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From left are Mike Daniel, regional director of the Orange County Inland Empire Small Business Development Center Network; economists Mira Farka and Anil Puri; and Sri Sundaram, dean of the College of Business and Economics, April 30 at the Cal State Fullerton 2024 Spring Economic Forecast at the Westin South Coast Plaza.

## SPRING FORECAST

# ‘ECONOMY IS WELL AND ALIVE’ BUT HIGH PRICES LOOM, EXPERTS SAY

### Troublesome trends remain in region

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

High inflation, the most aggressive rate-hiking cycle in 40 years, rising geopolitical risks, two wars and an emerging cold war between China and the U.S.

In normal times, such unfavorable conditions would signal disaster for an economic recovery, said economist Anil Puri, director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting at Cal State Fullerton.

But the recession predicted by the

world’s leading economists never materialized, the economist said.

Puri opened with those remarks at the 2024 Spring Economic Forecast on April 30 at the Westin South Coast Plaza.

Hundreds of business leaders and academics were in attendance for the bi-annual forecast.

As always, sharing the stage with Puri was colleague Mira Farka, co-director of the Woods Center.

“The economy has been growing, especially in the last half of 2023, and even up to the first quarter of this year,” Puri said. “The economy is well and alive, and doing quite well, actually, at this time.”

The GDP is up, spending is up, and the unemployment rate is down.

So, given these and other positive data points, “Why is everyone so depressed?” Puri asked rhetorically.

“If you adjust it for inflation, the real value of wealth is really below what it should have been,” Puri said. “Prices are not coming down. The rate of increase has not come down.”

New-car prices and used-car prices have gone up 20% and 30%, respectively, and the cost of grocery staples such as eggs, sugar, coffee and other food items has also spiked dramatically.

“So, inflation is becoming hard to dislodge,” Puri said. “We’re not sure that

the economic picture that we see really tells us the reality of what’s going on.”

The impact of artificial intelligence on employment is also an uncertainty, as trends show that AI will reduce job opportunities for lower-income earners, the economists reported.

The outlook for the economy is nuanced and complex, Farka said — favorable in the short term but a bit gloomier over the long term.

“Now, we don’t think we’re going into a recession right now,” Farka said. “But there are certainly signals that a shift is coming down the line ... maybe five to six months away.”

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PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Volunteer Eric Brown connects with attendees at the 2024 Pathway Conference.

## EMPOWERMENT

### Conference provides academic direction to young men of color

#### Presenting college as achievable goal

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

Motivated by its mission to give male students of color in ninth and 10th grade insight into college life, Cal State Fullerton’s Center for Educational Partnerships started the Male Youth Empowerment Conference in 2016.

Offering workshops, panel discussions, keynote speakers and other features, the conference drew hundreds of young male students of color from throughout Southern California each year and helped to demystify the uncertainties of a post-secondary education, particularly for those students who think they lack the wherewithal to attend college or that the cost of a college education is beyond their means.

With the understanding that young

men of color usually begin their foray into higher education by enrolling in community college, the 2024 conference has been rebranded and given a new name, said Raymond Lu, associate director of the Center for Educational Partnerships.

Held at CSUF on April 5, the 2024 Pathways Conference featured programming geared for community college students and high schoolers in upper grades on the verge of attending college.

Of the 129 attendees, 75 were from three different high schools, 37 came from 12 community colleges, three were CSUF students and 14 did not list their institution of origin.

“We know for our male students of color, their entry point into higher education is usually and most commonly through the transfer pipeline, through the transfer process,” Lu said. “And then we help them through that pipeline.”

The Pathways Conference was a collaborative effort between CSUF’s Center for Educational Partnerships, Male Success Initiative, Fullerton ASPIRE (Access, Support, Pathways, and Inclusive Resources for Everyone) grant,

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I ALWAYS WANTED TO  
**TEACH** SPECIAL EDUCATION





HEALTH

# Degree programs open career doors for nursing students

## Education beyond clinical training a plus

By **Jenelyn Russo**,  
contributing writer

Established in 1974, Cal State Fullerton's School of Nursing within the College of Health and Human Development is committed to providing highly competitive nursing education programs for Titan students.

Now celebrating its 50th year, CSUF offers a range of nursing program options, including a variety of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree paths. And with a strong reputation for local job placement, those looking for a career in nursing will find the support they need at CSUF to achieve their goals.

"We take pride in that most of our students get employed within three months of graduation," said CSUF School of Nursing Director Penny Weismuller. "Our local hospitals, where they have been going to clinical, say they like Cal State Fullerton nurses. And we have traditionally been in that 95% to 100% pass rate on the first take (of the NCLEX nursing licensure exam). Hospitals want to hire our students."

One of the more popular bachelor's degree programs in the School of Nursing is the RN-BSN pathway, a track that is specifically for those students who have completed a nursing associate's degree at a local community college and have already taken and passed the nursing licensure exam. The RN-BSN option partners with local community colleges to provide a streamlined path for students to earn their bachelor's degree without having to repeat any of the curriculum they have already completed.

