



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton alum Joshua Gonzalez checks the floor at Mercado Gonzalez in Costa Mesa.

ALUMNI

EDUCATION HELPED TRANSFORM FAMILY BUSINESS INTO A SUPERMARKET DYNASTY

Northgate one of largest Hispanic chains in U.S.

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

As the grandson of the late Miguel González Jiménez, founder of the Northgate Market, Joshua Gonzalez was born into a family that owns one of the largest Hispanic supermarket chains in the nation.

But being born into the family didn't automatically entitle Gonzalez to step right into a management position in a family business that currently operates 43 markets across Southern California, with more than 7,500 employees.

At 16, Gonzalez started by bagging groceries, cleaning, cashiering and performing other ground-floor duties.

"I was just learning the business, learning how to treat customers, which is really the most important thing; how to engage with the people," he said.

Gonzalez then chose to attend the College of Business and Economics at Cal State Fullerton.

Gonzalez graduated from CSUF with a finance degree in 2018 and said he was inspired by his uncle, who was co-president of the Northgate chain when he decided to attend Pepperdine and earn an MBA later in life.

"And I think that really changed the trajectory of our family and how we thought about education, both in our family and in our business, for our people and our communities," Gonzalez said. "And just the encouragement to go to school, to be prepared, to add value to the organization and become better. I think that definitely shines through, and that was kind of my inspiration for going to school."

CSUF administration prides itself on

its designation as a Hispanic-serving institution, offering a variety of resources to first-generation college students.

Two respected magazines covering higher education from a Hispanic perspective ranked CSUF No. 4 in the nation among four-year schools for the total number of bachelor degrees awarded to Latinx students.

"I felt the support, especially from the professors," Gonzalez said. "I think their effort to go above and spend the time (with Latinx students) knowing that the learning curve is so much higher if you don't have your parents or relatives that have been to college before."

Studying finance at CSUF, Gonzalez took advantage of the business school's Center for Family Business, which was launched in 1995 to help family businesses recognize common problems and assist in finding solutions to those issues.

After earning his degree from CSUF, Gonzalez went on to earn a master's

degree in real estate development from University of Southern California.

Gonzalez was then well-prepared to collaborate with the Northgate Market team to develop Mercado Gonzalez, a 7,000-square-foot mercado in Costa Mesa.

Opened in 2023, the company's flagship mercado is both a sprawling market and food court, offering churros, tamales, agua frescas, street tacos and more.

In delivering the commencement address to CSUF business school graduates in 2024, Gonzalez recounted his family's pursuit of the American dream.

After a devastating fire destroyed Miguel Gonzalez's La Elegancia shoe factory and store in Jalostotitlán, Mexico, in the mid-1960s, he emigrated to the U.S.

In 1980, the elder Gonzalez purchased a liquor store in Anaheim and

GONZALEZ » PAGE 5

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Event to feature screening of 'Black Barbie,' research projects

BUSCAR a mentored experience for students

By Nicole Gregory,
contributing writer

On Feb. 6, seven Cal State Fullerton student researchers who are part of the Bolstering Black Undergraduate Student Creative Activities and Research program, or BUSCAR, will present their research projects, explaining their research questions and how they came to their conclusions.

Their presentations are part of a campus Black History Month event that will also include an evening screening of the film "Black Barbie," and talks by CSUF professors and noted psychology experts.

BUSCAR is an acronym, but also a Spanish word meaning to seek, which is the essence of the program, said Terri Patchen, its director. She initiated BUSCAR to increase the number of Black undergraduates participating in research at CSUF. Patchen received funding from a Scott-Jewett grant that enables students and their faculty mentors to receive a stipend for their work. The program began in spring 2024.

None of the students had previous research experience, and each was paired with a mentor who helped them choose a research topic. In some cases, students expanded on research

BUSCAR » PAGE 5



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Assistant professor Amirah Saafir is a Bolstering Black Undergraduate Student Creative Activities and Research mentor.

PROJECT REBOUND

Housing for women will 'open doors' for formerly incarcerated students

Planners hope for fall start

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

While Cal State Fullerton isn't the first campus to launch a Project Rebound program, the university has been among the forerunners in its expansion, becoming a model for Project Rebound programs at the other universities in the CSU system.

Founded on the conviction that education is one of the most powerful mechanisms for transforming lives, Project Rebound was designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals earn college degrees.

After being the first of the 19 Cal State campuses with Project Rebound

REBOUND » PAGE 5

Cal State Fullerton.

performer in the nation for

TOP 10 SOCIAL MOBILITY

U.S. News & World Report's 2025 list of Top Universities Impacting Social Mobility





PHOTO BY BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

Firefighters are positioned at the top of a hill overlooking residential neighborhoods Jan. 19 in Altadena. More than 12,000 structures, many of them homes and businesses, burned in the Palisades and Eaton Fires.

TITAN VOICES

A vision for collective care and a healthier future

As wildfires ravage Southern California, my heart goes out to families who have lost loved ones and beloved communities. My heart also goes out to the first responders and firefighters who are struggling against unpredictable wind patterns and other challenges to keep us safe, even after experiencing devastating losses.



