



Jonathan Sarceno, right, and his father, Jong Sarceno, walk toward student housing during Cal State Fullerton's Move-in Day on Aug. 17.

PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

NEW PRESIDENT

ALVA WILL LEAD THE UNIVERSITY THROUGH A SOCIAL-JUSTICE LENS

A focus on academics, diversity, inclusion

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

As Cal State Fullerton's newly appointed president, Sylvia Alva embraces the university's commitment, and the commitment of the CSU system overall, to cultivate an environment of diversity and inclusion and enhance academic success for first-generation students.

And for good reason.

Alva and her four sisters, her husband and her two daughters are all products of the CSU system.

"So, this is deeply personal," Alva said of her new role. My parents were immigrants to this country, and so for us, education was the vehicle. It was the vehicle for social mobility. It was the tool that

was used to continue to advance in this society and in this world to make contributions along the way."

Alva views her presidency as an opportunity to "add value and momentum" to the university's commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice.

"And it isn't just a feeling," she said. "It shows up in our results, in our impressive graduation rates, in our recognition by national organizations like Excelencia in Education for our work in graduating Hispanics and closing those gaps and being very intentional about how we approach that work."

Alva took over as CSUF president in August, returning to the institution where she began her career as an educator 30 years ago, as an assistant professor of adolescent development.

"Dr. Alva wonderfully embodies the CSU core values of inclusive excellence and educational equity," said then CSU Interim Chancellor Jolene Koester when she appointed Alva to the CSUF president » PAGE 3



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Sylvia Alva is Cal State Fullerton's newly appointed president, succeeding Fram Virjee.

SAGE PROGRAM

Students return from study abroad with new perspectives

More than 300 experience other cultures

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

It was a summer to remember for more than 300 Cal State Fullerton Titans who traveled to all corners of the globe as participants in study abroad programs through CSUF's Study Abroad & Global Engagement department.

Alongside engaging academics that provide degree advancement, the students were able to immerse themselves in other cultures, an opportunity that enriches all aspects of their college experience.

Second-year communications major Dulce Garcilazo had never been out of the country before she embarked this summer on a month-long study abroad trip to Barcelona, Spain. In

ABROAD » PAGE 5



PHOTO BY DULCE GARCILAZO

CSUF student Dulce Garcilazo, left, poses with a fellow traveler at the Dragon Stairway in Park Güell in Barcelona, Spain.

GRANTS

New buildings, renovations and parking upgrades greet students

Visual Arts Complex work moving ahead

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

As the new school year gets underway, students and faculty stepping foot onto the Cal State Fullerton campus will see building renovations and improvements that increase functionality and enhance the aesthetics of the entire environment.

One of the most obvious is the progress made in the massive modernization project » PAGE 5

BUILDINGS » PAGE 5

#3


Bachelor's Degrees earned by **HISPANICS** in the Nation

Cal State Fullerton
fullerton.edu


BACK ON CAMPUS!

FALL SEMESTER

Some 40,000 students and 5,000 faculty members arrived on the Cal State Fullerton campus last month, filling dorms, classrooms and parking structures and heralding the beginning of the 2023 fall semester. We caught up with some Titans to ask them what they're most looking forward to this semester.



CSUF BY THE NUMBERS
(Fall 2022)



| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| 40,386 | 79,412 | 11,114 | 23.7 | 14.03 | 31.2% | 52.7% |
| number of students enrolled | number of applications | degrees conferred 2021–22 | average student age | average unit load for first-time freshmen | first generation to attend | underrepresented (Native American, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander) |

Photos by Drew A. Kelley, contributing photographer

Source: CSUF News Media Services



Kailee Silva:

"I just moved so I'm looking forward to the new environment."



Erika Rasmussen:

"Learning new things."



Liz Boyd:

"Returning to school and obtaining my degree."



Ezekiel Basilio:

"Finally finishing and graduating."



Brillith Guillen:

"I'm looking forward to meeting new people and being more open minded."



Austin Biedermann:

"Finishing my GEs and moving on to my major."



Paris Boothe:

"Staying in school and getting good grades."



Max Gaglio:

"Meeting new people and figuring things out on my own."



Lauren Lloyd:

"Taking classes that pertain to my major."

#2

Online Master's
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
in California

■ U.S. News & World Report, 2023



Cal State Fullerton

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The Cal State Fullerton community section is produced by The Orange County Register for the benefit of its subscribers. While the university is the section's primary advertising sponsor, all editorial decisions are independent of the university's control.

Published on select Thursdays by
The Orange County Register
2190 Towne Centre Place
Anaheim, CA 92806
ocregister.com/cal-state-fullerton

EXCELENCIA IN EDUCATION

Latinx-focused counseling grad program recognized

Clinical training rated among best in nation

By Lou Ponsi ,
contributing writer

Realizing there was often a disconnect between mental health counselors and their Latinx and Spanish-speaking clients, Cal State Fullerton, in 2018, launched the *Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis*.

