



PHOTO BY JEFF GRITCHEN, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/SCNG

Anil Puri, director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting, presents at the Orange County Business Council Fall Economic Forecast at The Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim.

WHAT'S AHEAD

CSUF ECONOMISTS DELIVER MIXED FORECAST TO BUSINESS LEADERS

High interest rates vs. consumer spending, hiring

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

In the opening minutes of the Economic Forecast Conference, Anil Puri, director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting at Cal State Fullerton, painted a bleak picture of the world. Just as the U.S and the world started to emerge from an economy-crippling pandemic, war breaks out between Russia and Ukraine along with a deadly conflict in the Middle East, noted Puri, as he addressed hundreds of business leaders at the Disneyland Hotel on Oct. 19.

Domestically, partisan politics exist on both sides of the aisle, and the House of Representatives struggled to find its way in selecting a leader, Puri said. “As we look around, it seems to be that the world just doesn’t want to heal,” the economist said. “And I’m sure a lot of you are thinking, what about the soft landing? Is it here? Is it going to happen? Well, economists have been predicting it for over a year.” As always, partnering with Puri for the forecast was Mira Farka, professor of economics at Cal State Fullerton and the co-director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting. The event was co-presented by

CSUF and the Orange County Business Council, which collaborates with leaders in academia and government to help bolster the county’s economic development. “This event is really a symbolic gesture, a symbolic expression of the relationship that we have with the business community that runs deep, and we really value and hold these relationships dear,” CSUF President Sylvia Alva said. “They’re important to our students. They’re important to our community.” Farka and Puri predict that a recession will likely hit Southern California and the nation during the second half of 2024. However, unlike the Great Recession

that crippled the global economy from 2008 to 2012, the economists predict it will be a normal or “garden variety” recession. Ever since the Fed embarked on its unprecedented rate-hiking cycle, raising the interest rate 11 times over the past 18 months, the U.S. economy has been on the verge of a recession, the economists said. But despite the hikes, real GDP is still growing, and employment has increased by 5.8 million jobs, much faster than the normal rate of growth. Additionally, the unemployment rate has picked up only slightly. “So, it seems like whatever the Fed

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Reality TV production internships to offer hands-on experience

Professionals promote diversity, inclusion

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton students had the opportunity to learn about full-time paid internships in unscripted/reality television production from professionals in the industry. The presentation, “Getting Real: Unscripted Internship Program,” took place Oct. 10 in the Laurel Multipurpose Room on campus, and was put on by the Television Academy Foundation, the charitable arm of the Television Academy. Part of the academy’s mission is to promote creativity, diversity and innovation toward the advancement of the telecommunications arts and sciences.

Through paid internships, the foundation aims to promote the voices and stories of underrepresented communities and increase diversity and inclusion in the field. Among the presenters were CSUF graduate Cris Abrego, chairman of Bani-jay Americas, a collective of more than 130 production companies in multiple countries, and Jonathan Murray, co-founder of Bunim-Murray Productions. Abrego and Murray helped launch the Television Academy Foundation with personal donations and are the chair and vice chair of the foundation, respectively. The internship is offered during the summer and provides opportunities in casting, development, production and post-production within unscripted/reality television. Applications will be accepted starting Nov. 8. Also sharing his experience with the 30 or so students in attendance was comedian/producer Grant Cotter, who was an intern in the program in 2022. The moderator for the presentation, which also included a Q&A session, was Bey-Ling Sha, Dean of the College of Communications. Abrego and Murray are two of the

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PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

From left, comedian Grant Carter; Jonathan Murray and Cris Abrego, chair and vice chair, respectively, of the Television Academy Foundation; and Bey-Ling Sha, dean of the College of Communications



TITAN OF EMPOWERMENT

From a fan in the stands to a voice in demand.

Communications major **Robbie Loya**, is turning his broadcast dreams into reality through an opportunity provided by the **Titans Sports Network** at Cal State Fullerton.

Learn more about Titans Sports Network:



ESPN+

Sports-broadcast students prepare for prime time

CSUF News Media Services

While Titan sports fans file into their seats at Goodwin and Anderson Family fields, broadcast journalism students are on the move behind the scenes. They set up cameras, queue up commercials and graphics for the Titan Gym jumbotron, and prepare the livestream for a national audience.

These students are the driving force behind Cal State Fullerton's Titans Sports Network, founded in 2021 to give students hands-on experience in sports broadcast media as they livestream events and produce original content that is aired on ESPN's streaming service, ESPN+.

One of these students, Robbie Loya, dreams of becoming a play-by-play broadcaster for a professional sports team. A sports fan to his core, Loya grew up with Titan Athletics. He remembers watching baseball games at Goodwin Field and cheering on the women's volleyball team in Titan Gym.

Now, he's calling those games. "To be able to say that I'm 23 years old and I've already broadcast more than 100 sports games for a Division I school is incredible," Loya said, a fourth-year communications student. "This network gives students the opportunity to be creative and bolster their resume before they enter a competitive sports industry."