Moigan Sami
public health professor

As we mourn, let us remember that the destruction extends beyond physical structures; disasters shatter our feelings of safety and security, and disrupt the very fabric of our communities that we study and serve through Cal State Fullerton's Department of Public Health and the College of Health and Human Development. The profound grief we experience stems not from the loss of material possessions but from the erosion of shared bonds, collective memories, and the safety of our neighborhoods.

This sorrow underscores a vital truth: Our communities are the anecdote to crises. Our communities must be reimagined beyond physical reconstruction towards communities founded on principles of unity, compassion, and love over material wealth. These intangible assets form the bedrock of resilience and cannot be diminished by disaster. In fact, disaster often compels societies into recognizing the compassionate nature of the human spirit.

Reimagining communities

In the wake of devastation, we have a unique opportunity to reflect collectively and rebuild our communities with intention. What kind of communities do we aspire to rebuild? The fires have laid bare systemic vulnerabilities, inequities, and the perils of valuing possessions over people and our planetary home.

Instead of restoring the status quo, can we envision neighborhoods where connections flourish, children play without fear, and resources are equitably shared? Can we address systemic inequities to address fundamental issues: Ensuring access to healthcare, securing housing, and confronting the escalating threat of climate change?

At Cal State Fullerton, public health students learn to analyze health outcomes of climate change related disasters, such as wildfires. They analyze four levels of prevention, including primordial prevention, and devise resilience plans. An Instructionally Related Activities grant from the university assists us in teaching students about community organizing and understanding the multidimensional histories of our diverse local neighboring cities including Anaheim, Buena Park, Santa Ana, and Westminster. Together, we are working on the foundations that support resiliency. Our graduates are the future that will strengthen our communities.

A framework of health

The cornerstone of our rebuilding efforts may be focused on the three levels of health: Individual, community and planetary. In the short term, this

means providing emergency medical and social services to all those suffering from direct impacts of wildfires. We need financial support to guarantee universal access to healthcare and mental health support for those affected by the fires, regardless of employment or legal status. Survivors require not only physical aid but also emotional support to navigate their trauma.

In the coming months, we will need all sectors to engage in thoughtful, compassionate conversations about rebuilding, financing the post-disaster recovery, ensuring timely insurance and recovery payments while working together to put aside political and identity politics. Now is not the time for political partisanship or shame-blaming communities. Now is the time to come together to chart a path forward, together.

Long-term, we must focus on prevention. Public health principles teach us that addressing the root causes of disease and injury is paramount. Similarly, to mitigate wildfire risks, we must tackle underlying issues: Climate change, unsustainable urban development, and environmental degradation.

Embracing primordial prevention — addressing conditions that give rise to risks — is essential. For California, this means implementing sustainable land management, constructing fire-resistant infrastructure and not building properties in zones at risk of wildfire, flooding, land erosion and other disasters. We need a firm commitment to phasing out fossil fuels and embracing renewable energy sources to combat climate change and the rise of greenhouse gas emissions across our planet.

Commitment to care

Reconstruction must transcend physical structures; it must reflect a dedication to fostering resilient, compassionate and sustainable communities. Imagine neighborhoods with communal green spaces that encourage interaction, homes designed to withstand wildfires away from disaster-prone areas, and emergency systems that ensure equitable access for all residents.

This vision requires a paradigm shift from valuing possessions and individual wealth to valuing relationships, from short-term fixes to long-term solutions, and from individualism to collective well-being. We must shift from blaming individuals for their losses to taking systems to account for the harms against our planet and our health.

Moving forward

The grief we are collectively experiencing is a testament to our deep connections, to one another and our communities. These are the foundations upon which we must rebuild.

As we get ready to rebuild, let us honor our losses by cultivating communities where no one faces adversity alone, where collective care and compassion are paramount, and where our health and our planet's health are valued as

the greatest assets. In this reimagined future, the ashes of these fires may become the fertile ground for a new world.

Moigan Sami, assistant professor of public health at Cal State Fullerton, is co-chair of the Global Working Group

on Planetary Health at the International Union of Health Promotion and Education. She teaches classes on community health, global health and climate change and conducts research on systems and their impact on collective health and well-being.

I WANT TO ADVOCATE FOR STUDENT VETERANS

At Cal State Fullerton, I embraced my experience as a former Marine, worked toward my degree in business administration and found my calling as an advocate for the veteran community.

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

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

EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE

Zhang passes his 'can-do' attitude to the next generation

Pick Up Stix founder gives back to CSUF, OC

By Jenelyn Russo,
contributing writer

Entrepreneur, philanthropist and longtime Cal State Fullerton supporter Charlie Zhang was inducted into the Orange County Hall of Fame's Class of 2024 last month. The founder of Pick Up Stix is committed to uplifting the next generation and has made extensive contributions to local arts and education communities, including more than a decade of support to CSUF.

Zhang's path to achieving the American dream is at the core of how he pays it forward. A native of Shanghai, China, and one of nine children, he arrived in Los Angeles in 1980 at the age of 24, speaking no English and carrying only his clarinet and \$20 in his pocket. He had accepted a scholarship at a local music school, but when the money ran out, he was forced to leave his dream of becoming a musician and find employment.

Zhang landed a job as a busboy at a local Chinese restaurant, and not long after he was hired, he was involved in a kitchen accident that damaged the tendons in one of his fingers. He knew then that his musical aspirations were likely over, so he focused on the opportunity in front of him.