"It's been shown that as hospitals get a higher percentage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses, patient safety increases," Weismuller said. "American Nursing Association, American Hospital Association, they are looking for hospitals that primarily have those nurses with a baccalaureate."

Titan alumnus Jose Llanas took



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF offers several programs for nursing students at the undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels.

advantage of this pathway, and after completing his associate's degree from Pasadena City College and passing the nursing licensure exam in 2018, he enrolled in CSUF's RN-BSN program. Llanas found a setting that helped him develop in other aspects of nursing beyond the clinical training.

"Nursing is a very unique discipline where the public only sees a nurse as a clinical person," Llanas said. "But Fullerton did such a good job with the students at distinguishing that we are clinical, but we are also scholarly, we are also academic, we are also professional, we are also leaders. For me personally,

in my education, that was the biggest benefit."

The clinical hours that Llanas logged in the RN-BSN program were in public health, a setting that offered him a different perspective on being a nurse.

"It really illustrated to me that not clinically professional aspect of being a nurse where you're running the meetings and you're meeting with patients who are not in a gown attached to an IV pole," Llanas said.

Llanas also saw significant growth in his writing skills, another aspect of the nursing career path he feels is often overlooked.

"Because the core of nursing is so clinical, writing is not something that a lot of us as students pay attention to," Llanas said. "If you're a good, prolific writer, that makes you just that much more strong of a nurse because you're able to communicate much more effectively. Fullerton was able to help me refine my writing and give me a solid foundation."

CSUF will be able to support more students like Llanas as the School of Nursing recently received a \$5 million grant from CalOptima Health that will specifically support the university's RN-BSN pathway. The five-year initiative includes a commitment to increased collaboration with community college partners, as well as the funding of stipends to CSUF nursing students in their last two semesters of study.

"A large portion of our program is to bring these nurses to a more complex level of practice and provide additional skills and ways of looking at their role as a professional nurse," Weismuller said. "We wanted to attract more students and provide them the opportunity to get their baccalaureate more quickly."

Llanas, who is a first-generation college student, graduated from CSUF with his BSN in 2020 and will finish his master's of science in nursing from UCLA next month. All the while, he has worked as an oncology nurse at City of Hope, and he credits his time at CSUF for giving him the skill set to take on new roles at the hospital, including teaching a discharge class for caregivers and patients who receive bone marrow transplants and undertaking a quality improvement program on early discharge for patients admitted for chemotherapy.

"Having direct access to the faculty (at CSUF) and the fact that they spend time with you one-on-one really helped me grow academically," Llanas said. "I have a big sense of pride and confidence in being able to undertake more than direct care nursing. A nurse can be in any setting. They can be in scrubs. They can be in a suit. They can be in a boardroom. They can be in a lab. And I feel like it was Fullerton that showed me that this is possible."

## Empowerment

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and academic advising.

Of the 79 attendees who identified their race, 15 self-reported as Asian, four as Black, 49 as Hispanic/Latinx and five as white.

The visiting students attended several breakout sessions, focusing on topics including career pathways, opportunities within the university's eight colleges, and identity and sense of belonging.

"This is to help our students hopefully come to a conclusion and come to focus on their passions and interests and being able to align their passions and interests," Lu said. "Let's say a student really loves writing. Through these workshops, students hopefully are able to connect that passion to 'maybe I can become an English major or something along those lines.'"

Attendees also learned about on-campus housing, mental health services, study abroad programs, on-campus housing and scholarships.

"Our department works very closely with a lot of the local community colleges," Lu said. "And one of the most prevalent and common things that we saw was that students were, when they get to the community college, a little lost in defining their major."

Attendees could also attend panels and hear from current CSUF students on a variety of topics.

Those included a transfer student panel, a male-of-color employee panel, and an identity and belonging panel.

Knowing transfer students sometimes struggle with a sense of belonging on a university campus, attendees could hear from speakers from the university's Diversity Initiatives Resource Center, a

collective of eight subcenters providing resources and a sense of inclusion for African American, Hispanic, Latinx, LGBTQ and other demographic groups.

After attending the Male Youth Empowerment Conference, current CSUF student Eric Brown, a third-year kinesiology major, felt the need to volunteer for this year's Pathway Conference.

When Brown was going through the angst-producing task of setting up his schedule and picking classes, connecting with other students from the same background made the process more palatable.

"I had people that I could talk to and relate to," Brown said.

The conference provides resources to students early in their academic journey, said Felipe Martinez, director of the Center for Scholars.

"For our young men of color, in particular, they can sometimes have trouble seeking help," Martinez said. "They want to do it all on their own, but they don't have to. We have people here to support them."

The keynote speaker was Adrian H. Huerta, an assistant professor of education in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California.

Huerta, whose research focuses on boys and young men of color, college access and equity, laid out his Five Steps for College Success.

Those include setting a life/college game plan, conferring with an academic advisor, being engaged in your college community, keeping your GPA above 2.5 and developing or refining your balance.

Of the attendees who listed their most meaningful areas of interest at the conference, 22 mentioned major and career exploration, 12 mentioned networking and connecting with peers and seven mentioned the keynote speaker.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The Male Success Initiative offers programs to aid men of color with higher education and employment goals.

