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Kristin Steiner



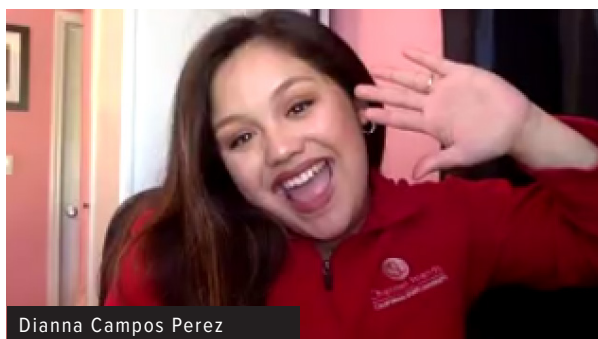
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Channel

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS / *2020 Spring Magazine*



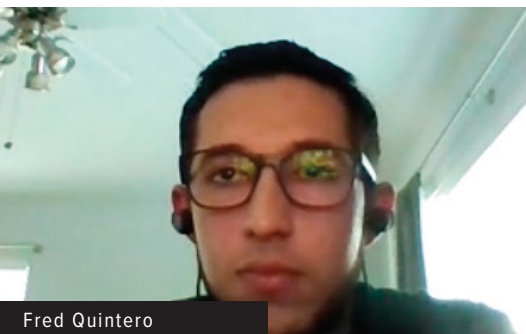
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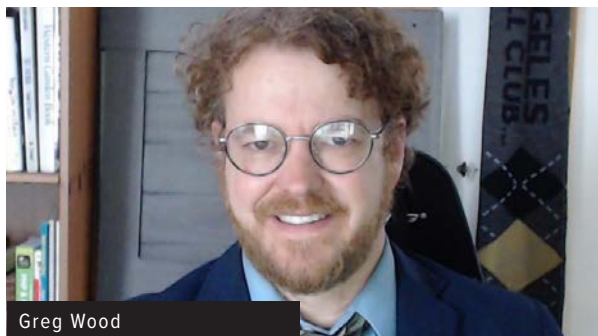
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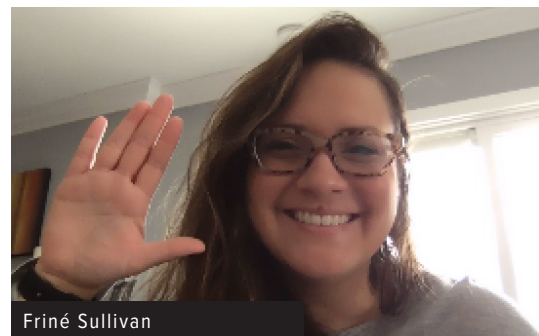
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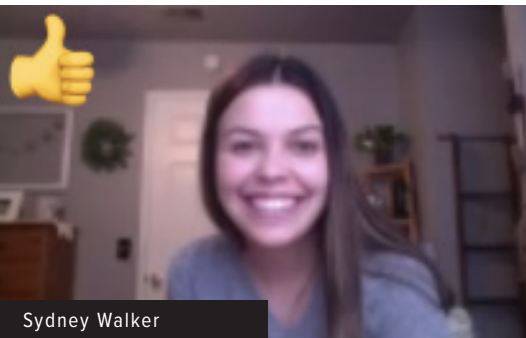
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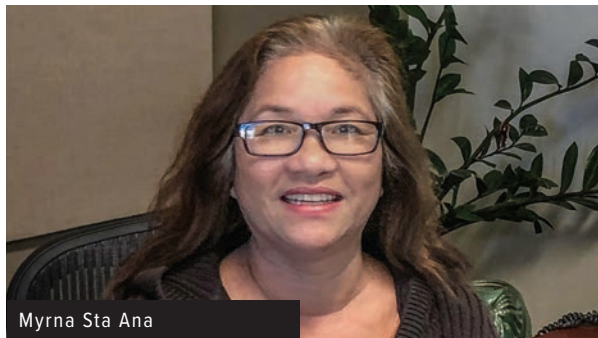
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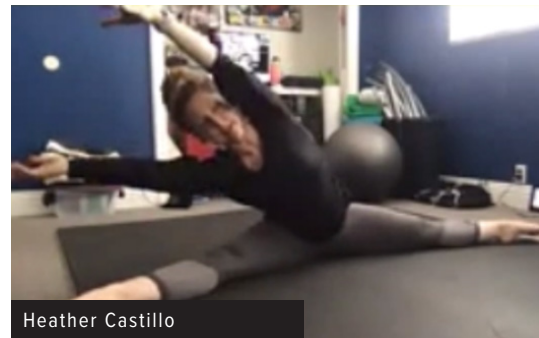
Friné Sullivan



Sydney Walker



Myrna Sta Ana



Heather Castillo



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President's Message



Life at Cal State Channel Islands changed instantly on March 19 when Governor Gavin Newsom ordered all Californians to stay home in order to curtail the spread of COVID-19. During this time, we accelerated plans for virtual instruction, sent faculty and staff home to work, and entered a new era in higher education. With our lives dramatically changed, we remained grounded in our mission and resolute in our belief that the advancement of knowledge enhances the common good.

I am proud to share that through this time of uncertainty, the true Dolphin spirit of resilience, innovation and compassion shown through brightly in every corner of our academic community. Faculty, staff and students 3-D printed face shields for our local frontline medical professionals, faculty in our Performing Arts/Dance program forged new paths for virtual dance pedagogy, our Nursing students staffed a County public health call center, and staff in Enrollment Management quickly crafted virtual admission, recruitment, and financial aid sessions. These are but a few examples of the exceptional work being done at CSUCI during these trying times.

Even though we continue to live with uncertainty and great challenge, there is still much to celebrate. Foremost among them are the graduates of the Class of 2020. We will celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates in person once it is safe to do so, but for now, we celebrate them virtually. I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Channel and learning about the many actions initiated by our campus community during this unprecedented moment in history.

I wish you and your loved ones well.

Sincerely,

Erika D. Beck, Ph.D.
President

Channel

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

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CSU Channel Islands Mission Statement

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

Channel is printed on FSC certified recycled paper.



Channel Islands
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Ricky Medrano, Mechatronics/Computer Science Lab Technician making 3-D Face Shields for local medical personnel.

Around Campus

by ZOE LANCE

MEET ALICIA VIRTUE, DEAN OF THE LIBRARY

Alicia Virtue sees the John Spoor Broome Library as more than just a place to borrow a book, study for a test or use a computer.

"It's a holistic network of support services that bridges the technical and financial gaps for a student's educational experience," Virtue said. "It's an inclusive, scholarly environment that I want to support and help grow."

Virtue joined CSUCI as the Dean of the Library in June 2019. She believes that the library plays a pivotal role in academic success, giving students the knowledge and technology to be successful both in and out of the classroom — especially those from historically underrepresented communities.

"I worry about the equity gaps that these students experience," Virtue said. "These gaps are barriers to achieving their academic goals, and I see the Library and all of its services as an essential com-



ponent in removing these barriers."

Virtue earned a master's degree in library science from UCLA, and a doctorate in organizational leadership from Brandman University. Prior to joining CSUCI, Virtue served as a senior dean and tenured faculty member at Santa Rosa Junior College. She is looking forward to continuing campus partnerships

in basic needs, technology access and innovative instruction.

"The Library is an essential partner in building a network of instructional, financial and emotional support for our students," Virtue said.

"I am so proud to work with the team of dedicated professionals in Broome Library. Their agility and creativity made it possible for students to have the resources and services needed to support student academic success when the Coronavirus pandemic hit. The Broome Library team quickly virtualized all tutoring, research support and information literacy instruction with expanded and personalized online services to help students maintain critical connections as they rapidly transitioned to a fully online learning environment. The Broome Library, with its rich and responsive services, is central to knowledge creation, intellectual collaboration and student success."

INNOVATIVE STUDENT AFFAIRS DASHBOARD

The Division of Student Affairs, led by Vice President Richard Yao, has developed an interactive dashboard that helps the University community better understand the impact of campus services on student success.

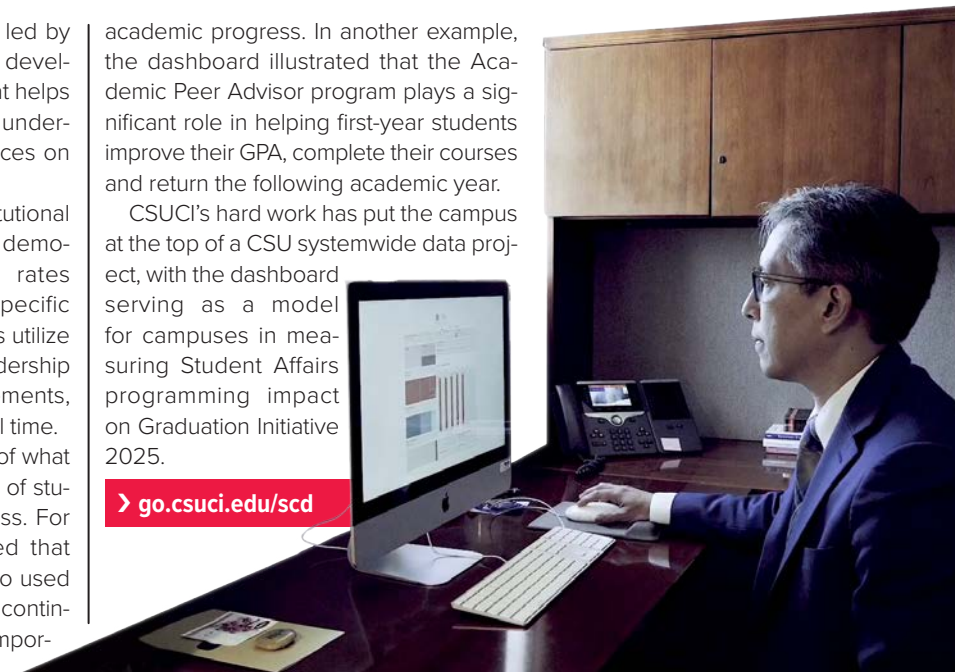
The dashboard integrates institutional level data — points like student demographics, GPA and graduation rates — with division and program-specific information on how many students utilize services. This allows campus leadership to see relationships, try improvements, and make budget decisions in real time.