"I put my head down and worked hard with a can-do attitude to be the best dishwasher, the best busboy," Zhang said. "I learned all the skills that were in a restaurant job — the kitchen skill set, then the dining room, waiting tables."

Over the next two years, Zhang put his strong work ethic into practice. In 1984, with \$7,200 in savings, he opened his first restaurant, Shanghai Charlie's, in San Juan Capistrano, and in the late 1980s he founded Pick Up Stix, a fast-casual Asian food chain that grew to more than 140 locations. In 2001, he sold the brand to the parent company of TGI Friday's and found continued success in other pursuits, including real estate and manufacturing.

With a heart for giving back, Zhang began philanthropic efforts in support of the next generation of students chasing the American dream. His involvement at CSUF began about 10 years ago when he was invited to campus to speak to students in the College of Business and



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Pick Up Stix founder and longtime CSUF supporter Charlie Zhang

Economics, and he quickly saw himself in the student body.

"What attracted me the most was the first-generation graduates," said Zhang of CSUF. "I was inspired by their potential."

Zhang is currently a member of the board of directors for CSUF's Giles-O'Malley Center for Leadership and has played a pivotal role in supporting the Landmark Hall project, a 20,000-square-foot facility designed to become a central hub for leadership studies in Orange County. Additionally, he serves as a mentor through the college's Executive in Residence program.

At CSUF's 2023 commencement ceremonies, Zhang was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of his contributions to the university and his dedication to education and the arts.

"Charlie Zhang's extraordinary generosity and unwavering commitment to our community are a true inspiration," said Sridhar Sundaram, dean of CSUF's College of Business and Economics. "Charlie's passion for empowering others and his dedication to fostering education

and leadership resonate deeply with our mission to prepare future business leaders who will drive positive change in our community. His support for our college underscores the transformative impact of philanthropy, and we are honored to be part of his incredible legacy. Charlie exemplifies the values we strive to instill in our students — excellence, resilience and a commitment to making a difference."

Zhang's philanthropic reach extends far beyond CSUF, as he has also supported other educational institutions in Orange County, including Chapman University, Concordia University and UC Irvine. Although he didn't complete his music degree, his passion for music remains and is reflected through his service on the board of directors for Pacific Symphony and in the founding of OC Music & Dance. The nonprofit community performing arts school will open an 82,000-square-foot facility at Great Park in Irvine in 2027.

"It's my dream," Zhang said. "We want to train and raise disciplined, hardworking, musically talented young students."

Residents of Laguna Niguel since 1987, Zhang and his wife of 40 years, Ling,

enjoy their two children and two grandchildren. His induction into the Orange County Hall of Fame puts Zhang among other OC names who have made a lasting impact, including Carl's Jr. founder Carl Karcher, Wahoo's Fish Tacos founders Wing Lam and the Lee family, and the 37th president of the United States, Richard Nixon.

But Zhang doesn't enjoy the spotlight. Instead of focusing on his list of accomplishments, he says he would rather use his energy to help others achieve their dreams. So he will continue to model for young business students and musicians alike what a "can-do attitude" looks like and what is possible when determination meets opportunity.

"I want to pass on the philosophy and culture to the next generation so they can catch the baton, run the race and be the champion," Zhang said. "Keep working hard, keep striving, stay hungry, seeking success. We all will achieve the American dream together."

OPEN 25 YEARS

How Grand Central Art Center helped an alum land a role in 'Les Misérables'

CSUF News Media Services

The moving melodies and commanding choreography of the Broadway musical "Les Misérables" have been intricately woven into Julie Cardia's life since she was 12 years old.

"That show has been a part of my DNA ever since I saw it and heard the music for the first time," said Cardia.

With a Cal State Fullerton education, Cardia transformed her love for "Les Misérables" into a career. The CSUF theater arts alum, who lived at Grand Central Art Center as a graduate student, is now performing with the national touring company for the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical.

She first joined the cast in 2017 for the national revival tour, during which she stepped in to play characters such as Madame Thénardier and a wigmaker. On the current national tour through 2025, Cardia takes the stage as part of the swing ensemble.

"There's a saying when you're in 'Les Misérables' — You never leave the barricade. It represents commitment and standing with one's community. In my experience, that has definitely been true. Artistically, it has been so fulfilling, and I've met some lifelong friends," said Cardia, who earned a master's degree in theater arts -acting in 2014.

In addition to taking the stage with the cast of "Les Misérables," Cardia has landed several iconic roles in theater. She played Stephen Hopkins on the first national tour of the Broadway revival of "1776" and was part of the original cast for Disneyland Resort's "Frozen: The Musical."

She credits CSUF's College of the Arts for preparing her to succeed in a competitive entertainment industry. She said that the combination of hands-on stage training, network of experienced theatre faculty and arts community at CSUF played an instrumental role in helping her turn her love for performance into a prolific acting career.

"Cal State Fullerton has had a lasting impact on my career and the great opportunities I've been able to have," said Cardia.

Artists' village

As a graduate student, Cardia lived at the university's Grand Central Art Center in downtown Santa Ana. She said her favorite part of the experience was that she was only a floor away from the center's Black Box Theatre.

