

Channel

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS

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MAGAZINE

Guardians of the Waterways

CSUCI researchers find microplastics in moon jellies p. 14

Changing lives, impacting communities

IN MAY, CAL STATE CHANNEL ISLANDS HELD ITS largest commencement ceremonies ever, celebrating along with a record number of graduates and more than 20,000 of their closest family members and friends. It has been an honor to assist in the academic journey of these students and watch them realize their greatest educational aspirations.

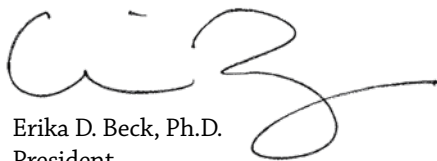
At the ceremonies, I had the pleasure of awarding honorary doctorates to four individuals known for their extraordinary contributions to CSUCI, for raising academic achievement and opportunity for economically vulnerable and historically underserved student groups, and for their outstanding achievements in the community. It was a great honor to recognize these remarkable individuals and I hope you enjoy learning more about them on pages 10-11.

At CSUCI, we are known for hands-on, immersive learning experiences that take students out of the classroom and allow them to serve as a social and intellectual resource to the community. For example, our students had the opportunity to study the presence of microplastics in moon jellyfish proliferating in the Channel Islands Harbor (pages 14-15) and to help recover remains lost in the Woolsey Fire (page 5). These examples typify the signature academic experiences our faculty regularly facilitate to provide our students with the critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills needed to thrive in today's innovation economy.

The good work happening on campus also extends to our community more broadly. Last year, in partnership with SAGE Publishing, our campus commissioned Beacon Economics to conduct a study examining the economic impact of the University on our region, as well as on the state. I think you will find the results of this study compelling (pages 6-7) as they detail the considerable economic, social and fiscal effects Cal State Channel Islands has on California, and Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

As we look forward to the start of a new academic year, we will continue to focus on increasing graduation rates, decreasing equity gaps in student performance and providing enhanced access to the transformative power of higher education. I look forward to welcoming thousands of new students to our academic community and continuing to reimagine higher education to serve a new generation and era.

Sincerely,



Erika D. Beck, Ph.D.
President





Channel is an official publication of California State University Channel Islands. It is published twice a year for students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community at-large by the Communication & Marketing office within the Division of University Advancement.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please send correspondence to: csuci.news@csuci.edu or CSU Channel Islands, Communication & Marketing, One University Drive, Camarillo, CA 93012-8599, 805-437-8415.

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CSUCI researchers find microplastics in moon jellies
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CSU Channel Islands Mission Statement

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

If you would like to be added to our email or mailing list for University events or special announcements, please submit your contact information to: csuci.news@csuci.edu



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Channel

MAGAZINE

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Hockey Club: Rookies of the Year



Left to Right: Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Senate Pro Tempore Toni Atkins, Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, President Beck, Minority Leader: Senator Shannon Grove, and Democratic Caucus Chair: Senator Connie Leyva.

President Beck named Woman of the Year

By Kim Lamb Gregory

PRESIDENT ERIKA BECK TRAVELED TO Sacramento this spring for a ceremony honoring her as Senate District 19 Woman of the Year. State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) selected Beck because of her dedication to seeing that all students have a chance for a quality education, and because Jackson believes Beck is an inspiring role model. The Woman of the Year celebration in Sacramento has been happening since 1987.

“Erika Beck is a committed advocate for quality education and a dedicated community volunteer,” Jackson said. “Her academic credentials, experience and contributions to our community make her an inspiration to young women and girls everywhere. I am proud to honor CSUCI President Erika Beck as the Senate District 19 Woman of the Year.”

In honor of Women’s History Month, each of the 121 state senators choose an outstanding woman from their district for the annual event. The Senate and Assembly-wide ceremony took place March 4 during the regular floor session.

When their names were announced, each senator and his or her choice for Woman of the Year walked together to the podium to accept a large, framed certificate.

Beck said she is proud to be President of a university that has achieved so much since she took the reins in 2016, including being ranked 23rd in the nation for improving the social and economic mobility of its students and experiencing record numbers of graduates each year, making CSUCI the fastest-growing campus in the California State University system.

The release of an economic impact study also found that CSUCI generated \$517 million in economic output in California in 2016 alone.

“As President of CSU Channel Islands, I am deeply honored to receive this award, which truly is a reflection of the tremendous work our entire University is doing to transform the lives of our students and our community,” Beck said.

Jackson’s district encompasses all of Santa Barbara County and western Ventura County, part of the broad region served by CSUCI.

Closer to home, Beck enjoyed local honors with celebrations in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The Santa Barbara “Women of the Year” event took place in late March followed by a celebration in Ventura the next day. In addition to Beck, Senator Jackson and Assembly member Monique Limon recognized three other exceptional women from Ventura County. ♦c

Unique expertise brings solace and closure to families after tragedy

By Zoe Lance

IN DECEMBER 2018, CSUCI ANTHROPOLOGY Professor Colleen Delaney and a team of fellow anthropologists used their expertise to help families affected by the Woolsey Fire.

In natural disasters, people don't just lose everyday items — fires also take photographs, mementos and even loved ones' ashes in cremation urns. The contents of those urns are also referred to as cremains, and they are recoverable if attended to quickly and carefully. As an archaeological anthropologist, Delaney is uniquely equipped to help with this kind of excavation. Her research interests focus on the physical things we make, use and interact with every day.

"A lot of people think that archaeologists just dig up old things," she said. "But we have a skill set that can help with this work, and help people find some solace and closure."

In the aftermath of the fire, the Institute for Canine Forensics, a nonprofit based in Northern California that uses trained dogs to recover cremains, put out a call for anthropologists interested in helping recover cremains. Delaney responded, and was sent to the house of a family looking for their mother's urn.

Recovering cremains is a painstaking process. When she arrived at the burned-down home, Delaney and three other anthropologists walked the property with the family as they described the layout and where they placed the urn in the house.

"It's a bit of therapy and a bit of archaeology," Delaney said. "You have to listen to them as they recount memories and what they lost, and form a connection with them."

Once the team had an idea of where the cremains could be, they sent the dogs to sniff around. They then found a pile of fallen terra cotta tiles from the roof, which had partially protected items by creating a nook. Underneath a pile of wet books and a familiar woven textile, they recovered the bag of ashes.

