% of hate crimes are directed at LGBTQ+ individuals, 10% of which occur on school grounds.

It is likely that mental health concerns, homelessness, and substance abuse rates within the LGBTQ+ community have largely increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

YPA's educational outreach efforts are of extreme importance in getting tools and information shared with students so that they can navigate difficult conversations regarding gender identity and sexual orientation.



"My philosophy is that it is harder to put someone into an outgroup and treat someone like trash when you've humanized them. YPA's goal is to educate individuals the best that we can."



Marlene tutored kids at the Cabrillo Economic Development in Oxnard for two years. She began serving there through a service-learning art course at CSUCI. After the course was ended, she realized she had a social responsibility that she needed to fulfill. In order to fulfill this responsibility she extended her service, and the end result was very rewarding to her.

Marlene Pelayo

Voices of CI 2015-2016

“Growing up in Oxnard, I had first hand experience struggling with my homework and not having someone help me with it because of the language barrier. Serving there is just my way of giving back.”



“I was looking for a way to give back to a community that has given so much to me. A large portion of my childhood was spent growing up in Ventura County. I felt it was time to go forth and create some positive change in my community.”

Connor Collins
Voices of CI 2015-2016



In order to create positive change in his community, Connor became a tutor and mentor at the Emily Shane Foundation. “The Emily Shane Foundation partners with public middle schools in Los Angeles and Ventura County to

provide academic and mentorship support. Middle school is a formative time in any young person’s life. It is a period of flux in which we bridge the divide between our adolescent and teenage years.” Connor believes that providing guidance to at-risk youth can redirect their life in a positive direction. At the site, he would sit with students for an hour at a time for academic support.

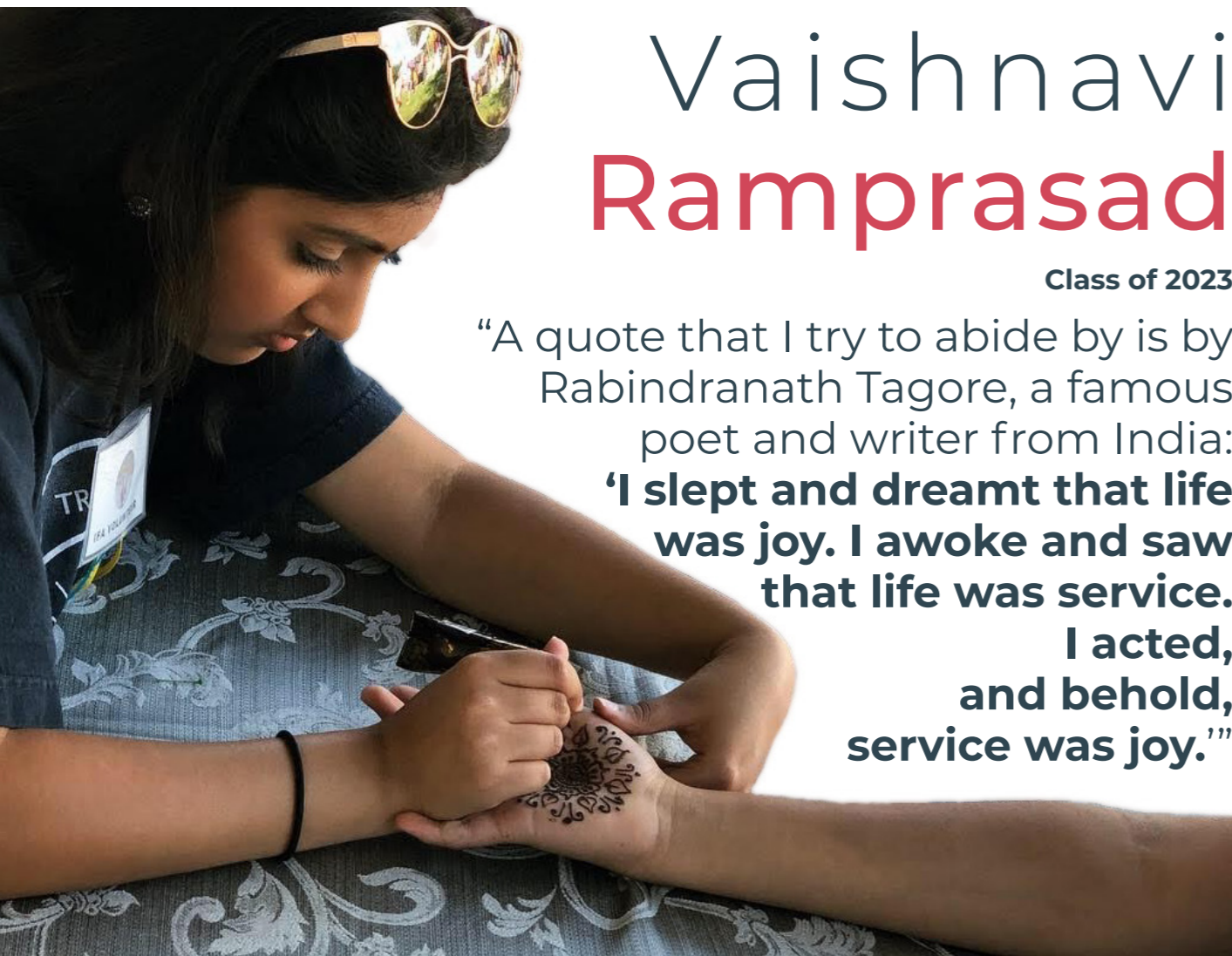
Lisa Clark

Voices of CI 2015-2016

Lisa graduated in Fall 2015 with a double major in Communication and Political Science with a Health emphasis. She volunteers at Planned Parenthood once a week due to her interest in promoting women’s rights. As soon as Lisa discovered that she would be required to volunteer 90 hours for her Capstone project, she knew she wanted to dedicate those hours to Planned Parenthood.

Volunteering at Planned Parenthood sparked an interest in the health field, leading to her emphasis in health. Lisa shared that her most memorable service experience was lobbying in Sacramento and Washington D.C. for young people’s reproductive rights. She hopes to raise awareness for Women’s Rights and bring more of a positive connotation to Planned Parenthood and their many services.





Vaishnavi Ramprasad

Class of 2023

“A quote that I try to abide by is by Rabindranath Tagore, a famous poet and writer from India: **‘I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted, and behold, service was joy.’**”

Vaishnavi Ramprasad studied Health Science at CSUCI. She was born in India and is currently a citizen of India, so she feels she has a close tie to her familial roots. **“Doing service and volunteering has been a fundamental philosophy that my family carries.”** Vaishnavi elaborates, **“I have been raised to have service as a backbone of who I am as a person.”** She attributes her upbringing to feed her passion towards serving with Westminster Free Clinic and using her art business to promote philanthropy and support important causes.

