



Food Pantry Coordinator Kristen Johansson describes The Pantry inside the Titan Student Union during an open house Nov. 30 at Cal State Fullerton.

THE PANTRY

LARGER SPACE HELPS ACCOMMODATE GREATER DEMAND FOR FOOD

Community partners aid distribution

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

The scenario is a typical one. A full-time college student, living away from home, having to pay Orange County's exorbitantly high prices to rent an off-campus apartment, even with roommates splitting the cost. Then there is the soaring cost of food. This high cost of living can lead to "food insecurity," a term defined by the Centers for Disease Control as "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food." The recently opened ASI Food Pantry in the Titan Student Union on the Cal State Fullerton campus – nearly twice

the size of the old food pantry – was constructed to accommodate greater demand and better help alleviate food insecurity among CSUF students. Managed by Associated Students Inc. and known simply as "The Pantry," the 1,400-square-foot space is stocked with canned foods, frozen foods, fresh produce and freshly prepared meals, available for free to all full-time and part-time Cal State Fullerton students. Using the Pantry diminishes the financial burden of a trip to the supermarket, said fourth-year student Alexa Vergil, who lives in the Bay Area and moved to Fullerton to attend CSUF in the fall of 2021. "It's the first time I've ever been on my own," Vergil said. "If I ever do have to go to the grocery store, it's usually around \$100. So, paying for food – and I don't have a job yet – kind of took a toll, and I have rent." Any CSUF student can visit the ASI Food Pantry up to once a week with an appointment.

"When I come here, sometimes they'll have beans," Vergil said. "Those last me a week, so I have a whole meal for a week. Same with the pasta, I have a whole meal for a week and not having to pay for that at the grocery store is really nice. It takes off a big load, too." Students are not required to prove financial hardship to qualify for the Food Pantry's services. "One of the biggest problems with food pantries is the stigma attached to it," said Kristen Stava, the Titan Student Union director. "First of all, we don't think that stigma is legitimate, and so we certainly don't want to reinforce it ... so it is open to all." According to the Pantry fact sheet from ASI, research led by Tabashir Sadeh-Nobari, assistant professor of public health, showed that 18.1% of CSUF students were food insecure during the spring 2021 semester. Percentages were higher among first-generation students, parenting students and Pell Grant recipients, who are stu-

dents with significant financial need. Aside from its larger size, the new Pantry is more centrally located than the previous pantry and has an open layout with aisles of stocked shelves, akin to an actual supermarket. The original Pantry opened in a 700-square-foot space near the Titan Student Union Pavilion in August 2021 and served about 100 students per week, according to the fact sheet. Nearly 300,000 pounds of food have been donated to students since The Pantry opened. The former pantry space is now used as a sorting area for donated items. "When we realized that the pantry was in a particularly smaller space, we needed to expand on it because of how many were utilizing it and how much support we were getting," ASI President Maysem Awadalla said. "So, we figured, okay, let's move it. And I feel like it's been very beneficial. I feel like it's been a great accomplishment from ASI, and

PANTRY » PAGE 5

LIFELONG LEARNING

January event highlights new classes for older adults

Wide range of classes, activities offered

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

On Jan. 13, The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Cal State Fullerton will present a preview of the many noncredit spring classes for older adults. These include classes on personal finance, great classical composers, line dancing, the history of Broadway, drawing, the Supreme Court and U.S. Constitution, history of rock and roll, poetry – even one about the gorillas at the San Diego Zoo – among others. "We have about 110 classes that we put on each year on average," said Ellie Monroe, who is vice president of programs and an instructor. The OLLI program was started at Cal State Fullerton 45 years ago to serve Orange County's older population. According to the Orange County Office on Aging, the program has been a success story. LEARNING » PAGE 5



Jeanette Reese leads a flash mob class in September 2022 as part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Cal State Fullerton.

RESEARCH

Discriminating Gen Z users can benefit from social media

Positive, negative aspects analyzed

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

There is certainly no shortage of studies analyzing social media use, and some of the latest numbers indicate that the average person spends nearly two and a half hours on social media each day. In the U.S., the average American checks their mobile device nearly 160 times a day, and almost half of Americans say they watch user-generated social media content more than they watch movies or television through streaming services. Like most aspects of technology, there are positives and negatives associated with social media use. Tara Suwinyattichai, assistant professor of communication studies, said that while social media can be a source of connection and support, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety. GEN Z » PAGE 5

#7

IN THE NATION FOR BEST VALUE

Wall Street Journal, 2024

Cal State Fullerton

YEAR IN REVIEW

Students make a titanic difference in 2023

From the classroom to the community to the athletic field, the achievements of Cal State Fullerton students shone brightly in 2023. Here are some of their stories.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES



Ramadhan Ahmed, a Class of 2023 biological science major who scored in the 97th percentile on his medical school admission test, was accepted to 17 top-ranked medical schools. The first in his family to earn both high school and college degrees, Ahmed participated in the Bridges to Stem Cell Research program and mentored students in Project RAISE. He was named the Alumni Association's Outstanding Senior.



