



Omid Abtahi, an Iranian-born actor and CSUF alum, stars as Dr. Penn Pershing in Disney+'s "The Mandalorian."

PHOTO COURTESY OF Omid ABTAHI

ARTS

ACTOR CREDITS CSUF FOR TURNING HIS INTEREST INTO A CAREER

Current 'Mandalorian' role engages Omid Abtahi

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

Actor and Cal State Fullerton alumnus Omid Abtahi remembers when he was first bitten by the acting bug, long before his starring role as Dr. Penn Pershing in Disney+'s "The Mandalorian."

Originally from Iran, Abtahi and his family moved to Paris, France, and then Houston, Texas, before settling in Irvine when he was in the third grade.

As a freshman at University High School in Irvine, he aspired to play professional soccer. With those dreams cut short by an injury, Abtahi took an acting

class his junior year and enjoyed the experience more than he expected. Most of all, he felt seen.

"It was the first time in my life I felt like I belonged to a group because I never really felt like I belonged to the jocks," Abtahi said.

But it was during his time as a Titan that Abtahi's interest in acting turned into a true passion and a career pathway.

Abtahi, a 2002 graduate, landed at CSUF with the intent of pursuing a degree in advertising. Familiar with the stage from his time in high school, he enrolled in an acting class for nonmajors as part of CSUF's general education requirements. The class coincided with Abtahi's first real break-up, and acting

became a much-needed outlet for what he was experiencing.

"I found (acting) to be a very therapeutic cathartic tool to work on these emotions that I didn't know what to do with," Abtahi said. "I realized that I wanted it, and I needed it. In high school it was fun, but it hit different in college."

Acting had his heart, and while he remained in advertising, Abtahi added the second major to his degree plan so he could take as many acting, voice and movement courses as possible. And he had the full support of the CSUF Department of Theatre and Dance, including professors Madonna Young Magee, Jim Taulli, Svetlana Efremova-Reed and Joe Arnold, all of whom were influential in

challenging him to look at life through new perspectives.

"What I love most about what I do in this profession is that it requires you to sample different kinds of life experiences that wouldn't necessarily be your own," Abtahi said. "It kind of opens your eyes to what is in the world ... and you experience life in a much fuller way."

After graduation, Abtahi won a three-week scholarship to the Sundance Institute Theatre Labs, where he worked with the "who's who" of New York theater and secured his first stage role in a regional production.

At the same time, he worked for the late casting director Mali Finn. It was

ACTOR » PAGE 2

COMMUNITY

CSUF summit addresses shortage of affordable housing

Panelists discuss practical solutions

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

The shortage of affordable housing and its impact on Orange County was the topic of an Affordable Housing Summit held recently on campus.

The Nov. 17 summit at the Titan Student featured a panel discussion among elected officials, university officials, housing experts and affordable housing advocates.

CSUF President Sylvia Alva, who moderated the discussion, noted that 50% of the university's 323,000 alumni live and work within a 50-mile radius of the university.

"Today's topic is very fitting and very important in that statistic in that one of the things that we want to do is ensure that once our students graduate, that they can afford, that they can afford to stay and contribute to the future of

this region," Alva said. "And so, today's conversation is an opportunity to think about affordable housing or the lack thereof, and what we can do together as a university in partnership with the community."

Panelists included District 67 Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva, Becks Heyhoe, executive director of United to End Homelessness, Kelsey Brewer, vice president of business development for Jamboree Housing Corp. and Vincent Vigil, senior vice president for student affairs and dean of students at CSUF.

Affordable housing can be defined as housing that meets the needs of individuals and families; incomes aren't sufficient to pay current market prices, Brewer said.

"For us, that's seniors," Brewer said. "We have thousands and thousands of units of affordable senior housing for folks that maybe couldn't afford the higher-end, luxury senior communities, but still need access to high-quality housing with wraparound services that support them as they transition and age in place."

But many working families are also in need of affordable housing, she said.

SUMMIT » PAGE 3



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The Nov. 17 summit included a panel of elected officials, university faculty and affordable-housing advocates.

#3

Enrolling
TRANSFER STUDENTS
in California

■ U.S. News & World Report, 2023

Cal State Fullerton.

HUMANITIES

Oral history center is a portal to California’s colorful past

Reaching out to students, community

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

CSUF’s Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History is home to one of the largest collections of oral histories in the state.

As part of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the center contains more than 6,000 oral histories, recorded by student interviewers and told by individuals who’ve lived through historically impactful events and periods.

But the center does more than create and archive oral histories,” said Natalie Fousekis, the center’s director.

“We teach students, we hold community workshops, we teach the community how to do oral history,” said Fousekis, who has been with the center since 2002 and has served as director since 2008. “Then we also teach students how to take the histories from our archives out into the public.”

Current and recent projects include Women, Politics and Activism; Orange County Politics; Documenting Experiences of Mexican, Filipina and Chicana Women in California Agriculture and the CSU Women’s Presidents Project, which examines the contributions to higher education by women who serve as leaders and administrators.

Students in associate director Ben Cawthra’s visual history course curated the Dorothea Lange exhibit currently on display at the Orange County Great Park.