It was in that theater that Cardia starred in the original play, "Replica." While living at the center and working on the show, she had the opportunity to collaborate with part-time faculty member and professional director Kari

Hayter, who earned a master's degree in theater arts-directing in 2011 at CSUF and who has directed shows for such organizations as South Coast Repertory, International City Theatre and Valley Performing Arts Center.

"My partner Mickey Fisher wrote 'Replica' for my twin sister and me, and we starred in it for the first time at Grand Central Art Center. It went on to be produced at Stages Theatre in Houston, Texas, but the original production was possible because of Cal State Fullerton," said Cardia.

For 25 years, Grand Central Art Center has empowered student artists to channel their creativity and land dream jobs in the industry. The community features several exhibition spaces, a theater, a shop, a restaurant, a cooking school and 27 apartments that are reserved for CSUF graduate students like Cardia.

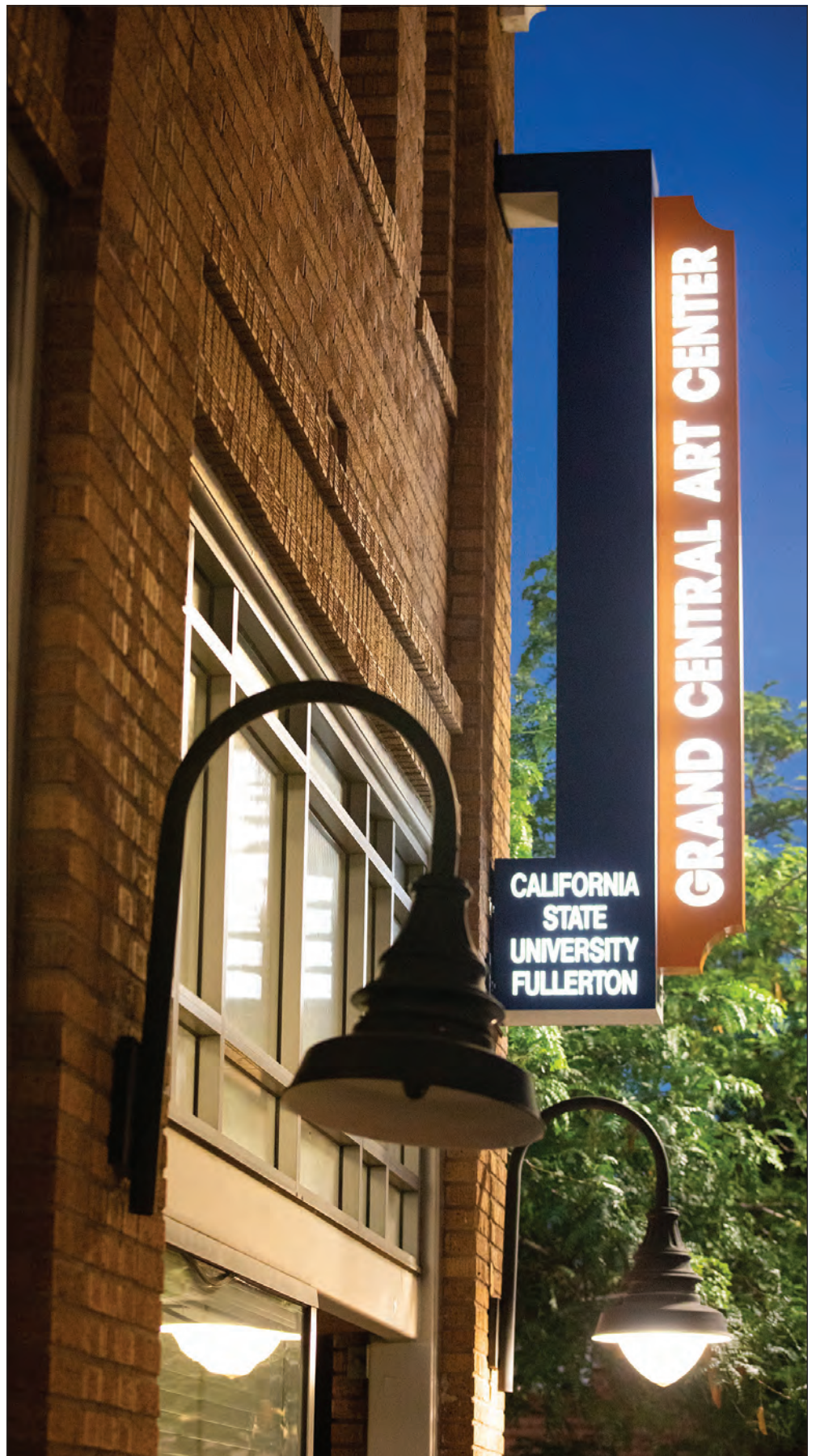
Unlike other galleries across the United States, Grand Central Art Center has a unique structure, housing model and connection to the local community.

"Grand Central has grown into an anchoring institution for arts in Orange County," said John Spiak, director and chief curator of Grand Central Art Center. "It's where professional artists, students and faculty come together to create a synergy of a collective of arts that are building an even stronger community."

Since it was officially dedicated in the late 1990s, the center has celebrated several milestones, including being awarded three \$100,000 grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for its innovation in programming that merges artistry with community.