As a five-course program within the Department of Counseling, *Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis* provides graduate students with bilingual and bicultural clinical training that prepares them to address the needs of Latinx clients.

The effort to create the curriculum was led by Olga Mejía, associate professor of counseling and the director of *Ánimo*.

And advocacy groups have taken notice.

Excelencia in Education, a well-respected nonprofit that advocates for the success of Latinx and bicultural students in higher education, selected *Ánimo* as one of 19 “Examples of Excelencia” finalists in the nation for 2023.

The award recognizes programs at the associate, baccalaureate and graduate levels that align with Exclencia’s mission.

The 19 programs were selected from more than 100 submissions from around the nation. *Ánimo* was one of five selected in the graduate-level category.

“Oh, I’m so proud,” Mejía said. “Building *Ánimo*, it really brings tears to my eyes. It’s really a labor of love for me.”

Ánimo’s designation as a finalist this year is a step up from 2022, when the curriculum was named by Excelencia in Education as one of 10 “Programs to

Watch” that foster a sense of academic achievement and belonging through the use of shared culture and language.

Ánimo is a component of the Department of Counseling’s master of science program.

Coursework focuses on clinical issues related to Latinx and Spanish-speaking clients. Topics include ethnic identity, immigration, cultural value systems, assimilation, ethnic identity and intergenerational family conflict.

Valeria Ayala is a graduate student working toward a master of science in counseling and is currently in the *Ánimo* program.

Ayala was working toward a bachelor’s degree in psychology at Fresno State when she became aware of the specific mental health needs within the Latinx community.

While researching master’s programs, Ayala discovered that CSUF was one of the only public universities that offered a focus on counseling in the Latinx community.

“That’s what really drew me to the program. It seems like something so unique because it’s not really offered anywhere else,” Ayala said. “I feel more comfortable to just go in and help my community. Just being from the community doesn’t mean that you know how to help them, but having some background and values and learning more about how to use these values when working with the community is something that was really important for me when picking out this program.”

CSUF alum Carla Vargas completed the *Ánimo* curriculum while working toward her master’s in counseling.

Vargas earned her bachelor’s degree at Long Beach State and was researching master’s programs when she discovered *Ánimo*.

“I didn’t even know there was a program such as ‘Animo Emphasis,’ said



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The incoming class of the *Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis* program at CSUF

Vargas, who currently works as a curriculum specialist creating art workshops for therapists. “I felt as a Latina, that is something that I wanted to do, and I think it’s so much needed.

Vargas was grateful to be accepted to the master’s program at CSUF but even more thrilled to be accepted into *Ánimo*.

“Being in an environment where your classmates look like you, they understand the language, they understand the barriers, they understand the stigmas ... I think that’s what really helped me continue throughout the program,” Vargas said. “I was really thankful that I was able to find a program that really highlighted my identity and how to work with my population.”

Even though the curriculum wasn’t formally launched until 2018, Mejía started teaching a version of *Ánimo* in 2011.

Mejía saw a need for a program such as *Ánimo* to address the academic and training needs of students who are passionate about serving Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities.

Mejía was also motivated by her own experiences as an immigrant from Mexico, who spoke only Spanish when coming to the U.S. as a young child.

Once pursuing a career in mental health, she saw a lack of cultural sensitivity from counselors working with Latinx and Spanish-speaking populations.

The biggest barrier to connecting with the population is often a lack of trust, Mejía said.

“When I was in community mental health, being Mexican, being an immigrant, speaking Spanish, clients were saying, ‘Oh, you get me. OK, let me tell you about my anxiety and my depression,’ ” the professor said. “I know my mom, I know my brothers and sisters, my nieces, my nephews, my cousins, when they go to therapy, I want someone to know how to work with them.”

In 2022, Mejía received the Innovative Counselor Education Program Award from the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision for creating *Ánimo*.

ALUM'S SUCCESS

Former CSUF lecturer Weller creates magic with costume design

CSUF News Media Services

For as long as she can remember, costume design has always been woven into Karen Weller’s life.

Living in Japan as a young girl, she learned how to sew clothing by watching a professional dressmaker who was hired to create clothing for special family occasions.

When she was in sixth grade, she created a costume for her fashion doll as a history project — a 15th century medieval gown complete with a headdress and jeweled trim.

The Cal State Fullerton alumna has since graduated from designing doll clothes to co-founding a design and development company that has created costumes for such entertainment companies as Radio City Music Hall Productions, Sony Entertainment, Universal Studios Hollywood and Walt Disney Productions.