Vaishnavi served as a medical intern at Westminster Free Clinic in which she served low-income and uninsured patients in

Ventura County with free medical care and community services. She feels like the hands-on nature of this project fit her desire to do active service work. She has fond memories of contributing to the treatment of underserved and underrepresented communities. Inspired by this experience, Vaishnavi wants to pursue a career in health care while also advocating for equity and social justice.

Vaishnavi has also utilized her business as a henna artist to raise money for charitable organizations such as the Leukemia and Lymphoma society, the Girl Up Foundation, and other local community efforts. The Girl Up campaign raises money in a global effort to promote education and

Shane Bowers

Shane is involved in a service project that has been close to his heart for the past 20 years. “I’ve done a lot of different types of service but the one that I probably continuously do every year is that I volunteer at a diabetic camp up in the Sierras.” His

service not only involves himself, but includes his parents as well. “Every Memorial Day weekend we drive up there, leave Friday and come back Monday, and we basically set up the camp to get it ready for summer.” The camp is only open in the summer so the work that Shane and other volunteers do every Memorial Day weekend is vital to the success of the camp. “We set up a lot of the structure of the camp... work can vary from using power tools to raking pine needles to filing paper work. [It’s] basically maintaining the facilities to keep it running. We have to get a lot done in order for them to open for the summer because they take in almost 1,000 kids and families.”

Juvenile diabetes does not discriminate against anyone, regardless of nationality, gender, or socioeconomic group. “I know that it’s not just affecting kids in the US but its affecting kids internationally too. I’ve met people from all around the world from Afghanistan, Japan, New Zealand, and Scotland. Our camp is known world-wide that people come to see our impact.”

In addition to setting up the foundations for the camp to run, Shane works as a Camp Counselor during the summer sessions. “This will be my eighth summer working there. I usually work the entire summer with people ranging from infants to grandparents.” His jobs vary depending on which camp he is with. “For Kids Camp, we have different activities like archery,



equity for women. Funds are specifically used for books and menstruation products. “This project is meaningful to me,” Vaishnavi shares, “it is really cool to incorporate my abilities as an artist [through] service. **I encourage anyone who is able to use their talents to serve others to do so. It is something that I love, and I can share it in a fulfilling way.**”





pool, arts and crafts, sports, and games.”

Participants can also join Team Camp, Shane explains. “Each group has a certain program that they stick to; it could be day-trekking and they go backpacking through the park or performing arts and they put on a huge play at the end of camp.” When asked why he is so passionate about this camp he responded, “I’ve been diabetic for 21 years this June (2016). When I was growing up, I was the only kid for the longest time [with diabetes] until my parents found this camp. I was a shy, quiet kid, and as soon as I realized that there were other people out there like me I became more like a kid. You know, going out and having fun. It completely changed my outlook on life.”

Being a Camp Counselor is contributing and benefiting the lives of so many children. Shane explains that educating people is also one of the most important actions that someone

Debora Ehrich

Deb has been an active contributor to her community for many years. When she transferred to CI, Deb wanted to get involved as soon as possible. She soon discovered the Days of Service hosted by the CCE and began to participate in as many as she

could do. “People are unaware of this disease and we, as people, need to be more open-minded and willing to help [...] It doesn’t even matter where [someone] come[s] from or their social background. Information is the most powerful tool.”

“I can see how much of an impact that camp meant to me and how much it reaches out to so many other kids like me and other families effected by juvenile diabetes.”

- Shane Bowers
Voices of CI 2015-2016

could. For Deb, these service days were perfect, as they allowed her an opportunity to volunteer while also balancing her other responsibilities.

“Most of my volunteer work has been with these little trips so I can still volunteer, but also focus on my school work and study.” Deb participated in the United Way Day of Caring, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, and César Chávez Day of Service. Out of all of these service days, the United Way Day of Caring stood out to her. This service day took place at Prototypes, an organization in Oxnard that provides addiction treatment, detoxification, mental health services, prevention and education, vocational training and parenting support for women and allows them to keep their children by their side. This was not Deb’s first encounter with the organization as she had previously interned at Prototypes.

“When I heard that it was going to be at Prototypes, I thought ‘I’ve got to go there. I’ve got to see if I still remember someone there’ and I remembered a couple people and it was really nice to see how they’re doing and be able to go back and work in their gardens and help improve those [gardens] for them and talk with some of the ladies that are there.” As an intern, Deb was able to work with many women and support them on their path to recovery. “Recovery is a process that never stops; it’s a continuous process. If a person ends up relapsing, that’s still part of the recovery process. They learn that they can always get help no matter what happens to them.”

Voices of CI
2015-2016

“That’s the important thing: to help them get back on their feet and empower women.”



Christina Truong

Christina Truong's motivation for serving others stems from her own struggles growing up. "What honestly motivated me to start doing service or volunteer work was the first time, me personally, missing a meal as a kid. I never thought it would happen to me. Just the way I grew up and the way my family was working out, things like that. I think that's what motivated me to help." The thought of having another person go through the same struggle she went through inspired her to help others in need. She wanted to make sure that no one would have to go through what she went through. Her earlier projects revolved around organizing food drives. Then, when Christina joined Key Club, she was able to expand her service experience. Key Club is the oldest—and one of the largest—service programs for high school students. Her service experience ranges from food drives to volunteering at major events like the Color Run. However, her favorite aspect of serving is event coordination.

Christina enjoys spearheading and organizing events because it allows her to expand her network while targeting social issues that matter to her. During her time at CSUCI, Christina was an active member in the Kilusan Pilipino Club. "We try to engage in as many volunteer opportunities as possible. I know it gets a little bit hard sometimes because of the scheduling with the opportunities that the school itself



provides, but we do know a good amount of external organizations throughout Ventura Country." When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines a few years back, her club was heavily involved in the relief effort. "We did a lot of selling of apparel to raise funds. We did a lot of local garage sales with Mary Star [of the Sea Church in Oxnard], and we tried to put on some benefit concerts with other schools—A lot of events that could hit our college demographic." Serving allowed her to network, connect with the community, and further understand the issues facing the

"Service-learning at CSUCI is what led me to serving others. I had to do a couple of projects with Food Share and at a local health clinic. I was able to see how my efforts could help others who are less fortunate and may need a helping hand. Since then, I have continued to take service-learning classes."