Class of 2023 graduate Jenna Maree Wong served as president of Student Speech Therapists and Audiologists Nurturing Culture Enrichment. Her drive to pave an equitable educational path for underrepresented communicative disorders students earned her the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders' Edith Li Communicative Disorders Service Award.



Business administration student Elizabeth Rocha served four years in the Marine Corps before coming to CSUF. She has served as president of CSUF's chapter of Student Veterans of America and volunteers with the Veterans Resource Center on campus, where she helps manage the VetForward program. After graduation in 2024, she plans to pursue a master's in social work or attend law school.



First-generation student Jose "Pepe" Tapia was introduced to artificial intelligence and machine learning research through ASSURE-US, a \$1.5 million grant program through the National Science Foundation. The 2023 graduate received the AWS Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Scholarship from Amazon and a California State University Edison STEM-NET Student Research Fellowship.



Class of 2023 graduate Sienna Baldwin earned her master's degree in athletic training before joining the Arizona Diamondbacks as an athletic training intern. Her internship was the first step toward achieving her goal of becoming a full-time athletic trainer for an MLB organization.



While pursuing a bachelor's degree in music-voice concentration, 2023 graduate Emilio Lopez Felix shared the stage with singer Andrea Bocelli, The Eagles, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and composer John Williams. "Cal State Fullerton's reputation in the music industry lands us these opportunities ... to work with these artists while I'm still in school," the first-generation student said.



As a middle schooler, Class of 2023 graduate Ainaria Johnson set her sights on becoming an educator. She earned a master's degree in education-special education and now works as a special education teacher at Richard Henry Dana Exceptional Needs Facility in Dana Point, where last year she received the school's Teacher of the Year Award.



Aryan Afshar earned her master's degree in clinical psychology and plans to become a licensed marriage and family therapist. For her outstanding research focused on the experiences and trauma of Afghans who settled in America, the 2023 graduate received CSUF's 2023 Giles T. Brown Thesis Excellence Award.



The men's track and field 4x400m relay team in May defeated Long Beach State to clinch its third straight Big West Championship, its fifth in program history, with all five since the 2017 season.



Single mom Sebrina Valdez returned to school at 53 to earn her bachelor's degree in business administration. Through the support of the Transfer Adult Re-entry Parenting and Pregnant Student Center, Valdez found a home away from home, often attending TAPP events with her children. She served as treasurer for the student organization Adults Who Are Returning to Education.

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.

Loya, 23, has already broadcast more than 100 games through Titans Sports Network and ESPN+; leading to multiple job offers.

Learn more about Titans Sports Network:





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FAST PITCH COMPETITION

Student entrepreneurs win with food bank and pantry app

CSUF News Media Services

Two computer science students and one computer engineering student, who made it their personal goal to create a software application that supports food banks and pantries, earned first place and a \$3,000 award in Cal State Fullerton's Titan Fast Pitch competition, hosted by the College of Business and Economics.

The team, Bag/Get, includes computer science students Alan Cortez and Rohan Kunchala along with computer engineering student Cesar Rojas. Their project derived from their personal experiences accessing food pantries.

The Bag/Get software application helps users locate food pantries in their area and provides updated information on walk-in hours, appointment bookings and food inventories.

"Members of our team have faced food insecurity and relied on Associated Students Inc. Food Pantry. Rohan decided to look deeper into the ecosystem — he found a rabbit hole of problems that food banks, pantries and communities face today," said Cortez. "After roping Cesar and I in, together we created Bag/Get: a software platform with the end goal of helping the community 'bag' their troubles and 'get' one step closer to sustained food security."

In under 90 seconds, the student entrepreneurs pitched their cutting-edge technology solutions to seven industry judges, including Natalia Razeghi, vice president of wealth management private banker for US Bank, and Justin Sanders, an intellectual property attorney.

The team members began working on their Bag/Get pitch in the spring, scribbling on white boards, conducting food bank and pantry market research, and collaborating with CSUF management lecturer Jeff Greenberg.

Kunchala said their current challenge is to design a user-friendly software application that is easy to navigate.

"We're working to create the most optimal user interface that anybody can pick up with ease. For example, during our market research with food banks, one common pain point we found is that they're frequently under-staffed, and their existing processes are often handled by volunteers," said Cortez. "We are in the midst of building an application where volunteers and staff don't have to waste time learning intricate software, which would enable them to better focus their time on the plethora of other responsibilities they handle."

The team also won a \$6,000, first-place prize in the Engineering and Computer Science Social Justice Competition and a \$5,000, third-place prize in the Social Enterprise Category at the CSU Sunstone Startup Competition.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN FEINZIMER

Computer science students Alan Cortez and Rohan Kunchala received first place and a \$3,000 award in the Titan Fast Pitch competition. Not pictured: computer engineering student Cesar Rojas.

The team credits its rewarding entrepreneurial journey to their adviser. Greenberg was instrumental in educating them about market research, validation and the lean startup methodology.