"We were really lucky — the way the fire happened and the way the roof fell to protect it, the bag of remains did not explode," Delaney said. "When we found the remains, it was very emotional. They could fulfill their mother's last



wish of scattering her ashes."

Fires not only change peoples' lives, but the physical and cultural landscape of the places we live and work in. According to Delaney, scientists can find remains of structures and deduce their histories after a fire to help understand it.

"Fire destroys things, but it also makes it easier to see what was underneath," Delaney said. "We're able to then document new types of sites that people didn't know about or remember, and paint a better picture of how people have lived throughout time."

Delaney is continuing this line of her work. This summer, she will work on a project at CSUCI. The 2013 Springs Fire uncovered a small, historic building on a hillside, and she and a team of students will excavate the site. Through this project, they are looking to learn more about campus history.

"Historians and anthropologists integrate our work into the bigger story of life — we study something so we can prevent it from happening in the future," she said. "There's an applied approach to archaeology that many people don't quite realize, and the reason why we document the past is to inform the present." ♦c

Economic study shows CSUCI's broad impact

By Zoe Lance

ANY GRADUATE OF CSUCI KNOWS THE IMPACT that the University made on their lives, whether it opened up a job opportunity, introduced lifelong friends or awakened a passion for learning.

While the University advances its mission to provide an exceptional educational experience, it is also making an economic impact on California, Ventura County and the region. The costs of running the campus have ripple effects through Camarillo and beyond, supporting California's businesses and organizations along the way.

To better understand these effects, CSUCI embarked on a study in April 2017. The University partnered with SAGE Publishing, which sponsored the study, and Beacon Economics, a Los Angeles-based firm. The California State University had last conducted a systemwide study in 2004-05, and CSUCI wanted to share updated information.

❖ “The CSU and campuses like CSUCI are a driving force behind California’s economic development.”
—President Erika Beck

“The CSU and campuses like CSUCI are a driving force behind California’s economic development,” said CSUCI President Erika Beck. “Higher education institutions perform these studies on a regular basis to understand and share the impact of how a university impacts its community, region and state, and CSUCI wanted to provide a deeper dive on the campus’ economic impact.”

The study’s findings were encouraging. In 2016-17, CSUCI generated \$517.2 million in economic impact, of which \$228.7 million was in Camarillo, Oxnard, Thousand Oaks and Ventura. Throughout the state, CSUCI supported nearly 3,800 jobs and generated \$193.2 million in labor income.

Beacon Economics conducted the study using University-related financial data for the 2016-17 fiscal year, measuring CSUCI’s economic activity on the local, regional and state levels. The study incorporates the direct impact of the institution’s expenditures, as well as the indirect impact of supply chain-related spending.

They first looked at University expenditure data, or the goods and services CSUCI purchased to both keep the campus running and work on expansion. They also

examined student spending — both out-of-pocket educational expenses and financial aid — as well as visitor spending at campus events, from campus preview days to Commencement.

CSUCI made this impact through several other measures. The capital improvement projects of 2016-17 were significant contributors, including work on Sierra Hall, the construction of Santa Rosa Village student housing, and renovating Islands Cafe. It also received over \$4.6 million in faculty research awards, and advanced projects including the Santa Rosa Island Research Station and the Student Research Conference sponsored by SAGE Publishing.

The study also explored how the University’s fiscal impact is tied to its social impact. The annual median earnings for an adult with a bachelor’s degree in Ventura County in 2016 was \$61,900, compared to \$31,400 for an adult with a high school diploma.

Ventura County was recently identified by 24/7 Wall St. as the 6th richest place in the US based on median

household income, median home value, adults with bachelor’s degrees, and the area’s unemployment rate.

While the earning potential of a college

graduate is substantial, so are the societal benefits — including co-curricular opportunities like participating in a community service project or an internship through the Henry L. “Hank” Lacayo Institute for Workforce & Community Studies — which instill a sense of civic engagement.

The University’s commitment to welcoming a student population that is reflective of Ventura County’s demographics also has long-term effects for the diversity of its community.


As CSUCI looks to the future, campus leaders are taking care to share the study’s findings as a proud reflection of the work students, faculty and staff have put into the University.

“The CSU provides the majority of the skilled professional workers that are critical to the state’s knowledge-based industries—industries like agriculture, engineering, business, technology, media and computer science,” Beck said. “Sharing this information helps everyone understand the value of the University and its impact to the communities we serve.” ♦C

To read the complete study, visit: go.csuci.edu/econimp18


CSUCI's economic impact on California, Ventura County and the region

California High-Level Findings




Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Output
Direct Effect*	2,400	\$112,235,000	\$284,590,000
Indirect Effect*	570	\$36,695,000	\$103,176,000
Induced Effect*	800	\$44,256,000	\$129,421,000
Total Effect	3,770	\$193,186,000	\$517,186,000

Ventura County High-Level Findings



Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Output
Direct Effect	1,840	\$64,740,000	\$190,463,000
Indirect Effect	390	\$18,533,000	\$53,708,000
Induced Effect	380	\$17,163,000	\$52,617,000
Total Effect	2,610	\$100,436,000	\$296,788,000

Local Area High-Level Findings



Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Output
Direct Effect	1,470	\$50,232,000	\$150,087,000
Indirect Effect	280	\$13,548,000	\$39,145,000
Induced Effect	290	\$13,017,000	\$39,506,000
Total Effect	2,040	\$76,797,000	\$228,738,000

**Direct Effect: any spending done by an economic agent in a given industry has a direct effect on that industry.*

Indirect Effect: there is a chain of indirect effects on all other industries (the "supply chain") whose outputs are used by the particular industry under observation.

Induced Effects: employment and household spending activity increase as a result of the direct and indirect effects, resulting in further positive economic effects, which are known as induced effects.





Commencement 2019

C SUCI CELEBRATED ITS 17TH COMMENCEMENT with two ceremonies on Saturday, May 18. More than 20,000 parents, families and friends cheered for graduating students who received bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees or credentials during morning and afternoon ceremonies.

This year's ceremonies were held at the University's Central Mall with the iconic Bell Tower building in the background.

Honored staff members selected by President Erika Beck to ring the Navy ship bell, signaling the beginning of the morning ceremony, included Miguel and Adelina Contreras, who work as Catering and Hospitality team members in University Auxiliary Services.

