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Sharon Don, CSUF communications alumna, actress and professional YouTuber, addresses the International Women's Day Conference.

CONFERENCE

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO BUILD A 'BOLD PERSONAL BRAND'

Keynote speaker Sharon Don says fear of missing out was driving force

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

The Women's Leadership Program at Cal State Fullerton was created to address the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions while creating initiatives to help women break through those barriers.

Two years ago, the Women's Leadership Program organized the first-ever International Women's Day Conference as a platform for career development and empowerment.

The conference is always held on or

around International Women's Day, which this year was March 8.

The theme for the second conference, held on March 7, at the Titan Student Union, was titled "Unstoppable You: Building a Bold Personal Brand."

Sharing her personal experiences with brand building was CSUF communications alumna Sharon Don, a Screen Actors Guild actress and producer, and a professional YouTuber.

As the keynote speaker, Don delivered an insightful speech, focusing on excelling in today's competitive marketplace, making the most of opportunities, leveraging social media, expanding skill sets and maintaining

brand flexibility.

"It's about balancing yes with boundaries to find that middle ground," Don said. "It's basically about embracing possibilities, even when they're outside your comfort zone. So, when you say yes, you challenge your self-doubt and allow yourself to explore what you're truly capable of."

Don used the acronym FOMO — fear of missing out — and how FOMO drove her to try new things.

"FOMO encouraged me to try something new," she said. "For me, FOMO was the driving force."

Don said she leveraged social media to create opportunities.

A prime example was her journey as a YouTuber, starting with her involvement in Jubilee Media's ASMR-themed episode.

"I wasn't planning to be a YouTuber," she said. "I will tell you that."

Her success as a YouTuber led to media opportunities and collaborations with other creators and sponsorships.

Don also discussed the value of personal interests, hobbies and passions.

For example, Don's passion for Comic-Con helped her land a job, she said.

"Your personal passions are part of your brand," Don said. "Diversifying your skills broadens your opportunity, connects you with your community, and ultimately is fun."

Awards

Lori Muse, the director of the Women's Leadership Program, and Sridhar Sundaram, dean of the College of Business and Economics, presented awards to JoAnna Moore, Founder of J. Moore Consulting Services, and Goli Sadri, professor of management at CSUF and director of the program from 2015 to 2023.

WOMEN » PAGE 5

EVENT SPACE

New terrace at Arboretum heralds spring season of activities

Covered patio designed for celebrations, meetings, classes

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

A ribbon-cutting ceremony held on the sunny afternoon of March 20 celebrated the Friends Terrace, a space overlooking a bucolic landscape of trees and flowers in the Fullerton Arboretum and Botanical Garden that provides a unique new venue for special events. Campus leaders praised the terrace and how it came to be.

Cal State Fullerton president Ronald S. Rochon pointed out that the design and building of the new terrace was supported solely through funds from donors.

Friends Terrace is named after the Friends of the Arboretum, a support group that has raised funds for more

than 50 years, said Greg Pongetti, the Living Collections Curator for the garden.

Designed by the Claremont-based Department of Space, Friends Terrace can accommodate events with more than 200 people.

"It is a beautiful covered outdoor space with 2,800 square feet of flexible space, including a covered patio area with views of the gardens," said Tiffany Tustin-Jordan, facilities sales and rental manager at the Arboretum. Friends Terrace is ideal for weddings, corporate events, baby and bridal showers, in addition to university classes, she said.

Also present at the ceremony was the former director of the Arboretum, Greg Dymont, who had worked with landscape architects, facilities



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The new Friends Terrace will host a variety of events for the Cal State Fullerton Arboretum.

capital programs and the facilities management department to bring the new terrace to fruition. Dymont retired in 2024 after nearly 28 years at Cal State Fullerton.

"The coolest part, why we gave it the name the Terrace, is because it sits at the top of a slight incline," Pongetti explained. "There is a wall around it that helps block some sound and we planted some trees

ARBORETUM » PAGE 5

CORRECTION

A partnership between the Lawrence de Graaf Center for Public and Oral History at Cal State Fullerton and the Flying Leatherneck Museum at Great Park in Irvine will preserve the oral history of the Marine base. Because of a reporting error, the name of the de Graaf center was misspelled on Page 1 of the March 9 edition of the Cal State Fullerton section in the Orange County Register.