"After I graduate this semester, I plan on pursuing a master's degree to become a computer science professor or working in a web development position to create meaningful solutions for the modern world," said Cortez.

Kunchala, who teaches data structures and algorithms to students as an Algo officer for the Association for Computing Machinery student chapter on campus, said, "Entrepreneurship, professorship or a career as a technical product lead are all on the table for me. I chose CSUF because of its thriving computer science student community."

Titan fast pitch program fosters innovative thinking

Through the Center for Entrepreneurship's annual Titan Fast Pitch competition, students from Southern California middle schools, high schools and universities pitch their business concepts in 90 seconds to judge investors and community business leaders for the opportunity to win cash prizes.

The theme for this year's competi-

tion was "Changing the World through Social Enterprise," demonstrating how businesses can be a force for positive change in the world by integrating social and environmental goals into core operations. "Changing the World through Social Enterprise" is about harnessing the power of entrepreneurship and commerce to create a more just, sustainable and equitable society. Social enterprises including companies like TOMS, which donates a pair of shoes for each one sold, and Patagonia, which promotes environmental sustainability while manufacturing outdoor clothing.

"The Titan Fast Pitch competition provides a unique and enriching experience that goes beyond traditional classroom learning, offering students the opportunity to develop essential skills, build networks and cultivate the mindset needed for success in the entrepreneurial world," said center director John Bradley Jackson.

He added that the Center for Entrepreneurship aims to guide students in brainstorming, pitching and networking to create a holistic approach to enhance students' chances of success in entrepreneurial competitions.

Captivating the audience's attention with a quick pitch requires effective

communication, a compelling story and a deep understanding of the audience, explained Jackson.

Jackson said that Bag/Get received the first-place award for its market need and compelling value proposition. The team also demonstrated a viable and scalable business model.

"Bag/Get also embraced social entrepreneurship," said Jackson. "Unlike traditional charity or philanthropy, social entrepreneurship applies business principles to social problems such as using market mechanisms to create sustainable and self-sufficient solutions."

The team envisions Bag/Get as a reliable and robust application that can increase efficiency in food banks and pantries.

"In the immediate future, I foresee a continued spate of interviews with pantries and food banks and pantries across the country to better understand their experiences and needs," said Kunchala. "Further down the road, I expect for our product to stand up to the rigors of commercial and enterprise use by a number of food banks, their partnered food pantries and pantry users. It's certainly a technical challenge for us, but we're both well-equipped and passionate."

CLAPPER'S ENDOWMENT

Late lecturer's gift will continue to boost liberal studies

CSUF News Media Services

A lifelong learner with a passion for art, music and literature, the late Ronald Clapper found a home in Cal State Fullerton's liberal studies program — a campus hub for interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship.

The lecturer emeritus in liberal studies served the university from 1974-2011. Throughout his time on campus, Clapper played an instrumental part in the department's growth. From helping bring in new faculty experts to cultivating a tradition of research excellence, Clapper was passionate about supporting students on their academic journeys.

Clapper, who died in April, was a champion of student and faculty success. During his lifetime, he made a \$300,000 gift to the university that will be used to establish an endowment to support such areas as faculty research, conferences, study abroad opportunities and scholarships.

"His gift will help the department continue to be a place where intellectual curiosity and rigor go hand in hand with sociability and friendship," said April Bullock, chair and professor of liberal studies.

Bullock added that the endowment will continue to fund opportunities that honor Clapper's legacy. After his retirement, Clapper gave to such scholarship funds as the Jane Hipolito Memorial Scholarship, which recognizes students for writing outstanding research papers. He also supported departmental conferences that provide faculty and students with opportunities to network and engage with a variety of research topics.

As the department grows, Bullock said the endowment will be paramount to ensuring that faculty and students have the resources they need in the future.

In the liberal studies program, students become critical thinkers and problem solvers whose research integrates knowledge from the humanities, arts, natural sciences and social sciences. They are mentored by faculty experts with diverse research backgrounds that include such areas as music aesthetics, theory and religion, literature and science, and the history of food and culture.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

April Bullock, chair and professor of liberal studies

"Students come to this program for many reasons. For future educators, liberal studies provides solid academic preparation for multiple subject and education specialist career paths," Bullock said. "We prepare them for the challenges of the workforce."

Bullock noted that one of the unique parts of the program is the interdisciplinary thematic emphasis, which allows students to create a personalized education plan complete with courses that cater to their interests and career goals.

Since the program was established in the 1970s, thousands of students have graduated with majors in liberal studies, said Bullock. Alumni of the program have gone on to become educators, lawyers, musicians, entrepreneurs and leaders in their respective fields.

Empowered by a liberal studies education, Joel Thayer, who earned a bach-

elor of arts degree in 2011, went on to earn his law degree and become an attorney in Washington, D.C. Throughout his career, he has represented a myriad of clients, including the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission, and has been featured in high-profile publications like The Wall Street Journal.