The data has pinpointed much of what the campus knows about the role of student services in academic success. For example, the dashboard showed that 90% of the over 700 students who used the Dolphin Pantry one semester continued to enroll, demonstrating the importance of basic needs security in

academic progress. In another example, the dashboard illustrated that the Academic Peer Advisor program plays a significant role in helping first-year students improve their GPA, complete their courses and return the following academic year.

CSUCI's hard work has put the campus at the top of a CSU systemwide data project, with the dashboard serving as a model for campuses in measuring Student Affairs programming impact on Graduation Initiative 2025.

go.csuci.edu/scd



CENTRAL MALL: THE HEART OF CAMPUS

by MARYA BARLOW

A campus transformation eight years in the making wasn't stopped by the worldwide pandemic. By the end of summer, CSUCI construction crews will have completed the most recent phase of Central Mall renovation. The 60,000-square-foot open space is a scenic landmark and vibrant event venue in the heart of campus that will serve students and the community for generations.

Launched in 2012, the renovation includes several phases. The first phase focused on converting the pre-existing roadway into a park-like pedestrian plaza with new gardens and decompressed granite pathways. The second phase added a beautiful fountain in the middle of the mall. The third and most recent phase

includes the installation of permeable pavers in front of University Hall and the Bell Tower building to increase accessibility for the growing number of students and guests to participate in large outdoor events, such as Commencement. In spring 2019, more than 21,000 family members and friends convened on the Central Mall to celebrate a record class of 2,760 graduates.

Supporters and volunteers have been critical to the Central Mall project, with philanthropic gifts comprising \$1.1 million of phase three's \$1.37 million total cost.

"The Central Mall stands as a magnificent tribute to the power and generosity of our supporters," said President Erika Beck. "Thanks to everyone who stepped

forward to donate money, materials, time and services, we were able to take a major step in transforming the University while preserving its open space, history, character, and beauty."

With 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and Spanish Mission-style architecture, the Central Mall also offers a picturesque setting for weddings, concerts, luncheons, and other outdoor events. Future phases include extending pavers to the ends of the Central Mall and adding a sculpture garden.

To learn how you can help support this ongoing project, contact richard.leroy@csuci.edu or call 805-437-1662.



A Photography Collection

by MARYA BARLOW

SANTI VISALLI

A Photojournalist's Tribute to 60 Years of World History

SANTI VISALLI ARRIVED IN the United States from Italy in 1959 with a camera, \$60 in his pocket, and the ambition to “make an impression.”

Today, he's the embodiment of the American Dream, with a celebrated career as a photojournalist known for capturing the newsmakers and zeitgeist of six decades. His photographs of some of the world's most iconic people, places, and events—The Beatles, Martin Luther King Jr., Sophia Loren, Andy Warhol, civil rights marchers, Vietnam protestors, and five sitting U.S. presidents, to name just a few—have graced the covers of newspapers and magazines worldwide.

When seeking to share his life's work with the public, Visalli found the perfect place just down the road from his home in Santa Barbara, at CSU Channel Islands.

“All 106,964 pictures I donated to the University are my babies,” he said. “They describe 60 years of world history. What good is it to anyone if they are in a drawer where no one can see them? By keeping them together, they have an impact.”

Inside CSUCI's John Spoor Broome Library administration wing, you'll find 15 large prints of Visalli's most beloved and well-known images, including the gleaming towers of the World Trade Center, and portraits of Martin Luther King Jr., John Wayne and Robert DeNiro. Throughout the year, various Visalli prints are displayed in the Library exhibition hall to commemorate holidays and historic events. At any time, the public is welcome to browse his collection. And soon, CSUCI hopes to share all of Visalli's negatives, which are being digitized into a vast online archive.

“To receive an editorial photographer's collection is a rare thing, but Santi's donation is remarkable for many reasons,” said librarian Matthew Cook, Head of Unique

Collections and Scholarly Communications. “Not only did he work as a freelance editorial photographer for more than 40 years, he held on to ownership of his work and meticulously maintained his collection. When he donated it to us, he also forwarded copyright, allowing us to generate reproductions and use the fees licensed to offset storage and production/digitization costs. In essence, he gave us not only the collection, but a revenue stream to help preserve it. What a remarkable man.”



Santi Visalli, 2012

Visalli says he chose CSUCI to receive his collection because he wants it to be part of a growing institution where it can inspire generations to come.

“I wanted to evoke in people the same emotions I felt when I took the pictures,” he said. “I wanted to provide a historical record of what life was like for scholars. And I wanted people to get educated about good photography.”

Born in Sicily in 1932, Visalli left Italy in 1956 on a three-year trip around the world with friends seeking to become

journalists. After landing in New York City, he began his career as a freelance photojournalist, covering many of the defining celebrities, politicians, and events of the '60s and '70s for the New York Times, Life, Newsweek, and other high-profile American and European publications. He also published 14 coffee-table books depicting iconic cityscapes and worked on films with such directors as Federico Fellini, Lina Wertmuller, and Peter Yates. His photographs are in many private collections, and five are in the permanent collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

An active and “well-preserved” 88 year old, Visalli works out at the gym each morning, still takes pictures, sells photos, and rubs elbows with celebrities.

He was recently featured in “Mentors—Tony & Santi,” the acclaimed documentary by Academy Award-winning director Andrew Davis that made its world premiere in January at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. The film touchingly documents the lifelong friendship between two renowned, world-class photographers, Visalli and his early mentor, Tony Vaccaro.

“Usually they do those things after you're dead,” Visalli quipped. “I was so honored to have a documentary made by Andy Davis, who directed ‘The Fugitive,’ and to have it premiere in my hometown.”

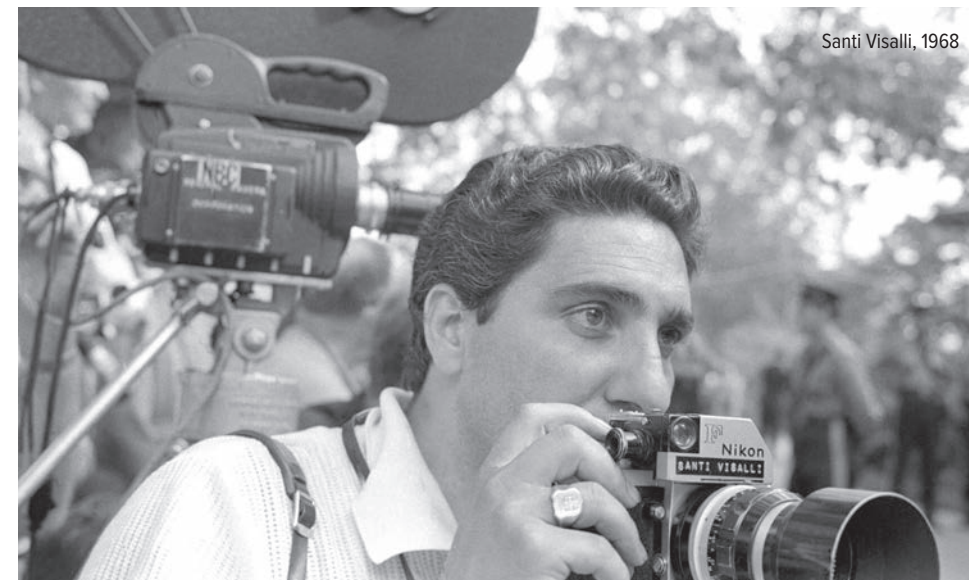
Among the other unique honors his career has afforded, Visalli was made a Knight in the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy in 1996 and presented with a medal for life achievements by Italy's president in 2011.

Without hesitation, Visalli says the greatest honor of his life is his family: wife, Gayla, and sons, Ivon and Anthony.

“I came to America with \$60 in my pocket,” he said. “I'm most proud that I was able to make a nice family. A beautiful wife and two kids.”