Timothy Jackson, the facilitator behind the Titans Sports Network, previously served as director of digital and video distribution for the Big West Conference. He was at the forefront of the Big West ESPN Campus Production Initiative. This effort invited all Big West schools to produce content for ESPN+, including Cal State Fullerton, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Cal State Bakersfield, Cal State Northridge and Long Beach State.

"The first school I visited when we started this initiative was Cal State Fullerton and I'll never forget it. I remember telling the Big West deputy commissioner, 'I want to work here,'" said

Jackson, assistant athletic director of broadcasting, facility and events. "The students are motivated and they want to get better. There's so much potential."

He immediately got to work building the network from the ground up as a collaboration between the College of Communications and Titan Athletics. Tucked in a second floor room in Titan Gym, Jackson established a professional production studio, equipped with television monitors, computers, sound boards, video production systems and an underground cable that runs to each of the athletic venues on campus.

When he started, the network planned to produce about 60 games every year. However, with state-of-the-art equipment, mentorship from College of Communications faculty and a staff of 20 to 30 students, the network surpassed that goal to produce more than 120 live events.

Cal State Fullerton also had the largest audience among all schools in the Big West Conference that broadcast to ESPN+, garnering around 900,000 views and reaching a national audience this past year.

The network broadcasts games for baseball, men and women's basketball, men and women's soccer, softball, women's volleyball, and men and women's water polo.

"We have the resources to help students start their broadcasting careers at Cal State Fullerton," Jackson said. "If students want to be camera operators for ESPN or get into production with NFL Network, they can begin to build the skill sets for those jobs here."

When third-year communications major May Pham joined the team as an ESPN+ broadcasting student assistant, she didn't know a lot about sports. With Jackson as a mentor, she learned quickly and after a couple months at the network, she was accepted as a game day operations intern for the Angel City Football Club.

"Tim is a great mentor. From giving professional advice to networking advice, he looks for opportunities for students and wants us to succeed in which-



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Gayle Jansen Brisbane, assistant professor of communications, and Robbie Loya, communications student

ever roles we take on," Pham said. "I've seen myself grow tremendously as a communicator and leader."

In addition to livestreaming Titan sporting events, Jackson wanted to give students the opportunity to create original content for ESPN+ that would showcase their on-camera skills and sports reporting abilities.

Working alongside Gayle Jansen Brisbane, assistant professor of communications, the network team created the Preseason Show, a 30-minute news broadcast produced three times a year to highlight updates for fall, winter and spring sports. Among Big West schools, Cal State Fullerton was the first university to establish an original show for ESPN+.

"The preseason broadcast shows how Tim and Gayle go above and beyond to create opportunities to help us succeed," Loya said. "They're doing their best to make our dreams become reality."

Students step in as anchors, reporters, camera operators and graphics coordinators to produce the show alongside on-air guests including coaches and student athletes.

"Other universities contract their production to outside companies," said Jansen Brisbane, who has over 20 years of experience in the sports-broadcast industry. "It's hard to put into words how much of a headstart students get and how this experience puts them above other people in the job market."

For students like Loya, who has primarily focused on play-by-play announcing, the network allows them to expand their skills in areas like on-camera hosting and directing.

"Play-by-play broadcasting is still the goal, but learning behind the scenes gave me an open mind. At the end of the day, if I am confident in the product that I put out on ESPN+, it's a rewarding feeling," says Loya.

Loya has received inquiries from such organizations as UC Irvine, California Interscholastic Federation and Stanford University — all interested in hiring him for a multitude of sports-broadcasting opportunities.

"I still have so much to learn and so many ways to get better, but it's incredible to know that I'm getting offers to work as a broadcaster," said Loya.

Production

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biggest names in reality television, said Hunter Hargraves, associate professor in cinema and television arts, and having them on campus to interact with students can prove to be a valuable experience that students at a state university might not normally get.

"So, it's kind of an insane opportunity to get this level of pioneers," Hargraves said. "Just interfacing with students and encouraging them to get their foot in the door early to compete with students at richer universities so they have the same opportunities as everyone else."

Hargraves recently published his first book, Uncomfortable Television, which examines the methods television uses — violent dramas, ironic comedies and trashy reality programs — to make its watchers find pleasure through feeling disturbed.

Abrego, who graduated from CSUF in 1995, said he has returned to campus several times and has fond memories of his experiences and the foundation he built for his future career in television.

"It's special to be coming back here because this is where I kind of really cut my teeth in the business," said Abrego, who attended CSUF on a wrestling scholarship. "It's really when I started to become even more passionate about television."



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
CSUF graduate Cris Abrego, chairman of Banijay Americas, talks with CSUF students about internship opportunities with the Television Academy Foundation.