- **Michael Gallardo,**
CSUCI Class of 2015



"In my Health Communication course, we are working on The Street Store project. This initiative has given me the opportunity to truly be immersed in the issues that the homeless and underserved in Oxnard area have to deal with. Being able to be on the front lines and really seeing how these people will be helped is very special. Building off of my basic medical skills and experiences, I went to Costa Rica and Jamaica where I served poverty stricken populations."

"My international experiences in Costa Rica and Jamaica are memorable to me because they confirmed that the access to healthcare that we have as Americans is a very unique privilege. Going to another country and experiencing what others must deal with, sometimes waiting months or years for a volunteer medical team to come through, is very eye-opening and creates a passion to continue this type of work to help others. I connect to service by interacting with members of the communities that these projects have served. The first-hand experience provides the opportunity to really get to know people and better understand the ways in which I am able to serve them."

community. "Somewhere down the line I want to start my own non-profit where it could provide more volunteer opportunities to the college demographic, more so aimed at the API (Asian & Pacific Islander) community just so they can be more culturally aware on the issues that are going on in the 'motherlands'. And, if there are any resources they can provide, they have the opportunity to do so."

Voices of CI 2016-2017

Voices of CI 2015-2016

Dayanara Rodriguez

Voices of CI 2015-2016

Dayanara Rodriguez enrolled in a service-learning class which gave her the opportunity to teach a group of Chicano youth in Oxnard. “We talked about identity and a lot of Chicano history. We had to learn all of that in order to be able to teach a class about identity to the youth. Outside of class, we had to brainstorm to think of how we were going to tie identity and education into one class.” At the time, Dayanara was also taking a Chicano art class. “We incorporated identity and art and how people express themselves through art.” She discussed art history with the students and focused on two artists: Frida Khalo and Diego Rivera. “We mostly focused on Frida because she was more self-aware and she knew her identity.”

The youth that Dayanara worked with were from an indigenous part of Mexico. “A lot of the time, they would use derogatory terms to identify that group and the main focus of [the class] was to get rid of those terms. By going into [the classrooms] and telling them how to identify themselves kind of reinforced what they were learning in their class.” Through teaching and helping the children develop a more complete self-identity, Dayanara herself was able to grow. “I had started exploring different terms like Chicana and doing the class with the kids just solidified it for me. At first I was kind of skeptical, but, once we did the class, talking about my own experience with identity kind of just set it in stone for me.” Seeing the youths and their everyday struggle had a big impact on Dayanara’s service-learning experience and goals for the future, “I put myself back into their shoes because the situations were pretty similar. They come from families where education isn’t really a big thing and self-identity isn’t really a big thing either... it did give me a guide of what I want to do now.”

Ashley Medina

Voices of CI 2015-2016



Ashley Medina studies English at CSUCI. She has been engaged in both the community here in Camarillo as well as abroad in Uganda. Ashley recently discovered her passion for serving in the prison education system. “Service has been a part of my life. That’s just how I was raised. But being at CI, it primarily focused on prison education and juvenile justice education through a service-learning course that I was a part of in 2013 and I’m still a part of now.”

Through this course, Ashley was able to learn more about the prison system in the United States. “Something that really stood out to me is that we have

5% of the world’s population but we have 24% of the world’s incarcerated rate. The way I personally view it is that incarceration for a lot of crimes—I’m not referring to the more violent crimes but mainly the minor/non-violent crimes—is kind of like a temporary band-aid to a very deeply rooted issue in our communities. If we are incarcerating individuals and they are not necessarily getting the services or support to come back out rehabilitated. What are we releasing them into? Are we setting them up for failure or success?” Ashley also spoke of the term *recidivism*, “It’s regarding the cyclical behavior of incarceration and how an individual can leave prison, go back to their community, and return to prison. It’s this behavior of coming in, coming out, coming in, and coming out.”

For the past two summers, Ashley was serving in Uganda for a program called Prison Education Project which stems from Cal Poly Pomona. “What I really liked about Uganda is that I got to teach my own class. I have taught social entrepreneurship, creative writing, women’s empowerment, and communication classes.”

Viviana Pimental

Class of 2021



Viviana Pimental, a first-generation college student, transferred to CSUCI from Porterville College in central California. She studied human biology with a minor in Chicano Studies and graduated in Spring of 2021. Viviana is also a member of CSUCI Corps, a community service initiative that partners CSUCI, federal work study, and community partners. As a part of the program, she works as an America Reads tutor at Somis Elementary where she works part-time with 1st through 5th graders. In the future, she hopes to find a career that intersects between medicine and children.

Viviana is no stranger to volunteering. While living in central California, she volunteered with the Homeless Project and Helping Hand; two organizations that provided direct services to the homeless population. She says, “Volunteering helps to open your eyes to the world and give you a sense of purpose. I like being a person that others can go to for help.” In the Spring of 2018, Viviana helped organize an immigration rights march in Delano, California. Over 100 people, mostly young adults, marched through city for four hours. Just a year later, Delano became a sanctuary city—only the second city to do so in the central valley. Now, Viviana brings that passion to give back to her community to CSUCI. When asked what her favorite part of being at CSUCI was, she said, **“I’m not a minority here. I don’t feel small; instead, I feel like my voice matters.”**

Staci Mallett
minored in
Social Business
and participated in

Staci Mallett

the service-learning class Business 301: Social Business Planning. Social Business is a modern approach to business created by Muhammad Yunus in which positive social change is created through a fully self-sustainable business. “I knew that the minor involved service-learning, which I was really excited about because I wanted to work with a community partner and to be able

to see the results of our work.” Staci served with Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP). MICOP is a non-profit organization that provides assistance to the Mixtec community in Ventura County. Staci’s group is focusing on the translation services that MICOP provides to the community. “[We are] developing a plan for them to be a 100%,

fully sustainable business in order to always have interpreters for the Mixtec people whenever it is needed.” Staci’s work with MICOP includes writing a business plan, revamping the website, analyzing competitors, and working one-on-one with community partners in order to best serve MICOP’s needs in a political and social landscape.

The Mixtec community does not have any written language, which makes MICOP’s job crucial to their community. As of now, Mixtec-speakers communicate via symbols. “If they have to go to the hospital and they have to get medication, the medication will have a sun on it if they need to take it in the morning or if they need to take it at night it will have

a moon”. The work that MICOP and Staci are doing is extremely important in providing more opportunities for the indigenous people.

“Another element to service with [MICOP] is helping them be part of mainstream society while also preserving their culture.” Cultural preservation is and always will be a very difficult feat; however, Staci says that, “It is a community effort. It is also about having inclusion and helping people understand that inclusion involves helping people to preserve their culture.”

“I’m very adamant about the philosophy: ‘When one falls we all fall, when one succeeds we all succeed.’”