Reflecting on the success of the program and looking forward to its future endeavors, Bullock said that Clapper's legacy will always be a part of the department and his gift will further its success for years to come.

"His intellectual curiosity and rigor, combined with a gentle and warm demeanor, set a standard that we will keep alive in our department and academic program," she said.



Ronald Clapper, lecturer emeritus in liberal studies

PROGRAM

Alum helps Black students, Men of Color to succeed

CSUF News Media Services

Raised by a single parent, alumnus and educational leader Antonio Banks’ mother always professed the power and opportunity of education.

“She would often tell us, ‘There is no quicker way to change your situation than through education.’ It’s a proverb that will stick with me for the rest of my life,” Banks said.

Banks credits his Cal State Fullerton education and research experiences at the Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership for transforming his life and changing his career trajectory.

Today, the first-generation college graduate is driven to uplift and empower other Black students and males of color in higher education. Banks, who grew up in Watts, is the inaugural director of Black and Males of Color Success at Compton College.

Banks earned a master’s degree in education-higher education in 2012 and, six years later, enrolled in the university’s doctoral program in education. In 2019, he earned a doctorate in educational leadership-community college concentration.

During his graduate studies, Banks became a research assistant at the center, known as C-REAL, founded and directed by Dawn Person, professor emeritus of educational leadership. He gained valuable, hands-on experience as an educational researcher with a just, equitable and inclusive lens.

“As C-REAL students, we share our lived experiences and perspectives on what true educational equity looks like and how we can serve as co-conspirators to solve issues in education more effectively,” Banks said. “I honestly do not know if I would be where I am if it wasn’t for the time I spent at the center.”

As a C-REAL researcher, Banks’ projects included assessing and evaluating the university’s GEAR UP partnership with Anaheim Unified School District. His research focused on topics such as veteran student success, Latino parents’ support of their child’s college aspirations and markers of success for men of color in community colleges.

“Through Dr. Person’s visionary leadership and deep understanding of higher education, we learned about the importance of capturing quality quantitative and qualitative data to paint a vivid picture of issues in higher education and move toward solutions,” Banks said.

Banks continued his research at C-REAL as a doctoral candidate, focusing his dissertation on “Traversing the Higher Education Pipeline for African American Transfer Students in California.” His study examined African American male students from the Inland Empire who transferred from community college to a public university.

“After I enrolled in graduate school, I wanted to figure out the problem that plagued me since my first year of undergraduate studies: ‘Why were all the Black students leaving after their first year of college?’” he said.

Major findings of his study included



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Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership alum Antonio Banks, center, with Karla Aguirre, the center’s alumni engagement liaison, and Alexander Villagomez Buus, a former research assistant

that a dedicated professional within the university setting is pivotal in the trajectory of a student’s success and that learning communities centering on cultural identity development are catalysts for student engagement and increased academic success.

15 years

C-REAL was founded in 2008 and is housed in the College of Education. The center recognized current and former research students, faculty, staff and community members at its recent 15th anniversary celebration.

“The center supports research that is solution-focused with an approach that is caring and intended to interrupt systemic exclusionary practices,” Person said. “We work to develop a more socially just researcher at all levels — faculty, students and community leaders who rely on decision-making that is data-driven and considers both affective and effective outcomes.”

Banks was among seven individuals honored as a “C-REAL legend” for his work to support educational change and transformation. Over the years, the center has honored 35 people for their unwavering commitment to serving, supporting and sustaining underserved communities, Person said.

“Antonio’s research experience at the center strengthened his resolve and commitment to serving underserved populations and making a difference in the

lives of students and their families,” said Person, Banks’ research adviser and doctoral dissertation chair.

Black student success

After completing his doctorate, Banks stepped into the role of C-REAL program analyst for a year. During his career, he has held leadership roles at two- and four-year institutions and nonprofit organizations.

These included serving as the state charter director for the African American Male Education and Network Development Organization (A2MEND) and project director of Fullerton College’s Umoja Community, which is designed to enhance the cultural and educational experiences of Black and African American students.

Since 2021, Banks has worked at Compton College. As a role model and mentor, he strives to elevate Black students and males of color to achieve academic success and improve retention and graduation rates.

“I wanted this position for several reasons; it felt like a divine alignment of many different aspects of my personal and professional development and trajectory up until this point,” he said.

“Programs like this are critical to college campuses because there is still a significant level of equitable practices, policies and personnel that need to be embedded in higher education systems to provide students with the educational experiences and outcomes they deserve.”



Antonio Banks

Banks said Compton College, near where he grew up in South Central Los Angeles, gave him the opportunity to return home and give back to his community.

“It utilizes all my educational experiences and professional passions up until this point in my life — and allowed me to bring the needs of Black and male students of color to the forefront of both student services and academic affairs in a meaningful and intentional way.”

FINANCIAL AID

Alumni establish fund to support international education

CSUF News Media Services

In the Vietnamese language, the name “Tâm” means “heart.” Much like his name, Minh Tâm Nguyễn led his family, business and community with his heart.