Lange’s iconic photographs from the 1930s and 1940s captured the mood of the nation through the Great Depression and World War II.

And one of more ambitious projects currently underway is an oral history project on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fousekis is having her students collect oral histories from frontline workers in the medical field and essential workers.

Students are also interviewing Asian American teachers and others to address

the surge in anti-Asian hate that occurred during the pandemic. Oral histories are also being collected from African Americans.

“Because in my mind, you can’t really separate one from the other,” Fousekis said. “But some students have interviewed people who were participating in Black Lives Matter, but also interviewed them about COVID.”

For another undertaking, Fousekis’ colleague, Margie Brown Cornell, formed a partnership with California State Parks and is working with her students on a project on Pio Pico State Park in Whittier to revamp the park’s educational program and materials.

The students also put together a temporary exhibit on the project in the center.

“So that’s an example of the hands-on work that we have our students doing,” Fousekis said.

Launched in 1968, the university’s Center for Oral and Public History was formed to record the history of Orange County and the university.

In 2017, the center was named for CSUF historian Lawrence B. de Graaf, who pledged \$1 million to the center.

With help from a National Endowment for the Humanities grant and a 10-year fundraising campaign, the center moved to a new, 10,000-plus-square-foot space on the third floor of the Pollak Library.

In addition to being twice the size of the old center, upgrades include an archive with temperature control settings, a collaborative workroom for students, a community room for exhibits and events, reading room for researchers, a processing room for handling and organizing new materials, a project room for student assistants and interviews, and a recording room.

Archivist Natalie Navar Garcia has the responsibility of organizing every oral history conducted for the center. Part of her job is to create finding aids to help researchers locate interviews that cover a variety of topics and are cataloged in multiple categories.

For example, an oral history of a nurse who cared for COVID-19 patients could



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Lawrence de Graaf speaks Dec. 3, 2021, during the dedication of the new home for the Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History on the Cal State Fullerton campus.

also contain information on hospital conditions or the demographic background of the nurse or the patient.

“Whenever somebody donates an interview to us, we always require them to have an abstract or a summary of the interview so that I could put it in that project’s finding aid so a researcher can go through and see exactly what the interviews are about in that collection. Because oral history is multifaceted.”

The most rewarding part of her job is knowing that the oral histories created by the students are often on topics “close to their hearts,” she said.

“It just makes my job fun,” she said.

Actor

FROM PAGE 1

there that Abtahi learned the art of auditioning, a skill that helped him land his first television guest starring roles in popular shows such as “JAG” and “24.”

But it was his recurring role as Salim in “American Gods” that he credits with leading him to the role of a lifetime.

“It wasn’t until I did ‘American Gods’ in 2017 that you got to see me act,” Abtahi said. “It was a popular show, and it really put me on the map with the industry. Then I got ‘The Mandalorian’ offer.

Abtahi admittedly had not seen much of the “Star Wars” franchise before he was offered the role of Imperial cloning scientist Dr. Pershing. He did his due diligence, watching the entire catalog of movies to prepare, but seeing the “Star Wars” storylines through the eyes of his now 8-year-old son brought the experience to life for him.

Abtahi was given significant time in season 3 of “The Mandalorian” to develop the role and story of Dr. Pershing, a character that rides a morally gray line

between good and evil. It’s an aspect of acting that draws him specifically to television work.

“I love to grow with the character ... and where I thrive is when I bring who I am into a character,” Abtahi said. “With the help of the writers, that character grows and grows over the seasons. ... That’s my favorite kind of acting.”

The nearly four-month American actors union SAG-AFTRA strike earlier this year put the future of Dr. Pershing and other opportunities for Abtahi on hold, but he is looking forward to getting back to work at the start of the new year on several new projects.

While this career path is far from what he envisioned as a teen, Abtahi credits much of his success to his time at Cal State Fullerton. To him, being a Titan means being proud of his work, and he knows he would not be the actor he is today without the training he received while at CSUF.

“What impacted me more than anything was the friends I made there, the people I met and the quality of relationships,” Abtahi said. “I have taken that with me into my professional life, and I have sought not quantity but quality in relationships. I don’t know if I would be the same without that experience.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF OMID ABTAHI
Omid Abtahi has appeared in a number of TV shows, video games and movies over his career.

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PROFESSOR'S BOOK

The citizenship crisis of twin babies with different fathers

Surrogate births complicate immigration

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

When two young men, Elad Davash, an Israeli citizen, and Andrew Banks, an American whose parents were born in Canada, got married in Toronto in 2010, they had several reasons for doing so. They were in love, they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together and, as a married couple in Canada, Andrew would be able to sponsor Elad for a U.S. visa, since at the time there was no federal recognition of gay marriage in the U.S.

Six years later they were delighted to become parents of twin baby boys. But their happy family life was threatened when they needed passports to move to the U.S. and the genetics of their twin sons was questioned.