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ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Disneyland's 70th will market memories, chronicler says

Merchandise appeals to nostalgia, Stein notes

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

This summer marks Disneyland's 70th anniversary, and "the Happiest Place on Earth" is gearing up for a yearlong tribute to dreams, imagination and magic. Beginning May 16, and continuing through summer 2026, the Disneyland Resort 70th Celebration will commemorate seven decades of Walt Disney's vision brought to life.

It was July 17, 1955, when Disney first welcomed guests through the gates of Disneyland and onto Main Street U.S.A. While the genius behind the Magic Kingdom is well known for saying "It all started with a mouse," Cal State Fullerton professor emeritus of communications Andi Stein feels that it was Disney himself, and all of his ideas, enthusiasm and innovation, that are the real genesis of Disneyland and everything behind The Walt Disney Company.

Stein, who turned her love for all things Disney into a career researching Walt Disney and his company, was a featured expert in the History Channel's docuseries, "How Disney Built America," which aired in June 2024. According to Stein, Disney's early ideas for Disneyland were not well received by all, with many believing he had moved too far away from his company's primary mission. Stein believes that with 12 Disney theme parks now operating globally, the dreamer behind the magic was simply ahead of his time.

"Although he had earned a reputation as a visionary for his innovative ideas, even some of (Disney's) key supporters thought this one was over the top," Stein said. "As we know, he proved them all wrong when the park was a big hit with the public. Disneyland set the stage for the theme park industry as we know it today, all around the world. And it was just the beginning of a whole new direction for the Walt Disney Company."

The Disneyland Resort 70th Celebration will feature everything from updated attractions and anniversary décor to reimagined parades and entertainment. There will even be a new anniversary theme song released by the Jonas Brothers titled, "Celebrate Happy."

But it is the anniversary-branded merchandise that will likely be the biggest draw for Disney enthusiasts. Stein said that for events like a landmark anniversary, the "merchandise is all about creating memories." Ears, apparel, pins, popcorn buckets and more will be on park-goers' lists and will be specifically designed to both evoke fond memories of Disneyland's 70th celebration and inspire visitors to return and relive the magic.

"Nostalgia has always been a big part of Disney's approach to marketing," Stein said. "Tugging at the heartstrings by appealing to people's emotions works amazingly well to keep them engaged with the Disney brand and leave them wanting more. I suspect we'll see a lot of marketing for the 70th anniversary celebration that is intended to do just that."

One of the attractions that will receive a refresh in time for the anniversary celebration is the Main Street Opera House, which has historically been home to "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln." Beginning July 17, the Opera House will debut "Walt Disney - A Magical Life," a look into Walt Disney's journey as told through cinematic experience and audio-animatronics. After its initial run, the attraction will rotate with "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln."

Stein said that while not all die-hard Disney fans see this new feature as appropriate, she believes the attraction will be significant for younger generations who never experienced



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Cal State Fullerton professor emeritus of communications Andi Stein with two friends

seeing Walt Disney on television or in person during his lifetime.

"This exhibit has the potential to show park-goers who he really was — not just a name on the screen, but a real person who made a huge contribution to the entertainment industry," said Stein, author of "Why We Love Disney: The Power of the Disney Brand."

On campus at CSUF, Stein currently teaches Deconstructing Disney, where students take a deep dive into how Disney and his successors have impacted the entertainment and communications industries, as well as how their marketing practices have shaped The Walt Disney Co.

Next fall, Stein will also teach Tourism Venues and Attractions, a graduate-level course that will explore marketing strategies specific to places such as theme parks, museums, zoos and aquariums, including special-events promotion. She hopes to incorporate examples from the Disneyland Resort's 70th Celebration into her curriculum.

As Disneyland celebrates 70 years of "faith, trust, and a little bit of pixie dust," the impact of Disney's magic continues to shape the imaginations of its visitors while also leaving an indelible mark on the county and surrounding area it calls home.

"The fact that Disneyland has endured for 70 years is a testament to the genius of Walt Disney," Stein said. "The park is a Southern California fixture. In many ways, it helped put Orange County on the map. I've met a lot of people who told me they 'grew up' at Disneyland. And for many people — myself included — Disneyland is a place where visitors don't need to grow up. They can remain eternally young."



Stein's areas of study include entertainment and tourism with an emphasis on the Walt Disney Co.

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CAREERS

History alum's bookstore inspires talk about social justice, activism

CSUF News Media Services

With unique titles fitted on every shelf and the smell of fresh coffee filling the air, Fulton Street Books & Coffee has become a home for local readers in Tulsa, Okla. In many ways, the shop is a love letter to Onikah Asamoa-Caesar's younger self.