Class of 2017

Angad's experience with community service began with planting trees and cleaning arroyos in middle school. From that point on, his passion for creating change gradually led to larger-scale projects and events such as Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, and Invincible—a benefit concert that he planned and produced himself. As an artist, Angad finds inspiration from all facets of life, so when asked about his inspiration to serve, he had this to say: "Most of my service and volunteer work is centered [around] those who simply don't have the resources. As somebody who has always lived in a way that I didn't have to worry about when my next meal was coming, when I didn't have to worry about medical assistance and didn't have to worry about anything, I thought, 'I can give back and help people bridge that gap.'"

Voices of CI 2016-2017

Angad Gill

Elmar Navarette

Voices of CI 2016-2017

As an 18 year-old, Elmer Navarette's primary aspiration was to travel the world. However, since the circumstances of his old neighborhood limited his options to do so, the military was the doorway he used to explore his fascination with travel. Elmer spent two years of high school as a member of The Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). This program teaches high school students the values of character education, student achievement, wellness, leadership, and diversity. For Elmer, the program acclimated him to military culture, which would ultimately be a factor that swayed his decision to join the United States Army. "It was very influencing in my life because I was able to meet a lot of cool people—a lot of veterans that were in different wars, from the Vietnam War up to the original Iraq War."

Elmer served in the Army for five years as a French

and Spanish linguist, but notes that his growth was not limited to this one job. "It was more about learning how to be a team leader for a lot things since I was delegated to that role. A lot of it is learning as you go." His experience also helped him to have better organizational skills and interact with other people. As a self-identified introvert, constant interaction with people from various cultures and mindsets helped him learn how to express himself. "What I learned most is to be independent and how to rely on yourself while relying on people when you



need to. It was a great team building station because you are forced into helping out or learning about yourself through the reflection of others." When asked what service means to him, he had this to say: "[Service is] growing beyond your own world and trying to help others, seeing that you are not the only one that matters in this life and trying to reach out to other people. Trying to help out in any way you can is what service is. Just putting yourself aside and just helping out others."



Kyle Ball

Kyle Ball transferred to CSUCI in the Fall of 2018, after serving eight years with the U.S. Coast Guard. While traveling with the military, Kyle saw the beauty of untouched places, just as he saw the devastation of anthropogenic activities. He knew he wanted to preserve natural beauties. When Kyle arrived at CSUCI, he was even more inspired to do so.

Kyle joined the student club Green Generation and served as president for the 2019-2020 school year. Green Generation appealed to him because members have the unique opportunity to practice their passion; protecting and preserving the earth for future generations. Green Generation gathers intellectual peers who want to make a difference on campus through small intentional changes.



During his leadership, Green Generation hosted the California Coastal Commission's annual September Beach Cleanup at Calleguas Creek and attended a public meeting to discuss oil drilling in the Oxnard Plains. During the meeting, Green Generation pleaded with the Ventura County Board of Supervisors for a

moratorium. The club also won CSUCI's Legacy Award for the most Outstanding Student Club & Organization for the 2019-2020 school year.

Kyle has led students through many triumphs and successes, including helping to establish a battery tube in Broome Library, renovating the Healing Garden on campus, organizing a group of students to attend a Climate Strike in downtown Ventura, and receiving a grant of \$16,000 for a campus charging station. Kyle also participated in numerous beach and campus cleanups, a kayak cleanup with The Boating Center, and raised awareness on campus about overflowing trash cans, in which he was able to get a hotline number started to reach someone when the cans were full.

Kyle has always been a firm believer in leaving behind something better than when we first arrived and thinks volunteer work makes the world a better place. As an Environmental Science & Resource Management major and a recent CSUCI grad, he is humbled by the next generation's stance towards environmental justice.

Voices of CI 2019-2020

Alviana Johnson

Alviana is a committed leader and servant of her peers, CSUCI, and those who encounter her path. She advocates for equity in spaces where the fight for justice is long overdue and often overlooked.

As a student experiencing food insecurity, Alviana understood the struggles some students silently endure. She was also aware of how the University could assist these students. Alviana collaborated with University Advancement to promote the Hot Meals Program, for which she was able to raise over \$6,000. Acting as an intermediary, Alviana worked to expand vital resources for students by fostering donations while simultaneously broadcasting these resources to the internal and external community of CSUCI. She helped launch the Inaugural Class Gift Campaign that engaged over 20% of the 2019 graduating class. She contributed to laying the foundation for the 2020 class gift that engaged 24% of the graduating class. Plus, Alviana raised over \$7,000 before the transition to virtual learning.

Alviana embodies the characteristics of an engaged CSUCI student: involved, informed about societal issues, and dedicated to being a socially responsible individual by serving her community.

“Alviana Johnson changed my life.”

Like a lot of other people, I could speak at length about how strong, courageous, and inspirational Alviana is. But what can easily be overlooked in a list of characteristics is the person behind them and the impact that person has had on those around them. Yes, Alviana is strong. But she's also used that strength to overcome difficulties I could never even imagine having to face in my own life.

Yes, Alviana is courageous. But she's also used that courage to speak up and speak out, and to share her personal story as a living example for others. And yes, Alviana is inspirational. But she's also used that inspiration to help ensure that one day no other CSU student will ever have to endure the type of hardship she once did. I believe we reveal who we truly are through our communication with others. As a result, I can't think of a more deserving recipient for this year's CCE Student Award than Alviana Johnson – not just for the list of characteristics she embodies, but rather for all she's done to flex and wield those characteristics for the selfless benefit of countless others.”

Nomination by Jacob Jenkins
Voices of CI 2019-2020

Sometimes, the most influential people in our lives are our parents. And, for Jennifer Corpus, that meant growing up in an environment that values helping others. Her parents showed her the importance of being there for her neighbors in a time of need, whether family member or stranger. “Knowing you are making a difference in someone else's life is something extraordinary,” Jennifer shares.

Throughout high school, she volunteered with campus beautification projects and, most recently, joined us at the sat'wiwa trail restoration event. Jennifer is also a member of the CCE's CSUCI Corps program, tutoring 6-12-year olds at University Preparation Charter School. She loves the interaction she has with the children and how their faces light up when they learn new words and concepts. She looks forward to volunteering with the Ventura County Search & Rescue team, once she turns 21 years of age, as this organization aligns with her love of hiking, the outdoors, and service.

Jennifer's volunteer experiences has given her a whole new understanding of the world; and wants to use those experiences to make her community a better place. Jennifer believes that her volunteer experiences have helped give her confidence and become a more open person. According to Jennifer, she used to be shy and closed off but working in the community has helped her feel more comfortable around other people.