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Enrolling TRANSFER STUDENTS in California

■ U.S. News & World Report, 2023



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PSYCHOLOGY

Reducing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder

Physiological resilience helpful, researcher finds

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton’s public health lecturer Mark Dust was 29 when he deployed to Iraq in 2005 and spent his 30th birthday in a guard tower at Abu Ghraib prison. During his service in Iraq, he was nearly killed by a roadside bomb, engaged in deadly combat and multiple times came upon the aftermath of a suicide bombing. But he did not realize after he had returned to the U.S. that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Eventually, he recognized the symptoms and started on a journey to study ways to manage and prevent the damaging effects of chronic and traumatic stress. His research on building physiological resilience was recently presented in the professional journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Post-traumatic stress disorder can develop when a person witnesses or experiences a traumatic event that is shocking or life-threatening, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website. Symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, headaches, irritability, and being highly vigilant can begin months or years after the event.

“I knew I had a short temper, and I would have intrusive thoughts,” said Dust, describing his return to the U.S. “And I noticed that I was always just tense around all the crowds.”

Even going to Disneyland with his kids was difficult. He felt threatened all the time. The sight of a pile of trash on the side of the road while driving once triggered sudden, acute fear.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Public health lecturer and Iraq veteran Mark Dust

While working toward a master’s degree in business administration, Dust signed up for a course called Executive Mind that taught him mindfulness meditation, hoping it would calm his nervous system so that he would make good decisions.

“I started noticing that I wasn’t being as reactive as I was before,” he said. He also realized that in certain situations his body would tingle as if he were being threatened, even when his mind knew that he was completely safe — and here the beginnings of his research inquiries took hold.

After he completed his MBA, he began working toward his doctorate at the School of Community and Global Health at Claremont Graduate University. He earned his degree in health promotion sciences with a concentration in neuro-

cognitive sciences.

“I had to know, is it possible for us to exercise our nervous system to try to prevent PTSD from happening after a traumatic event?” Dust said.

He recalled that when he’d attended a support group at the Veterans Administration, he became agitated hearing the stories from the veterans sharing traumatic experiences. Just as he’d been fearful in crowds, his body reacted to the stories as if they were happening in the present. Could calming thoughts prevent a stress reaction?

“If the brain doesn’t know the difference between you telling a story and it actually happening, then why can’t we use that for positive?” he said.

The pilot study Dust conducted looked at people who practiced either a visualization technique or a breathing tech-

nique to see if they could build resilience against stress. The visualization group’s results trended in a positive direction and could hold promise as a viable way to build resilience, Dust said.

“The visualization exercise uses the power of the brain not knowing the difference between hearing someone else’s story and flipping it on its head for good,” he said. “Instead of generating a fight-or-flight response from the thoughts, we generate a rest-and-relaxation response by telling ourselves a positive story that gives us a sense of comfort, safety or joy and elicits a rest-and-digest physiological response — the antithesis of fight or flight. I think this has a greater potential for building physiological resilience than a breathing exercise.”

Dust teaches stress management and feels that by sharing his personal story he may help someone to effectively treat their stress without turning to drugs or alcohol.

“Our physiology can drive our thoughts,” he said. “For example, if we start taking short rapid breaths, that increases our heart rate, and an increased heart rate can trigger an adrenaline release, which can make us more alert and introduce thought patterns to scan the environment for threats. Part of building resilience could be a less active physiological response that would reduce the fight-or-flight drive and, in turn, keep our thoughts from going into survival mode.”

Dust is in a unique position to help others who may suffer from PTSD. “I feel like I need to be one of those figures that people can look to and say, ‘Well, if he can do it, I can do it.’ It can be painful, but I think more good comes out of me sharing my story than if I were to keep it under lock and key and not let other people know that what you’re experiencing, I’ve experienced as well, or something similar, and you’re not alone.”

MICROBIOLOGY

Professor, students seek treatments for drug-resistant bacteria

Her group looks for new approaches

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

Professor María Soledad Ramírez is passionate about her work in microbiology and its far-reaching potential to save the lives of people who are infected by dangerous, drug-resistant bacteria.

Antimicrobial resistance is an urgent global public health threat, according to the Centers for Disease Control. It kills at least 1.27 million people worldwide and was associated with nearly 5 million deaths in 2019.

“In microbiology, you have different organisms that can cause infection, such as viruses, parasites, fungus and bacteria. We work with bacteria,” Ramírez said, describing the work she does with her students as a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Cal State Fullerton.

“One of the main things that we are trying to do is to find novel or different approaches, or combination of approaches, to try to combat the multidrug-resistant pathogens — in this case, multidrug-resistant bacteria,” she said.

Ramírez has been sharing her passion and knowledge with undergraduate and graduate students since her arrival at Cal State Fullerton in 2014. In 2021, she was awarded the L. Donald Shields Excellence in Scholarship and Creativity Award for her work.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

María Soledad Ramírez, professor of biological sciences at Cal State Fullerton

“We approach the crisis of the problem of the antimicrobial resistance from different sides,” Ramírez said. “One side is trying to find novel strategies to see if we can restore the susceptibility of multidrug-resistant bacteria — and what we saw is that we can, with the combination of novel molecules that we are testing. We observed that some of the compounds we are working with are killing the bacteria.