Nancy Covarrubias Gill, Senior Executive Director of University Communication, was selected by the President to ring the Navy ship bell for the afternoon ceremony.

Program Chair and Professor of Psychology Beatrice de Oca was chosen by the President

to carry the Light of Learning for the morning ceremony. Associate Professor of Health Science Carol Mack was chosen to carry the Light during the afternoon ceremony.

Beck and graduating students Atticus Reyes, Student Government President, and Raul Perez, Student Government Vice President, provided remarks during the ceremonies.

During the morning ceremony, honorary Doctor of Humane Letters were awarded to President Sarita E. Brown and Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Deborah A. Santiago of Excelencia in Education. During the afternoon ceremony, an honorary Doctor of Laws was awarded to Laurence K. Gould Jr., and a Doctor of Humane Letters was awarded to Janice Bryant Howroyd, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the ActOne Group (see article on pages 10-11). ♦c

Morning ceremony ► go.csuci.edu/grad19am

Afternoon ceremony ► go.csuci.edu/grad19pm



From left to right: Laurence K. Gould Jr., Deborah A. Santiago, Sarita E. Brown, Janice Bryant Howroyd

Education champions earn honorary doctorates

By Kim Lamb Gregory

FOUR INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED education in unique ways were awarded honorary doctorates at the University's Commencement ceremonies, which took place on May 18 at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

President Erika Beck presented an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to both Founding

President of Excelencia in Education, Sarita E. Brown and Excelencia co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Deborah A. Santiago during the morning ceremony.

At the afternoon ceremony, Beck presented a Doctor of Laws to Los Angeles attorney and former Trustee of the CSU system Laurence K. Gould Jr. and a Doctor of Humane Letters to Janice Bryant Howroyd, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the



ActOne Group.

“These four remarkable individuals have had an extraordinary impact on our University in their own distinctive ways,” said Beck. “From facilitating CSUCI’s establishment to working to raise academic achievement and prepare for career success – they have all helped create opportunity for our students.”

A record 2,700 students were eligible to graduate and about 10,000 guests gathered at each ceremony to watch the students accept their degrees and listen to the honorees address the 2019 graduates.

Brown and Santiago co-founded Excelencia 15 years ago, which is a national non-profit organization working to accelerate Latina/o success in higher education. Brown and Santiago were generous with their expertise when CSUCI became a

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Bryant Howroyd is founder of The ActOne Group, a multibillion-dollar international enterprise that provides talent, technology and business solutions to a wide range of industries. She is known as the first African American woman to create a billion-dollar company.

And Gould, who has practiced law in Los Angeles since 1971, was instrumental in the very beginnings of CSUCI — serving on the CSU Board of Trustees at the same time CSUCI was forming.

All four have removed barriers to education for those who might never have otherwise attended college, helped students with internships, or volunteered their expertise to the continued success of students at CSUCI. ♦C

'CSUCI has been there for us all along'

Meet Distinguished Alumni awardees Andrew and Kirsten Skinner

By Zoe Lance

WHEN ANDREW AND KIRSTEN SKINNER TELL people their feelings about CSU Channel Islands, they don't hold back.

"I tell them that we're not just satisfied with the experience we had," Andrew said. "I tell them that we're the biggest fans of CSUCI."

Since graduating in 2004, the Santa Clarita-based Skinners have stayed engaged in the CSUCI community, using their time and energy to spread the word about the University's educational mission. They are the 2019 recipients of the University's Distinguished Alumni award, which recognizes outstanding alumni for their professional achievements, service efforts and support of the University community.

"When we were at CSUCI, the people you hung out with weren't just your friends — they became your family," Kirsten said. "That's stayed true ever since we've graduated."

The couple met at CSUCI as Business students, taking classes together. They fondly remember the energy of being at the University in the first few years. "It was really neat to be part of the genesis of CSUCI," Andrew said.

Shortly after graduation, Andrew suffered a spinal cord injury in a snowboarding accident. With their family and friends, Andrew and Kirsten worked hard through years of recovery and therapy. In 2008 they co-founded the Triumph Foundation, deciding that they wanted to assist others who were going through similar experiences.

The Southern California-based nonprofit organization has helped over 5,000 children, adults and veterans with spinal cord injuries or disorders. Its team has given out thousands of care baskets, and provided hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of grants and accessibility equipment. They also organize adaptive recreational activities and community fundraisers.

Andrew splits his time between visiting hospitals and managing the foundation's team. Kirsten handles the foundation's operations, and coordinates a partners' support group. They both agree that their experience in CSUCI's Business program, as well as the support of faculty and staff they stayed in touch with throughout Andrew's recovery, has set them up to successfully run a nonprofit.

"What you learn in the classroom is definitely useful in the field," Kirsten said. "The management, bookkeeping, marketing and communication skills you learn are really important."

Andrew believes that his CSUCI education and the skills he learned both in and out of the classroom helped him move forward.

"My injury limits what I am physically able to do, but I have my education to fall back on," Andrew said. "My mind is stronger than ever, and because of my education I was able to find a way to persevere. It lifted me up, and I'm really thankful for the honor of being chosen as a distinguished alumnus."

The Skinners proudly represent CSUCI, and are active members of the Alumni & Friends Association. They hope that their 8-year-old daughter, Betty, decides to be a Dolphin one day.

"CSUCI has been there for us all along," Kirsten said. "It gave us the platform to do incredible things to help other people." ♦C



A fresh start on life

*Kenneth Wiseman,
'19 B.A. Psychology*

By Marya Jones Barlow

KENNETH WISEMAN IS PROOF THAT IT'S NEVER too late to become who we want to be.

He grew up in a dysfunctional home, surrounded by drugs and chaos, sleeping on the floor of a double-wide trailer occupied by 14 kids and six adults.

At age 14, he started abusing hard drugs. He spent his teenage years in and out of juvenile detention and on probation. After losing his mother at age 19 and becoming homeless, Wiseman hit rock bottom and sought help for drug addiction.

Today, he's nine years clean and sober, happily married, and the proud father of four-year-old daughter, Harper. He recently graduated with a 3.8 GPA and a bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSUCI's Extended University in Goleta. His next goal is to join a law enforcement agency and fight crime in his hometown of Placerville.