“My education at Cal State Fullerton provided me with a very good foundation and I’m appreciative of all that it has done for me and my career,” said Weller, who earned a master of fine arts degree in theater arts in 1981. “The department of theater and dance provided a wonderful array of educational opportunities and encouragement.”

Weller’s professional costume design career in themed entertainment started with a little bit of magic — the kind that involves Mickey Mouse. In the 1990s, Disney was in the midst of producing films that were on their way to becoming classics.

Surrounded by the creativity of such films as “The Little Mermaid,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin” and “The Lion King,” Weller joined the Disneyland Resort as a costume production manager. In this role, she oversaw the production of many of the costumes that the performers wore across the theme park.

Dressing entertainers for the park’s newest shows and parades, Weller found herself at the center of Disney’s costume artistry for seven years before she took her expertise overseas to be the wardrobe design manager for Universal Studios Japan, an international theme park that opened in Osaka, Japan, in 2001.

Working on costumes and wardrobe for the first-ever Universal Studios theme park to open outside of the United States, Weller and her team created original concepts and collaborated with fabrication vendors to develop prototypes for the first production pieces.

Today, her costumes can be seen in the park’s various stage shows, on the characters who interact with guests and on the crews that run the attractions, shops and restaurants. She also continued to work with Universal Studios Japan as a design consultant after the park opened.

“It was a massive project to take on, but it was incredible to see everything come together,” said Weller. “Then, to have the opportunity to help maintain the integrity of the original designs that we created and introduce new designs as needed, for over 20 years was an honor.”

After Universal Studios Japan opened, she was invited to manage wardrobe design efforts for Universal Studios Singapore. Seeing the industry shifting from in-house designers to contracted project designers, she co-founded The Costume Connection, Inc. The design and development company has distinguished itself over the last decade through its work with top-tier entertainment companies,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KAREN WELLER

Karen Weller worked at Disneyland Resort as a costume production manager.



Weller’s company created costumes for SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi.

including four Universal Studios Parks, Resorts World Entertainment, Warner Bros. Studios, Samsung Everland and Dollywood.

The company’s latest adventure took them under the sea, creating 38 costumes for SeaWorld’s newest theme park that opened in May 2023, SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi. This venture included costume designs for mermaids and engaging characters that roam the park.

“It sounds cliché, but when you hear that saying, ‘Find something you love and you’ll never work a day in your life,’ it’s true. I get to show up to work every day and do something I’m passionate about,” she said. “I’m very grateful for that”

After graduating from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro and spending several years in the merchandising industry, Weller moved to Southern California, where her interest in costume design was reignited by the excitement of the entertainment industry.

“I interviewed at different universities, but a lot of their programs were very theoretical. Cal State Fullerton offered more hands-on experiences. It wasn’t just about conceptual design assignments. I had opportunities to make things happen and collaborate with other creative departments, which was very valuable,” said Weller.

During her time in the College of the Arts, Weller expanded her design skills, built a professional network and learned the beauty of cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Working on her graduate thesis, the aspiring artist collaborated with multiple creative teams to coordinate such elements as music, lighting and scenic design. Weller said she has carried the skills she learned from that experience into all of her future endeavors.

Throughout her career in the professional costume design industry, Weller has always held strong to her Titan home. In the department that helped her launch a successful career, Weller served as an instructor for 15 years, teaching introduction to costume design, costume construction and the graduate student seminars, as well as mentoring special projects.

“My time at Cal State Fullerton was filled with good experiences and networking opportunities, and I made friends for life,” said Weller, lecturer emeritus of theater and dance.

Her passion for CSUF can also be found in the network of artists that she has worked with over the years. She has called upon CSUF graduates to assist on various projects, and to this day, she is always on the lookout for talented alumni to bring onto different assignments.

“My company and I have hired CSUF alumni as project assistants, design assistants and illustrators for projects that warrant additional staffing. That networking keeps our world going around and provides more opportunities for up-and-coming artists,” said Weller.

For students looking to pursue careers in costume design, Weller said it’s important to gain as much hands-on experience as possible. Not only will those experiences help students hone their technical and design skills, but they will also become talented critical thinkers and problem solvers.

“Everything you do is valuable,” said Weller. “So often, we think that the project is the end product, but really, it’s the process that’s important. The process of creating something is where you learn those critical skills that you’ll continue to use throughout your career.”

President

FROM PAGE 1

dency in April. “I am confident that Cal State Fullerton will benefit from her equity-centered mindset, collaborative nature and student-driven leadership style,”

Growing up in Los Angeles, Alva first had career aspirations to become an educator while in high school, initially thinking about becoming a high school Spanish teacher.

By the time she was working toward earning a master’s degree and a doctorate in psychology from UCLA, Alva’s ambitions broadened, and she discovered a passion for becoming an educator in a university setting.