A book enthusiast at heart, Asamoa-Caesar fueled her love for reading and history at Cal State Fullerton before graduating and bringing the magic of literature into her own bookshop.

"The experiences I had at CSUF reinforced my belief in the power of community and storytelling — both of which are central to what I do now," said Asamoa-Caesar, owner and founder of Fulton Street Books & Coffee.

Growing up, Asamoa-Caesar said she didn't always see herself reflected in the books around her. Inspired to change that for herself and others, she created a unique space that champions representation in literature.

"The mission is simple but powerful: to build a place where people feel seen, heard and valued," said Asamoa-Caesar. "When people read about others, it fosters empathy and understanding. Books shape how we see the world and our place in it, and making sure those narratives are inclusive is essential."

As the only Black-owned bookstore in Tulsa, Asamoa-Caesar said she's seen the impact of the brick-and-mortar store on the local reading community. Whether it's through book clubs, author events or casual conversations over coffee, the literature has inspired discourse about social justice and critical issues facing the country.

Increasing intergenerational literacy is also at the heart of the store's mission. According to the National Literacy Institute, literacy has become a widespread issue across the U.S. with about 54% of adults reading below a 6th-grade level.

"Fulton Street has become a hub — not just for books, but for dialogue, connection and activism," said Asamoa-Caesar.

After graduating from high school in rural Mississippi, Asamoa-Caesar found that her passion for understanding the world was best suited in CSUF's Department of History.

"CSUF provided a supportive environment where I could grow both academically and personally. I was looking for a place where I could be



PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN CASS

Onikah Asamoa-Caesar, owner and founder of Fulton Street Books & Coffee

challenged, but also where community and mentorship were prioritized — and CSUF gave me that," said Asamoa-Caesar, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in history in 2012.

Her academic and career success can also be attributed to the community she found on campus. As a student, Asamoa-Caesar spent time in the African American Resource Center, was a founding member of the Black Student Union and collaborated with

faculty experts.

"I credit Cal State Fullerton for giving me the language to articulate my experience in this world," said Asamoa-Caesar. "The faculty members pushed me to think deeper, ask better questions and see history not just as a subject, but as a tool for change."

Jessica Stern, dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences said Asamoa-Caesar is not only a trailblazer in Tulsa, but she is also a role model

for CSUF students who aspire to enact change in their future careers.

"Onikah should be an inspiration for all students who are pursuing majors they are passionate about," said Stern. "She built a bookstore that only an HSS alum could — one that is grounded in the history of Tulsa, that knows that intellectual communities lead to thriving communities, and one that opens up space for new thinkers and artists."

DEGREES OF POSSIBILITY

What's next? Program helps open doors to a variety of fields

Passage to the Future connects students

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton student Nataly Luna had been planning to pursue a career as an elementary school teacher.

But Luna, who is majoring in liberal arts and minoring in literacy education, was still curious how her liberal arts degree and education studies could open the door to other careers.

Luna found her way to the Passage to the Future Program, a certificate program within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at CSUF designed to prepare students to succeed in a variety of fields.

"So that really captivated me because I wanted to learn what other career possibilities there were," said Luna, who will graduate in May.

Luna completed an internship in Washington, D.C., through the Cal State D.C. Scholars program that was paid for by the Passages program and is currently doing an internship at Team Kids, a nonprofit group focused on empowering youth to strengthen connections to the community and become changemakers.

"Because of Passage to the Future, I realized that I want to do something different and pivot and maybe something more at a macro level or at an administrative side of things supporting children, families and education," said Luna, who plans to attend graduate school. "Taking all these opportunities, I've been able to now engage with other professionals and ask them questions and kind of pick their brains and learn more about what they do and their passions and how they got to where they are."

Passages to the Future was started in 2022 by Sheryl Fontaine, former dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and current dean Jessica Stern.

Students pursuing humanities and social science degrees often don't realize the scope of available opportunities, said Business and Community Relations Strategist Cherie Rolapp, who currently manages Passage to the Future.

Rolapp spent 30 years in the corporate world, working with Fortune 500 companies and launching her own startups. She leverages her contacts to help create internships and other opportunities for Passage to her Future students.

Under Rolapp's guidance, the program has grown from nine students to more than 300 students.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

From left are Emma Vega, Nataly Luna, Lazurus Bonilla, Ashley Rodriguez and Brianna Castillo.

"I always care about social impact and giving back and education reform," Rolapp said. "This job is just like my dream job to mentor and coach students to help move the needle in economic development and workforce readiness."