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## AWARENESS MONTH

## Mental Health Resource Fair guides students to programs

## Need for help isn't always obvious

By Nicole Gregory,  
contributing writer

For the third consecutive year, Cal State Fullerton coordinated a campus Student Mental Health Resource Fair to kick off Mental Health Awareness Month in May.

Hosted by the Counseling and Psychological Services department along with Partners4Wellness/Connect OC, this year's fair, held April 23, was a success, according to Jacquelyn Gerali, a faculty counselor/prevention education coordinator with the department.

"We received a lot of positive feedback about the variety of low-cost and free resources, doggy therapy, art activities, affirmation wall and yoga," she said. Approximately 500 students were in attendance, according to Gerali, which made it the largest fair so far.

College students suffer from a number of mental health problems. "Some of the most common mental health concerns that we see here at CAPS include anxiety, depression, interpersonal relationship problems, trauma and social anxiety," Gerali said.

Recognizing these problems and getting help is critical for students to be able to function socially and academically.

"Mental health is just as important as physical health," Gerali said. "It is important to provide students with space to know that it is OK to not be OK — this is a part of the experience of being a human being. It is OK to feel pleasant and unpleasant emotions. It is natural and normal to feel a variety of emotions."

But some students won't seek help, believing they can't afford it, an obstacle that Gerali and her colleagues address. "Mental health services oftentimes can be quite expensive, which can be challenging for many students," Gerali said. "Providing students with access to these valuable resources is something we are really passionate about. With intentionally, we identified free or low-cost resources that can best meet the needs of our particular student population."

Another obstacle to getting help is the stigma associated with having mental illness such as depression or anxiety. One purpose of the CAPS program is to remove that stigma by raising awareness about mental health so that students are willing to take steps to stay healthy.

"We like to work on reducing stigma by stepping away from a problem-saturated narrative," said Jessica Leone-Aldrich, a CAPS faculty counselor/prevention education coordinator. "You do not have to have 'issues' with your mental health in order to take care of it."

"We encourage students to engage in mental health practices that are preventative and can help protect against possible development of mental



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

CSUF students pet a therapy dog during a Student Mental Health Resource Fair on April 23 at the central quad in Fullerton.

health conditions. Just like there are many things that we can do to give ourselves a fighting chance against many physical chronic illnesses, there are supportive and protective measures that we can take for our mental well-being as well."

The department provides choices for students who want to manage their mental health.

"Our goal is to offer a variety of different services for our students because each student is unique and not everyone has the same needs," Gerali said.

The Wellness Room, with massage chairs, napping pods, art area and lounge, and yoga is open to students as a place to relax and decompress. Compass.Fullerton.Edu is an online resources navigation tool and Fullerton. Thrivingcampus.Com provides off-campus therapy resources. YOU. Fullerton.Edu is another online wellness platform.

Peer education, drop-in counseling groups, wellness workshops, initial consultation appointments, single-session therapy, short-term counseling, crisis services and a new mobile unit

crisis service are available. Students can join therapy groups and receive wellness coaching, case management and psychiatry services.

College students may not realize that they are suffering from a mental health problem, so education about the tell-tale symptoms is part of the purpose of CAPS.

"Oftentimes, people are not intentionally in denial of the status of their mental health, but rather, they may not know that the reasons why they are struggling with various facets of their life are directly related to their mental health," Leone-Aldrich said.

"A student may be unmotivated, not able to sleep, binge eating, not able to access joy in their hobbies, lacking confidence and isolating from their friends and have no clue that they meet full criteria for major depressive disorder," she said. "Along with that, they may also be missing out on the fact that depression is treatable. Without proper education about mental health, this student may assume that the reason why they struggle is due to some sort of personal flaw instead of depression."

The resource fair cohost,

Partners4Wellness/Connect-OC, works to raise awareness about the importance of mental health for young people throughout the county.

"Connect-OC is a community coalition through Partners4Wellness focused on promoting existing mental health resources to Orange County young adults through education and outreach," Gerali said. "The organization hosts a variety of mental wellness events throughout the county and provides education, presentations and event planning assistance to local colleges and student groups."

## Learn more

Students can find out more about CSUF CAPS services by calling 657-278-3040, following CAPS on Instagram, or visiting the website at [www.fullerton.edu/caps](http://www.fullerton.edu/caps). To learn more about Connect-OC, visit [www.connect-oc.org](http://www.connect-oc.org) and [www.partners4wellness.org](http://www.partners4wellness.org), and for Partners4Wellness visit <https://www.partners4wellness.org/>.

## CAROL BARNES AWARD

## Expert on biology of aging recognized for teaching excellence

CSUF News Media Services

As a Cal State Fullerton undergraduate student, Melanie Garcia struggled with her academic and career path in biology.

Garcia decided to take one last biological science course before giving up.

By chance, Garcia ended up in an introductory genetics course taught by Parvin Shahrestani, associate professor of biological science, who helped her stay on track to graduate with a bachelor's degree in biological science in 2020.