To honor their late father, Cal State Fullerton alumni and Advance Beauty College leaders Tâm and Linh established the Minh Tâm Nguyễn Endowment Fund for International Education at Cal State Fullerton. The new fund will benefit students who want to study abroad as well as international students who want to pursue an education at CSUF.

“Our father was the patriarch of our family, an educator, the founder of Advance Beauty College and a leader in the Vietnamese community,” said Tâm, who earned a master of business administration at CSUF in 2005, chairman of Advance Beauty College. “He took pride in his children being graduates of Cal State Fullerton, and he had the opportunity to meet every president from President Gordon to President Virjee.”

Both Tâm and Linh are alumni of CSUF’s College of Business and Economics, with Tâm currently serving as chair of the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation board of governors and Linh serving on the dean’s advisory board for CBE. They also are supporters of the university’s Center for Family Business and the Giles-O’Malley Center for Leadership.

“As a family, we believe in education,” said Linh, who earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s at CSUF as president of Advance Beauty College. “This fund will help keep my father’s legacy alive, and allow students to experience the meaningful educational opportunities we had ourselves at CSUF.”

Diverse partners

Throughout the years, Cal State Fullerton has had a deep engagement with Orange County’s Little Saigon, the larg-

est Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam. The university has supported critical mental health and historical research, promoted the teaching and learning of Asian languages, and forged educational partnership between the two countries.

As Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation board chair, Tâm builds and strengthens relationships with a variety of communities to encourage investment in and support of students.

“My dad and our family are great believers in accessibility, quality education and opportunities,” said Tâm. “Linh and I continue to believe in our father’s work and want to provide opportunities to support students, and in particular, international education.”

Debra Leahy, dean of extension and associate vice president for international programs, explained that the Nguyễn family’s gift will help students broaden their global perspectives and better prepare them for today’s workforce.

“The Nguyễn family are supporters of our international students and bring the heart, vision and deep conviction for how global learning transforms the minds and lives of students,” said Leahy. “The students who benefit from their generous gift will have their lives changed in many ways.”

Greg Saks, vice president for university advancement, described Tâm and Linh’s father as “a remarkable man” with a legacy extending from a military leader in Vietnam to an educational leader in Orange County.

“Tâm and Linh are following in their father’s footsteps — leading their family business and having a positive impact on just about every area of Cal State Fullerton’s campus,” said Saks. “I know their father would have been proud of the work they’re doing today as alumni and community leaders.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Tâm and Linh Nguyễn with their late father, Minh, center

Choosing a Titan education

With its notable business school, affordability and flexibility in allowing her to work at her family business while pursuing her education, Linh chose to attend CSUF for her undergraduate degree. When she decided to pursue an MBA, Linh chose Cal State Fullerton again.

“In addition to my incredible undergraduate experience, I really appreciated coming back to CSUF as an adult. The program helped me learn what’s new and grow as a business leader,” said Linh, who now mentors students through the Executive in Residence program.

While students, Tâm and Linh had opportunities to study internationally — Tâm studied in England, France, Germany and Vietnam, and Linh studied in Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam. Tâm and his wife, Christine, have also served as a host family for numerous international students.

Today, Tâm and Linh lead Advance Beauty College, founded by their father in 1987 to provide quality vocational education in Orange County.

“Our father was bicultural, bilingual and a true global citizen,” shared Tâm. “Our family business has also been deeply committed to serving diverse communities for over 40 years.”

Linh’s daughter, Cara Nguyễn, also chose to become a Titan and is finishing her first semester as a student in the Business Honors Program.

“It was her No. 1 school,” said Linh. “She’s already had such a positive experience at Cal State Fullerton. It’s not just us telling her it’s a great school — she’s seeing it herself.”

To contribute to the Minh Tâm Nguyễn Endowment Fund for International Education, visit: give.fullerton.edu/nguyen.

Pantry

FROM PAGE 1

I'm excited to see how it continues to grow because this is only the start."

The Pantry's community partners include the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, Orange County Food Bank and Community Action Partnership of Orange County.

Second Harvest Food Bank, for example, provides The Pantry with three to five pallets of free food each week, often totaling over 4,000 pounds.

Its grocery store partners include Ralphs, Sprouts Farmers Market, Northgate Market and Sam's Club.

The Pantry's campus partners include Basic Needs Services, Student Wellness' Cooking Healthy & Optimal Movement Promotion (CHOMP) program and the Children's Center.

"So many of our students have multiple jobs, and their focus is on school, which is where we want it to be," said Dave Edwards, executive director of ASI. "But the food pantry and some of our other student services help them be successful in the classroom."

Funding for The Pantry comes mostly from student fees but largely from grants and donations.

"Getting to this place is a collaboration with our students, with our ASI, which are really the leaders of this effort, working with so many external partners, our grocery store partners, and so many nonprofits that are making a big difference in Orange County," said Greg Sachs, vice president for community engagement at CSUF. "And coming together, we've been able to help our students have the most fundamental need that they have, which is food in their belly."