“[It's] important that no matter what we do, any small act of kindness or anything that we think is small can make someone's day. We never know what others are going through and it's important to keep that in mind. Carry with you a joyful spirit and it will spread and catch on to others.”

Jennifer Corpus
Voices of CI 2019-2020

“Jennifer is a hard worker and dedicated to helping others. She loves working with the CSUCI Corps program and her job at the elementary school. Jennifer recently has started helping at a wellness center in Ventura, which serves the community as well as focuses on providing resources to many of the homeless population in the community. Overall, she is a genuinely nice person to be around and has an incredible work ethic.”

- Voices of CI Nomination

Patricio Ruano

Patricio Ruano is a first-generation college graduate who double majored in Biology and Global Studies.

Patricio volunteered for nearly two years in the Leaders in Education Awareness [LEAP] and volunteered with the annual Science Carnival. Through a collaboration between LEAP and Dr. Phillip Hampton, he was able to help create the “LEAPing into Science” program. This program offers a unique opportunity for K-8 students to visit CSUCI and learn about higher education with a special emphasis on STEM within the college world. He recalled, “I remember there was a little girl from LEAP that thanked me by giving me a squishy turtle toy. I overheard her telling the chaperone, ‘I wanna be like Patricio one day,’ as she was walking away.” Patricio keeps that turtle on the dashboard of his car, it gives him motivation. **“It’s crazy to think that I played a part in her journey. It makes me want to be the version of Patricio that she saw in me.”**

Amongst his off-campus service work, Patricio’s near two-year involvement with the



“I collect memories of touching moments after helping and unknowingly inspiring someone [...] This pushes me to fulfill the potential that people believe I have and to continue to give back by helping others.”

- **Patricio Ruano,**
CSUCI Class of 2021

COPE Health Scholars program is very meaningful to him. “It’s common to find Spanish-speaking patients that find it difficult to communicate and connect with a provider,” Patricio explains, “Sometimes just having another Spanish speaker in the room can positively impact that patient’s demeanor and communication”. Even though he does not have training in medical translating, he says, “The fact that I earn the patients’ trust and can make them feel better taken care of by speaking to them and reassuring them is awesome.”

Patricio graduated in May 2021 and will attend medical school at Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine (MSU CHM) in the Fall. He was accepted into MSU CHM’s Leadership in Medicine for the Underserved Specialized Education and Training Program. Within MSU CHM and the LMU program, he will not only gain the education to become a physician but will do so with service at the forefront.

Michelle Noyes

Michelle Noyes is a student, an active member of multiple student organizations, and the 2016-2017 President of CSUCI Student Government. Balancing these roles is no small task, but when she does find time, Michelle enjoys dedicating it to the people of her community. “Giving back to people in need that could use my time [and] seeing how people are rewarded from my volunteer work” motivates Michelle’s participation in Gamma Beta Phi and Mortar Board, both of which are service-based honor societies on campus. With these organizations, she participates in events such as Relay for Life and, ‘Walk a Mile in Her Shoes,’ which is an opportunity to raise awareness about the serious causes, effects, and remediation to men’s sexualized violence against women.

Mortar Board is an honor society specifically for students in senior standing (90 credits or more) that selects students for their achievement in academics,

leadership, and service. What differentiates Mortar Board from Gamma Beta Phi is a student’s standing. Students can only qualify to be in Mortar Board during their senior year. During the 2016-2017 school year, Mortar Board planned multiple service days for its members that include outreach to youth about the importance of education. As an incoming freshman Michelle’s goal was to be a part of an honor society. At first, she kept missing the 3.5 GPA qualification by a slight margin. But, Michelle remained persistent and managed to join during her sophomore year. “I was really excited to be a part of a community that are involved and still dedicating their time to the community. I thought that it was really amazing seeing what students are doing and to strive to be more like them and volunteer more.”



“You see the difference [service] makes and if I have time, I want to dedicate it to something of importance.”

– Michelle Noyes

Voices of CI 2016-2017

Crystal Altman

Crystal grew up in Oxnard, CA and attended St. Bonaventure High School in Ventura, CA. A big motivator in choosing CSUCI was her desire to stay local in order to support her son, Roman.

Despite her obligations to her family and as a student, Crystal served as the president of Physician Assistant Student Club. When she first joined the club as a founding member, she discovered the opportunity to volunteer at Food Share. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 50,000 families received food distributions from Food Share. That number has since doubled, with about 103,000 families served per week at drive-thru pantries across the county. Crystal’s struggle with poverty allows her to connect with her motivations to volunteer. “I feel a personal connection because I know how it feels not to have resources,” Crystal shares. “So many people helped me out when we were down. If I didn’t receive the help that I had when my son was first born, that could have been me. It definitely hits home. It’s important to give back to people, especially with kids.”

Crystal also has volunteered at Midnight Mission, a non-profit facility in downtown Los Angeles, where she helped prepare dinner and fed about 1,000-2,000 homeless individuals a



week before Thanksgiving. “It definitely changed my outlook on the homeless population,” Crystal recalled meeting a patron that graduated from Yale: “It was unique seeing different populations of homeless and seeing that human aspect of them, as we as a society typically do not get out into the street and talk to them.”

After graduation, Crystal plans to attend a Physician Assistant program in California. “I would like to stay in California because it is such a diverse area,” Crystal shares. It is her priority to treat a widely diverse population in all aspects (DACA-status, LGBTQ+ status, race, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.) Crystal has a bright future ahead of her and she looks back fondly at her time at CSUCI. “Since CSUCI is a newer campus, I am very grateful that students are able to create new opportunities and connect with faculty that help you succeed and help you do the best you can.”



Voices of CI 2020-2021

Voices of CI 2015-2016

Angie Garellick

Angie Garellick studied biology at CSU-CI. She has been actively serving her community since she was young. As she got older, Angie began to expand her philanthropic work and focused on something that really interested her. “Any chance I could get to work with animals or help them, that’s what really drove me to do those things because it was also really fun. It didn’t even feel like work. I think that’s what motivated me and got me into service.” Angie served at the Marine Mammal Center in Morro Bay for over six years. “It’s basically rescuing and rehabilitating sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters, elephant seals, and the occasional dolphin that pops up on the beach.”



Voices of CI 2016-2017

Elizabeth Heim

Elizabeth Heim’s interest in community engagement started at a young age. In middle school she participated in the California Junior Scholarship Federation. This led her to volunteering at Atria Senior Living of Santa Clarita (formerly known as Summerhill Villa). “After fulfilling the 10-hour service requirement, I grew attached to the residents of the facility, and affectionately became known to some residents as their granddaughter. I volunteered there for the remainder of my time in Santa Clarita, CA until I graduated high school.” Her daily activities at the center included serving snacks, performing on the piano for residents before dinner, and keeping them company during her volunteer shift. Elizabeth has developed such a relationship with the site and residents that she still served there during breaks in semester.