Passage to the Future students are required to take a three-unit class, HSS 200, to start learning about various careers.

Students also learn to market themselves and have the opportunity to connect with humanities and social science alumni.

Passages to the Future student Georgina Galindo, a criminal justice major, is currently working as an immigration legal empowerment intern at the Orange County Justice Fund, a position that deeply resonates with her.

"As someone with a similar background, I was drawn to their mission of supporting individuals and families facing deportation by providing legal assistance and advocating for due process," Galindo said.

After graduating in fall 2025, Galindo hopes to secure a position at a nonprofit organization where she can make a positive impact.

"Ultimately, I aspire to be part of a policy department where I can advocate for underrepresented communities and help shape initiatives that promote

equity, opportunity and social justice," Galindo said.

History major Eli Wolcott, who is also in the Passage to the Future program, has aspirations for a career as a museum curator.

Wolcott is currently interning at the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum at the site of the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro.

Wolcott, who learned about the internship from Passage to the Future, digitally preserves historical artifacts related to the men and women who served at the Orange County base, along with other duties.

"They like having the students there, and that's the whole goal of the museum: to help educate students," said Wolcott, who hopes to work at the museum after he graduates. "I didn't really know about the internship. I've come to realize that

you don't hear about a lot of it. You kind of have to know somebody that's involved. So that's why the Passage program is helpful, because they have alumni or they know people."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERIE ROLAPP

Georgina Galindo, left, with Nataly Luna

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Empowering young math teachers to demystify math

Mallika Scott stresses dignity, community

By Larry Urish
contributing writer

If terms like “multiplication tables,” “long division” or “coefficient” tend to jack up your blood pressure, you’re not alone. Millions of people have an aversion to math.

Mallika Scott, Cal State Fullerton assistant professor of education, believes that this common fear can be addressed at a young age, provided mathematics is taught with the right mindset in a nurturing classroom environment.

To that end, she has studied the challenges beginning teachers face in teaching math, and she offers ways to support them while raising the confidence of their young students. A paper co-authored by Scott that outlines some of the key ideas that guide her research, “We Ask So Much of These Tiny Humans: Supporting Beginning Teachers to Honor the Dignity of Young People as Mathematical Learners,” was published in the journal *Cognition and Instruction* in 2023.

“One challenge is the status that math has in our society,” Scott said. “It’s closely acquainted with smartness. So when people struggle with math, sometimes they feel inadequate or inferior. People can say ‘I’m not a math person,’ but that’s not particularly true about any other subject.”

The classroom environment, Scott said, has been lacking. “Math instruction in the U.S. has not been great for a long time. (It involves) a heavy focus on procedures and following steps, but it lacks any focus on a deeper understanding and applying math to relevant issues and problems in the world. Teachers have been through that same schooling system, and they haven’t always had a chance to develop a strong grasp of the math concepts that they’re going to teach.”

In addition, Scott noted that teachers do a lot of the thinking for their students in math classrooms. “They show kids things and then kids follow

steps, but kids don’t always make sense of the math ideas for themselves or make connections on their own,” she said. “So math can feel like a series of disconnected things that they’re supposed to memorize. If key ideas aren’t connected to each other, it can feel totally overwhelming.”

While high school and middle school teachers receive subject-specific assistance, Scott maintains that math support for elementary-level teachers is minimal. As such, her work has focused on helping prepare teachers to teach math, as well as working with teachers once they’re in their own classrooms specifically focused on math. A former middle school math and science teacher, Scott later engaged in professional and curriculum development for school districts. This involved supporting teachers with their math instruction. After working with teachers who’d been in the profession for a while, she wanted to reach teachers earlier in their career. So she returned to school, earning a doctorate in learning sciences and human development from UC Berkeley.

Scott stressed two key elements that are largely absent in today’s math classrooms: community and dignity. “We need to create a math community where we learn from each other and where everybody’s ideas are welcome,” she said. “And the classroom can be a place where kids feel seen, where their ideas are valued, where everyone has things they can contribute. ... Math classrooms haven’t always been a place where young people feel a sense of dignity. Their humanity, potential or unique contributions aren’t valued or seen. When kids don’t feel valued, they tend to shut down. They’re not in a learning space they want to be in.”

This is particularly true when it comes to mathematics. “With other subjects like reading, writing or social studies, kids often feel that their ideas matter,” Scott said. “But math classrooms tend to be narrower or more rigid.”