The Beatles, 1966



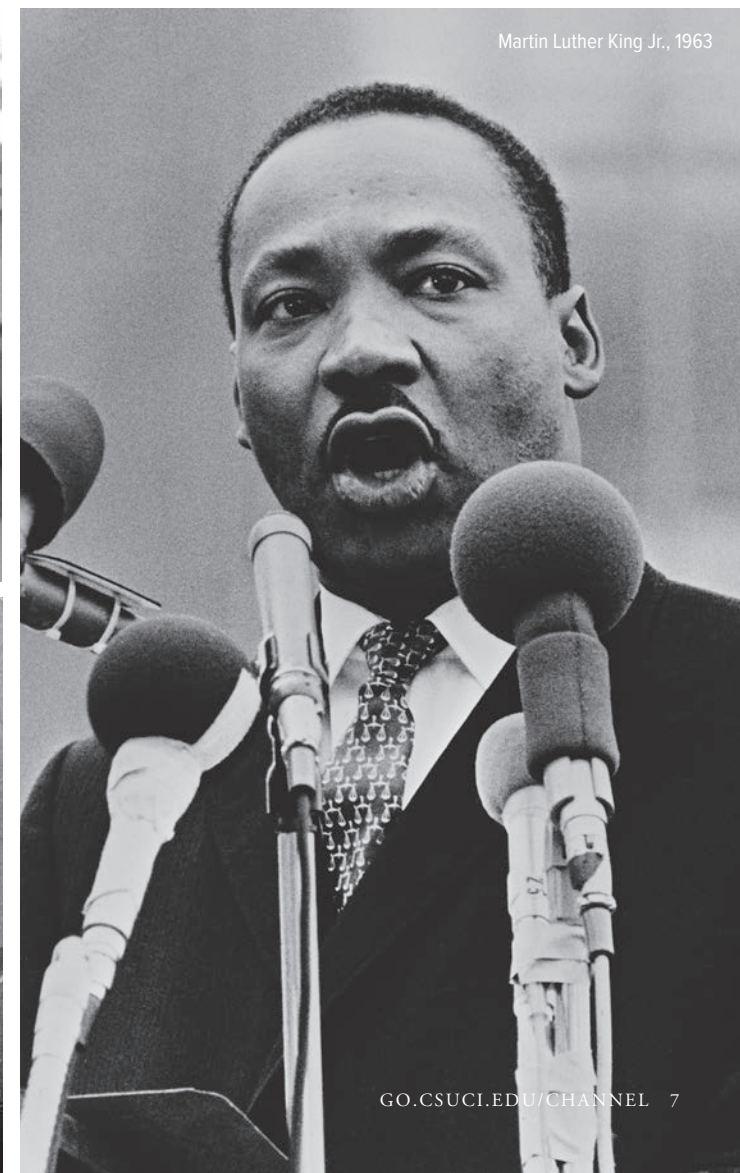
Santi Visalli, 1968



Jackie Kennedy, 1965



Andy Warhol, 1968



Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

Anticancer Drug Research

by ZOE LANCE

A TEAM OF CSUCI STUDENTS IS GETTING AN academic experience that most students would dream of: researching life-saving anticancer drugs.

Under the guidance of Associate Professor of Chemistry Ahmed Awad, since summer 2019, a group of five students — Prince Salvador, Lujain Alnouri, Asia Fee, Hannah Kraeck and Christopher Dickson — have been working on a biochemistry project on enzymes linked to cancer.

Enzymes, or proteins that speed up chemical reactions, work throughout our bodies to help us breathe, digest food and build muscle. They also help make DNA. The team was tasked with figuring out potential chemical compounds that could inhibit a specific enzyme, slowing cancer cells in making new DNA.

They used computer simulations to test their hypotheses, finding that three of six potential compounds had promising results. These three drug candidates' molecules bonded to the enzyme, or what's called "docking" in biochemistry.

"If you can stop the cancer cell from making new DNA, you can slow its growth," Christopher Dickson said. "We were trying to come up with a drug that would stop the enzyme from doing its job."

While some of the student team has moved onto other projects, the research is ongoing. The next step is to test the chemical compounds with actual enzymes.

While working in the lab, the team also sharpened their professional skills. They learned how to use sophisticated software, designed research protocol, created posters and wrote scientific reports. They have also been able to share their research with other students, faculty and scientists: they've presented at the CSU's annual biotechnology conference and other campus research showcases.

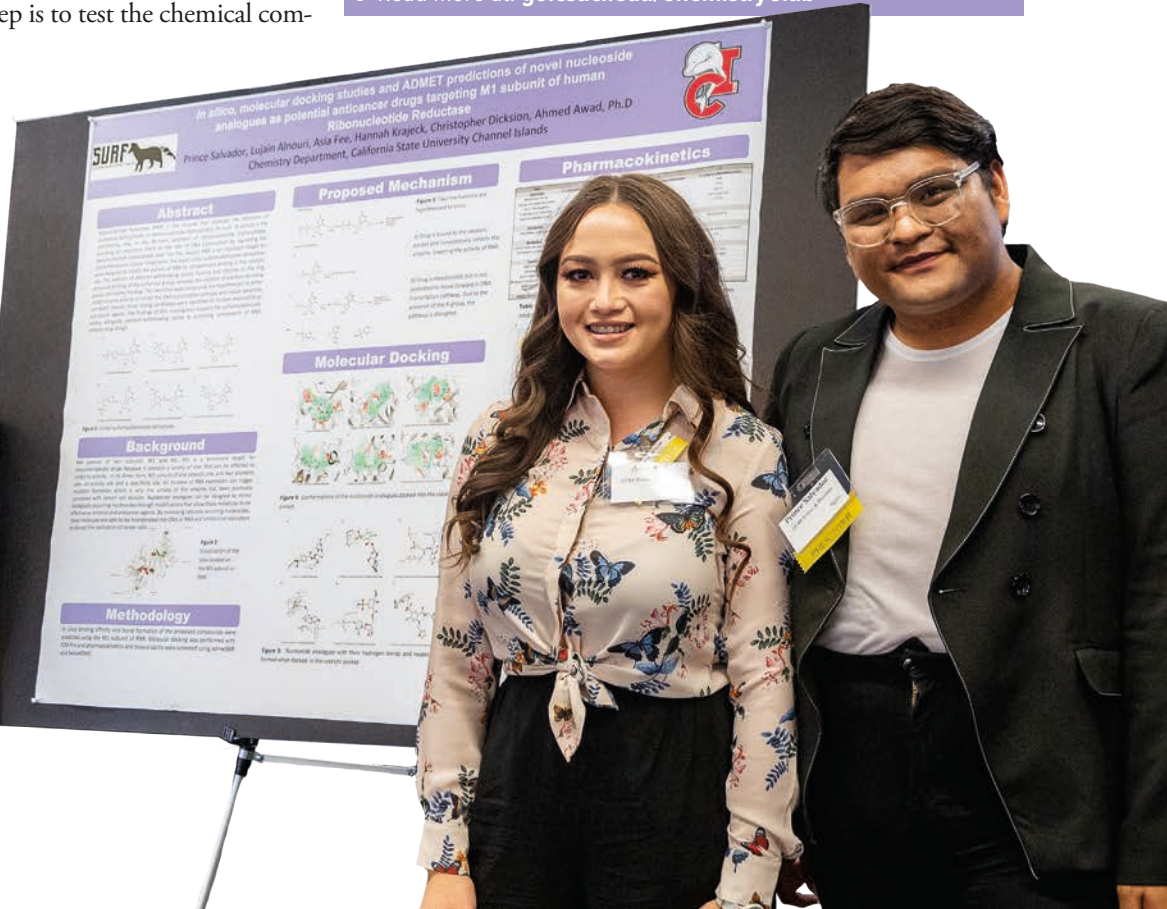
Salvador, Fee and Dickson all joined the project after taking Awad's courses and learning how they could apply what they were learning in the classroom. All three say it was instrumental in their educational pathways, solidifying their interests in teaching and research careers.

Dickson earned an anthropology degree from UC Santa Cruz, but has been taking Chemistry courses at CSUCI to apply for a doctorate in chemistry. He will join UC Irvine's program in the fall, and said the knowledge and skills he learned at CSUCI helped him get there.

"It's cool to be a part of a bigger scientific community. It's about sharing knowledge freely and openly, seeing what other people are doing and bringing that back to campus," Dickson said. "It makes what we're doing that much more robust."

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/ChemistryClub

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Christopher Dickson, Lujain Alnouri,
Asia Fee, and Prince Salvador.



STUDENTS GET THEIR KICKS IN CLUB SOCCER

by MARYA BARLOW

MORE THAN A CHANCE TO PRACTICE AND PLAY competitively, the Men's and Women's Soccer Clubs at CSUCI offer students the benefits of new friendships, a campus family, inspiring mentors, sharper skills, and a way to channel their passion for soccer into victories against some of Southern California's top-ranked teams.

"Being part of the team has been a real blessing," said Kacey Ramirez, president of the Women's Soccer Club. "I played soccer my whole life and it's not just a club — it's a competitive league. We play against amazing teams like UCSB, UCLA, CSUN and USC. Being a part of the team and watching us grow has been life-changing. Soccer has brought me so many friendships I never thought I'd have."

The arrival of COVID-19 and halt of matches in the West Coast Soccer Association was a disappointing setback in an otherwise promising season for both teams. Before campuses closed in mid-March, the men's team had completed five of seven games in its season, with two wins, two losses and a draw—ranking third in its conference. The women's team was only three games into a nine-game season, with a win over the Claremont Colleges and losses to UCLA and UCSB.

"It's really disappointing because we showed a lot of promise," Ramirez said.

The women's team, founded in 2012, has 26 players on the roster, and holds games most weekends during the fall and spring semesters. With the addition of head coach Luis Gonzales in fall 2019, the women have grown under the guidance of a veteran player and coach.

"Soccer is his passion and he has passed his passion for the game on to girls on the team," said Tia Navarez, vice president of the women's team. "He has helped develop the skills of our players, initiated strategies and plays during games, and held girls accountable for missing practice. He always believes in the players and helps keep our heads up during difficult games."

The men's team, founded in 2011, has 24 players on its roster. Coach Ricardo Rico, an alumnus ('14 Psychology) and Educational Opportunity Program Counselor at CSUCI, says he's proud of the men's team not only for its performance on the field but also as citizen-scholars. Many players on both teams serve as peer mentors, resident advisers, orientation leaders, and in other campus leadership roles.

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/ClubSoccer

"I played soccer my whole life and it's not just a club — it's a competitive league."

— Kacey Ramirez



DOLPHIN CONNECT

Fosters Online Mentoring Relationships

by MARYA BARLOW

SENIOR GABRIELLA BENEVENTO WAS seeking career advice and wondering if recruiting and human resources might be a good fit. Alumnus Nick Martuscelli, '14 B.S. Business, was looking for a way to mentor others and give back to his alma mater.

Though separated by over 2,800 miles, they forged a helpful bond through Dolphin Connect, the online career mentoring platform that encourages CSUCI students and alumni to network, exchange professional development and job advice, and explore interests and opportunities together.

"I quickly fell in love with the platform because it's super easy to use and incredibly helpful in gathering career advice," Benevento said. "It shaped my career path and helped me understand what I should be looking for. After speaking with Nick and members of the Dolphin Connect community, I knew in-house recruiting would be an ideal fit for me. I was able to get advice on my resume and LinkedIn profile and interview tips to help me stand out."