“And from the other side, we also try

to understand why the bacteria are gaining resistance. That’s why we also do a lot of studies at the molecular and also transcriptomic (RNA) level, exposing the bacteria to different fluids. We also study at the genomic level the presence of novel genes, or mutations in genes, that can explain why the bacteria is now resistant to certain antibiotics or groups of antibiotics.”

Recently, the professor and her students discovered a potential treatment against the bacterium called *Acinetobacter baumannii*, which is found in hospitals and is resistant to many antibiotics. Their research was reported in the August issue of *Scientific Reports*.

This is important because there are few effective treatments against *Acinetobacter baumannii*, which can cause infections in the blood, urinary tract and lungs, and also in wounds, according to the CDC. Infections often occur in patients who are on ventilators, are in intensive care, have catheters or who are in the hospital for a long time.

Ramírez and her students tested different lactic acid bacteria strains to see if they could stop *Acinetobacter baumannii* from growing.

“We found that one in particular that we call CRL 2244 was exerting a huge, strong activity against the pathogenic strains that we had been testing,” she said.

Her enthusiasm has influenced her students; some of whom see her as a role model and have chosen to follow in her footsteps into microbiology. Several have authored their own research

papers, some have gone on to get their doctorates and one graduate student is now working at Pfizer on vaccine development, Ramírez said.

“When they are with me, I try to share my passion for what I do. I share with them my research skills and, well, I get excited. We have lab meetings where we discuss our results. I always try to incentivize them to present the work in our area when there’s an opportunity here on campus. I also encourage them to apply to fellowships.”

Though neither of her parents were scientists, they encouraged Ramírez to pursue her education and achieve her doctorate. “I grew up in a very small town in the province of Buenos Aires that is called San Antonio de Areco,” she said. “I studied in the University of Buenos Aires and I received my degree of biochemistry and then I did my Ph.D. in microbiology. I was able to enter in a research career in Argentina until I applied for the professor position here.”

She has published numerous papers throughout the last decade.

Ramírez and her students collaborate with other professors, for instance, CSUF’s Marcelo Tolmasky, who also works with antimicrobial resistance. But they are not the only ones tackling the problem of drug-resistant bacteria.

“In other countries, in other institutions, there are many people working on this,” Ramírez said. “We need to find novel alternatives or novel antibiotics or a novel way to treat the patients that have infections with highly resistant microorganisms so that we can save that life.”



PHOTOS COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Ramírez and her students are researching ways to fight multidrug-resistant viruses and bacteria.

GLOBAL POLITICS

Examining the complexities of Israeli-Palestinian conflict

CSUF News Media Services

During an Oct. 23 panel discussion hosted by Cal State Fullerton’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences, researchers offered academic perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Scott Spitzer, associate professor of political science who teaches a course on The Politics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, opened the discussion by providing political, historical and social context.

“I want students to understand the complexities and the widespread disagreements among the chief protagonists in this intense 100 years plus conflict,” said Spitzer. “The conflicts have been there even before the current Israel-Hamas war.

“The current situation is not just about war and death and destruction, which I am horrified by, but it’s also about change,” he said. “We’re in the middle of changes in the Middle East that are going to be incredibly long lasting and affect your generation and generations thereafter.”

Jessica Yirush Stern, associate dean of student relations in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, said that the purpose of the panel was to create an open dialogue and to teach students how to think critically about complex situations.

“We believe in the college that it’s our responsibility to help the campus community use the humanities and social sciences to understand events that are facing them,” said Stern. “I found it encouraging to see all of the people who attended the panel to listen to our scholars as we try to make sense of this current moment.”

Ella Ben Hagai, associate professor of psychology, shared her research, “Living the Dissonance and the Ethics of Multiple Truths: American Jews in Israel.” Ben Hagai, who teaches courses in social psychology, critical multicultural psychology and intergroup conflict and reconciliation, explained the importance of understanding and being able to hold multiple perspectives on the conflict.

In her research, she studied a service-learning program in which American Jewish people travel to Israel for a year to teach English to both Palestinian and Jewish people. Interviewing participants in the program, Ben Hagai wanted to understand how “being there” shapes the



Ella Ben Hagai, associate professor of psychology, left, and Scott Spitzer, associate professor of political science

way people understand Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The interesting thing is that they didn’t stay inside a binary story on the conflict because they were working with all sorts of populations,” said Ben Hagai. “They find themselves having empathy for people of both sides and understanding the reality of their pain. They’re seeing that it’s not just two narratives, but it’s much more complicated.”

Ben Hagai said that many participants showed signs of experiencing cognitive dissonance, which is a mental conflict that occurs when people are introduced to narratives, actions or beliefs that are contradictory to their own perspectives.

“The cognitive dissonance that holding multiple truths causes is not enjoyable, but it leads to the development of a new identity that really takes the ethics of multiple truths seriously,” said Ben Hagai.

Graduate psychology student Abir Ayesch presented her research, “Everyday Palestinian Resistance, Resilience and Recovery When Faced With Violent Occupation,” in which she evaluated how Palestinian people make meaning of their trauma, how they cope with traumatic experiences and how they exhibit resiliency.