"I want to do whatever I can to help prevent other children from having to live a life where drugs are more important than their own lives," he said. "I want to find a way to stop people from ruining their lives and the lives of their children. More importantly, I want to find that little boy that I once was and save him before it's too late."

Wiseman says CSUCI Extended University's Psychology program, with its small classes and close-knit community, set him up for success.

"I would recommend my program because of the faculty members, the high level of learning, and the people you meet along the way," he said. "The smaller classes allowed me to form strong personal relationships, and because of that I have made lifetime friends that I will cherish forever. All of the professors were very caring and passionate about teaching. For example, Professor Kimmy Kee-Rose made it a point to call me during the wildfires to make sure my family and I were OK. Moreover, I have to acknowledge (Advancement Administrative Specialist) Clara Valdovinos-Magana because she went above and beyond to make sure my cohort had everything we needed to succeed."

Wiseman obtained his associate degree in Administration of Justice from Folsom Lake College in 2017. At CSUCI, he earned honors each semester



and was inducted into the Mortar Board National Honor Society and Gamma Beta Phi Honor Society while also working as a security guard.

After graduation, Wiseman hopes to enter a criminal justice academy near his hometown of Placerville and one day become a sex crimes investigator.

"I was on the wrong side of the law for a good portion of my life and I want to use that inside knowledge to be successful," he said. "I am proud of the man I am today. I am proud to be a husband, father and friend. I am proud to have been clean and sober for over nine years. I am proud of the life I have created. I am proud of achieving a higher education. I am proud of never giving up when the whole world was against me, when I had nobody but myself, and when the only thing I could do to get through life was to remember what I had been through and have hope for the future. Now I want to help people, I want to make a difference in the world, and I want to change lives." ♦C



Left to Right: ESRM students Ashlee Phelps and Julie McHorney

Guardians of the Waterways

Professor, student researchers find microplastics in harbor moon jellies

By Kim Lamb Gregory

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL Science & Resource Management (ESRM) Clare Steele knelt on a wooden pier at the Channel Islands Harbor and dipped her net into the water.

“Half of being a marine biologist is not falling in,” Steele joked.

She slid her net under a translucent moon jelly, scooped it up and deposited it into a plastic cooler. When she had collected several, she snapped down the top of the cooler and transported the jellies to a CSUCI lab where Steele and her ESRM students would examine the sea creatures for microplastics.

Steele and her students have been conducting studies into microplastics in the ocean for about

four years now, so when thousands of the gelatinous invertebrates swept into the Harbor in early April, Steele and her students decided to test them.

“We found microplastics in all 10 of the jellies we processed,” Steele said. “It’s a representative sample of an organism that has a different feeding mechanism than the ones we’ve looked at so far.” In other words, moon jellies are largely at the mercy of the ocean currents, so they feed on whatever gets caught in the mucus lining of their bell-shaped bodies.

Earlier studies indicating microplastics in the sand of all 50 beaches tested up and down the California coast told Steele and her research team that microplastics are ubiquitous in coastal waters, but the presence of microplastics in moon jellies, which move by pulsing their bells up and down through columns



Left to Right: Assistant Professor of ESRM Clare Steel and ESRM Technician Emily Gaston

of water, are even more of a concern.

"It should concern people that plastics of all sizes are in the oceans and waterways," Steele said.

"Another thing that concerns me is that as plastics break up into smaller and smaller pieces, they become more difficult to detect and difficult to remove."

Plastics in the ocean and estuaries mean plastics are getting into the food chain, and therefore, into us, she

"If we can remove plastics before they get into the ocean, we have a chance to keep them out of the food chain." – Clare Steele

said. "One of the concerns we have with microplastics is that their surfaces have an affinity for attracting environmental chemicals, maybe DDT (a synthetic organic compound used as an insecticide) or some sort of organic pesticides," she said.

The California State Senate invited Steele to testify

about microplastics before a joint hearing of the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality and Committee on Natural Resources and Water on March 20. The hearing preceded the reading of Senate Bill 54, which would, if passed, phase out single-use plastics by 2030.

Whatever lawmakers decide, Steele and her student researchers intend to use scientific methods to keep vigil on California's coastal

waterways. "If we can remove plastics before they get into the ocean, we have a chance to keep them out of the food chain," she said. ♦c

Shining a light on a silent struggle

Alviana Johnson is an advocate for students in need of food and shelter

By Marya Jones Barlow

JUST ONE YEAR AGO, COMMUNICATION major Alviana Johnson was waging a silent struggle. After losing her apartment and her job, her dreams of completing college were slipping away. She slept in her car and came to class tired and hungry, wondering how she was going to make it through the day.

"I didn't want anyone to see me struggling," she said. "I felt devalued as a person. I couldn't focus on school. I was ready to quit."

Her Leadership Studies professor, Jacob Jenkins, Professor of Communication, noticed something was amiss and told Johnson about CSUCI's Basic Needs and Emergency Intervention program, which offers assistance to students experiencing food and housing insecurity. The program provided Johnson with temporary housing and an emergency grant to get her back on her feet.

"Because of that boost, I was able to take the next step and keep going," she said. "Now I have all these open doors in front of me. I am an overcomer. I belong here. My grades are fantastic. I sit in the front in all my classes to let my teachers know I'm here to learn."

Today Johnson shares her story — and the surprising statistics on student food and housing insecurity — to help others. CSUCI estimates that 34% of its students struggle with food scarcity. A recent study by the CSU system revealed that one in 10 CSU students experiences homelessness and four in 10 encounter hunger. Numerous studies have confirmed how food and housing insecurity negatively affect students' academic, mental and physical well-being, and ability to graduate.

As Student Government's Director of External Affairs, Johnson works alongside administrators and peers as an advocate for students who may be silently struggling, helping connect them with resources they need to better navigate the University.

"It could happen to anybody at any time," she said. "Your favorite student could be suffering right now. If I can help keep someone from living in fear of not having their needs met, I will do everything I can."



That's why Johnson was particularly touched when CSUCI's 2019 graduating class chose to raise money for the Hot Meals initiative as its class gift. With a donation of \$10, students could buy a hot meal for a fellow student in need. The class exceeded its goal by more than 34%, with 591 students donating \$6,695 before May 1.

Johnson also was featured in a giving campaign by the University that highlights the importance of the Hot Meals program and Basic Needs Initiative.