The story is told in a new book by Cal State Fullerton professor of developmental psychology and the director of the Twin Studies Center Nancy L. Segal called “Gay Fathers, Twin Sons: The Citizenship Case That Captured the World.” Published in August by Roman & Littlefield, it’s a story full of legal twists and turns in law, surrogacy, and sometimes strange realities of twins.

A twin herself, Segal has authored many books about twins, including “Deliberately Divided,” about a New York City adoption agency that secretly separated twins and triplets in the 1960s.

In her new book, she recounts how



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The story of the Davash-Banks family, written by Nancy L. Segal, is a story of love, surrogacy and a complicated citizenship case.

Andrew and Elad Davash-Banks sought and found a young woman to be their egg donor through an agency and then located a surrogate mother. Through in vitro fertilization using sperm from both men and the donated eggs, the surrogate mother received viable embryos.

To the surprise of everyone, not one but two embryos were implanted and

began to develop — and it was later discovered that one carried the genes of Andrew and the other carried the genes of Elad. This rare occurrence is called heteropaternal twins.

Two healthy baby boys, named Aiden and Ethan, were born minutes apart on Sept. 16, 2016. Their extended Israeli and American families were thrilled, and a month later the boys’ bris ceremony was held at Temple Sinai in Toronto.

Segal tracks the stunning events that unfolded when the couple planned a move to Los Angeles, a place where they hoped to live, work and raise their sons.

“They were going to the U.S. consulate in Toronto for the passports for their children because the children were born in Canada,” Segal explained. The men had with them their marriage certificate, the boys’ birth certificates and many other documents.

But the consul official questioned the men about how their sons were conceived and if they were genetically related — questions that would never have been asked to a married heterosexual couple.

The result was that Aiden, the baby with the genes of Andrew, the American, was allowed to get a U.S. passport, but baby Ethan could not — the consul officer decided that Ethan had no biological connection to an American parent.

“Despite their being twins, having shared a womb for seven months and being delivered just four minutes apart, their futures appeared quite different,” Segal wrote in the book. “Aiden was a U.S. citizen at birth and could live freely and indefinitely in California, while Ethan would stay a Canadian citizen and

come to California only as a tourist. He would be allowed to remain in Los Angeles for no more than six months. The twins’ official acceptance and rejection letters, and Aiden’s passport, reached the family a month or two later, after they had left Canada.”

The couple searched for attorneys to represent them so that little Ethan would be able to become an American citizen. A New York City-based nonprofit called Immigration Equality that works to protect LGBTQ and HIV-positive immigrants and families took the case and initiated a lawsuit against the U.S. State Department for the family.

Segal, who is currently on sabbatical, learned about the story in 2018. “The case attracted me immediately because it had twinship and so many timely issues like egg donation and surrogacy and gay marriage and family,” she said.

Andrew and Elad were enthusiastic about her writing a book about them because “they were fighting for something bigger than themselves, and that’s why I applaud them,” she said.

Finally, the case was settled in favor of the family in October 2020. Bringing it into the public eye may have helped, but Segal said that the subject of twins has a particular emotional tug for people, and it fascinates them.

“Certainly, the idea of a child being separated from the parent is horrendous. But ideas of twins being separated really cuts another way,” she said. “And people have a difficult time dealing with that. That’s why twins are in the news. When twins are reunited, everybody celebrates. Even if you don’t know them, you celebrate because twins belong together.”

DONATION

Graduate, 24, pays it forward with \$20,000 gift to university

Computer science, leadership his focus

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

Less than a year ago, Josh Mitchell was stressing to finish his finals for his master’s degree in computer engineering at Cal State Fullerton. Today, the 24-year-old works as a software and database engineer at a growing Bay Area company called Poshmark and has recently given back to the university in the form of a \$20,000 gift, in gratitude for all that he learned in his five-and-a-half years as a student.

Leadership roles in particular, which Mitchell took on as an undergrad and graduate student, taught him valuable lessons that he’s already used in his new job.

He was student body president at a time when racial tensions were escalating on campus and the entire community still struggled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“What I came to appreciate was that everybody has a different worldview or different viewpoint that they come to with a conflict,” Mitchell said. “And with that, it’s more so about listening and being able to navigate different people’s perspectives, and also learning to humble myself that I may not always be right, and there’s always going to be people smarter than me, so learning to appreciate their feedback.”

He also worked as a resident adviser overseeing freshman housing, a role that he likens to that of being a first responder, on call to help students in any kind of trouble and being a point person during an emergency. “One night there was flooding in one of the buildings, so I had to help get all the water out at 2 a.m.,” he said. “That was my first leadership experience that really started to change me.”

He taught computer science at a nonprofit called Dreams for Schools, which educates children, from kindergarten through high school, about STEM careers by demonstrating how to build software games for fun.

Mitchell was born in Mission Viejo and raised in Rancho Santa Margarita. When he entered CSUF in fall of 2017, his horizons were broadened. “Being from where



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Josh Mitchell graduated from Cal State Fullerton last year with a master’s degree in computer engineering.

I was born in south Orange County, you hold onto certain privileges that you take for granted, and maybe not understand that other people have other challenges that you’ve never had to experience or deal with,” he said.