Using a clinical psychology approach, Ayesch spent two years interviewing 20 people over the age of 18 who were of Palestinian descent and had lived under Israeli occupation in Palestine at some point in their lives.

“I chose to study this topic because I wanted to better understand how I could treat clients with these backgrounds. Their trauma is ongoing and it’s collective,” said Ayesch, an aspiring clinician. “By becoming more culturally competent and taking into account their collective experiences, we can learn how to recom-

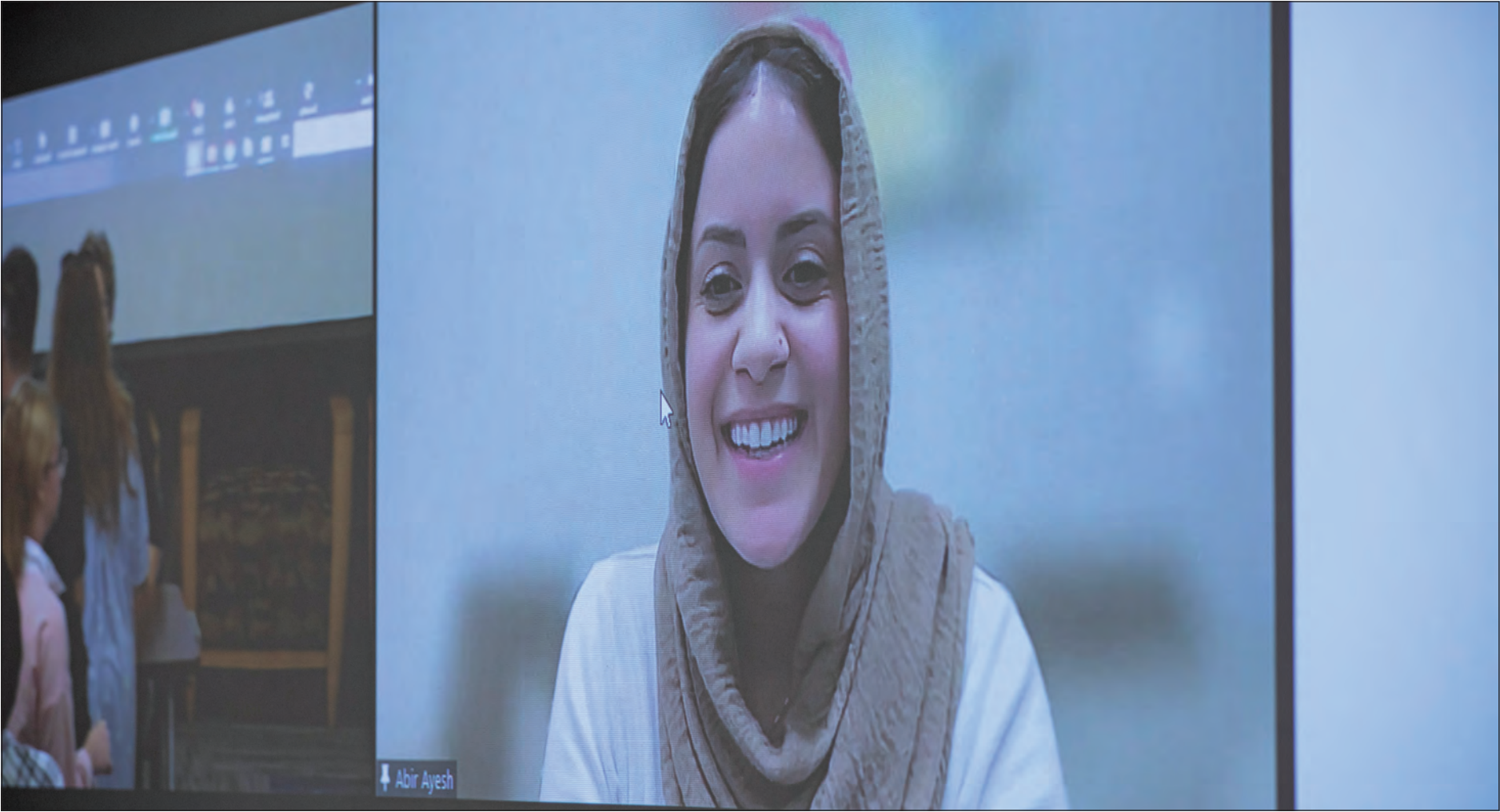
mend coping skills.”

Her findings showed that many participants experienced collective trauma, meaning they defined their trauma in relation to their community and others’ experiences.

“The shared suffering experienced by Palestinians creates a culture of mutual support and community that provides a safe space for people to share their painful accounts,” said Ayesch. “This is trauma bonding that produces a sense of safety for them.”

Ayesch added that some participants coped with their experiences by getting involved in politics and educating others. “The participants all talked about the empowerment of just existing,” she said.

The panel discussion was followed by a candlelight vigil in the Quad to honor the lives lost in the current Israel-Hamas war.