"To say she changed my life is an understatement. Dr. Shahrestani provided a safe space for learning, questions and, most importantly, for open discussions," said Garcia, now a graduate student in biology. "I rediscovered my passion for biology and decided to stay in the program and join her research lab."

Kshama Ekanath Rai, who earned a master's degree in biology in 2019, also praised her former research adviser for fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.

"Dr. Shahrestani has left an indelible mark on my academic and professional development," Rai said. "Her teaching style, mentorship and commitment to excellence have equipped me with the skills and confidence to navigate the challenges of scientific inquiry."

In recognition of her outstanding achievements as an educator, Shahrestani is the recipient of the 2024 Carol Barnes Excellence in Teaching Award.

"Receiving this heartfelt support from students and colleagues is deeply appreciated and underscores the importance of community. It is humbling," said Shahrestani, adding she was moved that her 4-year-old daughter told her she was proud of her.

"Fulfilling my role as a mother to the best of my ability is a driving force behind my commitment to excellence in teaching and mentoring my students."

Melanie Sacco, professor of biological science, who nominated her colleague, shared that Shahrestani "is an outstanding teacher and mentor with



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Associate Professor of Biological Science Parvin Shahrestani, right, is congratulated by CSUF President Sylvia Alva at the April 25 Academic Senate meeting.

a sustained record of transformational student engagement while maintaining academic rigor."

"As I prepared this nomination, I was staggered that someone could accomplish such a diversity of teaching accomplishments of this magnitude. Parvin's energy and multifaceted approaches to education have elevated the biology experience for students."

Since joining the university in 2015, Shahrestani, who holds a doctorate in biology from UC Irvine, consistently receives "outstanding" evaluations from her students. Written comments praise her for her knowledge and drive as an educator and researcher.

She has taught lower-division to graduate-level courses, created the "Evolutionary Genomics and Aging" course and advises University Honors

Program students on research projects.

Sacco said Shahrestani is masterful in creating a gripping lesson that captivates and inspires students to think and actively participate in their education.

"I expect my students to be knowledge seekers and hold themselves accountable for their learning," Shahrestani said. "My role is to serve as a resource for them, helping them develop the skills and tools to learn in my class and beyond."

Beyond the classroom, Shahrestani supports junior colleagues and guides student researchers on the evolution and genomics of aging, immune defense and other health-relevant traits.

Shahrestani, an evolutionary biologist, has advised 155 students in independent research — from high school to graduate students — and co-authored presentations and peer-reviewed

publications with student researchers. Her Evolution and Genomics Research lab uses a model organism called *Drosophila melanogaster*, known as the fruit fly, with which humans share many genes in common.

She also served as the faculty liaison to the Supplemental Instruction program in biological science to ensure all students have the tools to succeed.

"Dr. Shahrestani commands respect through her compassion, empathy and moral compass. Students see her genuine and endearing spirit and flock to her," said biology graduate student Alex Moran '22 (B.S. biological science), a former Supplemental Instruction leader.

To offer transformational experiences, Shahrestani and her students collaborated with art majors to create a children's book, "Tiny Freddy Fruit Fly," based on her research. Another innovative undertaking has been establishing an international collaboration with the Tokyo Metropolitan University School of Biological Sciences' Biology English Program.

Her service activities include building inclusive spaces and a sense of belonging for students and faculty. She leads the department's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, chairs the Academic Senate subcommittee for Diversity and Inclusion and is a member of the University's Commission on Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice.

As an Iranian American, Shahrestani also collaborates on campuswide initiatives to support individuals and movements striving for freedom, equality and justice within the Iranian community.

"This award validates our university's commitment to fostering a learning environment that promotes belonging and healing," she said. "It inspires me to continue to learn my role in our collective work toward multicultural, restorative and just education on our campus."

The Carol Barnes Excellence in Teaching Award honors a faculty member who demonstrates academic rigor in teaching consistent with the mission of the university and California State University.



**EXCELENCIA IN EDUCATION**

# Publication cites 3 programs promoting Latinx success

CSUF News Media Services

Since becoming one of 10 institutions across the U.S. to earn the Seal of Excelencia in 2021, Cal State Fullerton has upheld its commitment to programs that champion Latinx student success.

Excelencia in Education, a national nonprofit organization that promotes Latinx student achievement in higher education, recognized three CSUF programs in its 2024 publication, "Advancing What Works to Intentionally Serve Latino Students: Opportunities for Action."

The publication spotlights programs across the nation that are at the forefront of improving higher educational achievement for Latinx students. CSUF is one of five California State Universities named in the publication for its innovation in bilingual programming, Latina/Latino gender-based programming and college preparation programming.

Excelencia in Education's press release said that the publication "brings national attention to noteworthy efforts increasing Latino student success in higher education to inspire and support educators, community leaders, funders and policymakers to replicate and bring to scale evidence-based practices."

The three CSUF programs recognized are:

## Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis

Launched in 2018, the Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis provides counseling graduate students with high-quality bilingual and bicultural clinical training that prepares them to work with Latinx and Spanish-speaking clients.