PHOTOS BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Anh Hoang, left, and Linh Chung check out the selection of food at The Pantry inside CSUF's Titan Student Union during an open house Nov. 30.



Chicken broth is among the food available at The Pantry inside CSUF's Titan Student Union.



The Pantry inside the Titan Student Union is well-stocked with food for the people it serves.

Learning

FROM PAGE 1

ing, about 14% of OC residents are 65 and older, and this number is predicted to grow steadily.

Bernard Osher, a successful businessman and native of Maine with a passion for lifelong learning and the arts, founded OLLI as a nonprofit, self-supporting organization. Through his generous support, the OLLI program at Cal State Fullerton has a \$2 million endowment; programs also exist at about 125 other universities throughout the U.S.

Open to adults who are retired or semiretired, Cal State Fullerton's OLLI program requires purchasing a \$275 yearlong membership. No previous college education is necessary. Membership allows people to take as many classes as they wish, though some may require extra fees if, for instance, travel expenses are involved.

"We currently have approximately 1,100 members," Monroe said.

Within this robust program, a subcategory of classes called Transition in Retirement is also available. These are designed specifically for members who are thinking about retiring or have already retired and need to make some adjustments for this transitional time of their lives.

"Transition in Retirement covers subjects that a new retiree would want to know about," Monroe said, including income tax planning, how to optimize your retirement budget, cleaning out the clutter and more. "We usually have someone from the psychology department who gives a lecture on retirement and what that means psychologically and what people might be mindful about. It's been very successful," she said.

OLLI members can also audit any of about 10,000 Cal State Fullerton classes, without paying additional tuition. "We just need to get permission from the instructor in order for a person to be able to sit in their classes," Monroe said, adding that no homework is necessary. Access to videos of recorded past classes is also available, and campuswide parking is included in the

membership fee.

OLLI classes are available year-round, with summer, fall, and spring programs.

The Jan. 13 spring preview event will give prospective members a glimpse of the OLLI program, Monroe said. "Different classes will be presented in different rooms for people who say, 'I want to know all about what kind of art classes you have,' or 'I want to know what kind of language classes you have.' They're all going to be bundled in different rooms so that people can wander in and learn about the classes."

OLLI members defy stereotypes of slowing down with age.

"We have a 90-plus club," Monroe said of about 40 people who are 90 years or older. "If they've been a member for at least five years, they get free membership. We recognize that these people are still very, very active. We have a 102-year-old who is extremely active. She plays a big bass drum in a band, and she loves it. She's also into ceramics and painting."

Members can also sign up for trips that are part of the OLLI program. These include day trips to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the Griffith Observatory and Old Town San Diego. Other options are one-day special event trips including a harbor cruise, a Pacific Symphony performance and a group trip to see a Hollywood Bowl show.

An upcoming overnight trip is planned to Joshua Tree National Park, led by a geologist who will take the group to various geological sites in the area.

Longer, more adventurous trips are also offered. "This coming year we have an Alaskan trip planned," Monroe said, "and they're looking at going to the Galapagos Islands." Past trips have taken members to China, Egypt, and Italy.

Along with the many offerings in the spring program is a unique trip to New York City, scheduled for March. Cal State Fullerton musical theater BFA students will be performing in a club called 54 Below, and that department has invited OLLI members to accompany the students and enjoy the performance as well as a week in New York.

For more information on OLLI, visit olli.fullerton.edu or call 657-278-2446.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL KITADA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/SCNG

Tara Suwinyattichaiporn

Gen Z

FROM PAGE 1

professor of human communication studies at Cal State Fullerton, and Ester Gonzalez, associate professor of information systems and decision sciences, have seen both sides in their research when it comes to social media and its interconnectivity with communication and relationships.

One of the effects Suwinyattichaiporn has found, specifically for Gen Z users, is a possible negative effect on mental health, or what she refers to as online social comparison. This is when users develop anxiety associated with seeing other people's heavily filtered and highly curated lives online.

"The main negative effect is mental health issues, and that typically comes from online social comparison processes," Suwinyattichaiporn said. "They assume that everyone else is having a great time, while they are not, so it causes a lot of anxiety, particularly in Gen Z."

Another negative effect Suwinyattichaiporn cites is a decrease in attention span. Gen Z has grown up with information at their fingertips that is delivered in bite-size pieces within seconds. But she has seen this effect in older generations as well, and shortened attention spans can lead to other challenges.

"It affects other parts of people's lives, including interpersonal relationships," Suwinyattichaiporn said. "So, when it comes to communicating in real life, people ... apply similar short attention spans to listening to people, and they can't hold a conversation for that long."

All that said, Suwinyattichaiporn is a supporter of social media and has found that if used in moderation, social media can have positive effects. The strongest positive outcome she has seen in her research is that the platforms can be effective in developing and maintaining relationships.