"As a first-generation college student, there were a lot of times I wished I could talk to somebody who had been through college before, so when I saw that I could have the opportunity to help others through Dolphin Connect, I jumped in right away," said Martuscelli, a recruiter at Common in New York City.

Since its launch in January, Dolphin Connect has amassed over 500 users, resulting in more than 100 connections, where two-way correspondence is established between students, alumni, faculty/staff or industry mentors. Similar to LinkedIn, Dolphin Connect displays participants' work and educational history, interests, areas of expertise, and contact information, and allows members to message one another directly through the platform. Users can search for mentors or mentees by major, industry, location, and even by commonalities, such as being a first-generation student or participating in a certain club. Groups and discussion boards allow members to pose and answer questions and network with people of similar interests and backgrounds.

The platform's focus on Dolphins helping Dolphins makes it exceptionally welcoming and effective. In a recent survey, users

gave it a 4.64 out of 5-star rating for helping them forge useful connections.

"Every person I talked to was willing to help, offered great advice, and had real-world experience in the industry I wanted to work for," Benevento said.

Numerous studies validate that students with mentors are more likely to graduate from college, volunteer, hold leadership positions, and become mentors themselves. Studies also show that 70-80% of jobs and internships are found through word-of-mouth referrals.

"Helping to establish and grow the mentor network at my alma mater feels pretty special," said Alumni Mentorship Coordinator and Career Counselor

Lisa Sewell, who manages the site. "It's exciting to see the CSUCI community coming together to share career advice, find inspiration, and talk openly about the journey from college to career."

Alumnus Jesse Vasquez, '16 M.S. Biotechnology and Bioinformatics, is a biology research and development scientist who has eagerly jumped in to advise multiple students on the platform.

"Dolphin Connect allows me to reach people remotely and share my journey as a STEM professional coming from a low socioeconomic background," Vasquez said. "As a result of mentoring, I have remained in the STEM field and am now a STEM professional. It helped me stay motivated and focused on the end goal, which was to continue my education and become a scientist. I find joy in mentoring students and sharing my experiences in hopes of inspiring the next generation."

Dolphin Connect is one of many resources available to CSUCI students and alumni in search of mentors or mentoring opportunities. Among the other highly successful programs supporting mentoring, the University offers Peer Education and Equity Programs (PEEP), the Peer Mentor Ambassador Program, the Women of Color Peer Mentoring Program, and faculty mentoring programs.

➤ Join the community at: dolphinconnect.csuci.edu



Nick Martuscelli

Recruiter at Common
New York, NY, USA

LET'S CONNECT VIEW ADMIN-ONLY PROFILE



Gabriella Benevento

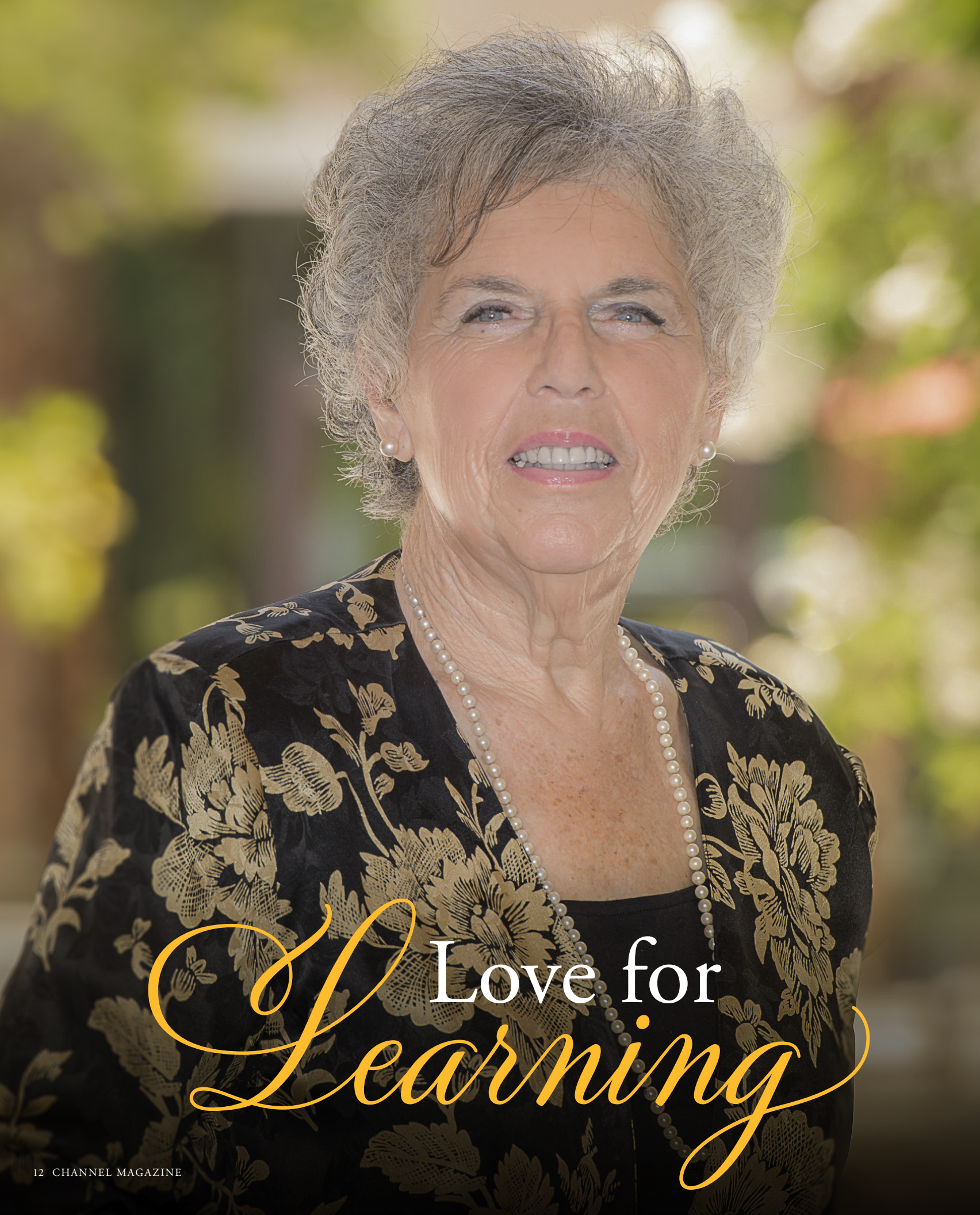
Communication Student at CSU Channel Islands interested in the field of Human Resources
Camarillo, California

LET'S CONNECT VIEW ADMIN-ONLY PROFILE

"Every person I talked to was willing to help, offered great advice, and had real-world experience in the industry I wanted to work for."

— Gabriella Benevento

LEFT TO RIGHT
Christabelle Angeles and Gabriella Benevento



Love for Learning

{ **DONOR** Profile }

With Her Legacy Gift, Jeanne Adams Cements a Lifetime of Impact on the Region's Students

by MARYA BARLOW

JEANNE ADAMS LOST TRACK LONG AGO OF the number of students she has helped guide in her 58-year career as an educator. But it's easy to measure her profound influence in the multitudes of former students who approach her with smiles, hugs and gratitude as she goes about her daily life in the community.

Adams has been a fixture in the education of students, teachers and administrators in the region for six decades. With her recent decision to leave a portion of her estate to CSUCI, she amplifies a legacy of providing support for generations of students to come. For Adams, the gift is the joyful progression of her life's work.

"It was very natural to me. My genuine wish is to make things better for those who need the help and support," she said. "My heart is with CSUCI and I know the University will put the gift to good use. You step on that campus and immediately feel it's a welcoming environment that's positive, open, productive, and providing a marvelous experience for students."

Adams showed an early aptitude for teaching and leadership. Growing up in a small town in New York, she assembled the neighborhood kids to play school and wrote and directed plays. As a middle schooler, she successfully lobbied the town council for a bicycle safety rodeo and helped create a library for a nearby school.

"Teaching and learning was at the heart of everything I did," she said. "I think it was in my subconscious from the time I was three. Right from first grade, I had one wonderful teacher after another who influenced my decision to go into education."

At 15, Adams moved with her family to Oxnard, where she joined the Future Teachers of America at Oxnard High School and met the love of her life, Ronald (Ron) Adams. He was the club's president; she the vice president. The couple married after graduating in 1960 and spent the next 25 years supporting one another through degrees and credentials.

Just as Adams prepared to transfer from Ventura College to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) in 1962, she was unexpectedly drafted into the profession. Ventura County's Pleasant Valley School District, in the midst of a teacher shortage, offered her the chance to teach second grade while pursuing her bachelor's degree and teaching certificate. When UCSB balked at overseeing the unusual arrangement, CSU Northridge (CSUN) eagerly partnered with the school district to make it happen.

"I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity CSUN gave me," Adams said. "They said, 'We'll work hand-in-hand with your teaching program.' With my limited teaching experience, I was concerned about ruining all those little minds, but as it turns out, I did have a sense of what I was doing."

Over the next three decades, Adams moved into roles as a principal and district administrator in the Oxnard School District. Along the way, she earned four college degrees ('66 B.A. CSUN, '74 M.A. CSUN, '85 M.A. UCSB, '87 Ph.D. UCSB), four credentials, numerous awards, and began working as an adjunct lecturer at CSUN's College of Education.

"I discovered another whole world," Adams said. "I love working with teachers and administrators as they work toward graduate degrees, credentials and field projects."

Adams spent the following two decades as a CSUN professor, preparing principals, directors, and superintendents. She served as chair the College of Education's Educational Leadership and Policy Department, director of CSUN's Center for Partnerships for Education Reform, a founder of the educational doctoral program, and forged alliances with school systems worldwide.