This funding supports the center's accomplished artist-in-residence program, which invites professional artists to the center to create and exhibit original pieces. Looking ahead to 2025, Spiak said that the center will be expanding the program to include more professional artists that students can collaborate with and learn from.

"We're not only supporting the students that live and have studio spaces on site, but we're also supporting economic development in the city, and fostering a strong connection with the local community through the projects and visiting artists that we host," said Spiak.



Grand Central Art Center in downtown Santa Ana

PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

NEW MAJOR

Urban learning prepares undergrads to become social justice educators

CSUF News Media Services

Urban learning major Sage Giambone's parents are Orange County public school teachers who inspired her to follow in their footsteps and enter the teaching profession.

Nikki Wu's elementary school teachers, who were patient and made her feel valued, sparked her career choice to become an early childhood educator.

To prepare for their future teaching careers, the Cal State Fullerton students enrolled in the university's new urban learning bachelor's degree program, which started in the fall. The College of Education's first undergraduate degree program has 28 first-time, first-year students.

"I chose CSUF's urban learning program because it gives us a better understanding of what it means to be teachers who treat all of their students with equality," said Giambone, who aspires to teach elementary-age children or middle school English like her mother, a CSUF alum.

Wu decided to enroll at CSUF because of the program's focus on social justice and equity in schools and communities.

"I hope this program helps me become a teacher that supports students not just academically but also how to foster an inclusive classroom environment," said Wu, the first in her family to attend college.

The degree program prepares future educators and community leaders who are passionate about creating inclusive and empowering learning environments for all students in urban schools and communities, said Calli Lewis Chiu, associate professor of special education and director of the urban learning program.

Lewis Chiu said that the urban learning major is rooted in social justice and equips students with critical thinking skills to analyze systemic inequities in education and the tools to challenge them.

"We're developing future educators who can advocate for marginalized communities, dismantle barriers to learning and create inclusive and equitable learning environments where all students thrive," she said.

The program offers interdisciplinary



PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSE ANDREW VILLAMIL

Students Bianca Juan, left, Alexa Gomez and Sage Giambone are enrolled in Cal State Fullerton's new urban learning major, the first bachelor's degree program in the College of Education.

coursework, including courses such as Structural and Institutional Bias in Schools and Literacy Education for Social Change, which give students a real-world understanding of the challenges and promises of education. The course Translanguaging Across Identities in Schools focuses on practical strategies to create supportive learning environments.

Other classes in queer studies and institutional bias in schools offer students a strong foundation in understanding how systemic inequities shape education, Lewis Chiu said.

The program is a cohort model — meaning students take courses with the same group of peers — to facilitate bonds and a sense of belonging and community. Students also participate in cocurricular activities such as research and study abroad opportunities.

Giambone and Wu are part of the urban learning program's Student Ambassador Team, which allows students to develop leadership skills and build connections with program peers and faculty. To further plan for the teaching workforce, they are also involved in Titan Future Teachers, which offers community building and academic and professional development.

What attracted Giambone and Wu to the urban learning program is the pathway and preparation it provides to obtain a teaching credential and land a teaching position.

Following earning their bachelor's degree, students enter the university's one-year credential program prepared to implement innovative teaching strategies and contribute to positive social change.

The future educators credit Lewis Chiu and Melissa Baez, urban learning academic adviser, for guiding them

through a successful first semester. Baez regularly checks in with students to ensure their well-being and that they stay on track with their educational goals.

"Dr. Lewis Chiu provides us with guidance and important tools that we can use to incorporate into our everyday teaching," Giambone said. "Melissa has given me helpful information and resources to ensure my academic success."

Lewis Chiu added that the new program is helping address California's growing teacher shortage and need for educators who support diverse students.

"Ultimately, the goal of this major is to empower students to become agents of change and contribute to a more equitable future for students," she said.

RESOURCES

'I Am First' program paves career path for first-gen student

CSUF News Media Services

Cal State Fullerton graduate student Lizeth Fuentes credits the "I Am First" program for helping her embrace her first-gen experience and putting her on the path to a master's degree in social work.

"The 'I Am First' program allows first-generation students to see ourselves in professional spaces we may find unreachable when we're starting out in our education," said Fuentes, who graduated in 2024 with a bachelor's degree in human services.

Launched in spring 2020 by the CSUF Career Center, the "I Am First" program helps first-generation college students achieve academic and career success by focusing on such areas as social capital, leadership skills and professional networking. The program hosts such events as alumni panels, career expos and speed networking sessions. Students are also paired with alumni mentors who provide valuable insights into how to launch careers in competitive industries.

"The comprehensive nine-week initiative is designed to empower first-generation students at CSUF in pursuing their career aspirations while fostering a sense of community among their peers," said Stephanie Reyes, senior associate director of the Career Center. "Our goal is for students to complete the program with increased self-confidence and access to tangible resources and tools that will help them expand their professional networks and continue developing their career-related skills."

Since its inception, the "I Am First" program has supported 486 first-gen students and awarded approximately \$56,000 in scholarships. In 2023, the National Association of Colleges and Employers recognized the program with a Career Excellence Award for its innovative approach to career development. The program also garnered the 2024 Region VI Innovative Program Award from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators for its dedicated service to students.

Career connections

For Fuentes, the "I Am First" program played an instrumental role in paving the way for a career in health care.