The program is built into the master's counseling program, and the course curriculum, offered in English and Spanish, teaches aspiring mental health professionals how to effectively approach a variety of clinical issues, including those related to the Latinx community, such as intergenerational family conflict,

ethnic identity, immigration and intersectionality.

Ánimo's course curriculum also provides students with training that meets the requirements needed to pursue licensure as a professional clinical counselor or marriage and family therapist in California.

In 2023, Excelencia in Education recognized the Ánimo: Latinx Counseling Emphasis as one of 19 Examples of Excelencia Finalists in the nation.

## Mathematics Intensive Summer Session

CSUF's Mathematics Intensive Summer Session, also known as Project MISS, was created in 1990 to address a nationwide shortage of female students, primarily Latinas, going into STEM fields. Project MISS is a summer program that provides middle and high school students with opportunities to attend math courses and develop their skills to prepare for high school and college.

Working with mathematics instructors and collaborating with their peers, students build community, and improve their algebra II and precalculus skills by participating in fun and engaging problem-solving activities.

The program aims to create opportunities for women in STEM and increase the amount of women in the STEM workforce. Since 1990, more than 2,000 students have completed the program.

In 2021, Excelencia in Education named Project MISS as one of 21 Examples of Excelencia Finalists in the nation.

## Center for Educational Partnerships

The Center for Educational Partnerships was recognized for its commitment to practices that expose and equip students to a wide range of college and career pathways. By collaborating with educational and community-based organizations, the center cultivates policies and practices designed to bolster students' advancement and achievements



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Andrea Ramirez Rivera, counseling graduate student

in higher education. Its services encompass academic enrichment, guidance, family involvement, educational support services, and post-secondary exposure and planning.

Each year, the center supports approximately 5,000 students, including those in 6th through 12th grade and CSUF undergraduates.

One of its programs, GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), introduces junior high and high school students from underserved communities to

higher education. Additionally, the Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search programs aim to expand the educational pipeline for students from first-generation, low-income and underrepresented backgrounds.

For CSUF students, the center offers the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, which prepares them for success in doctoral studies by providing them with research experience, graduate school tours, academic advising and professional development opportunities.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

# Experience CSUF welcomes incoming students to campus

CSUF News Media Services

When Alana Vazquez, a senior at Los Alamitos High School, stepped onto the Cal State Fullerton campus for Experience CSUF: Become a Titan, she knew she had chosen the right college.

Each year, Experience CSUF welcomes admitted students and their families to campus to ease the transition to college, learn about university resources, go on bilingual campus tours, attend workshops related to their intended majors, take photos with Tuffy the Titan, and sign the "I accepted" wall. More than 10,000 guests, including 3,156 admitted students, attended this year's Experience CSUF day.

Vazquez, who plans to study biological science, is a recipient of CSUF's President's Scholarship. The merit-based scholarship offers full tuition for four years, an annual book stipend, parking permits each semester, the use of a new laptop, priority registration and more.

An aspiring psychiatrist or oncologist, Vazquez has her sights set on medical school and is confident Cal State Fullerton will help her achieve her goals.

"As I join CSUF, I am most excited to meet new people and the opportunity to conduct stem cell research," she shared. "I am also excited for the individualized attention given by the President's Scholars and University Honors programs, as well as the large Latino population."

New to this year's Experience CSUF were tailored events for students identifying as Native American and Black/African American. The event also featured an organization and club showcase and student performances by Mariachi Titans, FullerTones, Ballet Folklorico de CSUF and the Nigerian Student Association Dance Team.

"At Experience CSUF, I attended the health science/pre-med workshop, where I learned a lot and felt I would be supported in my pursuit of a medical degree," said Vazquez. "Additionally, I learned about the Tau Theta Pi sisterhood and other available programs that made me more excited to become a Titan in the fall."



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

A visitor gets questions answered during Experience CSUF, held on campus to inform new students and their families.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Maliya Taylor runs to rub the toe of the Fallen David statue for good luck.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Provost Amir Dabirian, center, poses with student volunteers.



## BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

## Investment Research Center: Just like Wall Street

## Real-world trading floor is mirrored

By Larry Urish,  
contributing writer

Here's an indication that Titan Capital Management, the rigorous student-investment program within Cal State Fullerton's College of Business and Economics' Finance Department, does more than create successful investment professionals: The program's mantra, prominently displayed on a wall in TCM's classroom, reads, "The Best Return Is Giving Back."

Although financial achievement is important at Titan Capital Management, acting in a giving, team-oriented fashion remains paramount. The mantra underscores every TCM decision, and this character-first mindset has led to successful "returns" far beyond the financial realm. Now, with the addition of Titan Capital Management's new Investment Research Center, TCM students have access to a resource that's modeled after a real-world trading floor.

The name "Jeffrey S. Van Harte" is on the same wall displaying the mantra, and for good reason. A generous gift by Van Harte, a 1980 CSUF graduate, to the CSUF Philanthropic Foundation helped jump-start Titan Capital Management in 2013. Since then, the co-founder and co-chair of Jackson Square Partners has continued to give time, wealth and expertise to TCM, while giving to other CSUF programs.