Graduate psychology student Abir Ayesch

CHILD, ADOLESCENT STUDIES PROFESSOR

Interim dean of College of Health and Human Development named

CSUF News Media Services

Kate Bono has been appointed interim dean of Cal State Fullerton’s College of the Health and Human Development, effective Oct. 23.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to serve the college in this new role,” said Bono, professor of child and adolescent studies. “One of my highest priorities is to be a transparent leader who leads decisively, but with compassion and empathy, with open communication, and most importantly, with integrity.”

Bono earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of the Pacific and her master’s degree and doctorate in applied developmental psychology from Claremont Graduate University before she joined CSUF in 2006.

Since she’s been on campus, Bono has supported students, faculty and staff in a variety of leadership and campus governance roles, including serving as the college’s associate dean and department chair for child and adolescent studies. She has also chaired such committees as the Faculty Research Committee and Health and Human Development Stra-

tegic Plan Evaluation Committee.

Throughout her time in the College of Health and Human Development, Bono said she’s impressed with the faculty’s dedication and commitment. Not only are they champions of student success, but they are passionate about positively impacting communities through their work in health, wellness and human development, she said.

“The College of Health and Human Development provides high-quality education and support to students, many of whom are first-generation college students, so they can achieve their dreams,” said Bono. “This new role will provide me with ample opportunities to support our faculty, staff and students in a way that involves compassion, empathy, strong leadership and day-to-day support.”

In the Department of Child and Adolescent Studies, Bono has conducted research on the influences of parenting, intervention and executive function on developmental outcomes in children and families. Her work has been published in such academic journals as the Journal of Early Intervention and Infants and Young Children.

She also has a passion for advocacy

and supporting underserved communities that inspires her work both on and off campus. She co-directs the CSUF Resilient Families Program, an intervention program for English- and Spanish-speaking families that aims to increase children’s developmental capacity for resilience.

A partnership between the departments of child and adolescent studies and human services, this community-based program trains students to study and interpret data as well as work with parents to strengthen parent-child attachment, promote children’s self-regulation skills and support better management of parenting stress. Bono said she hopes to continue fostering community support in her new role by collaborating closely with campus centers and institutes and the college’s community partners.

“Our faculty and students conduct cutting-edge research that informs and affects change locally, nationally and globally, and provide valuable service to the campus and surrounding community. I am excited to be able to support all of this work through collaboration with my colleagues in the college and across campus,” said Bono.



Kate Bono, interim dean of the College of Health and Human Development

DECATHLON

University students design sustainable housing solutions

CSUF team exhibits innovative ideas

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

From concept to reality, Cal State Fullerton students were given the opportunity to see their visions for sustainable design take shape as nearly 75 Titans represented the university last month at the Orange County Sustainability Decathlon hosted by the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa.

The first of its kind locally, OCS&D challenged local university teams to develop innovative design ideas and energy-efficient housing solutions that support California's goal of becoming "100% reliant on renewable energy by 2045." With the belief that "education is the key to addressing climate change," the competition allowed students to showcase their market-ready concepts for the public to tour over the two-weekend event.

As one of the 14 participating schools (10 competitive and four exhibitors), CSUF's team kicked off the process more than a year ago with Phoolendra Mishra, CSUF professor and chair of the university's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, as its faculty adviser. The project, which was conducted outside of standard coursework, brought together a wide range of majors, including engineering, arts, computer science, biology and business marketing. The students began by putting their heads together to develop unique sustainable solutions that could be implemented in the built environment.

"The process was wide open, so anybody could bring in their ideas," Mishra said. "The only goal was to identify the problems and come up with sustainable solutions. And then we worked together to say, OK, let's move ahead with this one."

The team explored solutions for design and construction methods that reduced energy consumption such as wall membrane and insulation, roof design and ventilation, thermal moisture and soundproofing, and water conservation.

While the Titan team did not participate in the full decathlon competition this year, the CSUF students did construct housing models that were featured in the Exhibition portion of the event.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton students work to construct a sustainable home at the Orange County Sustainability Decathlon last month.

Their exhibit consisted of two structures, constructed side by side — one that demonstrated current California building codes and another that showcased more sustainable approaches. The team built the structures in such a way as to keep their innovative solutions visible to the public.

"We kept it incomplete, meaning you can see inside the house," Mishra said. "You can see how insulation is done, how our HVAC system is designed ... everything was open so people can walk through, and they can see and understand what we are trying to present."

CSUF senior civil engineering major Daniel Santa Maria was the team lead for the insulation portion of the building process. He and his teammates developed a double-wall construction assembly that reduces thermal bridging, essentially keeping heat out of the structure.

"The biggest problems that you see in standard housing (construction) are that insulation is there, but there are little pockets here and there where heat can slip through," Santa Maria said. "So to

solve that, we decided to emphasize our insulation envelope so that all the way around the house there was consistent insulation.

Isai Jimenez, who is also a senior majoring in civil engineering, worked on the team that was in charge of creating the building envelope, with an emphasis on keeping air and moisture out using a "smart membrane."