During his last year at Cal State Fullerton, Mitchell got a virtual internship

with Poshmark, and after he got his degree in January 2023, he moved to San Francisco, a city he enjoys exploring. He commutes to Silicon Valley several days a week because his company has a hybrid work schedule.

At Poshmark, he volunteers as a co-lead for an employee-resource group that

focuses on health and wellness. He and his co-leader host events and workshops centered on being well at work. “My co-lead and I started this fun event in our company called De-Stress Recess. The main purpose of it is to be a kid again, and so on Thursday afternoons, we go play kickball or volleyball. It’s kind of fun because the two of us have to build our community, so it’s like building a mini business within the company,” Mitchell said.

“With all the leadership experiences that I gained at Fullerton, it was easy to translate, because even though one is a college environment and the other is a company or corporate America environment, I feel like a lot of those same lessons apply,” he said.

He is happy to be able to make his recent \$20,000 gift to the university, part of which goes to the College of Engineering and Computer Science. “I hope that it would be gifted toward someone who is in NSBE, or the National Society of Black Engineers,” he says. “My experience as a student, as someone who is biracial, not seeing too many people like me, I’m hoping to see more people of color in that field.”

Part of his gift will also go toward scholarships for student leaders, in the hope of making those roles accessible to more students.

Mitchell remembers many talks about funding when he was president of ASI. “I got to connect with a lot of different student groups and saw the challenges that they went through. It always seemed like the number one problem coming up was ‘We need more money,’ or ‘Our students are struggling, and we need scholarships’ or ‘If our students had more financial support, then things would be going smoother.’ I felt like I was able to start off my career pretty well at Poshmark, so I wanted to find a way to help out, and this scholarship gift felt like a really easy way to give back.”

Though he is now a CSUF alum, he feels very connected to the university. “My heart is invested in Cal State Fullerton. I know a lot of the student groups there; I know a lot of the people who work there; I trust the leaders there. The two scholarships that I provide with engineering, computer science and also student leaders, those are identities that I held very closely to me during my five-and-a-half years at the institution.”

Summit

FROM PAGE 1

“It’s your teachers, it’s your teacher’s assistants, it’s your nurses’ aides, it’s your dental hygienists,” Brewer said. “It’s the people who do your nails, work at your grocery stores and serve you when you go out to eat. It’s folks that are making up the fabric of our community but cannot find a place to live within our communities that oftentimes are served by Jamboree Housing Development.”

Quirk-Silva, a longtime champion of affordable housing, discussed the passage of SB4, which gives nonprofit colleges and churches, mosques and other faith institutions the right to build affordable housing on their land.

“We certainly aren’t looking at building 50 units on school land or 100,” Quirk-Silva said. “These could be very small, 10 units, and again, if we even took a very small number of churches and schools in Orange County that chose to do this, you’re going to start ticking off these units that we need so desperately.

So, it gives us another tool in government to allow people to build affordable housing. I think this is a definite game-changer.”

Orange County spends about \$300 million annually to address homelessness, Heyhoe said.

That figure includes a cost of \$110,000 per person, per year, for chronically homeless individuals to cycle through assistance programs, she said.

The cost to keep a person housed and receive services is about \$51,000 per year, she said.

“We felt like this was such important information that people needed to know, that there was a more cost-effective way,” Heyhoe said. “And it just so happens that the more cost-effective way is also the national best practice for how to address chronic homelessness that has been supported by multiple presidents over the last few decades.”

The notion that affordable housing in a neighborhood brings property values down is false, Heyhoe said.

Research suggests that the opposite is true, she said.

So, we provide data,” Heyhoe said.

“We have equipped people with data, with knowledge, with tools, making it really easy for them to engage. And to date, our housing champions have been able to help push through 715 units of affordable housing and 518 units of permanent supportive housing.”

CSUF officials are also working to address affordable housing issues on campus, Alva said.

The university recently received an \$88.9 million contribution from the state, which is earmarked to upgrade campus housing.

The money will be used to rebuild the Plummer Cove housing complex, which is badly in need of a facelift, Alva said.

“But what it also sort of reminds us of is that we need to also think about how we expand capacity,” Alva said. “How do we ensure access and opportunity for more of our students to have affordable housing, whether it’s on campus or near the campus, so that they can enjoy the full benefit of a college experience, but also once they graduate and return to the community, that they’re able to stay and contribute to the region from which they came?”

State funding has also helped the university provide housing grants of up to \$2,000 for students living on or near campus, Vigil said.

CSUF has hired additional staff to work one-on-one with students in need of help, he said.

“We like to provide a personalized approach to our students because every student’s experience when it comes to basic needs is different, and we want to make certain that we understand their situation better,” Vigil said. “Sometimes some of our students are in tough situations.”

The university also provides temporary housing for up to three weeks for students in challenging situations, he said.

“It would be nice to have some additional funds to help the students when it comes to rent, or when it comes to living on campus,” Vigil said. “It’s not cheap, right? It’s a burden, it adds to their financial aid, it adds to the loans that they’re taking out. We’ve all heard from our alums when it comes to taking out loans. I’m still paying for some of mine. It would be helpful, I think, for our students.”