"I was amazed and very proud of all the students and alumni who pledged \$10 or more to help their fellow Dolphins," she said. "I'm so grateful that I get to work in Student Government, where I've gained the platform, knowledge and tools to help the entire CSUCI community. Every single person I meet, I'm like, 'How can I educate, encourage, or empower this person?' My goal is to spread love." ♦c

Community commitment

By Zoe Lance

NO TWO DAYS AT CSUCI ARE THE SAME for Jerry Garcia.

One day, he'll help Division of Student Affairs staff configure their file sharing accounts, while the next he'll deploy campus-wide software or meet with students about accessibility needs. Some weeks, he heads off campus as a volunteer first responder for the Ventura County Sheriff's Office.

Garcia is an Information Technology Consultant within the University's Information Technology (IT) Services. He is one of the IT technicians supporting Student Affairs, as well as the Disability Accommodations & Support Services' (DASS) Assistive Technology Specialist. He oversees some aspects of the campus's Alternative Media Program, which serves students who qualify for disability accommodations.

Over the past 10 years, he has helped with training and configuring assistive technology for DASS students and supporting various Student Affairs programs, such as Counseling & Psychological Services, the Multicultural Dream Center, Educational Opportunity Program, Student Support Services, Veterans Affairs, and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Helping members and programs of the CSUCI community is a vocation that's near and dear to his heart.

"I meet with DASS staff to assess, strategize and provide DASS students with accommodations so that they can succeed in their classes," he said. "It feels good to help students, and it's important to me that all of our students have equal access to a college education."

❖ "I feel like I need to give back to the community and help in any possible way I can." — Jerry Garcia

He says that making accommodations for students can range from low-tech adjustments, like lighting for better visibility, to more high-tech modifications like new computer software.

"Technology is everywhere and we can use it to help others in many different ways," Garcia said. "The work we do in IT empowers our students to be able to



obtain the information they need in a more effective and accessible way."

Off campus, he also makes time for community service. When he isn't spending time with his family and fulfilling his role as handler for Doc, CSUCI's campus therapy dog, he is a member of Ventura County's Search and Rescue team.

About five years ago, Garcia joined the team of community members that are on call 24/7 and skilled in search management, emergency medical care and evacuation techniques.

They've responded to fires and mudslides, looking for people that may need help evacuating or getting out of dangerous situations. Using his free time to help Ventura County is especially gratifying to him.

"I feel like I need to give back to the community, and help in any possible way I can," Garcia said. "It feels good to be part of both CSUCI and Ventura County Search and Rescue." ❖c



Rookies of the Year

Hockey Club celebrates its first season of games

By Zoe Lance

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF AT THE ICEOPLEX SKATING rink in Simi Valley, you'll see a group of players sporting jerseys with a fierce, stick-wielding Ekko, having the most fun out of everyone on the ice. This is the CSUCI Hockey Club, a team of students who play for the love of the sport.

"Being in the Hockey Club made my CSUCI experience," said Armon Ebrahimi '19, B.S. Business, who served as the club's Vice President. "It's been wonderful seeing how everyone has grown as players and the team's chemistry."

2018-19 was the first academic year that the Hockey Club played league games. From September to February, they played 18 non-contact games against other adult players from across Ventura County. There are about 15 players on the coed team, with skill levels ranging from first-time-on-the-ice to born-holding-a-hockey-stick.

"One of the aspects that makes CSUCI what it is, is inclusivity and this club embodies that," said Emily Teems '19, B.A. Communication, who served as the club's Treasurer. "It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, everyone is welcome to join and play. That's really special."

Both Ebrahimi and Teems found the hockey club as new transfer students. Ebrahimi, from San Jose, has enjoyed playing goalie since high school. He found the club's table during orientation and had joined the team last year. Teems, from Santa Clarita,

has been playing ice hockey since she was 11 years old and prefers being a winger. She overheard a group of students talking about the club one day and was immediately interested.

Both agree that the club helped to define their CSUCI student experience.

"Once I had a leadership role on campus, I branched out and met more people," Teems said. "I never thought I would be on a school sports club. I really enjoyed the responsibility."

Lauren Zahn, CSUCI Campus Recreation's recreational sports assistant, is the club's staff advisor. The students' commitment to the club and their focus on community building really impressed her. In April, the Hockey Club earned Campus Recreation's Sports Club of the Year award.

"They were determined to build the club and really focused on teamwork and getting people to their games," Zahn said. "They have a passion for hockey and the club's leaders put in a lot of hard work."

While both Ebrahimi and Teems recently graduated, they are both looking forward to seeing the club grow.

"When students hear that there's a hockey sports club, their eyes light up and they start asking a bunch of questions," Ebrahimi said. "It was cool to hear the word spread and that people attended games to support us." ♦C

For more information about the CSUCI Hockey Club, follow them on Instagram @csuci_hockeyclub.

Alumna finds dream work as Doctor of Physical Therapy

Noelle Boudro, '12 B.S. Biology

By Marya Jones Barlow

WHILE VOLUNTEERING AT A HOSPITAL AS A CSUCI student, Noelle Boudro stumbled onto a life-affirming career. Today, she's a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) at Glendale Adventist Medical Center in its neurological rehabilitation center, where she helps patients who have suffered strokes and neurological injuries recover their mobility and lives.

"The emotional and physical connection that I receive working with my patients means everything to me," she said. "When I see my patients progress and eventually leave the hospital, nothing can be more motivating."

During her undergraduate studies in Biology at CSUCI, Boudro spent hundreds of hours working at St. John's Regional Medical Center in its student volunteer program. After three years helping in the emergency room, she knew she wanted a career in medicine.

"Although I was passionate about working in the fast-paced ER, I was always left with this empty feeling when the patient was moved to a floor. What happened to them? What was their outcome? Did they heal physically, emotionally and spiritually?" she said. "One day I happened to meet this DPT and he suggested that I rotate into his unit. I did, and the rest is history because that day I realized that physical therapy was the field of medicine for me."

Her CSUCI professors and science courses also provided inspiration. Boudro praises Chemistry Professor Ahmed Mohamed Awad for putting in countless hours outside of class to help her grasp difficult material.

The most life-changing experience came in a UNIV 392 International Experience course in Japan led by Chemistry Professor Simone Aloisio. Boudro traveled with fellow students to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant to learn about impacts of the nuclear disaster and assist with restoration after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

"I will never forget that once-in-a-lifetime experience," she said.