"I think it's a great way for people to maintain social relationships and even strengthen those bonds ... and to share experiences that they're having that their friends perhaps don't have access to," Suwinyattichaiporn said.

Gonzalez has seen this effect in her research as well. She and Xuefei (Nancy) Deng, associate professor of information systems at Cal State Dominguez Hills, co-authored a 2022 paper, "Social Inclusion: The Use of Social Media and the Impact on First-Generation College Students."

Through data gathered from first-gen

students at Cal State Dominguez Hills during 2019 and 2020, Gonzalez identified four key outcomes that were experienced by the students as a result of social media use:

- interconnections — creating initial connections with peers, faculty and staff.
- inspiration — gaining new ideas from others and finding those who share those ideas in common.
- insightfulness — obtaining access to a new level of resources that was not previously accessible and leveraging that access to share, brainstorm and collaborate.
- intense comfort — a way for the students to de-stress and provide their minds a break.

As a first-generation college student herself, Gonzalez felt that using social media not as a social tool but as a place for academic resources and support is unique to this population.

"Their perspective of the tool is as a resource, versus someone else who already had resources and therefore may not necessarily look at (social media) in that way," Gonzalez said.

As a counterargument to the mental health concerns surrounding social media use, Suwinyattichaiporn has seen the benefits of people using the platforms to take control of their own mental well-being.

"There is so much mental health and wellness information on social media, including mental health advocates, influencers and content creators that talk about different methods of self-care and taking care of your mental health," Suwinyattichaiporn said.

Related to Gonzalez's findings, Suwinyattichaiporn sees social media use as a benefit when it comes to self-actualization and career opportunities. Through social media, users can promote themselves and their skills and gain access to entrepreneurial paths that would have been difficult to access in prior decades.

"I think social media allows for more opportunities for Gen Zs to achieve their dreams without the gatekeepers," Suwinyattichaiporn said.

Both Suwinyattichaiporn and Gonzalez see intentional use of social media in moderation to be the key to achieving positive outcomes.

"I do think that social media algorithms were created to keep people on apps, but I believe in free will, and I believe that we can monitor and regulate our own behaviors," Suwinyattichaiporn said. "So as long as there's enough education and awareness around social media addiction and social comparison, I think people can use it more moderately and to their own benefit."



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHMUEL THALER, SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Allison Garcia, Neil Sairbairn, Peter Middleton, Sandy Cohen and David Lieby play a piece by Johann Sebastian Bach during the weekly get together of the local Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's recorder interest group.

SPORTS

Titans chalk up records on many levels in 2023

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

In 2023, we watched the Cal State Fullerton baseball team not only return to a familiar perch but send one of their teams up to a deserved seat atop the university’s athletic Mt. Olympus. We watched the CSUF men’s track and field team build the next brick in a budding dynasty and the men’s water polo team lay the first brick of history.

We watched the softball team play its most brutal schedule in program history, then validate the challenge with its 31st postseason berth. We watched the men’s basketball team outkick its preseason prognostication once again, reaching the Big West Tournament finals and winning 20 games for the second consecutive season.

We watched the men’s golf team introduce more talented players, illustrating an underrated depth as it showed any of them can rise up at any time and win a share of conference championships.

We said hello to freshman standouts like golfer Davina Xanh, men’s water polo player Francisco Paredes and basketball player Hope Hassman, and transfer newcomers like tennis player Zoe Olmos. We said hello to soccer forward Roberto Ordonez, who announced his incandescent presence by kicking in the door to the Titans’ regular-season men’s soccer title.

And we said good-bye to Fram and Julie Virjee, who made attending CSUF athletic events a Presidential mandate, baseball pitcher Fynn Chester and softball pitcher Myka Sutherlin, the Big West Scholar-Athletes of the Year, and four Titan baseball players who were drafted by major league teams: Nate Nankil (Oakland Athletics, seventh round), reliever Jojo Ingrassia (Boston Red Sox, 14th round), catcher Cole Urman (Baltimore Orioles, 16th round) and outfielder/first baseman Caden Connor (Chicago White Sox, 19th round). The four draftees were more than any other Big West program.

Here, in no particular order, we look at some of 2023’s marquee athletic events.

Validation

On Page 9 of the CSUF 2022-23 Annual Report, there is a story about the Titans’ baseball team featuring the headline, “Back Where It Belongs.”

Every alum with a passing interest in the Titans’ athletic program likely said those exact words at the end of the 2023 baseball season. For the first time since

2018, the Ferrari of the athletic department, the most recognizable program across the country, returned to the post-season. It’s 1-2 record in the Stanford Regional did not detract from the fact CSUF went 20-10 in the Big West and won nine consecutive series, taking the conference’s automatic NCAA berth despite finishing one game behind UC San Diego. The Tritons were ineligible for postseason play, due to its transitional status to Division I.

In head coach Jason Dietrich’s second year, the Titans improved by 10 games overall (going 32-24) and six games in the Big West. The improvement came despite the Titans not finishing in the top three in any significant offensive category and in the top three in only strikeouts among the top pitching categories.