Although "The Best Return Is Giving Back" isn't his own thought, it speaks to what he and everyone running TCM value most in an investment professional. One element in particular is essential. "TCM students learn about the power of collaboration," Van Harte said. "Instead of acting as individuals, they learn to contribute their talents to the team."

Only top-notch students are accepted into Titan Capital Management. "We're also looking to recruit students who have



PHOTO COURTESY OF TITAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, CSUF  
CSUF alum Steven Wang, from CFA Society Los Angeles, speaks about the Titan Capital Management program's success.

the highest level of character," said Kelly Ko, finance lecturer and TCM Equity director. The 18 students currently in the program manage four portfolios, totaling \$3.5 million: Equity, Fixed Income, Tactical and President's Scholars (the latter supporting one scholarship for a CSUF President's Scholar).

The idea of the new Investment Research Center began with a discussion between Van Harte and Anil Puri, former dean of the College of Business and Economics. "We talked about something related to the real-world financial markets," Van Harte said. "Other universities have (resources) like this, but we didn't — and Fullerton has the second-largest undergraduate business school in the nation."

"We wanted a bigger facility for the

students to work together, plus an attached conference room for separate meetings while students are working," said Shane Kim, finance lecturer and TCM Fixed Income director.

"We're trying to grow the program, and we needed a bigger space dedicated to that," Ko said. "We're also trying to attract companies to hire our students. If they're going to come here to do interviews or see presentations, we need a professional space to do that."

TCM's Investment Research Center includes eight Bloomberg stations — state-of-the-art terminals used by the Wall Street pros that, Ko said, are the "gold standard in the industry" — plus four 75-inch monitors (three in the center's main room and one in the conference room) and a digital scrolling ticker.

Floor-to-ceiling windows provide visibility that TCM had been lacking. The old research room was so anonymous, "I didn't even know what TCM was until Professor Ko reached out to me," said Kyrstin Huxtable, a TCM member and Business Honors student majoring in both accounting and finance. "The new center is a lot more visible to students. ... I've learned more this year than any other year because of TCM."

Feedback about the new center has been stellar. "Students love it," Kim said. "People come by and look in as they pass. It's been very well received."

Ko agreed. "Students, faculty and others associated with the (Business) College think it's an exceptional space that highlights the program," he said. "I've received nothing but positive feedback."

Also receiving positive feedback was Titan Capital Management's impressive performance in this year's local Chartered Financial Analyst Institute Research Challenge. The annual competition includes teams from universities throughout the Los Angeles area that analyzed and reported on the same chosen company. On Feb. 16, not only did TCM win the 2024 competition, it did so for the fifth straight year. In addition, the second-place team was, incredibly, also from TCM.

Huxtable, a member of this year's winning squad, was among the current and former TCM students who talked about the Investment Research Challenge and presented or discussed their award-winning work, at the center's Grand Opening, which took place on April 26.

Rounding out the speakers was Van Harte. He announced a recurring program of \$25,000, to help support TCM, and invited Grand Opening attendees to match his contribution. Van Harte also discussed his favorite mantra, "The Best Return Is Giving Back," and how it remains a touchstone behind everything TCM does.

A few days before the event, Van Harte noted one of the many perks of being involved in Titan Capital Management: "It's fun to be a part of a winning team."

## BEDELL LEADERSHIP AWARD

## Political science professor puts collegiality at the center of his work

CSUF News Media Services

When Stephen Stambough walked into his first Academic Senate meeting at Cal State Fullerton, he looked around the room to find that it was filled with smart, dedicated faculty members who brought unique perspectives to the table.

"Shared governance only works when there is a venue for all voices and not just the most experienced voices, the loudest voices, the familiar voices, or any other single type of voice," said Stambough.

It's this mentality and dedication to inclusivity, academic excellence and community service that earned Stambough the 2024 John W. "Jack" Bedell Leadership in Collegial Governance Award.

"Collegial governance has been the hallmark of Steve's career at CSUF, and it's only fitting that he be nominated for and receive this award," said Matthew Jarvis, associate professor of political science and chair of the Academic Senate.

The award recognizes a faculty member who has gone above and beyond to serve and uplift the Titan community through their work in collegial governance. It is named in honor of John (Jack) Bedell, the late professor of sociology who exemplified campus leadership through his dedicated service and passion for helping others.

Stambough first joined CSUF as an



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES  
Stephen Stambough, professor of political science

assistant professor of political science in 2003. Combining his love for teaching and research, he said his role on campus quickly became "the best job imaginable."

His passion for helping others in academia continued to thrive when he joined the Academic Senate in 2009. Since then, Stambough has served as CSUF's Academic Senate chair and vice chair, and he also served two terms on

the Academic Senate of the California State University system.

Though his time with the university senate has been marked with significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the renegotiation of general education requirements and social justice issues, Stambough championed collaboration, critical thinking and community support, ensuring that faculty, staff and student success were at the forefront of every decision.