"The idea was to protect the insulation and protect the structure from water damage and air intrusion," Jimenez said. "We used a membrane ... an air retarder and vapor retarder. It separates air from outside and inside, and it also doesn't allow water vapor to penetrate or diffuse through it all."

Both Jimenez and Santa Maria were hands-on and worked on the construction phase of the project, building the components that showcased the teams' solutions. Additionally, they and several other Titans were on hand during the event to walk visitors through the exhibits and explain their design concepts. The experience brought sustainable

practices to the forefront of learning for the students.

"I think for this project specifically, it opened up my eyes, especially for why you would want to use sustainable materials," Santa Maria said. "It's something that's simple that could be accessible to people currently and that can be repeated long term."

The decathlon is held every other year, and with this experience under their belts, Mishra is confident CSUF will be able to enter a full decathlon team during the event's next cycle. As a result of their participation, the Titans not only gained experience in teamwork and leadership but are now challenged to keep sustainability practices top of mind for future projects.

"Sustainability will be the priority for almost any home design and many of the problems that require solving in the future," Mishra said. "It's not just an idea, but they were able to build it. Keeping that in their mind and getting that experience ... will make a difference in their careers as they move forward."

Forecast

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is doing hasn't had much of an impact so far," Puri said. "If anything, things seem to be picking up. If you look at the gross domestic product increase, the best measure of overall economic health, it has been very healthy since last year."

The backbone of this strength of the economy are the consumers, he said.

Consumer spending has been pretty healthy after going down a little bit earlier this year and last year, getting back to the historical average.

And although government spending is masking the effect of "the fastest rate

hike cycle in the past 40 years," a soft landing for the economy is unlikely, the economists said.

The economy is throwing out mixed signals, Farka said.

Some parts of the economy are slowing down while other areas pick up, she said.

"All we've been doing over the last 18 months is talking endlessly, really, about this soft landing and recession and kind of going back and forth between the two," Farka said.

The economist said soft landings and recessions are virtually indistinguishable in the early stages.

"And of course, everybody gets very excited that the soft landing is just around the corner the moment you think that the Fed is done with raising

interest rates," Farka said. "We think we're going to have sort of a normal garden variety recession. You can call us reluctant and bearish. And I say reluctant because we hope we're wrong. Bearish only because in a sense that we think it's going to be hard for the economy to sort of avoid a recession."

While inflation has not been halted, the rapid rate hikes of the past 16 months are beginning to have some impact, both nationally and locally, the economists said.

By late 2024 and early 2025, the economists predict the local unemployment rate to reach 5% or higher.

"We are finally at a turning point wherein the Fed policy is in search of a neutral space, hoping to tame the economy without a hard landing," Puri said.

"The strength of consumer spending and robust hiring by businesses have bolstered the overall economic outlook over the past year, but signs of weakness are proliferating. Trends in the national economy are reflected in many ways in our local economies, those of the state and Southern California."

Farka typically weaves a bit of humor into her forecasts, and that was the case again.

"In fact, in the words of the man who built this house, Walt Disney, 'I heard there's going to be a recession. I decided not to participate,'" Farka said. "So, let's actually decide not to participate, but maybe never participate in the recession. Maybe we're wrong about everything. Hopefully, your bottom line is better than our forecast."



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Anil Puri, left, with Mira Farka present at the OCBC Economic Forecast Conference last month.

TITAN HALL-OF-FAMER

Eddie Soto: A lifetime of turning heads on the soccer field

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

There are times when Eddie Soto — that's 51-year-old Eddie Soto, for the record — decides that showing is better than telling. Times where he puts the whistle down, steps out on the Cal State Dominguez Hills practice field and turns back the clock.

And when Soto turns back the clock, it's not only the hands of the clock turning.

"I still jump in with guys and show them what I know. I think that's important," said Soto, the head coach of the CSUDH men's soccer team. "They read about me and see that I was an All-American and say, 'You're not bad. Yeah, I'm not bad. I'm double their age.'"

Yes, some things never change. Middle-aged Eddie Soto can still turn heads on a soccer field. The boy who once came home from seeing Argentinian icon Diego Maradona's transcendent 1986 World Cup performance in Mexico City, threw away his baseball glove and became a soccer player so good he made the U.S. Junior National Team two years later still turns heads with a ball at his feet.

The young man who tore up the Cal State Fullerton record book, scoring a still-record 18 goals in 1994 and leading the Titans to the national semifinals the year before still turns heads. He turned enough heads to earn induction into the Cal State Fullerton Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2023. The former soccer forward will join soccer goalkeeper Karen Bardsley, wrestler T.J. Dillashaw, golfer Martha Wilkinson-Kirouac, former director of sports medicine Julie Max and the 1979 baseball team in this year's class.

When Soto learned the news over the summer, for once, *his* head turned.

"I was shocked. We only have one soccer player in the Cal State Fullerton Hall of Fame and that's Mike Fox. You look at the history of the program and the teams we've had and the players we've had and me being only the second player inducted is very humbling. I'm hoping it leads to more. I'm hoping it leads to some of our teams being inducted."