“After getting comfortable with CI, I decided to branch out within the surround-

ing community. I have volunteered at Habitat for Humanity of Ventura County, which is an organization that builds homes for low-income families, and is currently working on an eight-home build in Santa Paula, CA. I have also participated in countless Volunteer Projects with the CCE’s on their service days.” Elizabeth chooses to serve because of her sense of social responsibility to help address social issues. “I’m very passionate about prominent social issues, such as homelessness, drug addiction, domestic violence, etc. As a Political Science major, my goal is to work in Congress to fight current laws that are preventing progress in these areas.” During her undergraduate studies, Elizabeth became “even more inspired to fight these issues and work to help these people that desperately need it.”

“I feel that volunteering is an activity that is taken for granted quite often. An hour out of my—or anyone’s—day can make a big impact on someone else’s week. It means a lot to them. So, in turn, it means a lot to me.”

Yareli Moreno, CSUCI class of 2022, studied Biology. “Moving from my small hometown, Delano, was a very daunting task,” Yareli recalls, “It was scary to move without any of my family and friends for support. But, I knew I wanted more academic and volunteer opportunities during my time in college. At the end of the day, it was a decision I made for myself.” Yareli has dedicated a lot of time volunteering to give back to the local community, primarily Oxnard, since it reminds her a bit of her hometown. “Where I grew up, there was a good number of underserved families, agricultural workers, and health disparities, but not enough volunteers. When I moved here, I found that Oxnard faces the same obstacles and just reminds me of a larger version of the city I know to be home.”



Yareli Moreno

Yareli contributes to her CSUCI campus community by serving as the Community Service Events Organizer for the Empowered Womxn of Color Club. During Dia de Los Muertx, she celebrated this remembrance holiday in a meaningful way with her club; they were able to engage the campus community by making letters to loved ones that had passed and hung them up in a display to honor those individuals. “It made me happy to share a part of my culture with other students, especially those that did not know a lot about Dia de Los Muertx beforehand.”

In addition to this, Yareli was able to find meaningful volunteer experiences off-campus. She served in a local project that aims to give backpacks and school supplies away for free to POC and underserved families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Oxnard (pictured below). “Families were lined up since the morning, and the drive ended around 5 pm. I was lucky to be there because a lot of volunteers did not speak Spanish and most recipients were Spanish speakers. I felt like my biggest contribution that day was being able to translate to make sure everyone got what they needed before they went back home.” Yareli has also volunteered with her family at a local food drive in Oxnard during Thanksgiving to serve food to families that could not afford their own dinner.

Voices of CI 2020-2021

Noah Tyler Ratley

Noah Tyler Ratley was first exposed to community service in middle school through his involvement with Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a college readiness program with a required service component. In high school, he was persuaded to join Key Club International, where he participated in volunteer events weekly. These events included volunteering at marathons, homeless shelters, and providing relief during the Thomas Fire. Currently, Noah Tyler is a volunteer with the American Red Cross, the Interact Club, and is the president of Circle K International at CSU. Circle K International is a service club that aims to promote leadership and fellowship while volunteering in the community at least once a month.

As an individual, service has had a positive impact on his life. It has strengthened his ability to assist others when needed, increased his ability for public speaking, problem solving and holding high-level conversations. At the community level, Noah Tyler feels the impact is small, yet powerful, as it helps make direct personal connections with those in need at homeless shelters, local farms, or elementary schools. Recently, Noah Tyler was diagnosed with depression and volunteering in the community has acted as an escape for him. He says volunteering helps him feel good and it is something that everyone can do; "Any act of humanity is volunteering." He hopes that others will follow his passion for service and realize just how easy it is to help others.



Derek Flores, a first-generation student researcher at CSUCI, graduated in May of 2021. While wrapping up his undergraduate program as a Biology major with a Chemistry minor, he reflected on his motivation for volunteering: "I come from a family of low-income Latino immigrants, so I lived in a world of constant financial, medical, and legal issues. Growing up and sharing stories of hardships with others has caused me to have an altruistic outlook in life. I aim to better myself so that I can give back to my local community."

Derek has been very active during his time at CSUCI with club participation, hospital internships, and community events. He has held three consecutive officer/leadership roles for the Pre-Medical AMSA Chapter on CSUCI's campus, including serving as club president for the 2019-2020 academic year. He has plans to attend medical school to become a physician. "At my core, I'm the little boy that wanted to learn the world, but never really had a father-figure or role model to show me the way. Now that I am an adult, I was able to take this helpless energy and use it to help others who experience life's struggles. I have the tools

Derek Flores

"There's something about having your own set of responsibilities, struggling in your own way, and still finding time to give selflessly to others that makes me feel complete. Seeing the smiles and experiencing the 'aha' moments make the effort worthwhile."

- Derek Flores
Class of 2021

and ability to teach someone who's down and out how to get up."

His most meaningful volunteer experience is his work in the COPE Health Scholars program, where he served over 500 direct-patient care hours at St. John's Regional Medical Center and Pleasant Valley Hospital. His experience of ambulating, transporting, feeding, and changing hospitalized patients within various departments of the hospital fills him with feelings of humility and fulfillment. "I believe that we all have two obligations as humans. The first is to reach our true potential as individuals. The second is to uplift and aid those around us. We are all we got."



Camila Guzman is an alumna of CSUCI. She graduated in 2018 with a B.S. in Environmental Science & Resource Management (ESRM). Prior to her graduation, she completed a capstone project that showcased three easy at-home methods to participate in composting. As Camila developed her project, it gained attention from her cohort as it was a unique, but simple, way to utilize soil towards global warming reduction efforts. She felt inspired to turn the capstone project into a community project from the support of her peers and mentors, as something like this did not exist for Ventura County at the time. And thus, Queen of Compost was born!

Camila Guzman

Camila describes Queen of Compost as “a community compost project that is volunteer-based outdoor learning experience.” Volunteers help compost food waste, turn/maintain compost piles, and feed/water fruit trees. Camila hopes that volunteers become involved due to their curiosity but leave with valuable information about earth processes and feelings of accomplishment.

Camila’s motivation to start collecting and composting community food scraps goes back to her peers within her major during her days at CSUCI. “They gave me a lot of support to take my compost capstone project into the greater community,” Camila

“If people can compost on a small scale in their homes, think about how this could be amplified. One person can reclaim their food waste and feel empowered to make bigger changes that positively impact our soils and planet.”