After discovering her passion for physical therapy, Boudro spent a fifth year at CSUCI completing her pre-med requirements. She graduated in 2012 and



was accepted to Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, where she earned her DPT in 2016. She says her experiences at CSUCI gave her a distinct advantage during the medical school application and interview process.

"I truly believe the experiences I had at CSUCI set me apart from the other applicants," she said. "From traveling to Japan to do tsunami restoration at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, to the many philanthropy projects I was a part of as President of the Zeta Pi Omega (philanthropic) sorority, I had many things to make me stand out. CSUCI helped set me up for the career of my dreams." ♦c



From Mentee to Mentor

By Zoe Lance

IN A CLASSROOM AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, Northridge (CSUN), Cynthia Flores found herself in a predicament.

She was sitting in an informational session about a math scholarship program funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Flores was told that in order to participate, she would need to find a faculty research mentor.

Flores was a sophomore, still acclimating to campus as a first-generation college student. She was unsure of how to find a professor, let alone ask one to be her mentor.

But after the meeting, Flores was approached by Professor Maria Helena Noronha, who urged her to apply and volunteered to help her.

“This is a great time in academia to reshape our educational system — we are lifting up all of our students while closing the equity gaps.”

— Cynthia Flores

“To this day, she is still my mentor,” said Flores, who is now an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at CSUCI. “She taught me that I should always maintain high expectations of my students. Whenever I look at a student, I close my eyes and envision the highest potential for them.”

Mentorship is a significant aspect of Flores’s professional life. She is devoted to helping her students achieve their academic goals, while advocating for better representation of women and minorities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields.

“This is a great time in academia to reshape our educational system — we are lifting up all of our students while closing the equity gaps,” she said. “I’m passionate about that.”

Flores has always been interested in math. As a young woman, she’d work with her family at Los Angeles swap meets.

“Having my dad hand me stacks of dollar bills and tell me that I was going to be the cashier was his own way of validating that I was good at math, which was crucial for me at a young age,” she said. “I never questioned my ability and kept learning as much as I could.”

After earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees at CSUN, Flores completed her doctorate at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Her research interests lie in mathematical physics.

One of her students, Ivan Toledo ’18 M.S. Mathematics, met her through a mentoring program between undergraduate and graduate students at UCSB. When he came to CSUCI as a master’s student, Flores helped him through his thesis and challenged him to write about a new idea. At one point, Toledo only had inklings of a topic.

“She told me to go up to her whiteboard and write what I was talking about,” he said, “Once I wrote what I had worked on, Dr. Flores pointed out that I had something. She asked me a question, and suddenly I saw it through my scribbles. She didn’t tell me that I had failed. She recognized the work I

had put in and guided me toward my understanding. I wouldn’t have applied for a Ph.D. program if it hadn’t been for Dr. Flores — she believed that I was capable before I did.”

Her experience at CSUN in the NSF program has recently come full circle. She is the co-principal investigator of a \$2 million NSF grant, which brings UCSB and University of California, Merced doctoral candidates of underrepresented backgrounds into teaching at federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Mentorship is a large component of the pipeline.

Earlier this year, Flores was also named one of 15 Emerging Scholars across the nation by Diverse Education.

“This recognition gives me a stronger voice in advocating for girls, women and those who are historically underrepresented in mathematics, STEM and academia,” she said. “It means a lot to me.”

Nathalie Huerta ’19 B.A. Liberal Studies and B.S. Mathematics, credits Flores for encouraging her to add Math as a second major. Huerta appreciates how Flores has helped her through tough problems, both in math and in her personal life.

“She believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself,” Huerta said. “When you go to office hours for help, you work on the answers together. If you don’t understand something, she explains until you grasp it. I know that her door is always open.” ♦C



Left to Right: Kurt Zierhut, Robin Mathis, Professor Ekin Pehlivan, President Beck, Vanessa Meraz, Amparo Valdovinos and Brett Howroyd

Outstanding peer mentors receive awards

By Kim Lamb Gregory

THREE CSUCI STUDENTS WHO DEVOTED themselves to mentoring fellow undergraduates were recognized for their efforts by the Business & Technology Partnership (B&TP) at their 15th Annual B&TP Leadership Dinner. A faculty member and two professionals from the community were also honored. A sold-out audience of 250 gathered at CSUCI's Grand Salon for the April 11 event, which was hosted by President Erika Beck.

"Our peer mentors provide peer-to-peer support to their fellow students who need help in navigating college life, and most of it is not academic," Beck said. "It's what we call 'non-cognitive' skills. It's much more social and emotional — a sense of belonging, developing a sense of grit and

perseverance, and building a social network."

Thanks to an endowment from former U.S. Second Lady Tipper Gore, CSUCI was able to start a Peer Mentor Ambassador program. The Tipper Gore Award for Excellence in Peer Mentorship enables peer mentors the opportunity to earn an additional \$3,500 per semester (or \$7,000 annually) in return for taking on extra responsibilities designed to advocate for the program.

The first group to be named Peer Mentor Ambassadors were Biology major Amparo Valdovinos, Business major Vanessa Meraz and Nursing and Health Science double major Robin Mathis.

Valdovinos, of Santa Paula, was the first in her family to go to college. Her peer mentor helped her navigate the complexities of university life. "If it weren't for my peer mentor, I would have been lost



and maybe even dropped out,” Valdovinos said.

As a transfer student from Santa Maria, Meraz was confronted with similar unknowns, which she was able to conquer with the aid of a mentor who helped her choose classes, prepare for exams and manage her time.

Mathis, who was raised in Oxnard, was helped by a mentor with a similar background to hers. “I had so many questions about my classes, about financial aid, and there was even a time where I wasn’t even sure what questions to ask,” she said.

The 2019 Business Leader of the Year award was presented to Brett Howroyd who is president of Glendale-based AppleOne — one of the largest privately-held staffing companies in North America.

Accepting the award for Technology Leader of the Year for Haas Automation was company vice president of electrical engineering Kurt Zierhut. The Oxnard-based company designs and builds computerized machine tools.