Early on, Jeanne and Ron emerged as leading advocates for a four-year public university in Ventura County. When the CSU Board of Trustees adopted the site of the former state hospital in Camarillo as the CSU's 23rd campus in 1997, "We all just burst into cheers, jumping up and down," Adams said. "Finally, here was an actual structure we could turn into a university."

That evening, Adams started designing what would become her proudest undertaking yet: A groundbreaking professional development charter school that would provide dual-language, blended-age instruction to children, while serving as a working laboratory for teachers and administrators in training. With the support of CSUCI and all 21 Ventura County school districts, Adams founded The University Preparation Charter School at CSU Channel Islands in 2002. Nearly two decades later, the school has trained more than 700 student teachers and provided a high-quality education for thousands of college-bound Ventura County pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade students.



President Beck and Jeanne Adams

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/LoveForLearning
➤ Learn more about legacy giving at: www.csucilegacy.org

A Head in the Cloud

Michael Soltys, Program Chair and Professor of Computer Science

by ZOE LANCE

WHILE WE KNOW AMAZON AS THE world's online marketplace, millions of international companies know it for its cloud computing services. They use Amazon Web Services (AWS) to store and access data over the internet, allowing us to easily stream our favorite shows, store files and shop online. As more and more companies turn to AWS for technology needs, computer science students will need to quickly learn how to use the platform so they can market themselves post-graduation.

Michael Soltys, Professor and Chair of Computer Science at CSUCI, has been ahead of the curve. In the last two years, he has laid the foundation for CSUCI courses and a strong partnership with the company.

In addition to being an AWS cloud architect and official ambassador, he has led the Computer Science program to being an approved member of the AWS Academy and part of the AWS Educate Initiative. Soltys sees this initiative as an extension of CSUCI's role in the Ventura County region.

"I always want our students to get the best jobs, and I think some of the best jobs are in 'the

cloud' right now," Soltys said. "In our partnership, they really like how we have designed our curriculum and how we are quick, innovative and nimble. Our ability to meet them at their pace was what created the successful synergy between CSUCI and AWS."

Soltys became interested in cloud computing as a research interest, and studied on his own for the cloud architect certification. In looking deeper at the impact of AWS in the business world, he discovered that employers wanted all types of new hires — not just computer scientists — to be familiar with the technology. This spurred him to develop coursework and volunteer as an official ambassador for teaching other faculty.

"I studied very hard for several months, and that showed me that this is really something that can and should be taught at the University and made available to students. It's hard, but important and extremely useful," Soltys said.

In April 2020, he worked with AWS to record a lecture on online teaching — distributed by AWS as a webinar with question-and-answer sessions — helping faculty to meet the challenge of COVID-19.

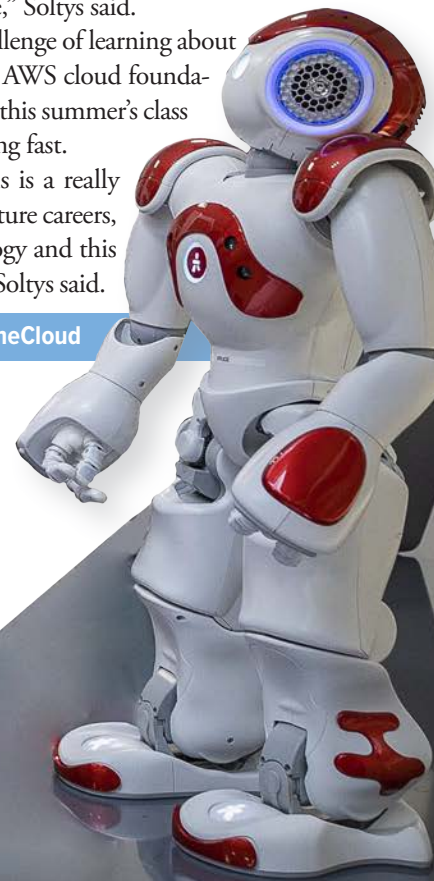
"They provide the cloud infrastructure where a lot of online teaching happens, and now they have cloud ambassadors like myself helping others in teaching online," Soltys said.

His students are up for the challenge of learning about the platform. His winter class in AWS cloud foundations was full with a waitlist, and this summer's class in AWS web development is filling fast.

"The students realize that this is a really important component of their future careers, to be well versed in this technology and this new paradigm of doing things," Soltys said.

▶ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/InTheCloud

LEFT TO RIGHT
Michael Soltys and Computer Science alumna Heather Bradfield



Enhancing Virtual Peer Advising

by MARYA BARLOW

WHEN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HIT, CSUCI's Academic Advising office redoubled its efforts to ensure that stay-at-home orders wouldn't deter students from earning their degrees.

"Not only did we want to recreate all the availability we previously had, we also viewed this as an opportunity to make lemonade out of lemons," said Ernesto Guerrero, Director of Academic Advising. "A lot of students are going to have difficulty continuing. We're trying to be on the cutting edge of mitigating that to the extent that we can. If we can make completing your college degree easier so that you can help your family out, we're going to do that."

Over spring break and while virtual classes ramped up, Guerrero and his team initiated a highly proactive approach to academic advising. They reviewed the records of every freshman, as well as every senior applying to graduate, notified them of missing or additional requirements they needed to fulfill, and offered course recommendations and online advising appointments to help students stay on track.

Guerrero says this elevated standard of degree auditing and outreach would never have been possible without the help from their peer advisors. Paid peer advisors normally work 15-20 hours a week and help advise first-year students, conduct workshops, answer emails, assist with resource tours, and schedule appointments.

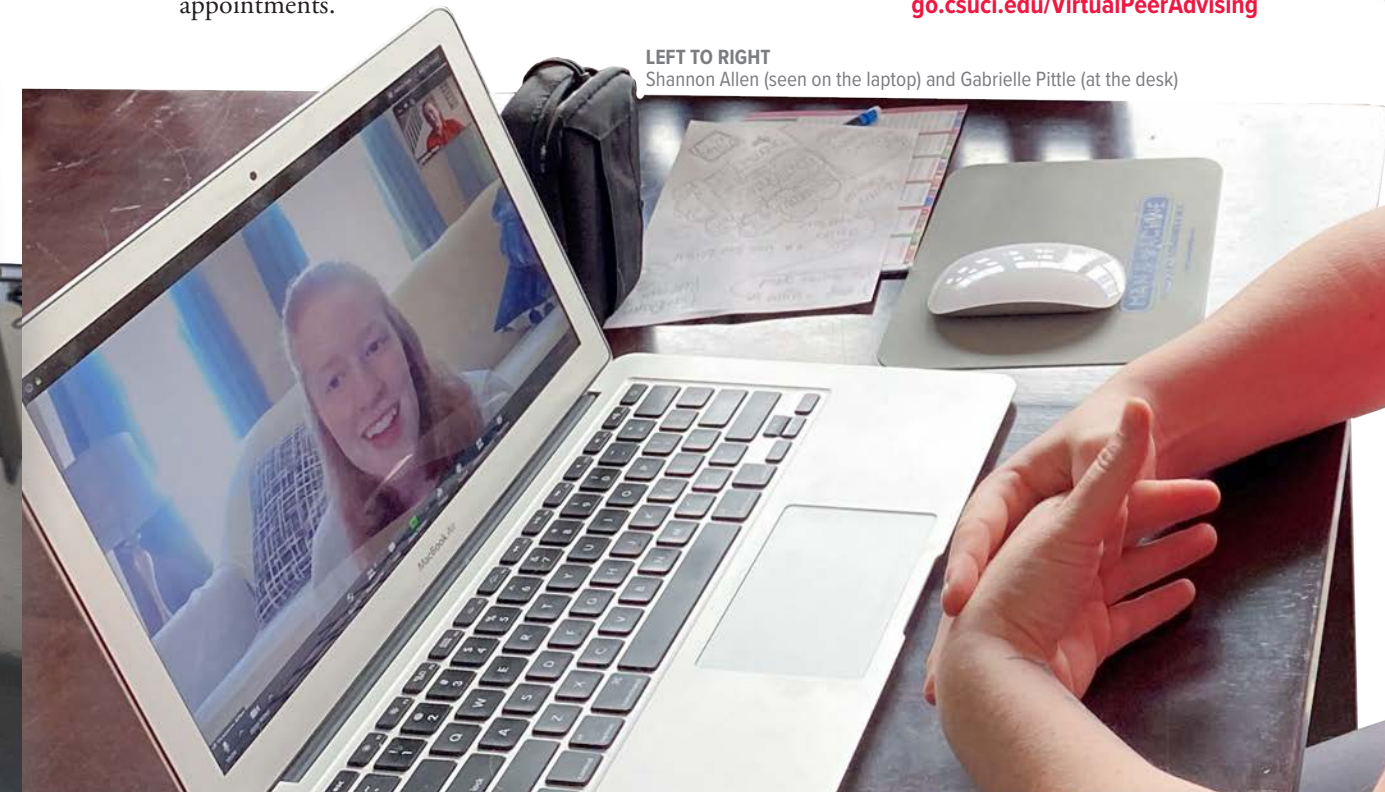
When the campus shifted to virtual instruction in March, the student employees' income was still guaranteed — whether or not they were able to work in a crisis. All 10 of them eagerly stepped up to continue their jobs remotely.

"We're here to help and we want to," said Aubrianna Cooper, a third-year student from Bakersfield majoring in Health Science. "When I started this job, I signed up to work. I respect the Academic Advising staff so much and I didn't want to abandon them or the students in a time of need. It's extremely important that freshmen get the help they need. I don't want them to feel neglected or not enroll."

"For us this is more than just a job," said Gabrielle Pittle, a fourth-year Business major from Simi Valley. "We take a lot of satisfaction in making a difference in students' lives. It's important that we remain a support system for them during an especially stressful time. Students only tend to come to us when there's a problem. The fact that we're reaching out to them is going to help both the students and the University in the future."