Reyes recognized Fuentes' passion for helping others and encouraged her to apply to the micro-internship program, which provides students with opportunities to execute professional assignments for top companies and build a strong skill set suited to their career interests.

"Before the program, I thought an undergrad degree would be enough for me, but participating in the Kaiser micro-internship through the CEO Leadership Alliance Orange County made me realize that I wanted to dream bigger," said Fuentes.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Lizeth Fuentes, CSUF grad student

Throughout the internship, Fuentes collaborated with Kaiser Permanente leaders to address real-world issues in the health care industry.

"I found myself in professional spaces where my voice mattered, surrounded by professionals and leaders who valued our experiences and wanted to see first-gen students make an impact in our fields," said Fuentes.

Inspired by this experience, Fuentes plans to earn her master's degree in social work, become a licensed clinical social worker and return to higher education as a professor or lecturer, where she can empower future first-gen students like herself.

"My undergraduate degree and all other degrees I garner in the future set a new precedent for my family and allow future generations to see higher education within reach and hopefully as an expectation down the line," she said. "I also aspire to serve as a role model and mentor to my two boys, Gerardo and Gael, in their academic journeys."

Balancing her roles as a mother, wife and daughter, Fuentes has also found strength in the empathy and encouragement she receives from the CSUF community. She said that connecting with fellow first-gen students through the "I Am First" program has been transformational.

"The relationships and support systems I've built are invaluable," she said. "This program taught me that I should always bring my whole self to college. I am welcomed and understood as a nontraditional student."



CSUF grad student Lizeth Fuentes, second from left, with other interns that participated in the Kaiser micro-internship through the CEO Leadership Alliance Orange County

Gonzalez

FROM PAGE 1

transformed the 2,000-square-foot space into a neighborhood market.

Of Miguel Gonzalez's 53 grandchildren, 32 work in the family business.

Joshua Gonzalez continues to support CSUF students and the greater community.

He is a member of the Dean's Advisory Board for the College of Business and Economics and is involved with the Alumni Association.

Northgate's Gonzalez-Reynoso Foundation supports associates and communities to pursue education through annual scholarships.

In 2024, the foundation granted more than \$250,000 in scholarships.

Through its umbrella program, Viva la Salud, Northgate Market addresses food insecurities and health and wellness challenges across Southern California.

Through donations and sponsorships, Viva la Salud has given more than \$1 million to schools, churches, nonprofits and other programs and provided about \$450,000 in food distributions, holiday food vouchers and other initiatives during the holiday season.

At Northgate Market's 2024 Years of Service Anniversary Celebration held recently, some of the company's long-time employees said that the family-owned chain makes them feel like part of the family.

"All of us here are a clear example that we are happy and comfortable," said Cesar Perez, a 25-year employee. "It is really thanks to them because they see us as family."

Jose Roman Salgado, a 35-year employee, said the owners are "very kind and thoughtful with us."

"That is what has kept me here," Salgado said. "We as employees are more motivated to work, and we take care of each other."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Mercado Gonzalez on Harbor Boulevard in Costa Mesa is the latest Northgate Market to open in Southern California.

BUSCAR

FROM PAGE 1

that their mentors had already begun.

"BUSCAR is really about a mentored research experience," Patchen said, adding that it is the only campus program that specifically focuses on Black women. "All of the faculty mentors are Black, and all the students identify as Black — and all the students that applied happen to identify as women," she said.

"It's a phenomenal program that gives Black students the chance to engage in meaningful research on topics they're passionate about," said Amirah Saafir, assistant professor in the Department of Child and Adolescent Studies, who is a BUSCAR mentor and is coordinating the Feb. 6 event. "Our BUSCAR mentees have done everything from conceptualizing projects to presenting their research at national conferences, which is huge for their academic and professional growth."

Students Leilani Rains and Trinity Jack partnered on a research project called "Pynk & Curly: Centering Narratives of Black Queer Femmes in the Contemporary Natural Hair Movement."

Their research explored the natural hair movement which began on social media in 2000, when Black women started deciding to stop using chemical hair relaxers. Rains and Jack researched the subject by reading articles and books and then interviewing women about their feelings about their hair. Their faculty mentor is Kristin D. Rowe.

Their research found that "The natural hair movement has opened up more spaces of haircare and styling across sexuality and gender expression," among other conclusions.

Rains said her experience with the BUSCAR program has been positive. "I want to become a physician, and doing this research is allowing me to build my resume with something I'm passionate about. I think the program is good for students — it allows them to gain more professional experience and gives them more confidence to speak with people."

Another BUSCAR student, Sumiyah Etchison, who is majoring in communications with a concentration in journalism, said, "I liked the hands-on experience of research, learning how to read the history, then reporting and meeting the deadline," she said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Jade Coombs is a psychology student and BUSCAR mentee at Cal State Fullerton.

"I'm really enjoying this program," she said. "It's helped me in terms of discipline."

Etchison also appreciated having access to her faculty mentor, Shanara Reid-Brinkley, for guidance.

Etchison's research project, entitled "The Effects of the Oversexualization of Black Women in Black Media," focused on representations of Black women in rap music videos and how these representations affect Black women and girls.