As a recently minted doctorate awardee, Alva landed her first teaching position at CSUF.

From a position as an assistant professor at CSUF, Alva advanced to a position as a professor.

Alva became the university’s educational equity coordinator for the College of Health and Human Development, the all-university director of the academic advising center and the associate vice president for undergraduate programs.

Alva recalled a transformative experience she had in the early 1990s, while still at CSUF, when she had the serendipitous opportunity to share a bus ride with Rosa Parks, the civil rights icon who famously refused to vacate her seat for a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery Alabama, on Dec.1, 1955, violating the state’s segregation laws at the time.

Parks had just spoken at a conference that Alva had attended, and the two were taking a bus back to their hotel.

“We had a really nice conversation,” Alva recalled. “And I remember that evening reflecting on the historical impact that she’s had on society, and how leadership can express itself in different ways, and that we all have an opportunity to lead with an important social justice lens, an equity-minded approach to our work. It opened up for me a passion, a commitment to trying to use the position, the opportunity to be at a university, to a much bigger end, to have a bigger impact.”

Alva continued her career as dean of the College of Health and Human Development at Cal State Northridge and, later, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Cal Poly Pomona.

The career educator went on to serve in the CSU Office of the Chancellor as the executive vice chancellor of the Division of Academic and Student Affairs, where she was part of a leadership team that instituted CSU’s Graduation Initiative 2025, designed to close equity gaps and boost graduation rates for students of all backgrounds.

“And I had an opportunity to now come back in August to serve as the university’s new president,” Alva said. “So, for me, it’s always been about education. It’s always been about thinking about how to create access and opportunity to college, and the benefits that come with earning a college degree, and the impact that that degree can have — not just in the individual and their family, but an entire region — and impact so many others through how that degree is leveraged and utilized.”

RESEARCH

Marine biology student studies snout shape of pipefishes

CSUF News Media Services

Inside a lab in McCarthy Hall, biology graduate student Anabell Espinosa removes a museum sample of a California pipefish from a glass jar. She then places the specimen under a microscope to examine its head shape.

As she peers into the microscope, she zeros in on the head to determine the relationships between head morphology and the ecology and evolution of these long, thin fishes.

With a face resembling a sea dragon, a snake-like body and a slim snout, five pipefish species were historically reported in the coastal waters of Southern California. Pipefishes, which grow 6 to 8 inches in length, are relatives of the seahorse and sea dragon that live cryptically among seagrasses and seaweed.

A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Fish Biology* by marine biologists, including Cal State Fullerton biological science professors Douglas J. Eernisse and Kristy L. Forsgren, proposed classifying four of these pipefishes into one species since they have the same genetic makeup and similar characteristics.

Even so, within this newly revised species (*Syngnathus californiensis*), there appear to be two conspicuous head shapes with different mouth and snout characteristics, said Ryan Walter, associate professor of biological science, Espinosa's research adviser.

To learn more about these two seemingly different morphologies within this species, Espinosa is characterizing the diversity of head shapes among individuals and looking for links to the environment where these fishes are found.

"Anabell's thesis research will help to document important morphological variation that likely underlies ecological differences among California's pipefishes," Walter said.

Espinosa said her study would give scientists more information about the species' morphology differences based on the location these pipefishes inhabit.

"This knowledge will improve our understanding of the evolutionary processes and diversification in pipefishes of the eastern Pacific Ocean," said Espinosa, who studied pipefish DNA as an undergraduate alongside Walter.

A California State University Council on Ocean Affairs, Science & Technology's Dr. Kenneth H. Coale Graduate Scholar Award and CSUF's Veterans Student Success Scholarship and Pa'lante Fellowship fund her research project.

For her lab-based work, Espinosa obtained museum specimens from the ichthyological collections at the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County and UC San Diego Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Walter said that Espinosa is applying geometric morphometrics, a technique that can reveal subtle but important differences in organisms' shape and body parts.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Anabell Espinosa's research focuses on the ecology and evolution of California pipefishes.

ferences in organisms' shape and body parts.

"This technique has been used on fish fins and jaws, butterfly wings and mammal skulls to uncover important sources of variation and reveal evolutionary novelty," he said.

Her research findings reveal that the snout morphology of California pipefish seems to be linked with the location where the fish lives.

"Specifically, northern pipefish populations — San Francisco to Alaska — have a more elongated snout, whereas pipefish from southern locations — Santa Barbara to Baja California — have a wider and shorter snout," said Espinosa, who presented her research virtually this summer at Evolution 2023, a global research conference.

The differences may be tied to the size of zooplankton, tiny aquatic microorganisms that pipefish eat in their habitats — and the efficiency of their snout types.

"Zooplankton species are more diverse at lower latitudes, with smaller and bigger sizes available. Pipefishes found at southern locations have a wider snout. A wider snout allows pipefishes to feed on various prey sizes," Espinosa explained.