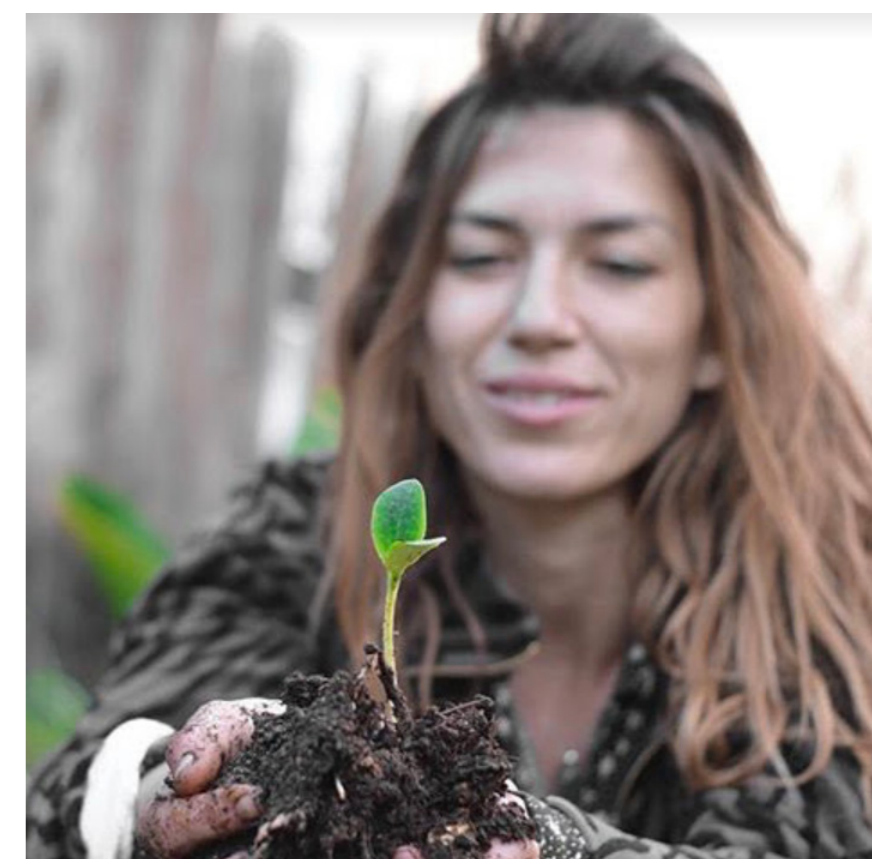
- Camila Guzman
CSUCI Class of 2018

shares. Queen of Compost has helped over 150 community members in diverting over 15,000 pounds of food waste from going to the landfills and back into our local soils. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Camila has established a pick-up service to continue composting efforts. “I feel like the project evolves more and more every week. By building better soils, we are building healthier and more resilient communities.”

Camila has plans to expand the Queen of Compost into a full-time project and has desired to talk to the local farm worker community to advocate for them and bring back the knowledge they hold regarding agriculture back into the community. “Ventura County has valuable agricultural land, and it is almost doing the community disservice to not learn about the soil. Farm workers are valuable, we should listen to what they know and give them a space to share what they know.”



Check out [@queenofcompost](https://www.instagram.com/queenofcompost) on Instagram to learn more about composting and volunteering.



The evolution and expansion of CSUCI's culture of service is also reliant on the continued efforts of its faculty and staff. Without the dedication of those teaching service-learning courses, many students may not have found the local projects and non-profits that inspire them to continue service. The staff and faculty that make time for activism and volunteerism outside of their daily obligations act as role models for CSUCI's population and strengthen the Community Engagement.

Staff &

The following pages share a few highlights of our many motivated and engaged campus workers: **Nancy (Nien Tsu) Chen, Andrew Morris, Michelle Hasendonckx, Gayle Hutchinson, Melissa Remotti, and Maggie Tougas.**



Faculty

STORIES OF SERVICE, ACTIVISM, AND SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE FACULTY AND
STAFF AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
CHANNEL ISLANDS
(2015-2022)

Nancy Chen



Voices of CI 2015-2016

Dr. Nancy (Nien Tsu) Chen, who teaches in the Communication program, helped start the Alhambra Source five years ago while she was in her PhD program at USC. Alhambra Source is a website that provides news to the predominantly immigrant area of the San Gabriel Valley. It shares local information in English, Spanish and Mandarin so those whose second language is English can become informed and civically engaged in their community.

Dr. Chen is passionate about the work she puts into this news source because of her ethnic background. She shared that she relates to the problems that new immigrants face because of her own experiences or awareness of those problems. The goal of this website is to connect residents of diverse backgrounds and empower them to participate in the local decision-making process. Dr. Chen continues to contribute to the Alhambra Source in order to provide this service to the community of the San Gabriel Valley.

Andrew Morris

In 2006, Dr. Andrew Morris started a cycling team at CSUCI called the Cycling Dolphins. The team was created with a goal of raising funds for the Multiple Sclerosis Society through MS Rides. MS Rides are some of the largest organized charity events in the world, and they require participants to cycle approximately 150 miles in a two-day span.

In order to participate in these MS rides, each rider would need to raise a minimum of \$350. The funds raised by each participant who rode from start to finish would support and provide services to individuals with multiple sclerosis and their families. Dr. Morris combined his passion for cycling and the opportunity to serve the MS Society to create the Cycling Dolphins. Although Dr. Morris eventually disbanded the team, in a three-year span the Cycling Dolphins raised around \$20,000 for the MS Society.

Voices of CI 2015-2016



Michelle Hasendonckx

Dr. Michelle Hasendonckx, a Camarillo/Somis native, has a long-standing passion for being involved in her own community. At a very young age, she knew that service and volunteer work was important and felt called to contribute to something greater than herself. Serving her community has helped connect Dr. Hasendonckx to incredible people and leaders. It has also made her feel a part of something positive, which is much needed in the world today. She says that getting to know her neighbors and building relationships across differences is a wonderful way to rejuvenate herself. "It's also just fun doing something positive with other people!"

Dr. Hasendonckx has been part of the CSUCI community for the past five years. Trained with a master's degree in Education and a doctorate in Educational Leadership, she is the Vice President for Student Academic Success & Equity Initiatives and regularly interacts with PEEP (Peer Education & Equity Programs) students. As part of the Board of Directors for CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy) Action Fund, she has helped organize fundraiser events as well as contribute to important issues, such as the recently defeated proposal for the Puente Power Plant in Oxnard. Influenced by the high incidence of cancer that has affected multiple members of her family, Dr. Hasendonckx is also a team captain for Relay for Life of Oxnard. For the past three years, she has led teams to raise funds and improve the lives of those affected by cancer. In collaboration with the LA Kings (go Kings go!), she coordinated a fundraiser on Hockey Fights Cancer night, selling 47 tickets to the game. In addition, she is also passionate about the electoral process and has canvassed neighborhoods to encourage people to vote.