Assistant Professor of Marketing Ekin Pehlivan was named Faculty Leader of the Year in part because of her creative spin on class. Pehlivan encourages students’ critical thinking skills by having them collaborate to



come up with solutions for local nonprofits, social enterprises and small businesses. ♦c

To learn more about the Peer Mentorship Ambassador program and students, visit: go.csuci.edu/pmap19



From left to right: Renay Garcia, Professor Jennie Luna, Rebecca Marquez, and Antonio Magaña



Photos of Michele Serros through time

Serros collection finds home at CSUCI

By Kim Lamb Gregory

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CHICANA/O STUDIES Jennie Luna was busy on Valentine's Day, making sure all the exhibits in the John Spoor Broome Library Gallery were ready for the opening of a show honoring the late Chicana/o poet/author/activist Michele Serros.

Before her death in January of 2015 at the age of 48, Serros arranged for CSUCI to receive her original manuscripts, notes, last-printed copies of her books, skateboards, personal effects and, most importantly, her desk, which she writes about in her 1993 publication, "Chicana Falsa."

The opening of the exhibit of the Serros collection was held on Valentine's Day, which fell right after Serros's February 10 birthday. "She loved Valentine's Day cards and sent them to everyone," Luna said. "It was her favorite holiday."

This opening was like no other for Luna, as she and Serros had been friends since they were neighbors together in New York about 20 years ago. "She and I go way back," Luna said. "I was

there with her weeks before she died and we had lots of conversations. I knew she had such valuable documents and that we would be the best place to house them. This is her hometown. CSUCI is where folks from Oxnard come and she wanted to support the Chicana/o Studies program."

Serros was survived by her husband, Antonio Magaña, also born and raised in Oxnard. When he walked into the Broome Gallery on the night of the opening, his eyes filled with tears. "I was overwhelmed," he said. Then, he walked over to Luna and pressed a book in her hand. Serros's very first diary, the one that started her on her journey as a renowned writer. Luna was momentarily at a loss for words.

"I can't believe it," Luna said. "This diary is what started it all." She pressed the diary to her heart, then hugged Magaña. "It was one of the last things I had of hers," Magaña said. "I wanted Jennie to have it."

Serros grew up in the El Rio area, attending Rio Mesa High School. When Serros was 11, her parents separated, leaving Serros overwhelmed with fear and confusion, so she wrote to Judy Blume, an



The author's beloved writing desk



Serros' prized possessions

author for young adults. Blume wrote back and suggested Serros express herself in a diary, and that diary launched her literary career. Blume's letter is part of the collection.

The show was filled to capacity that night, guests spilling out into the hallway. On display was a wealth of her writing, her signature skateboard,

last year archiving the Serros collection. The project inspired her to pursue a graduate degree in Library Science.

"It was a very emotional process," Marquez said. "It was like her whole life was in these boxes. I got to see her ups and downs, her successes, her failures. I saw things from her perspective and felt a deep connection to her."

Serros left her personal library and the rights and royalties to her books to CSUCI. Any monetary gain from reprints will go toward CSUCI's Chicana/o Studies program, and support for the Michele Serros Multicultural Living-

Learning Community, one of several living-learning communities at CSUCI in which students with a common academic focus are housed together to help provide an immersive living-learning experience.

Magaña believed Serros would have loved the tribute to her and her work. "This was a great homecoming for her," he said. ♦c

❖ "I knew she had such valuable documents and that we would be the best place to house them. This is her hometown. CSUCI is where folks from Oxnard come and she wanted to support the Chicana/o Studies program." —Jennie Luna

photos, a script she wrote for comedian George Lopez, T-shirts and her art collection, to name a few of the items.

The reception included the screening of a short film called "Cielo or Bust: Honoring the Life and Work of Michele Serros and her Stories of Death, Identity, and Oxnard" by director/producer Julio Alcalá.

Luna was featured in the film as well as Chicana/o Studies student Rebecca Marquez, who spent the

The ‘peddler of words’

Elynor Whitaker, '12 B.A. Spanish

By Marya Jones Barlow

IN 2012, AT THE AGE OF 71, ELYNOR WHITAKER graduated summa cum laude from CSUCI with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and a minor in English.

Today, at 78, she's still a woman on the move. She's a semi-retired federal and state court interpreter with two grown children, two grandkids, two “mischievous” cats, and a busy schedule filled with travel, friends, exercise, gardening, church, and volunteer activities.

Despite already having a successful three-decade career as a court interpreter, Whitaker says her passion for learning and linguistics compelled her to finish her degree at an age when many of her peers were enjoying retirement.

“To me it was natural. What better way to enrich and deepen my knowledge of both languages than through these studies?” she said.

Whitaker discovered her calling as an interpreter early. When she was nine, her family moved to New York City for her father's job as consul general for Guatemala.

“I became my mother's interpreter in varied situations,” she said. “I used to translate letters for my friends; and when I had children of my own, I would do sight translations into Spanish of children's books because there were no Spanish books for children at that time. These experiences have made me feel like the ‘Peddler of Words’ — to invoke a loose translation of Isabel Allende's short story, ‘La vendedora de palabras.’”

Whitaker grew up in Guatemala, the United States and Mexico, developing fluency in English and Spanish. As she pursued an associate degree in medical transcription in Delaware, she spent three years as an exchange student with an American family. She ended up living with the family for 10 years. During that time, she also met her late husband of 36 years, Ernie, “the love of my life.”

The couple married in 1973 and, with their two kids, Mark and Marisol, moved to California in 1980 for Ernie's longtime job as Oxnard's Affordable Housing Manager. Elynor re-entered the workforce in 1983, utilizing her bilingual skills as a certified court interpreter.

Her return to college at age 65 was a case of “serendipity,” she says. While taking courses at Ventura

College to fulfill continuing education requirements for court interpreters, a counselor suggested she complete her degree. She transferred to CSUCI in 2006.

“Because I continued working at least part-time, I only took two classes per semester, so it took me another six years to graduate with my bachelor's degree,” she said. “Better late than never, right? I was in no hurry, since I was doing this for myself.”

She almost dropped out in 2009, when her husband lost his battle with cancer.

“I didn't feel much like going to school,” she said. “Notwithstanding, my mother's saying, loosely translated as, ‘I am now on this horse and what's important is for it not to throw me’ — an allusion to

perseverance — seemed to haunt me. So, I returned to CSUCI in January 2010.”