"I was really proud at the way we all came together — even on Zoom meetings — to work on these issues together," said Stambough, who oversaw changes to general education requirements in social sciences and helped create policies for the creation of the ethnic studies requirement.

A first-generation student himself, Stambough said every decision he's made throughout his 21-year career has been guided by what is best for students.

Over a decade ago, Stambough realized that the best way to prepare students for careers in government, business, entertainment and other industries was to have them apply their knowledge in the field.

That's how he became the founding director of the Cal State DC Scholars program, which provides students with opportunities to study and intern in the nation's capital. Since 2006, more than 600 students have studied and earned professional experience in Washington,

D.C., and the program has expanded to nine other CSU campuses.

"It never gets old seeing our students in our nation's capital," said Stambough. "Our students prove time and time again that, if given the chance, they can succeed anywhere. Leading this program gave me the honor of seeing that happen. I realize this was only possible due to our tradition of collegiality, collaboration and determination to work together to build things that matter for our students and community."

During his time at CSUF, Stambough has served as chair of the Division of Politics, Administration and Justice, collaborating with faculty to plan the university Town Hall event, develop an OC Fellows program for local internships and service learning, and improve outreach to emeriti and alumni. He also supported students as a faculty adviser for multiple organizations, such as the Political Science Student Association and CSUF College Democrats.

"He is eager to advance the mission of the CSU and higher education to be more just and equitable. He cares about doing the right thing, and seeing the right thing be done. Many people on this campus strive to be more like Steve," said Jason Shepard, chair and professor of communications. "I know Jack Bedell, ever the campus statesman if there was one, is looking down and smiling at Steve being recognized for this award in his name."

## Forecast

FROM PAGE 1

For the first time in history, for example, nonmortgage interest payments, such as payments on credit card debt, were nearly as high as mortgage payments.

In the banking sector, borrowers were granted short-term extensions on their maturity dates, which has given both lenders and borrowers a reprieve since losses would mount were it not for these extensions, the economists reported.

However, the looming maturity wall has grown higher, with about 40% of the debt maturity coming from loans extended in 2023 coming due later in 2024.

## California, Southern California and Orange County

The forecast details an array of troublesome economic trends impacting California, such as a housing crisis, a homeless crisis, budget deficits, tech layoffs and minimal employment growth.

In February, California had the highest unemployment rate in the nation at 5.3%, the report stated.

In Southern California, which includes Orange and Los Angeles counties, economic health has been mixed, according to the forecast.

Orange County has also been on a path of sluggish growth since the middle of 2023.

The county's unemployment rate has ticked up to 4.2% in February, up from 3.4% a year ago.

Raising the minimum wage for large fast-food chains, "will unquestionably" harm large employers, though it is unclear whether small employers will benefit, Puri said.

"Well, somebody had to pay for this," Puri said. "So, the result is that prices of fast food are going up. Now, the Happy Meal may be great for kids, but not for moms, necessarily."

Citing a recent report from the state auditor, California spent \$24 billion in attempts to solve the homeless crisis over the past five years, but the state's homeless population increased to 181,399 people in 2023, up from 151,278 in 2019.

The auditor's report said the state lacks good information on the homeless population and "has not consistently tracked and evaluated the State's efforts to prevent and end homelessness."

"So hopefully, state and local governments will adopt policies that are more effective and more efficient and have a desired impact," Puri said.

CSUF president Silvia Alva, who was among the local dignitaries in attendance, praised the contributions of Farka and Puri.

"The economic research and forecasting that we're doing today will give us valuable information to help us anticipate and make informed decisions about our investments, projects and economic policies," Alva said.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES  
Mira Farka, co-director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting, presents during the forecast.



**TRACK**

# Gates keeps running to better times and doesn't look back

By **Brian Robin**,  
contributing writer

It's one thing to appreciate what Dominic Gates has done on a track in his young collegiate career, one of those careers that necessitates a closer examination to fully appreciate. To fully appreciate the Dominic Gates Experience, it's best to start by quoting from the Book of Gates.

Which means a full dive into a sense of humor that is Sahara Desert-dry in its wit, prisoner-free in its subjects and all-encompassing as a coping mechanism.

Gates on sitting through an accounting class:

"I know the creases of my hands better now. I twiddle my thumbs watching the clock tick by."

Gates on the importance of his beloved Mott's fruit gummies, which he mainlines during track practices and meets:

"In Mott's gummies, we trust. If I find some Mott's gummies, they're getting stuffed into my grubby little mitts."

Gates on where that sense of humor came from and why he embraces it like, well, like a girlfriend.

"That's the best sense of humor, and that's me. My dad and my brothers have that sense of humor, and it rubbed off on me. My girlfriend likes my sense of humor, which is all that matters, honestly."

You grow up with a quick-witted father and two older brothers and you, too, can develop a sense of humor that runs as fast as you do on a track. But you know what else you develop?

A sense of confidence.

"They've always helped me get out of my own head," he said. "When they've seen me battling with bad mental advice, my oldest brother, William, would always tell me something that I live by today—'Just shut up and run.' You can apply that to life because in a race, you never look behind you. You can accept the past, but the finish line is ahead of you."