One activity that Scott uses, “visiting” Planet Pent, helps teachers better understand the math-learning process done by their young students. Planet Pent uses a base-five counting system, in which numbers are organized in groups of 5 instead of 10. (The ancient Greek prefix “penta” means “five.”) “As adults,



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF professor Mallika Scott’s work focuses on teacher learning and supporting new methods of teacher education.

we take the normal base-10 number system for granted,” Scott said. “Planet Pent is a way to help teachers reconnect with the challenges of making sense of a new number system. It puts teachers back in the experience that young children have when they’re five, six or seven years old, trying to understand how numbers work. The same errors that kids make in our base-10 system, teachers make on Planet Pent. It’s a way for teachers to understand the math

more deeply.”

Scott remains confident in the abilities of math teachers and their young charges. “Research shows that everyone can be good at math. Everyone is capable with the right support and effort,” she said. “That doesn’t mean everybody wants to become a mathematician or has that level of interest in math, but everybody can do math at the high school level and be successful in that with the right support.”

OUTSTANDING PROFESSOR LECTURE

Rats, cats and prairie dogs: Stapp unravels wildlife ecology research

CSUF News Media Services

Some people may squirm when encountering roof rats. But not Gaby Guzman, who is studying ecology. The future ecologist wants to learn more about the diets of these invasive species to improve pest control strategies.

Classmate Saatvika Deshpande investigates the diets of feral cats in Southern California. She has studied over 400 free-roaming cats to understand what they eat to develop evidence-based management decisions about managing their effects on wildlife in urban ecosystems.

During his Outstanding Professor Lecture, wildlife ecologist Paul Stapp discussed Deshpande and Guzman’s graduate thesis projects and research findings of past students as examples of his faculty-student collaborative research.

Over the past two decades, most of their research has focused on ecological challenges in natural resource conservation and management.

Stapp, Cal State Fullerton’s 2024 Outstanding Professor, said students’ research experiences to unravel real-world ecological problems are “our underappreciated superpower.”

“These projects underscore the invaluable contributions of graduate and undergraduate students and to the success of our research endeavors,” said Stapp, professor of biological science.

“Faculty-mentored student research involving undergraduate and master’s students is a high-impact practice that defines excellence at a comprehensive university like Cal State Fullerton.”

At his Feb. 27 lecture, titled “Black Boxes in Ecology,” Stapp used the metaphor of the black box to describe a system, technology or function whose inner workings are undefined or unobservable.

Stapp said ecologists rely on black boxes, literally and figuratively, to explain a complex problem. Examples of this research include how plague persists and spreads among prairie dog colonies in Colorado and how rodenticides applied in literal “black box” bait stations affect nontargeted species — such as coyotes — in urban settings.

“Ecology deals with complex interactions and dynamic systems, and with wild organisms, that can be challenging to study,” Stapp said.

“Sometimes, we have to rely on models that try to predict future behavior or outcomes based solely on past behavior or phenomena without fully understanding the underlying processes and mechanisms. That’s the essence of a black box.”

Stapp said ecology, a subdiscipline of biology, uses rigorous scientific methods to understand what factors determine the distribution and abundance of organisms by focusing on interactions



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Wildlife ecologist Paul Stapp delivers his Outstanding Professor Lecture, “Black Boxes in Ecology.”

between living things and their environment.

“The science of ecology is the basis for understanding how humans influence, and are affected by, biodiversity and the natural world,” said Stapp, faculty director of the California Desert Studies Consortium, which oversees the California State University Desert Studies Center.

Students studying ecology can become academic researchers and educators. Many also work for government agencies to study, manage, protect and restore nature and natural resources. These careers include park rangers, land stewards, plant ecologists, wildlife biologists and fisheries biologists.

Others work in agriculture to find sustainable ways to grow food. In urban environments, graduates with a bachelor’s degree can also work as environmental consultants who help minimize the effects of human development on natural systems.

Deshpande and Guzman, biology graduate students on track to graduate in August, said Stapp is an outstanding research adviser who supports and encourages his students in their scientific pursuits.

Deshpande aspires to work in natural resource management, such as in an urban county or regional park system. Guzman ’21 (B.S. biological science) plans to pursue a



CSUF President Ronald Rochon, second from left; Kathleen Preston, Faculty Development Center executive director; Amir Dabirian, right, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, congratulate 2024 Outstanding Professor Paul Stapp at his Feb. 27 lecture.

doctorate to become an academic researcher focusing on urban environments.

“My goal is to investigate how vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by human-wildlife conflicts to develop strategies to mitigate these conflicts,” said Guzman, a Sally Casanova Scholar in the

California State University pre-doctoral program.