'GREENTECH'

Students learn manufacturing methods for a sustainable future

CSUF News Media Services

Mechanical engineering major Matthew Lindwall is working on a manufacturing project to reduce carbon emissions in transportation by using “green” hydrogen as a clean energy source.

Classmate Rahul Pashpuleti is developing a 3D-printed artificial meniscus made of biodegradable and environmentally friendly materials to replace damaged knee cartilage.

As today’s manufacturers realize financial and environmental benefits from eco-friendly business practices, these Cal State Fullerton students are learning about green technology, often called “greentech,” and sustainable manufacturing to help shape the industry’s future.

Sagil James, associate professor of mechanical engineering, and his research students are engaged in various pioneering projects — some sponsored by industry partners — that focus on trends and sustainable manufacturing methods.

“Greentech is a forward-looking approach that places environmental responsibility and resource efficiency at the forefront of industrial processes,” James said. “It involves minimizing carbon emissions, reducing waste and efficiently managing resources, including a shift toward renewable energy sources and eco-friendly materials.”

This approach is vital for environmental stewardship, cost savings, competitive advantage, regulatory compliance and ensuring the availability of resources for future generations.

“Greentech manufacturing drives innovation, enhances employee satisfaction and supports a sustainable, greener future for the industry and the planet,” James added.

Lindwall, a senior, and Pashpuleti, a graduate student, are among James’ students working on real-world projects focusing on cutting-edge technologies and practices in eco-manufacturing, clean energy manufacturing and cyber-manufacturing.

Students also gain a strong foundation in sustainable manufacturing principles through coursework in the College of Engineering and Computer Science, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the industry after graduation.

Additionally, more than 400 students, faculty and industry partners attended the recent Titan Manufacturing Day. The Orange County Department of Education K-16 collaborative grant and student organization Society of Manufacturing Engineers supported the event.

“I’m interested in green and sustainable manufacturing because I believe that humanity is, in general, seeking a ‘greener’ future, meaning that all aspects of our lives are going to involve more environmentally sustainable practices,” said Lindwall, who is leading a team of nine students on their “Titan Green” project.

Pashpuleti, who is from Bangalore, Karnataka, India, is intrigued by the potential of sustainable manufacturing to revolutionize the production of goods.

“The idea of creating environmentally friendly and cost-effective products is exciting. This emerging industry aligns with my passion for innovation and sustainability, which makes it a perfect fit for my career goals.”

Lindwall and his Titan Green team of mechanical engineering majors are working on developing a hydrogen-powered, remote-controlled speed boat. The team’s project will be a proof-of-design concept for life-size boats.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Members of Titan Green set up a wind turbine, which is an integral part of their project to use green hydrogen as a clean energy source in transportation. From left are mechanical engineering students Christian Dominguez, faculty adviser Sagil James, Matthew Lindwall and Jerry Pratanavanich.

Green hydrogen involves the generation of zero-emissions hydrogen fuel using renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. Using hydrogen as a fuel source is crucial to a sustainable future, Lindwall said.

Through efficient integration of renewable energy, the project intends to set a sustainable precedent for the transportation sector while promoting public awareness of the potential of green hydrogen.

“This endeavor represents a vital step toward a more eco-friendly and carbon-neutral future for transportation,” he said. “Maritime applications of hydrogen energy represent a new design frontier — and we want to be one of the first to explore it.”

Pashpuleti uses bioprinting technology, in which biomaterials are mixed with cells to construct living tissues like a meniscus.

“Bioprinting uses a 3D printer with living cells to build tissues and organs layer-by-layer, offering hope for organ transplants and medical research breakthroughs,” he said.

Amarjeet Singh, a mechanical engineering graduate student, is working on an augmented reality research project to fuse the innovative potential of this technology with manufacturing processes to advance sustainable manufacturing principles.

The project explores the seamless integration of AR-enhanced cognitive ergonomics into manufacturing, offering real-time visual guidance, data overlays and interactive checklists to assist workers in their tasks.

“By incorporating AR-enhanced cognitive ergonomics, the project addresses fundamental principles such as resource efficiency, the adoption of eco-friendly technology, workforce training, safety improvements and reduction of environ-

mental impact,” James said.

“The goal is to establish a model for the future, where technology-driven manufacturing seamlessly harmonizes innovation, safety and sustainability, fostering an efficient and environmentally responsible industry.”

The demand for professionals versed in sustainability, renewable energy and environmental management is rising, making it a dynamic and promising field for those passionate about sustainable practices and environmental responsibility, James relayed.

Lindwall plans to pursue a career working at a water or power company and looks forward to incorporating sustainable practices.

“This research experience and course-

work prepares us for the workforce because it gives us a better understanding of the engineering process — from ideas to schematics to a finished project and everything in between,” Lindwall said. “It also gives us an idea of what it will be like to work as part of a team on such projects.”

In his future career, Pashpuleti also hopes to make a positive impact on the environment and society.

“My research and coursework have equipped me with the technical skills and knowledge needed for a career in sustainable manufacturing,” he said. “I’ve learned how to develop and implement green manufacturing processes that are valuable skills in today’s environmentally conscious industries.”