▶ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/VirtualPeerAdvising

LEFT TO RIGHT
Shannon Allen (seen on the laptop) and Gabrielle Pittle (at the desk)



LIVING THE DREAM

Lauren Boross

'13 B.S. Biology and Environmental Science & Resource Management

by ZOE LANCE

ONE DAY AT CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK, a child on a field trip noticed a sea star in a tidepool. Marveling at the creature, the child saw a photo in a textbook come to life. Observing the marine animal in its natural habitat builds an understanding of how the Pacific Ocean is home to a vast ecosystem.

For Lauren Boross, a national park ranger, watching these interactions never gets old.

“One of the most rewarding parts of my job is seeing how kids experience the park,” Boross said. “There aren’t many jobs where you can directly see or hear how your work impacts others, but I get that in this job.”

Boross ('13, Biology and Environmental Science & Resource Management) is a supervisory park ranger and volunteer coordinator at Channel Islands National Park. She leads the visitor center team, coordinates volunteers and educational field trips, and organizes special events.

While people might think of Ranger Smith from Yogi Bear when they hear her title, Boross said there’s much more to the job — one example being the local work that park rangers do to get people excited about nature.

“We secure funding for local high schools to go out to and experience Anacapa Island,” Boross said. “Many of the students that visit the park would never have the opportunity otherwise to visit an island or a national park. Some of them return with an enhanced perspective.”

Boross started volunteering at the park while in high school and got a job in college, cultivating her academic interests in biology and ecology. During her career, she has led Anacapa Island restoration projects for thousands of students, planned hundreds of special events and community outreach activities, and managed over 1,500 annual volunteers for the entire park.

“My favorite part of my job has been working with the volunteers,” Boross said. “I’ve been able to work with a lot of different

people, and they help us do so many things behind the scenes, allowing us to fulfill the National Park Service mission.”

Boross said that her CSUCI experience as a double major was instrumental in her career development. She participated in Yellowstone and Costa Rica field work, allowing her to apply what she learned about resource management in the classroom. She took on leadership roles in the Zeta Phi Omega sorority, and was a learning assistant in a pilot program for students who wanted to become teachers.

“CSUCI is a good school to develop leadership skills,” Boross said. “Having a background in marine biology, plant biology and cellular and molecular biology gives me a deeper knowledge that helps me provide better programs to the public. Having a scientific background in writing also really helps with working on press releases and social media. I chose to study biology because I’ve always had an interest in it, and now I get to share that interest with others.”

Boross enjoys working behind the scenes to share the park’s beauty with others and contributing to the National Park Service in a leadership role, even serving on the Pacific West Region volunteer leadership team.

“People tell me that their childhood dream was to be a park ranger,” she said. “I feel really lucky to live that dream.”



ON LEFT Channel Islands National Park Volunteers Barbara Hilburn, Carol Kurtz, Kelle Green with Lauren Boross at the Channel Islands Native Plant Sale in 2016.



“People tell me that their childhood dream was to be a park ranger. I feel really lucky to live that dream.” – Lauren Boross

GOING VIRTUAL TOGETHER

by KIM LAMB GREGORY

THE DYNAMIC CASCADE OF EVENTS following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic meant CSUCI leaders had an unprecedented task before them, one unlike any other that had been faced by higher education in more than a century.

"During our winter break, I began following COVID-19 updates from the World Health Organization and it was clear early on, that this was a serious situation and that our University needed to begin preparing for the threat on the horizon. I knew that when the time came, the campus would have to act and act quickly," said President Erika D. Beck.

In January, Beck called together the campus' Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and established a new preparedness team to begin planning for the tenuous road ahead and in February, she was engaged in county-wide discussions with education leaders and public health officials. By the end of February, the campus had already begun to develop contingency plans, updating its communicable disease plan, and working to understand its capacity for social distancing and virtual operations.

On March 11 Beck asked the campus to prepare for virtual instruction to begin by April 6, but just as the campus was preparing to implement this plan, Governor Gavin Newsom issued additional guidelines that included asking individuals 65 and older to self-quarantine. Wasting no time, Beck asked the campus to accelerate the plan and launch virtual instruction by March 20. This quick action was critical because only days after Beck accelerated the plan for virtual instruction, the Governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order and all but essential/designated employees were sent home to telework.

"Everybody went home on a Friday thinking classes would resume on Monday," said Interim Provost Elizabeth Say. "By Sunday night, it was a whole new ball game. We had to immediately stop face-to-face instruction."

It was a change that would affect every student, faculty, staff, and overall campus operations, which required campus leadership to pivot again. Beck met with the EOC nearly daily, and lead the mobilization of all areas of the University that worked extensively to make all instruction virtual, get most of the students off campus, and initiate plans to meet this unprecedented event.

The University's Teaching & Learning Innovations staff began the incredible undertaking of assisting faculty with converting more than 1,200 in-person courses to virtual instruction.

Vice President for Student Affairs Richard Yao and the Housing & Residential Education (HRE) team was charged with keeping residential students safe and informed while navigating an orderly move-out process.

"The entire HRE staff and student assistants were truly exceptional," said Yao. "They addressed the myriad of questions and concerns from students and parents, while concurrently tend-



Anahi Munson



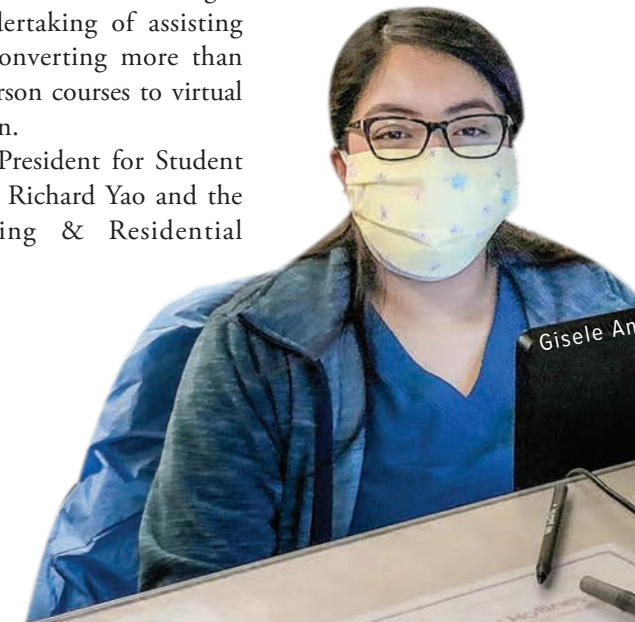
Megan Eberhardt Alstot



Gary Gordon



Laurie Nichols



Gisele Angeles



Roberto Perez



Brook Masters



Rachel Tafoya

{ FEATURE Article }

ing to all of the necessary logistics and while providing me with real-time data and updates throughout each day.”

Additionally, students studying abroad were contacted and asked to return to the United States as soon as possible.

“We had a very diverse group of students studying across the world in South Africa, Japan, Spain, France, Germany, Norway, England, Mexico, Italy, South Korea, and Chile with flights cancelled multiple times and parents of our students calling us for updates,” said Associate Vice President and Dean of International Programs and Extended

University Osman Ozturgut.

Through a coordinated effort by several areas across campus, which included International Programs, Financial Aid, Housing

& Residential Education, and Human Resources, all 25 students arrived safely and were self-quarantined off campus for 14 days.

Communication to faculty, staff, students, University Glen residents, and the general public has been critical throughout the COVID-19 crisis beginning in January and coordinated by Nancy Covarrubias Gill, Senior Executive Director of University Communication.

Gill was already a part of an existing team of campus leaders called the Communicable Disease Working Group that also set into motion the campus’ overall plan addressing the new virus. “The plan highlights everything from social distancing to infection control to the point of dispensing a vaccine when it becomes available,” said Gill.

Gill, who also leads the Communication & Marketing team, crafted messages for various audiences about the continually changing situation. Communication Specialist Kristin Steiner worked closely with Gill as they updated daily the University’s



Bobby Perez, Baldemar Salazar and Arturo Zumaya

{ FEATURE Article }

COVID-19 website, which includes frequently asked questions, information resources, health tips, travel guidelines, as well as updating other campus communication resources.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention placed restrictions on large gatherings that required Commencement for the Class of 2020 to be postponed; however, that didn’t stop the campus from celebrating graduating seniors. The Commencement Team, with guidance from student leaders, planned a virtual commencement Ceremony held on May 23 (pages 22-23). Plans also continue for a future date yet to be determined for an in-person Commencement ceremony for the Class of 2020.

“We are incredibly proud of the Class of 2020,” said Beck. “Their pursuit of excellence, resilience and perseverance have resulted in an academic achievement that merits all of the honors that a commencement celebration offers. Our students have most certainly earned this ceremony, and we cannot wait to celebrate with them alongside their friends, family, loved ones and peers.”

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/GoingVirtual



Colleen Forest



Anabel Barela



Nancy Gill



Garrett Brownfield



Anderson Hanchett



Celebration

A VIRTUAL

FOR THE CLASS OF 2020

by NANCY COVARRUBIAS GILL and KIM LAMB GREGORY

DU TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND LIKE so many other schools, colleges and universities across the state and nation, CSUCI made the difficult decision to postpone this year’s commencement ceremony. Without skipping a beat, the University’s Commencement Team, alongside student leaders, quickly switched their planning efforts to saluting the class of 2020 with a virtual celebration. The online ceremony was held on May 23 – the same day the students were set to graduate.

All graduates were invited to submit a video clip and photo for a personalized graduation slide, which was included in the virtual ceremony livestream and could be shared or downloaded for family and friends. The ceremony can be viewed by visiting: go.csuci.edu/2020

President Erika Beck stressed during her remarks that the virtual ceremony would not replace the in-person graduation. “If ever a graduating class had demonstrated their merit in realizing this singular accomplishment, it is most certainly the class of 2020. Not everyone can pivot on a dime, upend their entire lives, and find a path forward through unprecedented challenges and rise to the occasion. But this class did.”