Two other former Titans made news on a bigger stage. In August, Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Michael Lorenzen became the first Titan to throw a no-hitter in the major leagues when he scuttled the Washington Nationals, 7-0. It was the 14th no-hitter in club history, and it came in Lorenzen’s Phillies’ debut, after he was sent from Detroit to Philadelphia. That made him the fifth pitcher in major league history and only the second since 1900 to throw a no-hitter in his home debut with a new team.

While Lorenzen reconfirmed his major-league bona fides, Tanner Bibee announced his. The former Titan pitcher made his major league debut with the Cleveland Guardians on April 26 and immediately found a home. He went 10-4 in 25 starts, posting a 2.98 ERA and 141 strikeouts and 45 walks in 142 innings. Bibee was one of only eight major league pitchers to record a sub-3.00 ERA pitching more than 100 innings, becoming a finalist for American League Rookie of the Year and earning a spot on the MLB All-Rookie Team.

Back in the pool

In 2022, the CSUF women’s water polo team were debutantes. In the fall of 2023, the men joined them in the pool, where they returned to action for the first time since 1985. And by all accounts, it was a wildly successful return.

The Titans finished 16-16, a record that included two victories over Air Force and respectable showings against some of the best programs in the country. Playing in the Big West means you cope with a conga line of ranked teams. The Titans went 0-5 in conference, which sounds a lot worse than it was, considering every one of those losses was to a ranked team: No. 6 UC Irvine, No. 7 UC Davis, No. 8

Long Beach State, No. 11 UC Santa Barbara and No. 12 UC San Diego.

Togan Ozbek earned All-Big West Honorable Mention accolades for his team-high 58 goals, placing him sixth in the Big West. He led the team in assists (41), the No. 3 mark in the Big West, and fell one point short of being the first CSUF player to post 100 points in a season. Paredes captured a spot on the All-Big West Freshman Team with 27 goals and a stellar .551 shooting percentage.

A class of firsts

There was a thread running through the inductees into the CSUF Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2023.

Be first.

There was the 1979 Baseball Team, the first CSUF team to win the College World Series. There was Martha Wilkinson-Kirouac, who won CSUF’s first women’s national championship when she captured the 1967 Division of Girls’ and Women’s Sports Golf Championship in Seattle. She was the first woman golfer inductee.

Wrestler T.J. Dillashaw and women’s soccer goalie Karen Bardsley joined Wilkinson-Kirouac as the first inductees in their respective sports. There was soccer forward Eddie Soto, who led the Titans to their first national semifinal in 1993. And there was Julie Max, a pioneer in athletic training.

The Class of 2023 was honored at a November reception in Brea.

Next man up is ...?

CSUF Men’s Golf Coach Jason Drotter talked about the length and overall talent of Garrett Boe and the consistency of Harry Doig, both elements of which made them All-Big West First Team choices.

So who was the conference’s tri-champion at the Big West Tournament? Russell Howlett.

Howlett shot 73-70-68—211. His 5-under-par total at La Quinta Country Club tied Long Beach State’s Ian Gilligan and Cal Poly’s Baron Szeto for the individual title. It also paced the Titans to a second-place team finish, two shots behind Long Beach State.

How loud a debut did Ordonez make for the Titans’ men’s soccer team? He became the first Titan in program history to be named Big West Offensive Player of the Year. His nine goals were second in the conference, his 28 points and 10 assists led the conference, and those 10 assists were tied for eighth in the nation.

He and fellow All-Big West First Team selection Erick Serrano led a hardware parade that produced four Player of the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Titan players go up to block a shot against goal during an exhibition match against California Baptist University at Cal State Fullerton.

Year honors, Coach of the Year honors for George Kuntz and eight all-conference selections — the most in program history. The Titans won five of six yearly honors — every one but Freshman of the Year — and the five First Team selections were a program record.

Serrano’s eight assists ranked second in the Big West — behind Ordonez. He was named the Big West Midfielder of the Year and joined Ordonez on the All-Far West Regional Team.

Center back Giovanni Calderon became the first Titan to win the Big West Defensive Player of the Year Award. Tet-suya Kadona became the first Titan to win Big West Goalkeeper of the Year, earning the award for his five clean sheets. Rounding out the first-team choices was Sulaiman Bah, who finished second on the team and fourth in the conference with his 18 points. Bah’s eight goals tied for third in the Big West.

The CSUF women’s team had four players named to the All-Big West First Team, led by Women’s Soccer Goalkeeper of the Year Mia Ranson and Big West Freshman of the Year Kaylee Noble. Ranson led the Big West in save percentage (.838), tied for the conference lead in shutouts (seven) and second in goals-against-average (.952). Noble debuted with three goals and eight points, leading the team in shots on goal (17).

Sophomore midfielder Bella Cruz (three goals, 10 points) and sophomore defender Kaylin Raibon, who led the Titans in scoring with five goals and 11 points, rounded out the first-team selections. CSUF put four players on the first team for the first time since 2015.



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