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Mechanical engineering graduate student Amarjeet Singh is working on an augmented reality research project to fuse the innovative potential of this technology with sustainable manufacturing processes.

ELSEVIER REPORT

Faculty among top 2% of cited authors in the world

CSUF News Media Services

Twenty-one Cal State Fullerton faculty members have been recognized as among the top 2% of cited authors worldwide. Their research publications have been mentioned numerous times in papers published by other researchers and scholars.

Elsevier, a global leader in information and analytics, recently published the 2023 “Updated Sciencewide Author Databases of Standardized Citation Indicators.” The publication provides a list of the top 2% cited scholars globally.

“Having their research publications cited by their peers globally demonstrates the impact of faculty scholarship,” said Binod Tiwari, associate vice president for research and sponsored projects.

“We consistently have many CSUF faculty included in the list of the top 2% globally cited researchers every year. This recognition is a testament to the impactful research CSUF faculty members perform while being excellent educators and teachers in their classrooms. Their works deserve celebration.”

The report includes separate data for career-long and single-year impact. Scientists are classified into 22 scientific fields and 174 subfields.

Career-long data are updated to the end of 2022, and single-year data pertain to citations received during the same calendar year. The selection is based on the top 100,000 scientists, with and without self-citations or a percentile rank of 2%

WHO’S LISTED

The faculty members’ subject areas include such disciplines as information systems and decision sciences, human communication studies, chemistry, biological science, psychology, kinesiology and finance.

CSUF faculty members recognized on the 2% list for combined career citations and the 2023 citations are:

- **Michael H. Birnbaum**, professor emeritus of psychology
- **Tammy Drezner**, lecturer emeritus of information systems and decision sciences
- **Zvi Z. Drezner**, professor emeritus of information systems and decision sciences
- **William B. Gudykunst**, professor of human communication studies (deceased)
- **Maria C. Linder**, professor of chemistry and biochemistry (deceased)
- **Richard A. Lippa**, professor emeritus of psychology
- **Geoffrey Lovelace**, professor of physics
- **Roberta E. Rikli**, professor emeritus of kinesiology and former dean of the College of Health and Human Development
- **H. Jochen Schenk**, professor of biological science
- **Robert Voeks**, professor of geography and the environment

The following faculty members have been cited for career-long or recent single-year impact:

- **Sudarshan Kurwadkar**, professor of civil and environmental engineering
- **Robert G. Lockie**, associate professor of kinesiology
- **David Obstfeld**, associate professor of management
- **James A. Primbs**, professor of finance
- **Jocelyn Read**, professor of physics
- **Dana Rutledge**, professor emeritus of nursing
- **Nancy L. Segal**, professor of psychology
- **María Soledad Ramírez**, professor of biological science
- **Fu-Ming Tao**, professor of chemistry and biochemistry
- **Marcelo E. Tolmasky**, professor of biological science
- **Stella Ting-Toomey**, professor of human communication studies

The complete list of the top 2% cited scholars can be found in the Elsevier Data Repository.

or above in the sub-field.

Ten CSUF faculty members, including those who are retired or deceased, have been listed for both career-long as well as single-year impact as the top 2% cited scholars. Eleven other faculty members were recognized either for their career-long or single-year impact.

Cal State Fullerton is ranked third in the California State University system for the recent single-year citation.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton faculty members’ research citations include psychology, physics, biological science, biochemistry, and many other fields.

GEAR UP

\$4.1 million grant: Preparing middle school students for college

CSUF News Media Services

To prepare students in Buena Park and La Habra schools for college, Cal State Fullerton has been awarded a \$4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the university’s GEAR UP program — the seventh grant since the program started on campus in 1999.

“This comprehensive endeavor aims to improve the educational outcomes for historically underrepresented students,” said Adriana Badillo, director of the Center for Educational Partnerships. “Through GEAR UP, we collectively work across institutions and organizations to promote postsecondary options, college and career readiness, and overall student and school success.”

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, known as GEAR UP, is a nationwide program designed to enhance economically disadvantaged students’ college and career readiness. The program helps students prepare to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

The university has received \$618,400 in first-year funding for the new seven-year grant program.

A key goal of the latest GEAR UP program is to expand and strengthen Cal State Fullerton’s commitment, partnership and efforts with Buena Park School District, La Habra City School District, Fullerton Joint Union School District, Fullerton College and other community-based organizations that work in those communities, Badillo said.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton’s federally funded GEAR UP program for middle and high school students promotes postsecondary options, college and career readiness, and overall student and school success.

The new grant will serve 773 students at Buena Park, Imperial and Washington middle schools, beginning in seventh grade. GEAR UP will follow the students through their transition and graduation from Buena Park and La Habra high schools in 2029 and support them in their first year of college during the

2029–30 academic year.

GEAR-UP will offer specific grade-level services to participants at different stages of their education. These services include academic success tutoring and mentoring, individual college and career success planning, financial literacy workshops, career exposure workshops and college tours, among others, Badillo said.