"My study found that pipefishes from northern populations have a more elongated snout, where zooplankton at higher latitudes tend to be larger."

Previous studies on feeding behaviors show that pipefishes with more elongated snouts have higher success when catching larger prey than smaller prey, the researchers said.

Espinosa, a native of Ambato, Ecuador, moved to the U.S. with her mother when she was 18. A first-generation college graduate, she attended Fullerton College and transferred to CSUF, earning a bachelor's degree in biological science in 2021.

As an undergraduate, balancing her academics and research activities was challenging due to her service in the Army National Guard. She



Espinosa works in the lab on her study of pipefish.

served as a medic for six years and deployed to emergencies, including California's wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. She initially pursued college to become a doctor, but after conducting research with Walter, she changed her mind.

To help her prepare for the next step in her education, Espinosa is a recipient of the California State University's 2022-23 Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholarship, which supports underrepresented students with doctoral aspirations.

As a Sally Casanova scholar, she interned at Scripps Institution of Oceanography this summer and learned about artisanal fisheries and

their impacts on coastal communities. Unlike commercial fishing, artisanal fisheries involve fishing for individual, family or community consumption.

Espinosa plans to pursue a doctorate after she completes the master's program in biology in the fall and aspires to a teaching and research career at the university level.

"My research experiences have given me confidence and empowered me to advance my educational goals," she said. "Studying marine biology is important because the ocean is one of the most exploited yet more vital natural resources."

\$2.4 MILLION GRANT

Supporting the education of the region's migrant farmworkers

CSUF News Media Services

Educator Pablo Jasis has dedicated his career to community-based education to break the cycle of poverty among Southern California's migrant farmworkers.

In 2015, Jasis first led a Cal State Fullerton federal grant project to ensure farmworkers and their families received the equivalent of a high school diploma.

Now, Jasis, a former middle school teacher and professor of elementary and bilingual education, will direct a new five-year grant program to provide 400 farmworkers and their families with high school equivalency instruction, transition to college guidance, counseling and support services.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Migrant Education has awarded the university a second nearly \$2.4 million grant for the CSUF-High School Equivalency Program. The award includes \$474,039 in first-year funding for the program, which starts this fall.

The program will serve about 80 participants each year who work in the agricultural areas of Orange, Los Angeles and northern San Diego counties. In the future, the program will serve select areas of Riverside County.

"Farmworkers are the best examples of family strength, dedication and hard work among us. They are the true essential workers," Jasis said. "Yet they are still mired in harsh working and living conditions, with scant or nonexistent opportunities for better education and employment. They deserve better, and we can continue to support them with this new grant."

Lisa Kirtman, dean of the College of Education, said community-based education is crucial in bridging educational gaps and empowering underserved communities.

"CSUF-HEP is a perfect illustration of what the College of Education means when we say we are working toward providing a just, equitable and inclusive education," Kirtman said. "This work fosters social mobility and promotes a more inclusive society."

Alumna Susan Rodriguez, who earned a master of arts in English in 2023 and a bachelor of arts in criminal justice in 1997 and who is from a farmworker family, is the program's project director. Alumna Patricia Feliz, who earned a master of science in curriculum and in-



PHOTO BY ANA P. GUTIERREZ-GARCIA, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

CSUF's Pablo Jasis congratulates a graduate who earned her high school equivalency certificate as part of the first CSUF-HEP grant for migrant families from 2015-20.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK

The new \$2.4 million grant award from the U.S. Department of Education for the CSUF-High School Equivalency Program will serve about 80 farmworkers and their families each year.

struction-education for social justice in 2023, is the former project director and has taken on new responsibilities within the Department of Elementary and Bilingual Education.

"As a daughter of agricultural workers, this unique program is a wonderful way of giving back to the education and betterment of our families," Rodriguez said.

From 2015-20, the first \$2.4 million grant served 360 farmworkers and their families in five regional agricultural communities. Participants were from Anaheim, Santa Ana, Ontario, Fallbrook, Vista and the Coachella Valley. A total of 266 participants earned their high school equivalency, although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the program.

In California, more than 800,000 farmworkers across the state tend fields — from farmland, nurseries, field crops and dairy farms. The grant program aims to provide educational opportunities to adults and out-of-school youth in their communities.

Farmworkers and their immediate dependents, who are at least 17 years old, will receive instructional support to pass a high school equivalency exam to transition to community colleges, four-year universities, vocational training programs or the military.

The program will maximize online and hybrid instruction to increase participants' academic proficiency toward career and college-ready activities. Usually, it takes about six months for participants to complete the program after receiving instruction in mathematics, reading, writing, social studies and science, Jasis said.