Soto was quick to point out the team he thinks belongs — that 1993 Titans' team that went 16-7-0, beat Oregon State, Cal, UCLA and Washington in the regular season and Fresno State, the University of San Diego and the University of San Francisco in the NCAA Tournament, reaching the national semifinals.

"We were a mid-major. Within three

years, we were in the Final Four,” Soto said. “A lot of us played together, and we had so much success growing up, and it carried over into the Cal State Fullerton soccer program. We were all so successful playing together in club and all so driven. We looked forward to playing big teams, playing at Titan Stadium with our incredible fan base, the ‘Rag Patrol.’ (Head coach) Al Mistri was courageous enough to have us play ACC and Big Ten teams, and we would win. We were winning locally and on the national scene.

"It wasn't just UCLA and USC as national powers on the West Coast. It was Cal State Fullerton as well."

And Soto was a big reason why. In 1992, his first year with the Titans, Soto scored 12 goals, tied for eighth in the program's single-season record book. During that 1993 season, he tallied eight. In 1994, Soto etched his name atop the program's statistical pyramid, scoring 18 goals and adding five assists as the Titans reached the NCAA quarterfinals. The 18 goals remain a single-season record and the 41 points is third on the all-time single-season points ladder.

In his three years at CSUF, Soto scored 38 goals (tied for second), added 20 assists (tied for third) and finished with 98 career points (third). He was a second-team All-American in 1992 and honorable mention in 1993. Meanwhile, the Titans were 42-20-2 during Soto's career.

This turned the heads of the fledgling New York Metro Stars of the new Major League Soccer, which drafted Soto in the eighth round of the inaugural MLS Player Draft. But the week he was supposed to play the L.A. Galaxy in the Rose Bowl for his first MLS game, the team released him.

"I was devastated. Confused. I was a young kid who didn't understand what was happening," he said. "It was odd the way things were run back then, but just like everything in life, you need luck and being in the right place at the right time, and I just didn't have either. I had a really hard time with it because it was the first time where I wasn't good enough."

Soto redoubled his workouts. In 1998, he was drafted in the second round of the MLS Supplemental Draft by the San Jose Clash, but again, released in the preseason. As he saw it, Soto was a victim of a geographic bias in both places: he wasn't from the New York/East Coast region with the Metro Stars and wasn't a Northern California product with the Clash.

Soto eventually found a home with the United Soccer League A-League Orange County Zodiac, where he led the league

in goals during his five-year stint in the A-League. By 2000, Soto had enough of the A-League grind. He retired.

He didn't stay away from the field long. When he was playing at CSUF, he was approached to coach a club team in Brea. Soto jumped at the chance, leading an Under-15 team to its league title. For his efforts, he got fired.

"It was the first coaching job I ever had, and I got fired. But I was hooked," he said. "I love helping. I love giving back. You get these kids who aspire to reach the level I did. I really enjoyed that aspect of it."

Hooked enough that after he retired, Soto was working at DreamWorks as an IT recruiter. He got another blessing disguised as a phone call when Mistri called him to offer him an assistant job at CSUF.

"I had to think. Do I want to continue on this path, or do I want to jump into coaching full-time?" Soto said, pondering the pay cut he took. "I made the right choice because I've never worked a day in my life."

Soto spent 2½ years as a Titans' assistant. He spent two years as an assistant to the Long Beach State women's team, before returning to CSUF under new coach Bob Ammann in 2006. Soto spent one year at his alma mater before UCLA brought him over for an eventual eight-year stint as an assistant.

All the while, Soto coached the L.A. Galaxy's U-18 Academy Team. On the urging of former UCLA and Seattle Sounders head coach Sigi Schmid, who served as one of his mentors, Soto also coached the U.S. National Beach Soccer team for 12 years. He took the team to two FIFA World Cups and won a CONCACAF Region title. He was turning heads with a ball on his players' feet.

In 2014, that led to his first head coaching job — at USF, where he won 40 games in five seasons. The 2017 Donors won the West Coast Conference for the first time in nine years and Soto was the WCC Coach of the Year. But Soto's family was living in Southern California, while he was coaching 400 miles north.



PHOTO BY LEONARD ORTIZ, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/SCNG

Forward Eddie Soto led his team to the national semifinals in 1993 and still holds the CSUF record for the most goals in a season.

because he didn't want to uproot his family.

"I lost four years of my youngest's soccer career because I wasn't around. We were successful at USF. We had a high graduation rate, developed players, and had a great program," Soto said. "But my family wasn't with me. I knew I needed to be home."

Soto took the Dominguez Hills job in 2019. He's satisfied turning heads at the Division II level, where he and his staff were named United Soccer Coaches Division II West Region Coaching Staff of the Year in 2022.

"The amount of passion and compassion I have for these young men; I know how much they love the game, and I know how much I love teaching the game," Soto said. "I've always enjoyed creating an environment where they enjoy coming to practice every day. That's what I remembered about why I loved the game. That's the culture I've created everywhere I've gone, and the kids really love that."