The partnership with the school districts also emphasizes supporting students and their families as they approach postsecondary education options, planning and financing. These initiatives include raising awareness about college financial aid, increasing the number of students completing financial aid applications and supporting repayment planning.

“This effort calls for a strong commitment across various educational and community-based partners who will have pledged their support in terms of staff time, resources and facilities to ensure the success of students the project will serve,” Badillo said. “It is a collective approach to support our local community.”

In 2021, Cal State Fullerton received a \$8.9 million grant for GEAR UP — the largest the university has received for the program. The grant supports 1,706 students from Ball, South and Sycamore junior high schools in Anaheim Union High School District to prepare for success in college.

The seventh-grade students will participate in the program through their expected graduation in 2027 from Loara, Anaheim and Katella high schools and into their first year of college.

RESOURCES

Male Success Initiative unveils Men of Color Collection

CSUF News Media Services

When Isaac Alferos heard that the Male Success Initiative Center was unveiling its new library collection, he jumped at the opportunity to return to his alma mater.

Supported by MSI and inspired by such writers as Toni Morrison and James Baldwin, Alferos, who earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration-finance in 2022, found his love for writing while he was an undergraduate student.

Now a research and data analyst for The Education Trust-West, Alferos’ self-published book — “Prayer Song: Love, Healing and Ancestry” — is a part of MSI’s Men of Color Collection. The collection houses more than 400 narratives that center on the experiences of men of color throughout history and across different disciplines.

The center unveiled the collection during a Nov. 8 ribbon-cutting ceremony, inviting faculty, staff and students to celebrate the curation of these stories. The collection is housed in the MSI Center in Gordon Hall 229 and is available to all campus community members.

“We often hear from students of color that they want to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and in what they learn and what they read,” said Felipe Martinez, director of MSI. “That’s really what this collection does for our students and for the entire campus community.”

The project, a collaboration between the Division of Student Affairs and Pollak Library, is funded by a \$15,000 grant from the California State University Chancellor’s Office awarded through the Research, Scholarship and Creative Ac-



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The Men of Color Collection is part of the Male Success Initiative Center in Gordon Hall on the Cal State Fullerton campus.

tivity program. The collection has been in the works for years, with MSI community members, campus leaders and students working together to handpick titles that represent a diverse array of experiences.

“This not only helps our young men reach their full potential like our motto says, but also it gives them an opportunity to see faces and stories that look like them, and stories that they can relate to,” said Rodney Anderson, assistant director of MSI.

“This collection invites the young men who read them to reflect and think — both in serious books and in funny books — about their value, why they’re important and why they’re going to graduate from this institution,” said Emily Bonney, dean of the Pollak Library.

Copyright and policy librarian Anthony Davis said he remembers when the project idea was first brought to him. He was immediately excited because it aligned with MSI’s four pillars of potential: mentorship; leadership, engagement, enrichment and development; career trajectory planning; and explorations of gender and masculinity.

“It took a community to get us here. When we were choosing the books, we got suggestions from faculty, staff and MSI brothers to create a special col-

lection of narratives,” said Davis. “As librarians, we want to extend our reach and know that our resources are making a difference in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice all across campus.”

Martinez said MSI is constantly searching for ways to help students “achieve the fullness of their potential,” as it says in the MSI motto. As students access the collection, there are plans to develop more programming, such as a speaker series, that “brings the stories in the library to life.”

“The Men of Color Collection is the first step, but the sky’s the limit,” said Martinez.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

From left are Felipe Martinez, director of MSI; Isaac Alferos; Martha Enciso, associate vice president for student affairs; Emily Bonney, dean of the Pollak Library; Rodney Anderson, assistant director of MSI; Amir Dabirian, provost and vice president for academic affairs; and Anthony Davis, copyright and policy librarian.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Harada counting on depth, healthy roster to make a difference

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

At various parts of last season, Jeff Harada looked down his bench and counted his substitution options with one hand. This doesn't sound so bad on its face. Harada had five starters and five subs. Where's the problem?

No, it doesn't sound so bad. Until you realize when Harada counted his options, he had fingers to spare.

Three of them, to be exact.

"There were games we had seven healthy players," the Cal State Fullerton women's basketball coach said about the 2022-23 season. "We had issues last year. We lost all three of our point guards, and that was tough. It was one of those weird years."

That Harada and the Titans were in for "one of those weird years" could have been foreshadowed in their Big West Conference opener against UC Santa Barbara. On the first play of the game, 6-foot forward Kathryn Neff went up to contest a shot, came down awkwardly without any contact — and tore her ACL. That deprived the Titans of a minutes-eating inside-outside threat who was 7-for-17 on her 3-pointers in the 10 games she played.

The crystal ball could have foreshadowed it during an October practice when graduate transfer Shyla Latone — whom Harada looked to for major point-guard minutes and scoring — tore her ACL. Latone was expected to replace Lily Wahinekapu, the reigning conference Freshman of the Year, who transferred to Hawaii.