Patchen is proud of the BUSCAR students and how well they've presented their research at conferences. "They're wonderful students," she said. "To turn the lens on students who haven't been apprenticed into research — that is what's super exciting and super motivating. I think the BUSCAR program really shows how far we can go if we just pay attention to students who haven't received that kind of attention in the past."

Saafir, the assistant professor, is excited about the upcoming event. "The 'Black Barbie' documentary is such a powerful commentary on how representation impacts identity development and psychosocial well-being, especially for Black women and girls," she said. "We saw this event as an opportunity to not just celebrate the documentary but also shine a light on the amazing work happening at CSUF. Our students and faculty are doing incredible research to better understand and support Black families and communities of color, and we wanted to create a space to highlight that."

"This feels especially important because Black students and faculty are underrepresented at CSUF, which means opportunities to showcase work centering on Black experiences can be limited," she said. "Events like this are a way to fill that gap and make sure those voices and perspectives are seen, heard and celebrated."

RESEARCH DAY

Black Barbie: Film Screening & Research Day
DATE: Thursday, Feb. 6
LOCATION: Titan Student Union Pavilions
TIME: Afternoon Research & Resource Day 1-3 p.m. Evening Film Screening & Panel Discussion 6-9 p.m.
 Free and open to the public
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Rebound

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programs to offer housing for formerly incarcerated men, CSUF's Project Rebound is now in the process of establishing housing for formerly incarcerated women.

A \$500,000 county grant has made this possible.

"Women, oftentimes, are just left out of the conversations when we're talking about what the needs for returning citizens are," said J.C. Cavitt, executive director of Project Rebound at CSUF and former Project Rebound scholar. "We want to make sure that we do acknowledge that women do have needs when it comes to housing, and some of their needs look a lot different than the men when they return home, and so we're trying to close that equity gap there."

The grant is coming from Fourth District Supervisor Doug Chaffee's discretionary fund and was approved Dec. 3 by the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

Chaffee expressed support for Project Rebound, adding that two interns who worked in his district office went through the program.

"Cal State Fullerton's Project Rebound has transformed many lives of formerly incarcerated people in obtaining a higher education and decreasing recidivism in Orange County," Chaffee said in a statement.

Cavitt and his staff are actively looking to purchase a house about 2.5 miles from campus and hope to begin offering housing for women in the fall.

"Having a safe place for a returning female to lay her head is critical in them being successful not only with the reentry, with college, but actually being a productive member of society, so the long-term goal is building their life," the executive director said.

Currently, women entering Project Rebound in need of housing are referred

to outside facilities, Cavitt said.

Others travel from great distances, and some have even slept in their cars, said Project Rebound program assistant Nicole Chafey, who is also a former Project Rebound scholar — the name given to students in the program — and CSUF graduate.

"I was lucky enough to be able to rent out an apartment," Chafey said. "I had a one-bedroom apartment with my son. There's always a big waiting list when it comes to the men's house. There's definitely not enough beds to meet the needs. And so, I feel like with us having a women's house, I think it's just the right thing to do. And I think it's just going to open doors for a lot more women that really didn't have a safe space to focus on their education."

Cavitt hopes to accommodate from six to nine women in the new house.

In 2018, CSUF's Project Rebound opened the John Irwin Memorial House, named in honor of John Irwin, who founded Project Rebound in 1967 at San Francisco State University.

While serving a five-year sentence for robbery at Soledad Prison, Irwin took college courses and earned a doctorate at UC Berkeley after his release.

"Recognizing how effective and the impact of what the John Irwin House has done for students, I want to make sure that that same opportunity is there for our female students, as well," Cavitt said.

Chaffey, who spent several years in and out of the criminal justice system, was already in the process of turning her life around and was attending CSUF, unaware of Project Rebound.

"I was on campus, feeling very, very much like a fish out of water," said Chaffey, who was 30 at the time. "I did not feel like I belonged. It was just really a big challenge for me. And then when I heard about Project Rebound being on campus, I couldn't believe it. There's other people here who are like me. I eventually found my sense of belonging on campus where I could walk around and think, yeah, this is my school, too."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
J.C. Cavitt, executive director of Project Rebound at CSUF, is a former Project Rebound scholar.

So, it was definitely life-changing for me."

Chaffey earned a bachelor's degree in human services and just started her final semester of

graduate school, where she is earning a Master of Social Work degree.

In May, CSUF graduated 35 Project Rebound scholars, the most since the program began on the campus in 2016.

SPORTS

Golfer Davina Xanh finds a home away from home at CSUF

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

At first glance, the fact that Davina Xanh is currently rewriting the Cal State Fullerton women's golf record book makes no sense. A cursory glance at Xanh's background, her upbringing in a small, coastal English town best known for giving Monty Python funnyman John Cleese to the world, leaves no breadcrumbs leading her to Southern California.

The whole scenario sounds as improbable as one of Cleese's iconic skits. Yes, it's not uncommon for international players to find their way to the United States. And yes, CSUF has grabbed its share of them. The current women's golf team roster includes players from England, Austria and Denmark.

And one thing CSUF women's coach Kathryn Hosch realized very early in her coaching career is, when it comes to finding players, you do not leave stones unturned. Even if those stones exist in unlikely places — like the southwest coast of England.