Aside from remarks by President Beck, the virtual celebration included other highlights of the customary commencement, including a congratulatory message from the faculty delivered by Academic Senate Chair and Professor of Physics Gregory Wood. Psychology graduate Daisy Sumaya, performed the National

Anthem and the University’s alma mater was led by Business graduate Colleen Sanborn. And, as is customary, Director of Facility Support Raudel Bañuelos provided a Chumash blessing at the beginning of the ceremony to honor those who dwelled on the land before us.

Remarks were also provided by Student Government President Sara Ruiz, who earned a double major in Political Science and Performing Arts, and messages were read by students on behalf of two community leaders chosen to receive honorary doctorates: Ojai philanthropist Esther Wachtell, and social justice advocate and Oxnard political and educational leader Irene Pinkard, Ed.D. (see page 25).

Health Science graduate Ashleigh Secor read a message from Wachtell and Nursing major Jaelyn Anderson read a message from Pinkard.

The President also announced the conferral of degrees, which is the moment when graduates are simultaneously declared to have completed all requirements for their diplomas, as well as the traditional turning of the tassel.

“We all got knocked down,” said President Beck. “But instead of falling back, our graduates fell forward into the life they were meant to have. I am so very proud of their accomplishments.”

The date of the Class of 2020 in-person ceremony is yet to be determined and will be announced once known.

➤ View the ceremony at: go.csuci.edu/2020

Distinguished Alumni Award

by MARYA BARLOW

CHANNING LENERT, '11 B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE

Serving 'A Cause Greater Than Self'

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASSES in 2011, first-generation student Caitlin Cordova, '13 B.A. Psychology, stood in front of the Bell Tower feeling lost and overwhelmed.

A kind voice asked if she needed help. It was Channing Lenert, '11 B.A. Political Science, then a CSUCI senior, just doing what he does: noticing, caring and helping.

Nine years later, Lenert and Cordova are still friends, and he's impacted countless others with his steadfast devotion to public service, philanthropy and volun-

teerism. That's what prompted Cordova to nominate him for CSUCI's 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Channing's North Star is the notion of 'service to a cause greater than self,'" Cordova said. "He will always make CSUCI proud with his accomplishments. It has been such an inspiration to watch his career flourish. I have no doubt he will be the mayor of Chicago one day, or possibly even a senator."

Upon learning he'd been named Distinguished Alumnus, Lenert said, "As a proud Dolphin, it's incredibly humbling and exciting to be receiving such a prestigious award from my alma mater. My education at CSUCI has played a key role in shaping me, both personally and professionally. The CSUCI mission tenets of multiculturalism and service learning, in particular, have had deep resonance with me, both while I was a student, and as I've pursued my career in public service and grantmaking in Chicago."

At the age of 32, Lenert has already led a noteworthy life of service. After graduating from CSUCI in 2011, he returned to his hometown of Chicago to mentor middle school students as an AmeriCorps member with City Year Chicago, the largest AmeriCorps program in Illinois.

At Working in the Schools, a nonprofit that works with Chicago Public Schools to boost student literacy, Lenert served as development and operations manager and helped secure and renew the largest contribution in the organization's history. While there, he earned an M.S. in Nonprofit Management from Chicago's Spertus Institute.

As a development manager for Chicago's Navy Pier, Lenert secured the organization's first federal grant, increased grant support by 300%, and worked with the city's political and philanthropic leaders to enhance public programming and security infrastructure.

Today, he's a program officer at Polk Bros. Foundation, a private independent foundation dedicated to building and strengthening Chicago families and communities affected by poverty and inequity. With an endowment of over \$400 million, the foundation awards annual grants totaling more than \$20 million to nonprofits that focus on building strong communities and providing access to education, healthcare, and the arts.

"I can truly say that working at Polk Bros. Foundation continues to be a dream job," Lenert said. "I'm engaged in this sort of work because I believe that private philanthropy, at its best, informs public policy, and therefore is one of the few sectors that has the potential to really influence structural change."

Lenert actively volunteers and serves in leadership roles for numerous nonprofit and professional organizations, including City Year Chicago, the Chicago Urban League, LIFT Inc., Chicago African Americans in Philanthropy, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy, and Chicago's 46th Ward Democratic Organization. An IMPACT fellow of the Chicago Urban League and University of Chicago Booth School of Business, he was recently named "Outstanding Young Professional" by the Association of Fundraising Professionals and one of "35 Under 35 Young Leaders Making an Impact" by Chicago Scholars.

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/2020AlumniAward



Honorary Doctorates

by KIM LAMB GREGORY

ESTHER WACHTELL AND IRENE PINKARD

Two Philanthropists Receive Honorary Doctorates

PHILANTHROPY IS A MULTI-GENERATIONAL tradition for Esther Wachtell of Ojai and Irene Pinkard, Ed.D. of Oxnard.

In recognition of their commitment to enhancing the culture, environment and educational opportunities in the Ventura/Santa Barbara County region, honorary degree recipients Pinkard and Wachtell provided words of inspiration to the Class of 2020 read by students during the May 23 virtual commencement. The actual conferral of the honorary degrees will take place at the in-person ceremony, which will be held on a date still to be determined.

Pinkard and her late husband Bedford Pinkard have long been forces for justice and equal opportunity in Ventura County, and their time, energy and generosity has extended to CSUCI.

"My husband was on the advisory board that fought for years to have a university here," Pinkard said. "My hus-

band went to Cal State Northridge. It's something that's been in the family for a long time, so it's a natural to support Cal State Channel Islands."

Longtime Ojai resident and prominent philanthropist Esther Wachtell was also one of the first individuals to join the effort to plan and shape the county's first public university back in the late 1990s. In 2017, she joined CSUCI's Board of Directors and rose quickly to Board leadership.

"In Mrs. Wachtell you will find a leader who looks for every opportunity to give back to and serve her community," said President Erika D. Beck, PhD. "Her decades of tireless work on behalf of the Ventura and Los Angeles County communities make her a true exemplar of the CSU Channel Islands spirit and it is a unique privilege for the campus to bestow this honor on her."

This year, CSUCI is offering the Bedford and Dr. Irene Pinkard Multicultural Living Learning Community for first year students wishing to learn more about African American culture along with valuable academic skills while living together in the same residence hall.

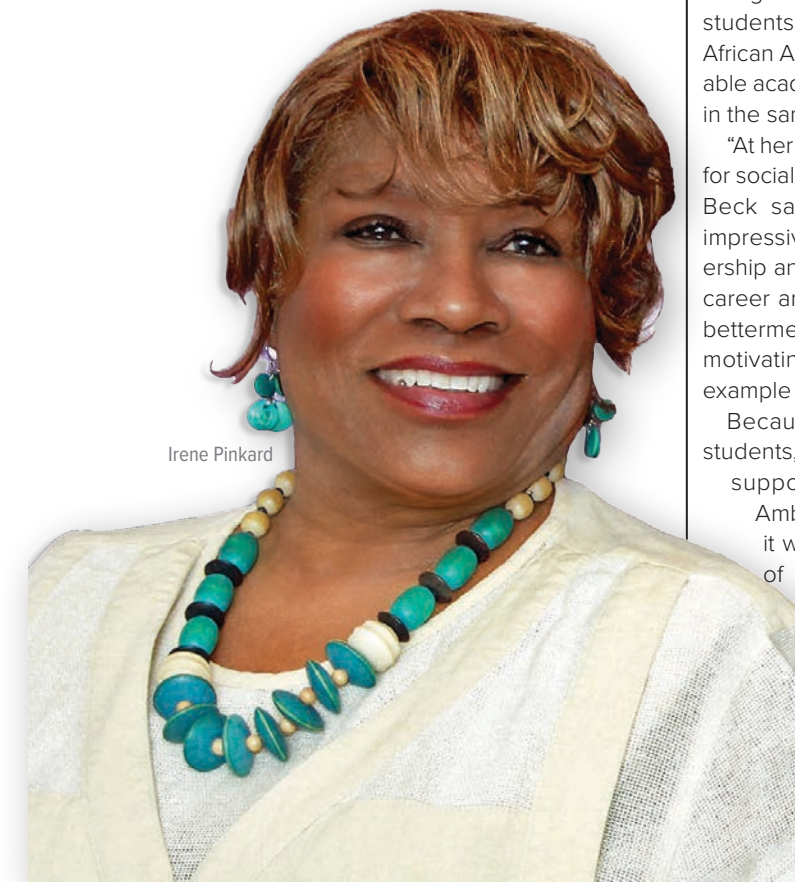
"At her core, Dr. Pinkard is an advocate for social justice and educational equity," Beck said. "Dr. Pinkard has had an impressive career in educational leadership and local politics. Her trailblazing career and undying commitment to the betterment of education at all levels is motivating and serves as an excellent example for our students."

Because of her belief in CSUCI's students, Wachtell has been an ardent supporter of the Peer Mentor Ambassador Program since it was launched in spring of 2019. This program

gives students the opportunity to earn a \$3,500 stipend per semester in return for advising and mentoring fellow students—especially those who are the first in their family to attend college.

"The most important thing about CSUCI as far as I'm concerned is the students," Wachtell said. "I so admire the students at Cal State Channel Islands because so many have responsibilities above and beyond their education and they handle it all with such grace. They have such a strong sense of what education will mean in their lives."

➤ Read more at: go.csuci.edu/HonoraryDoctorates2020
➤ Learn about the Peer Mentorship Program at: go.csuci.edu/PeerMentorship
➤ Living Learning Communities: go.csuci.edu/LearningCommunities



Irene Pinkard



Esther Wachtell

ASK Ekhhobot

Students Find a Friend in "Ekhhobot"

by KIM LAMB GREGORY

"What time does Sage Hall close on Friday?"
"When is Spring Break this semester?"
"Where can I apply for a job?"

THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE HUNDREDS OF QUESTIONS a new freshman or transfer student might have during their first year at CSUCI.

Now, new students have a digital friend available to answer those questions 24/7.

"Ekhhobot" is a new campus service for students that uses text messaging and artificial intelligence to help guide new students through the university experience.

Named for CSUCI's dolphin mascot, Ekho, Ekhhobot is a chatbot that has been answering questions from freshmen and new transfer students since last fall.

Ekhhobot can answer common questions students have, and, for the more complicated questions, connect them with someone who can find the answer.

When the campus transitioned from in-person to online instruction because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ekhhobot was able to keep students abreast of a fluid situation.

"The chatbot is based on text messaging," explained Associate Vice Provost for Innovation and Faculty Development Jill Leafstedt. "Students can send a message to Ekhhobot via text and it will provide an answer. Using artificial intelligence, it has learned information about our campus and can provide answers to a lot of questions freshmen and transfer students have."

Leafstedt and Associate Vice Provost for Student Success & Community Engagement Amanda Quintero, led the effort to launch Ekhhobot, making CSUCI one of five universities in the CSU system to adopt a campus-specific chatbot. These chatbots are designed to help set a smooth trajectory for new students so they can thrive academically and graduate on time.

Quintero said Ekhhobot will also help with "nudge" campaigns, which are designed to remind students of important dates or deadlines.

"The students get a lot of information at orientation, so it's hard to retain all of it," Quintero said. "But if we break up this information during the year and deliver it around important deadlines, or to let them know that resources exist, it will be a lot less overwhelming."

Ekhhobot is friendly, informative, and has a distinct personality.

For example, when one student thanked Ekhhobot for information around Valentine's Day, Ekhhobot recieved a surprising invitation.

"Thnx Ekhhobot," the student texted. "Will u b my valentine?"

"My intelligence may be artificial, but our bond is real," Ekhhobot texted back. "However, I'm not sure that a robot and a human would make good mates!"

One-Stop Shop FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

by PAMELA DEAN

WHEN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC forced CSUCI to implement virtual learning, Vice President for Student Affairs Richard Yao wanted to come up with a way to ensure students stayed engaged with the University and got the support they needed to finish the school year.

"The one thing that makes CSUCI so special is our sense of campus community and belonging. We want students to still feel connected to the campus even though they can't physically be here," Yao explained. "We know how important this is for student success, especially for our students from historically marginalized groups and our first generation students."

To create this virtual space where students can get the vital information needed for academic success as well as foster their connection to the campus, the division decided to develop a comprehensive website they dubbed "The Island."

The Island is dedicated to sharing information, resources and events for current students all in one spot. The intent is to provide all sorts of resources students need to stay connected and engaged with the campus and their classmates during this time of "physical distancing."

"Normally each Student Affairs unit does their own outreach and marketing for their individual events and

services using the social media tools they feel best reaches their audiences. The Island brings together all that information in a coordinated way and in one easy-to-find place," said Kristina Hamilton, the Associated Students Inc. (ASI) graphic designer who designed and built the website in just two weeks.

On The Island students can find information about academic support, counseling services, basic needs support, COVID-19 resources, health and wellness resources and fun virtual events. Information about the upcoming virtual commencement ceremony, inspiring commencement speeches from the past and even exercise videos to stay well at home can also be found. The dynamic website uses lots of color, photos, large font, and buttons to keep the website user-friendly and engaging.

➤ LEARN MORE AT: [THEISLAND.CSUCI.EDU](https://theisland.csuci.edu)



ON THE FRONT LINES

Dallas Lawry
'14 B.S. Nursing

By PAMELA DEAN

AS AN ONCOLOGY NURSE AT UCLA MEDICAL Center's Santa Monica Hospital, Dallas Lawry, B.S. Nursing, does her best to dodge the coronavirus (COVID-19) every day.

"I work on the oncology floor where a majority of the patients are very immunocompromised. I am impressed with the emergency preparedness actions UCLA is taking, and I feel safe to work there during such an uncertain and truly scary time," Lawry explained. "The hospital is taking extra precautions to prevent the possibility of any COVID-19 patients from coming into contact with UCLA's cancer population."

Although she continues to work with hospitalized cancer patients, administering chemotherapy and managing oncologic emergencies, she knows as the crisis continues or ramps up, she can be reassigned to another unit at any time.

"UCLA is equipped to accept and manage COVID-19 patients. Soon, it is quite possible that all medical-surgical nurses will be caring for these patients regardless of specialty," she said.

In addition to her nursing job, Lawry is a part-time "open sim lab" instructor at CSUCI.

"I work with students in the nursing simulation lab, answering questions and working on clinical skills such as physical assessment and inserting IVs," Lawry said. "I also help with the simulations, acting as the voice of the patient simulator (mannequin), and change 'his' vital signs according to how the nursing students care for 'him.' These simulations are created to 'simulate' a patient in the hospital setting."

and CSUCI has the exceptional lab and technology to do so."

If that wasn't enough to keep her occupied, Lawry is also pursuing dual graduate degrees — Doctorate of Nursing Practice and Family Nurse Practitioner — through Loyola University New Orleans.

"My life has always been busy," she added. "I balance a hospital nursing job with the nursing simulation lab at CSUCI with a full-time doctoral degree program."

Because she is at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19, Lawry is taking many precautions to prevent bringing the disease home with her.

"I have not seen anyone in my immediate family for three weeks. I live with my significant other who is also an essential worker. For this reason, we have strictly followed the social distancing guidelines and rarely go to the grocery store. I change my shoes before getting into my car after work, and immediately shower when I get home. I wash my hands diligently, and try to leave anything from work in my car (stethoscope, backpack, shoes, etc.). We disinfect the high-touch areas in our home such as door knobs, faucets, cabinet handles, etc. A few weeks ago, I would have felt overly paranoid to report that I was taking these precautions. Today, I feel like I will soon be doing even more than I am doing now."

Lawry has some words of advice for the general public.

"It is absolutely crucial that the public continues to follow the guidelines of social distancing — we are seeing that it is working and we must not become complacent. You should not leave the house if it is not necessary. 'Necessary' is not running out of an ingredient for a specific recipe, and needing to go to the store. 'Necessary' is being out of enough food to last a few days. If you are still meeting friends or family that you do not live with, unless it is an absolute emergency, please stop. I personally believe it is a moral and ethical decision at this point to protect ourselves and others, we should all stay home."

"In addition to this, I am a strong proponent of mental health services and know this time in particular may be difficult for anyone struggling with anxiety, depression, or PTSD. It is very important to take the time you need to be mentally healthy: meditate, journal, call or Zoom with friends and family, tele-therapy with your counselor, exercise and get some sunshine. I am journaling my experiences every day and trying to make sure I get outside every day."



AT 'THE CAMPUS THAT BROUGHT US TOGETHER'

WHEN CSUCI ALUMS LAUREN Gih, '14 B.A. Psychology and B.A. Communication, and Ryan Stokes, '14 B.A. Psychology and B.S. Computer Science, started planning their wedding, there was never a question as to where it would be held.

"We wanted to get married somewhere that was equally meaningful to us and CSUCI came to mind immediately," said Gih.

On November 23, 2019, the couple returned to the place where their romance sparked six years earlier to begin their lives as husband and wife. They exchanged vows in front of 120 guests at the John Spoor Broome Library, with their cherished former Psychology Professor Kimmy Kee-Rose, serving as one of the wedding officiants.

"We both described the feeling as making a full circle of where our love started and continues to grow," Gih said. "We loved the idea of having our ceremony in front of the Broome Library because it's one of the most beautiful buildings we have ever seen and we knew it would be gorgeous for wedding photos. We are also very proud of our institution and wanted our friends and family to visit the campus that brought us together."

The couple met in the fall of 2013 in Kee-Rose's Psychology research course. Though Gih was "immediately smitten," Stokes initially dismissed her as a beauty who probably lacked substance. Over lunches in the campus cafeteria, study sessions in the library, and long conversations in the research lab, Stokes realized Gih was "the total package." At a Halloween party that fall, they confessed their love for each other and have been inseparable ever since.

Over the past six years, Gih and Stokes have earned six combined college degrees, endured three moves, made countless trips

to Disneyland, and adopted a beloved rescue dog named Daisy.

Gih earned a Master of Science degree in Applied Psychology from the University of Southern California and a Doctorate in Education from Concordia University, Irvine at age 25—making her the youngest and fastest doctoral graduate in the history of the university. She also completed coursework for a single-subject teaching credential at CSU Long Beach. Gih is currently an adjunct professor in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at CSU Long Beach and holds a senior administrative role in the UC Irvine School of Medicine. In addition to teaching, she has worked on programs at CSU Long Beach aimed at transitioning and retaining historically underrepresented students. "As a higher education professional, CSUCI is

where I truly saw examples of the educator I aspired to become," Gih said. "Dr. Kee-Rose selflessly mentored me into the person I am today. She is the first person who highlighted strengths I did not even see in myself and, with her high expectations, she never let me settle on a dream. These are tenets I carry into my own classroom, as I seek to mentor students who simply need someone to acknowledge their potential and help bring their talents to fruition."

Stokes received a full scholarship to UC Irvine, where he earned his Master of Science and Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience. He's currently completing his second Master of Science degree at UC Irvine, in Statistics, and is making the transition from graduate school to a career in data science.

"Summer 2020 will be the first time we will not be college students in nearly a decade," Gih said. "We are most excited to finally have time for the things we want to do, such as traveling, purchasing our first home together, and starting a family."

by
MARYA
BARLOW





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Support through the President's Circle has

- Provided the necessary equipment to create 3D Printing for face shields to help local medical professionals;
- Helped launch new degree programs such as the region's first Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree—students and alumni prepare and serve as essential employees in Ventura and Santa Barbara County health care communities;
- Provided financial support to our CSUCI students impacted by COVID-19, including support for students facing food and housing insecurities.



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