Whitaker says she enjoyed the small classes, where she had professors' individualized attention. She praises Spanish Professors Sandra Kornuc, Antonio Jiménez-Jiménez and Stephen Clark, English Professors Andrea Marzell and Mary Adler for enriching her translation and writing skills, and Chicana/o Studies Professor José Alamillo deepening her knowledge of the Aztec and Chicana/o cultures.

Other highlights included two study abroad trips to Spain (Madrid and Málaga), tutoring students

in Spanish, and serving as an interpreter at events involving former braceros and former CSUCI president Richard Rush.

“I believe we all have gifts that we may use for the benefit of our community,” she said.

Whitaker regularly uses her “language gift” to volunteer at her church, interpreting sermons and leading bilingual workshops on jam-making, canning and crocheting.

Though her children beat her to earn their college degrees (Marisol from University of California, Davis in 2005 and Mark from Brooks Institute of Photography in 2007), Whitaker is also proud to boast the distinction of being a first-generation college graduate at 71.

“I believe in perseverance,” she said. “‘El que persevera, triunfa’ (‘He who perseveres, triumphs’),” was one of my mother's favorite sayings.” ♦C



A financial whiz for philanthropy

Nicole Blair, '18 Master of Business Administration

By Marya Jones Barlow

IF THERE'S A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SANTA Barbara County, you can probably find Nicole Blair working behind the scenes, quietly, passionately and efficiently.

As finance and administration manager at United Way of Santa Barbara County, she handles the money and logistics so the nonprofit can improve lives, communities and support the region's philanthropic needs.

Last year alone, United Way of Santa Barbara County distributed \$4.59 million raised from community partners in support of local literacy, financial stability and health initiatives. During and after the Thomas Fire and Montecito Flood, the organization raised and distributed over \$2 million to fund 20 organizations and 421 families. It also subsidizes many ongoing programs including free tax preparation, literacy programs, Fun in the Sun summer camps, and annual Days of Caring.

Blair provides diligent financial oversight of each of these programs. She also manages an annual budget of approximately \$3 million, supports the organization's CEO, payroll and human resources for 15 staff members, and maintains compliance with private foundation grants and annual audits.

"I love what I do," she said. "I'm inspired by my team because they work so hard for our community that it makes me want to be the best I can be to support them. When I can help someone understand their payroll check or retirement benefit contribution — or run a successful full-scale audit where I tell a whole story about the organization's financials — those are times I feel like I've done my part."

A Santa Barbara native, Blair earned her undergraduate degree in biopsychology at University of California, Santa Barbara in 2006. She took a job as an office assistant at DKB Resources, a small company that developed circuit boards used in the aerospace industry, and quickly worked her way up to quality manager.

"It was an invaluable experience to work in a small, entrepreneurial company with a great mentor," she said. "I took over accounting and helped develop a

quality management certification for the company. During that time, I realized I had a proclivity for accounting and wanted to learn more."

Blair took accounting courses at Santa Barbara City College and Alan Hancock College as she climbed the ranks, moving from DKB into finance roles in the nonprofit sector. She became a staff accountant in 2010 at Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics and joined Domestic Violence Solutions as controller in 2013. In 2016, Blair began pursuing her M.B.A. at CSUCI's Goleta campus.

"I always wanted to further my education and improve myself. If I could, I would be a perpetual student," she said. "I looked around and I felt that CSUCI's M.B.A. program was the best value and the most accessible. It was close by, I could work during the program, and I wouldn't have to go into debt or take time off from work to do it."

She wasn't disappointed. Blair says she enjoyed high-quality professors, close-knit small classes tailored to working professionals, and team projects that she could apply in her own workplace. She also participated in a 10-day study abroad trip to Spain, where students enjoyed exposure to global business and cultural experiences.

In 2017, Blair joined United Way of Santa Barbara County as finance and administration manager.

"There are things the program helped me to develop that I draw upon regularly now," she said. "Critical thinking, presentations, group projects. It's really helped me become more solidified in my position and improve my professional and managerial skills." ♦c





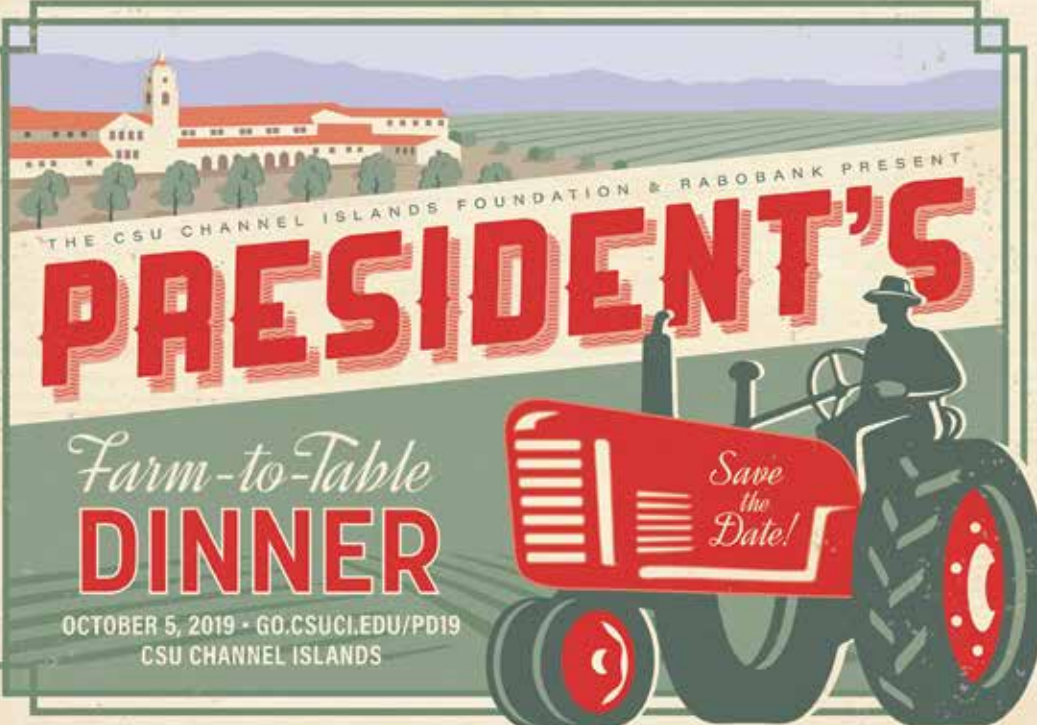
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