"Many of our students are adults and heads of households, with instruction delivered in Spanish or English, according to participants' preference and language mastery," said Jasis, whose research interests include multicultural education, migrant education and anti-racist education.

HEP participants also will receive counseling, transportation and child care support if needed. Instruction is provided in their communities or online through the collaboration of the program's agency partners, which includes organizations serving migrant workers.

Students in the College of Education's teacher preparation programs may serve as instructors. Additionally, activities for HEP participants and their families will be held on campus and led by CSUF's future teachers.

The program also will provide academic and mental health support to participants, with a particular emphasis on creating inclusive learning spaces that promote their social and emotional well-being, Jasis said.

Assisting in this effort is Marlene Flores-Avila, lecturer in social work, who will provide mental health support and coordinate workshops for participants. Laura Gil-Trejo, director of the Social Science Research Center, will serve as program evaluator, and Cecilia Peralta is the program's instruction and technology coordinator.

Buildings

FROM PAGE 1

ect for the Visual Arts buildings.

“As you return to campus, you will see the two new buildings fully framed,” said Jade Jewett, a professor who teaches drawing and painting in the Cal State Fullerton College of Art. “While the steel is still visible, builders have begun installing interior walls, windows, doors and architectural details. There is a new roof on Building E, and Building A is nearing its interior renovations.”

The \$65 million modernization project is now in year two and is on track for completion in the fall of 2024. It includes the building of new classrooms and a renovation of the Visual Arts Complex. The new buildings will have spaces for high-tech classes, green-screen labs, galleries and a collections library, Jewett said. “This ‘VA MOD’ Project will expand how we teach, learn, engage with, and share the arts,” she said.

The increase of space is critical to address students’ interests and needs, Jewett said. “Our renovated and new buildings will expand the potential for teaching and sharing art in interdisciplinary, innovative and collaborative ways. The new center will not only right-size our spaces for our current enrollment, but it will support the broadest demands of today’s students and expand opportunities for the community to come to campus and engage with art.”

Cal State Fullerton’s Visual Arts program includes a broad range of 14 disciplines. “We are the largest Visual Arts program in the Cal State system,” Jewett said. “We have popular digital majors and smaller boutique ones — all of which prepare students for the 1.8 million jobs in the booming creative economies of this region.”

Another visible upgrade is the exterior of the Engineering and Computer Science Complex, which “received a fresh coat of paint, adding a modern touch to this part of our campus,” said Beth

Moody, operations and communications specialist in the capital programs and facilities management department.

“The soccer and baseball stadiums have also undergone outdoor painting, revitalizing the aesthetics of these iconic venues,” she said. “Our campus’ continued commitment to sustainability and innovation is reflected in the Arboretum parking lot, where permeable paving has been implemented.”

And just inside the 26-acre Arboretum botanic garden, visitors will see that a new roof installation on Heritage House is nearing completion, “ensuring the preservation of this historic gem for generations to come,” Moody said. The Heritage House, now encircled by a white picket fence with rose bushes at its entrance, was built in 1894 and moved to the Arboretum from downtown Fullerton.

“These projects underscore our dedication to creating an aesthetically pleasing, technologically advanced and sustainably designed environment,” Moody said.

Less obvious but important to campus safety and functionality are exterior lighting improvements, which enhance visibility during evening hours.

New greenery contributes to the overall beauty of the campus. “Our campus-wide landscaping initiatives at tree wells and the soccer stadium hillside beautify the environment and contribute to preserving our natural surroundings,” Moody said.

Zoom gatherings, which have become an integral part of education and administration ever since the pandemic, will now function more smoothly. “In partnership with the Division of Information Technology, campuswide Zoom room upgrades have been implemented, fostering a seamless integration of digital platforms into the learning environment,” Moody said. “Housing has also been equipped with indoor and outdoor digital displays, facilitating communication and community engagement.”

Students who come to campus by car will find that parking validation has been streamlined. Parking & Transportation Services is transitioning to License Plate Recognition, or LPR — fully paperless



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Current construction underway on the CSUF campus includes two Visual Arts buildings and the Engineering and Computer Science complex.



Students returning to Cal State Fullerton this month will notice changes and upgrades to the campus.

permitting. “Plastic hangtags and paper permits will no longer be issued — LPR is a virtual permit system that uses license plates to validate parking,” explained Melanie Bates, communications and project specialist with Parking & Transportation Services. Not having rearview mirror hangtags reduces the overall use of plastic and the necessity for permit dispensers. “Cameras and accompanying

software are placed in parking enforcement vehicles to validate license plates,” Bates said. Each person’s car license plate serves as their permit.

Details about this new parking validation system can be found at parking.fullerton.edu. To understand how it works and why it has been implemented, check out the promotional video on YouTube, which explains the new system.