The finish line is indeed ahead of Gates, who established himself as a versatile cog in the Cal State Fullerton sprint corps, one who can run the 100-meters, the 200-meters, the 400-meters and both the 4-by-100 and 4-by-400 relays. Last year as a freshman, Gates finished fifth in the 100 meters in the Big West Championships, an event won by teammate John Clifford. He won the 400 at the Battle in the OC and the 100 at the Steve Scott Invitational.

But to fully understand not only Gates'



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Dominic Gates' performance was impressive at the Mt. SAC Relays last month in Walnut.

personality but his versatility in Titans' coach Marques Barosso's sprint squad, we go to another event at last year's Big West Championships—the 4-by-400 relay.

The week before the conference championships, Barosso sent Gates out in the 400 at the Titan Tuneup, a prep race for the conference championship. To that point, Gates' best time in what is probably the most difficult event for a runner was 50.31 seconds. He had yet to break 50 seconds.

"I said I was going to run this race like I have every other time in my life and go from there," he said.

The result: a 48.2-second quarter-mile. Gates had shaved more than two seconds off his personal record.

This brought Gates into the picture as an alternate on the Titans' 4-by-400 relay team, a status that — on its face — sounds more impressive than it was. He was the sixth man on a four-man relay team, meaning that two runners would need to either get hurt or get replaced for Gates to find his way on the track.

Figuring this unlikely happening wouldn't happen, Gates ran his 100, earned his fifth-place finish and figured that was a wrap on his freshman year. So he went off foraging for his beloved Mott's gummies — "I was hell-bent on

finding those little suckers. ..." — and a nice, comfortable place to watch the rest of the meet.

Until teammate Carter Birade interrupted Gates mid-forage with some unexpected news.

"He came up to me and said, 'Coach B wants you to run the four-by-four.' I said, 'What? You're joking.' " Gates remembered. "He wasn't joking. I said, 'OK, let's do this.' I went off and found my (relay) teammates: Reyte Rash, Isaiah Emerson and Justin Lowe. They told me, 'We believe in you. We trust you. You've proved yourself on the track. You're capable of this.' "

Gates spent the next hour and 10 minutes practicing handoffs. He'd run the third leg, taking the baton from Emerson and passing it to anchorman Lowe. In between, Gates located his Mott's gummies, which — like spinach for Popeye or long hair for Samson — is his source of power, his security blanket.

"The atmosphere was different. Standing on that line, it was a different atmosphere," he said. "My heart was pounding. It was my time to go out and help the cause out."

Gates, Rash, Emerson and Lowe did just that. They nipped Long Beach State by two-hundredths of a second (3:10.35 to 3:10.37). Of such infinitesimal margins

are bigger goals reached. That gave CSUF 184.5 points — a two-point victory over Long Beach State in the team totals. In turn, that gave the Titans their third consecutive Big West men's track title.

"I was the sixth man, and the fifth man got hurt. It came down to me," he said. "We had a good celebration after that, and it was a morale boost for everyone."

That Gates was even at Fullerton was one of those fluke occurrences that often happens in college recruiting. We've established that Gates possesses a confidence that serves him well in the clutch. It also served him well when it came to finding a college track program.

Gates was a talented high school sprinter at Tesoro High, the team MVP his senior year after he reached the state preliminaries in the 100. He holds the school record in six events: the 100, 4-by-100, 4-by-200, 4-by-400, the Swedish relay and the sprint medley relay. None of which impressed the colleges to which Gates audaciously sent letters or emails.

All this time, Gates had an inside track to Fullerton. Tesoro's girls' cross-country coach Courtney Tebbe is the wife of CSUF distance coach Alex Tebbe. She told Gates he'd fit in nicely at CSUF for more reasons than the two schools share the same mascot — the Titans. Courtney Tebbe sent Gates' info to Barosso with instructions to keep him apprised of his times.

After Gates ran a 10.49-second 100 in a very fast CIF Finals, a 10.64 at the Masters meet and a 10.68 in the state prelims, Barosso sent him a text saying, "That was a pretty big thing, and we're going to get you in here and get you right!"

This year, Gates continues to get right. He lowered his 60-meter time in the indoor season by more than a quarter-second, to 6.75 seconds. He shaved a third-of-a-second off his PR in the 200, to 20.97 seconds. He's run a wind-aided 10.37-second 100 and ran on the Titans' elite-division, sixth-place 4-by-400 relay team at the prestigious Mt. SAC Relays. Their time of 3:07.29 was the second-fastest in program history.

"The ability to accept that I have an ability to do something good, maybe even great, and execute it at a pretty good level has helped me in my running life and my all-around life," he said. "I was always going to run in college. It was just a matter of finding the right place to do it, and it just so happened that Fullerton was the only place to bring me in."

As a result, there will be plenty more chapters in the Book of Gates to appreciate.

**I WANT TO  
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Cal State Fullerton put me on the path to becoming a pediatric doctor. I scored in the 97th percentile on the MCAT and earned a full-ride scholarship to Johns Hopkins University.

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