No problem. Right? Harada had Anniken Frey, who didn't play the 2021-22 season due to nerve damage. But during the 2020-21 season, Frey started all 22 games, averaging 9.2 points and a team-best 3.6 assists per game. Until he didn't have Frey, who missed all but 12 games battling that recurring medical issue.

And we haven't mentioned then-freshman Kaliana Salazar-Harrell, who tore her ACL in her last high school game — the Hawaii state title game — in the late winter of 2022. Harada said he'd thought Salazar-Harrell would return for conference play. Instead, she wasn't ready, and Harada redshirted her.

"We had to make do with two other guards who had to play point guard," Harada said, referring to Fujika Nimmo and Una Jovanovic. "They had to play 38 minutes a game and share point guard duties. We had no depth at that position."

Nor does Harada have Jovanovic anymore. The second-team All-Big West se-



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Coach Jeff Harada talks with players Nov. 4 during a break in the game against Concordia University at Cal State Fullerton. The Titans won, 80-56.

lection transferred to TCU after leading the Big West in field-goal percentage (.425), finishing second in average minutes (37.9) and averaging 14.6 points and 3.8 assists.

You develop them, get them good, and they decide they want to leave," Harada lamented.

All of this is a roundabout way of saying that Harada spent an offseason fixing leaks on the recruiting trail, starting — not surprisingly — at point guard. The 2023-24 Titans, who lost in the quarter-finals of the conference tournament, are as deep as they've been since before the pandemic. Including Nimmo (more on her momentarily) and Salazar-Harrell, Harada has four point guards at his disposal and 14 players overall.

This is why Harada is the most optimistic he's been since the pandemic wiped out what would have been his most talented team. Barring another conga line of players heading to the trainer's room, Harada needs more than one hand to count his substitution options.

"This year, we have a good mix of players, a good balance of classes: seven upperclassmen and seven underclassmen. We have depth at every position, which is really important for us," he said. "All we're trying to do is stay healthy and keep a full

roster through a whole season."

If there was one positive Harada took from last year, it was Nimmo, who enjoyed a breakout year during her enforced stint sharing the point with Jovanovic. Now a senior, Nimmo averaged 14.5 points and 3.1 rebounds a game. She joined the 1,000-point club early in 2023 against UC Riverside, set career highs in points (26 against Santa Clara), 3-pointers (five against Cal Poly San Luis Obispo), minutes (45 against UC Irvine) and free-throws (nine against San Jose State). A second-team All-Big West selection, Nimmo's ability to create her own shot at all three levels and find teammates — she averaged 2.7 assists a game — just needs acclimation to a new group of players.

"Last year was a breakout year where it all came to fruition for her," Harada said. "She was able to understand our offense and understand the league a little better than before. She was able to make plays and she knows how to score the basketball, she can create, and she can create for others. She came from Florida and is getting used to playing with a new system, a new team, a new conference and a new style of basketball — everything that comes with transitioning from across the country."

Nimmo has some familiar players to

play off. There's Neff, 5-10 guard Gabi Vidmar and 6-1 post Ashlee Lewis. Vidmar led the Big West in minutes played (39.1), averaging 8.1 points and five rebounds a game while leading the Titans with 53 3-pointers on 35.3% shooting. Lewis averaged 10.3 points and a team-best 7.3 rebounds a game — the No. 2 total in the Big West.

"Gabi is arguably one of our best shooters, but she excels on both ends of the floor," Harada said. "She can knock down threes and she's just so consistent defensively. She led us in steals last year and her ability to read things on defense is due to her great timing. She is someone who can make a difference on both ends."

The next huge thing could be freshman Hope Hassmann. The 5-8 guard was a three-time conference MVP at Tahoma High School in Maple Valley, Wash. who passed up UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis and Cal Poly, among other suitors. This meant Harada not only out-recruited three of his conference rivals, but in so doing, brought him a player who made the all-tournament team in her first college tournament — the Bank of Hawaii Classic in Honolulu. Hassmann averaged 19 points a game in the two games and six games into her college career, averages a team-best 13.8 points on 46.4% shooting.

"Her work ethic is off the charts. She wants to be good," Harada said. "She's super-competitive, does everything the right way, and when she makes mistakes, plays through them. She has this edge to her that sets her above the rest and her motor is nonstop. ... I watched her play in summer club tournaments and when I watched her compete and play, she stood out. She literally willed her team to win. I said, 'This is the player I need.'"

When it comes back to what the Titans need this year, Harada had the answer before the question was asked. The preseason coaches poll picked the Titans fifth, a two-spot jump from their seventh-place finish last year, and Harada understands better than most what can vault the Titans beyond that.

"No. 1 is staying healthy. That's always No. 1," he said. "Our depth is a huge bonus for us, but in order to take advantage of that, we have to stay healthy. The biggest key on top of that is that our players understand and accept their roles. When you have a lot of depth, it's a blessing and a curse. Everyone wants to play, but you can only play five at a time and only so many players in 40 minutes. It's important that our players play selflessly and understand they have to make sacrifices."

It's a problem Harada is happy to experience.

TITAN OF EMPOWERMENT

TITAN FINDS VOICE THROUGH SPORTS NETWORK PARTNERSHIP

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