Abroad

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addition to taking classes in intercultural communications and reality television, led by CSUF faculty, Garcilazo’s class of 18 students took in the works of Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso and explored all parts of the region, including the city’s Gothic Quarter.

Through the smaller student-to-faculty ratio, the curriculum came alive for Garcilazo as she was no longer reading about international experiences but living them herself. And as a commuter student, she appreciated the opportunity to build stronger connections with her fellow Titans.

“I’ve definitely made a lot of amazing friends, as well as made great connections with my professors,” Garcilazo said. “If you struggle to get out of your comfort zone on your own, this is something that doesn’t force it but is a nice, easy transition. I would say take the chance, take the risk because you never know if you don’t take it the great experience you’ll have.”

MBA student Aya Morales jumped at the chance to study abroad through CSUF after missing out on an opportunity during her undergraduate years at the University of San Francisco. While she had traveled to Europe before, Morales had never been to Florence, Italy, and it was her time in Tuscany that showed her global marketing through a new lens.

“Putting the global marketing curriculum into the context of a different country and culture really puts it into perspective,” Morales said. “You actually experience what you’re learning.”

Led by CSUF College of Business and Economics marketing lecturer Luis Salem, Morales was part of a group of 20 students who engaged with a number of Italian companies during the trip, including Ducati Motorcycle in Bologna, where they took a deep dive into Ducati’s global marketing strategies and brand positioning.

“The visit gave a unique inside view of the company, which is much more in-depth than simply analyzing a business case in class,” Salem said.

“Much emphasis was placed in our course on deeply understanding the culture of Italy and how it shapes consumer behavior and how Italian companies go to market. This type of experience can be life-changing as it will make our students not only have a more well-rounded education but also be willing, in the future, to embrace career opportunities abroad.”

As an aspiring executive chef, Morales felt the experience in Florence enhanced her future goals of attending culinary school abroad and eventually opening her own restaurant.

“I was in awe when I was there, just seeing how they respect natural ingredients, till their land and respect their produce,” Morales said. “Every day was a different experience, whether that was in the classroom or out in the cities. It was a good perspective to give myself while in my MBA program.”

CSUF senior and public health general studies major Stephanie Jackson also traveled to Italy for a two-week program that focused on nutrition, with the island of Ischia as her classroom. In addition to soaking up the Italian culture, Jackson’s first time traveling out of the country came with a few challenges. But the experience of having



PHOTOS BY AYA MORALES

MBA student Aya Morales traveled to Florence, Italy, as part of a global marketing program.



PHOTOS BY DULCE GARCILAZO

Dulce Garcilazo, majoring in communications, traveled to Barcelona, Spain.



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE JACKSON

CSUF senior Stephanie Jackson spent two weeks on the Italian island of Ischia for a program focused on nutrition.

to navigate the unknown equipped her with valuable life skills.

“I learned to keep pushing,” Jackson said. “Had I given in and let my frustrations ... break me, I would not have stayed the entire trip; but I did, which I think speaks to not only my personal growth but also how I approach my academics as a student. I believe in finishing what I start.”

Jackson’s summer experience led her to join the CSUF SAGE team of Global Titan Ambassadors, a group of CSUF students who have studied abroad and are available to share information on the process with their peers through a

variety of information sessions.

“As a GTA, I want to motivate other students to take the leap of faith to go on a study abroad opportunity such as I did,” Jackson said. “Not only is it a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but it also allows for lifelong connections, a change of culture and scenery, and an overall different perspective outside of one’s own beliefs, which is essential for anyone interested in their personal and professional success.”

For more information on study abroad opportunities through CSUF’s SAGE program, visit extension.fullerton.edu.



WATER POLO

Witt looks to ‘diamonds in the rough’ to build the men’s team

By **Brian Robin,**
contributing writer

We’ll spare you the trip to Google, as we cue the addicting “Jeopardy” theme now running through your head and give you the answer to the question right here. You won’t even need the 30 seconds contestants in the game-show crucible get for Final Jeopardy.

“What was Cal State Fullerton 10, Pomona-Pitzer 8?” And with that, you know the question to the answer: “This represents Cal State Fullerton’s first men’s water polo victory in nearly 30 years.”

And while Kyle Witt knew the Titans would eventually break through — even with an opening weekend schedule featuring the likes of No. 1-ranked and two-time defending national champion Cal, No. 3 UCLA and No. 20 Navy — he lost exactly zero sleep and exerted exactly zero beads of sweat pondering when that would happen.

It would happen. And, more importantly, it would happen on Witt’s terms.

This is what keeps Witt traipsing merrily along on his endless conga line of chaos building the Titans’ men’s and women’s water polo teams from scratch. He did it in the spring with the women’s team, creating a team out of thin air that went a respectable 11-20.