This is why Xanh's odyssey to Fullerton — and what she's done once she arrived — comes with the can-you-believe-it aura that sounds like it came from the fertile audacity of Monty Python.

How does someone from Weston-super-Mare, the aforementioned town of 82,418, find her way to Orange County, then find herself as the Big West Golfer of the Year as a sophomore? And how does this happen in the throes of COVID?

Hosch, herself, still has a hard time wrapping her head around it.

It was the late summer of 2021 when an agent reached out to Hosch about this English player who had just de-committed from Kansas State. These agents, people who link international players with American universities, are common, and Hosch has netted several players in such a fashion.

"At first, I was reluctant to recruit her. I knew she was a talented player, but situations like hers often raise red flags," she said. "After some procrastination, I decided to set up a Zoom call with her and my assistant coach at the time, Margo Dionisio. We probably had three or four calls, and after each one, I remember telling Margo, 'I don't think she's interested.' She didn't show much excitement or enthusiasm.

"Little did I know, Davina was just being a typical Brit. I still tease her about it because she rarely shows outward excitement — like fist-pumping after making a big putt on the course. When we finally had the Zoom call where she said she



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton sophomore Davina Xanh

wanted to commit, I was shocked. Her excitement level seemed to go from a 0 to a 2."

Xanh's measured reserve is still there. She answers questions in a thoughtful, deliberate manner. But the excitement she's displaying on the course is anything but.

Xanh picked up in the fall where she left off in the spring, earning back-to-back Big West Golfer of the Month honors — her fourth career monthly honor. She began October finishing second in the Pat Lesser-Harbottle Invitational in Tacoma, Wash., leading the Titans to the team title. Along with her 6-under-par 201, Xanh secured her 13th consecutive top 10 finish and eighth consecutive top-five.

Two weeks later, Xanh finished 13th in the difficult Stanford Invitational, bookending a second-round 75 with twin 68s. This followed a T3 finish in the fall season's opener, the Branch Law Firm/Dick McGuire Classic in Albuquerque, N.M., and a solo third in the Ptarmigan Ram Classic two weeks later in Fort Collins, Colo.

There were plenty of breadcrumbs that Xanh's breakout sophomore

campaign foreshadowed the beginning of her junior season — a consistency that Hosch said has yet to be matched in program history. Xanh finished in the top 10 in all 10 CSUF tournaments last spring and her 13 consecutive top 10 finishes in college events and 17 overall (including summer events) is a program record. So is her scoring average of 71.43, which broke Martina Edberg's record by less than a half-stroke.

Xanh's metronomic consistency, born of a technically sound tee-to-green game that Xanh knows so well that she can diagnose any issues on the range after a round, does come with its own frustration. That victory in Washington is the only one she has to show for those 17 top 10 finishes, and Hosch said that for all Xanh's reserve and savant-level course management, patience can be an issue.

Xanh won't argue the point. When she was growing up in Weston-super-Mare, Xanh loved the competitive aspect of the game. What she didn't love was the cruel byproduct that comes with that competitive aspect of a game that defies perfection. She would practice and grind on the course and the range. And yet, the results didn't correspond to

the hard work.

Her goal was to make the English National Girls Team. Xanh was grinding away in tournaments, getting close, but not grabbing that signature victory that would do more than put her on the radar of coaches scouting for talent.

"I always had this issue where I translate what I work on and practice into a competitive situation," she said. "I didn't have very high confidence in myself until I could see the results. I wouldn't perform to my standard, how I could perform at tournaments. I was struggling on the golf course, and I was in a rut with my progression."

The rut ended in 2020 at Sandy Lodge in Hertfordshire, England. Xanh found herself in a sudden-death playoff with Abbi Rowlands for the English Girls' Amateur Stroke Play Championship. The pair were tied through 36 holes when rain washed out the last two rounds and mandated a playoff, which Xanh won by draining a 20-foot birdie putt on the first extra hole.

"That's the most nervous I ever felt in my whole career in golf," she said. "When I played that tournament, there was a lot of pressure on me because I was tied for the lead before they called off the rest of the tournament."

Shortly thereafter, Xanh was named to the England Girls U18 National Team, which — along with the prestige of playing for her country — brought Xanh another byproduct. She started working with sports psychologist Rosie Collins, which helped Xanh handle her penchant for blaming herself for the bad parts of her game and not giving herself credit for the good parts. Which by this time, were considerable.

And getting more considerable. The victory unlocked something in Xanh, springing her game to heretofore unseen levels. That's what eventually put her on Hosch's radar. More work with the Titans' mental coach Neale Smith has Xanh concentrating on the present and focused on finishing strong.

"I had never been to America before, and it was like a bucket-list place for me, regardless if it was for golf," she said. "When I came out here, I really got along with everyone. I liked the facilities, and I really liked coach Hosch. Plus, the weather was everything I wanted."

"It took a little time to get used to the conditions and the heat on the courses. I played links golf back home, where everything is different. That took a little bit to get used to. One thing I didn't realize is that we'd have to play 36 holes in one go without stopping. I'd have to be up at 5 in the morning. But you get used to it in the season ... I can be a morning person, but I think 5 is a little too early."

Xanh is nothing if not adaptable. When you think about it, that makes the breadcrumbs leading her from southwest England to Orange County easy to digest.

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