"It is one thing to give your time, but it is also important to understand the structures behind the issues you are working on. I think an informed public leads to a healthier community and we must be engaged in local issues and work together for the sake of our future."

Voices of CI 2019-2020



Melissa Remotti

Melissa Remotti was previously the Director of Special Projects and Operations for the Office of the President, but she is also a Reiki Therapy Volunteer at the St. John's Cancer Center. Reiki is a Japanese healing technique based on the principle that the therapist can channel energy into the patient by means of touch, to activate the natural healing processes of the patient's body and restore physical and emotional well-being. "I became a Reiki Practitioner in 1997. When I moved to California from the East Coast in 2004, I found an amazing group of fellow practitioners and Reiki Masters who became instant dear friends." One of her friends actually inspired her to serve as a practitioner for the Cancer Center at St. John's Medical Center in Oxnard.

"The joy I felt through helping cancer patients and their caregivers was contagious, and I felt compelled to join her in sharing

the gift of Reiki with people who truly needed and appreciated the service." Her daily routine would include giving Reiki treatments to cancer patients and their caregivers. This allowed for incredible moments and wonderful, new relationships to be made with her patients. Moments of happiness, sadness, pain, and joy came as she helped patients battle their cancer. Melissa Remotti has been volunteering at the Cancer Center for more than 10 years and she says that, "Volunteering at St. John's has been the most rewarding experience of my life. I am able to support others who are going through times of extreme stress and fear, or happiness and joy. I can see the relief of a cancer patient who has had a hard day and after a Reiki session feels relieved and more centered."

Dr. Gayle Hutchinson believes that service-learning is a key element in students' personal growth and community understanding.

"It is important for students to have that experience [...] They learn a lot about themselves through the process but they learn about wherever they happen to be working or helping out. Service-learning allows the students to directly learn about the mission of that entity and how it contributes to the community around them."

Voices of CI 2015-2016



Melissa volunteers for two different Centers at St. John's. Her other volunteer position is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) as a Cuddler. Cuddlers provide therapeutic talk and touch which helps preemies grow faster, so they can go home to their families sooner (Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach). "Both my twin niece and nephew were preemies and stayed in the NICU for a considerable time after their birth. I spent many hours there with them and with the amazing nurses and volunteers that helped to care for them. Later, when the volunteer program was looking for NICU cuddlers, I thought it would be a perfect way to give back to those who had done so much for my family and to assist other families who were going through similar experiences."

Melissa's daily routine in the NICU includes: restocking supplies, cleaning equipment, holding and rocking little ones who needed cuddling. "I was able to be there in NICU during times of the day when my friends could not. It was such an incredibly special experience to have been able to be there for them in that way-one that I will always treasure and be grateful! [...] I can see the gratitude in parent's eyes when they enter the NICU and know that their little one is getting extra love and attention. I get to hear from those I work with about how much what I am doing is helping them. And, most poignantly, as some of the people that I become close to pass on, it reminds me of the how important it is to make the most of each moment in life and to treasure time with loved ones."



"Sharing Reiki is a passion for me and helping others feel better through something as simple and profound as Reiki energy is absolutely the most rewarding experience I have ever had."

- Melissa Remotti

Maggie Tougas

Voices Of CI 2021-2022



Springs Fire (2013) view from CSUCI

Maggie Tougas is peculiar.

In chaos, she thrives. In disaster, she shines. Beginning her career path as a gang and narcotics analyst, building her own private consulting business, and eventually becoming CSUCI's Emergency Manager, Maggie has never been drawn to the mundane.

“Emergency Managers, we’re peculiar. We get excited and want to respond when a disaster happens. [We’re] getting calls over the weekend to know if there’s something to worry about. You just can’t shut it off.”

As California moves through waves of disasters, Maggie serves as a safeguard and healer for the community. After the Thomas Fire spread across Ventura County, she stepped forward to lead in the recovery: assisting survivors in rebuilding and restoring the community.

On the morning of November 8, 2018, Maggie awoke to dozens of missed calls. There had been a shooting in Thousand Oaks. “I need you to come to work, check-in, and go to the command post. We need you to be our liaison up there.” Maggie rushed to Borderline Bar & Grill to track down any

students, faculty, or staff who may have been injured. “We actually had fifty students in the bar that night, not just ten. Fifty. We had the most students out of all the Ventura County campuses.”

Hours later, she was evacuating campus remotely from Ventura County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), passing on instructions to staff and student assistants as the Woolsey Fire ripped through the mountains. With roads closing to contain the fire, students, faculty, and staff were unable to leave CSUCI during the evacuation. “It was a nightmare. Nobody could get out.”

Following these incidents, CSUCI decided to shut down the campus for two weeks, allowing the community to process these events. Meanwhile, Maggie did what she does best: mend. In response to the Borderline Bar & Grill Shooting, Maggie supported CSUCI in raising funds through the Chancellor's Office and local groups to provide counseling services to the CSUCI community.

With each disaster, Maggie Tougas takes a step further. She reaches past her position as Emergency Manager and meets the needs of the community. Some days she's holding someone's hand after an emergency, helping citizens access local resources, or complete FEMA applications. Other days, she's drafting award-winning emergency plans, later to be adopted throughout the CSU system and the state of California.

In all of her accomplishments, Maggie maintains humility and graciousness toward her colleagues. “I'm learning something every day from another agency, from another person, from my colleagues here at work.

During an emergency, we come together as a team, all departments on campus, and our EOC Team.”

Maggie also engages in community service. In the wake of the Thomas Fire, she stepped up as the Long-term Recovery Lead for Ventura County Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VC VOAD). For over eight years she has served as a chairperson for this non-profit, dedicating her spare time to improving outcomes for those affected by

disasters.

Yes, Maggie Tougas is peculiar. She is peculiar because, regardless of the situation, she jumps right in. She is peculiar because whenever disaster strikes, she has a unique ability to organize, regroup, and recover. Whatever comes her way, she takes in stride, bringing the community together through public service and volunteerism.

As an Emergency Manager, the job gets under your skin. You can't shut it off. Ever. You just want to be there to help make things better for the community. So, we, as Emergency Management oddballs, run into the fire just as others are running out.



After the 2014 Mudslides, Maggie stands on top of a house assessing damage of local buildings.



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