And now, it’s the men’s turn. Witt spent more than a year recruiting the 21 players making up this year’s first Titans’ team since 1985. He scoured the state’s community college rosters, using the entire state as his base. That meant going north to find players at West Valley College in Saratoga and Modesto Junior College, then going south, where Witt uncovered players from Riverside City College, Saddleback College, Golden West College, Mt. San Antonio College and Rio Hondo College, among others.

Of the Titans’ initial 21 players, 16 came from the JC ranks. This is intentional on several fronts that, on the surface, gives Witt those pesky unintended consequences regarding Orange County’s reputation as a water polo mecca. While it’s true that Division I water polo players grow on OC palm trees, it’s also true that their expectations — or, more accurately, their parents’ expectations — grow on trees the height of redwoods.

“The reality of today’s boys high school water polo players is that most of them here are at private schools, where their parents pay a lot of money to send them to those schools,” Witt said. “The biggest problem is their parents have no problem paying to send them to a

Loyola Marymount instead of a Cal State Fullerton. The parents look down on the Cal States. Long Beach State, which is nationally ranked, can’t even get these kids.

“That’s why you have to recruit far and wide to find diamonds in the rough. We think we’ve found that in our five high school kids.”

The corollary to that means Witt also knew hitting the JC schools hard would uncover diamonds of a different brilliance. He knew JC players would immediately take to a fledgling program that — above all—would give them something more established programs never would.

A chance.

“You can look all these players in the eye and tell them this is a unique situation, that we will have successes and failures in your time here, but you will have successes nobody else will believe,” he said. “They wanted someone to look them in the eye and tell them the truth. Those are the leaders I want, and that’s the type of program we will have. They want a chance, and they don’t want the BS they’ve dealt with before.

“The overriding theme is these guys wanted a chance and they got lost a little bit, whether it was from COVID or them getting lost themselves or coaches not believing they can help their programs. When JC players are recruited, coaches string them along. Once a high school player commits, they drop the JC guy. It’s a long wait for these guys, and it’s not a fun process.”

This is where Witt’s conga line plays a wonderful tune that is music to their ears. He told JC standouts like West Valley’s Togan Ozbek, Golden West’s Nico D’Angelo and Mt. San Antonio College’s Zach Ewing — who combined for seven of the 10 goals scored against Pomona-Pitzer — they would have an immediate role building something special. Witt’s zero-BS approach and deep knowledge of JC players, one learned at the pool deck of longtime Loyola Marymount coach and mentor John Loughran, made that always-important recruiting element easier.

There was another byproduct of that. When you recruit players like D’Angelo, who Witt said will make a great coach one day due to his water polo IQ and ability to play 3D chess seeing the entire pool, and Ozbek, who will be the Titans’ primary sniper due to his ability to get open and find shooting lanes, you get more than buying the water polo version of Amazon stock at \$7.

You get players who immediately buy into what you’re selling because you be-



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The men’s water polo team plays a scrimmage during practice before their first match.

lieve in their ability to grow, learn and improve as players and people. They understand your first lesson that you don’t have to take 100 shots a game to be successful. They learn that you can make the extra pass and you don’t have to make the eye-catching, how-did-he-do-that move every time you touch the ball.

And they learn Witt is playing the long game with them. Not just in the pool, with his defensive-minded, relentless counterattacking style that Witt said will eventually make the Titans impose their will on their opponents.

All well and good. But Witt’s long game goes beyond the pool. Waaay beyond the pool. And by “long game,” he means longer than any of these players comprehend at this point in their careers. These players may have only met each other on Aug. 5, when practices began. Some arrived even later than that, which is what makes going 1-3 in last weekend’s opening tournament at the Triton Invitational at UC San Diego even more impressive in the big picture.

Not that Witt cares about outcomes right now. The long game is more than trivia — or trivial.

“We tried to make sure we were bringing in the right people. That’s all that

matters the first year,” Witt said. “I don’t think anyone will look back 20 years from now and say, ‘You only won five games, or what have you.’ It will be, ‘You guys helped build something, and upon your shoulders stands the success of the Cal State Fullerton water polo program.’ That takes broad shoulders and we think we have those broad shoulders on this team.

“We won’t have any all-conference players, but we have good players. We have talent, we’re good, but compared to our Big West opponents who are nationally ranked, we’re behind. And that’s OK.”

The long game means you take small victories where and when you find them. Because small victories eventually morph into bigger ones.

“The other day, we found a microwave and put it in my office,” Witt said, in a proud, unironic, matter-of-fact voice. “If you visited my office, you’d see boxes not unpacked from when I came here from LMU. My to-do list is 100 things long. But you can look at it and freak out, or you can accept the fact that I got things done today and I’m excited to get back.

“This is why I wanted this job. We just have to keep building this thing.”

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