“Ecological research can inform policies and solve problems like climate change susceptibility, invasive species management and habitat restoration.”

FUNDING

CSUF advocates for financial support as state considers budget

CSUF News Media Services

With the California State University system facing unprecedented financial challenges, Cal State Fullerton President Ronald S. Rochon joined hundreds of students, faculty and staff at the state capitol to advocate for critical funding to support the nation's largest four-year public university system.

On March 18-19, CSU leaders, students and advocates attended CSU Advocacy Days in Sacramento, and were part of a systemwide opposition to drastic budget cuts that would impact student success and essential campus operations.

Many of the discussions centered around Gov. Gavin Newsom's 2025-26 budget proposal, which includes a \$375 million reduction — or 7.95% cut — to the CSU's state funding.

The proposed budget reductions coupled with looming federal funding cuts could have devastating consequences for Cal State Fullerton. Fewer course offerings and increased class sizes would make it harder for students to complete their degrees on time. Critical programs — such as academic advising, mental health services and financial aid — are at risk. In addition, the cuts would disproportionately affect first-generation and underserved students.

"We understand that the state has significant budget challenges, including the devastating impact the wildfires have had on our Southern California communities. However, the needs to serve the well-being of our communities are not exclusive to one another," said Rochon.

"The CSU and the legislature share the same educational priorities: Graduation rates, closing equity gaps, growing resident enrollment, elevating best practices in teaching, health care,

STEM programs and ensuring that graduates are prepared to succeed in the workforce," he continued. "We simply cannot fall behind in this important work."

The CSUF delegates met with several elected officials, including Assembly Members Sharon Quirk-Silva, Phillip Chen, Tri Ta, Avelino Valencia and Blanco Pacheco, and Sen. Steven Choi.

"This cut is equivalent to the funding needed to educate and support more than 36,000 full-time students," Rochon said. "These cuts threaten the progress that the governor and our elected officials have made in supporting our campus community in securing greater CSU access for brilliant and deserving candidates living in some of our most underserved communities."

Rochon outlined how the CSU is working to manage its structural processes, including its systemwide multiyear tuition increase, as well as how Cal State Fullerton is strengthening its enrollment efforts with a new, dedicated vice president for enrollment management position.

"Cal State Fullerton currently serves over 43,000 students. CSUF and other CSU campuses are evaluating how we can strategically tackle enrollment and develop efforts of broadening access and ensuring a smoother experience from admission to graduation for all students," said Rochon. "Coming to California from the Midwest, I can personally attest to the enrollment challenges many campuses are facing across the nation — we at CSUF realize that the days of 'build it and they will come' are over. Therefore, we must remain vigilant, attentive and strategic."

Megan Hannoun, CSUF Associated Students Inc. chief governmental officer and a political science major, highlighted the direct impact on students.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF delegates, from left: Nina Garcia, chief of staff; Annie Yea, senior director of Government Relations and Advocacy; Elva Rubalcava, associate vice president for Government and Community Relations; President Ronald S. Rochon; Kimberly Shiner, vice president for University Advancement; Megan Hannoun, Associated Students Inc. chief governmental officer; Tran Le, director of Executive Communications

"A budget cut of that size will negatively impact students and the services that they rely on to succeed in and out of the classroom," said Hannoun. "If funding is reduced, instruction, academic support, student services and facility improvements will be negatively impacted."

Rochon emphasized the broader economic implications, sharing that CSUF alone generates more than \$65 million per year in state tax revenue

and sustains over 8,700 jobs.

"The CSU system is the most consequential university system in America. These cuts threaten the futures of thousands of students and the nation's workforce who rely on affordable, high-quality education," said Rochon. "The CSUs produce half of the country's teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs and mental health professionals, and these cuts would be devastating for our region and nation."

Women

FROM PAGE 1

Moore and Sadri co-founded the Women's Leadership Program in 2015 to help young women develop the skills needed to excel in their chosen careers, particularly in leadership positions.

An award was also presented to Lacy Schoen, president and CEO of the Brea Chamber of Commerce and a consultant to the program.

Schoen developed a curriculum designed to help women overcome barriers on their career paths.

"Women are still making 81 cents for every dollar that a man makes," Schoen said. "And you'd be staggered to know what could happen if we had paid equity in this state. If women made the same as men, we would

eliminate 40% of poverty, and we would add \$68 billion to our economy. I'd say that's good for everybody."

Sundaram said the Women's Leadership Program has become one of the signature programs in the College of Business.

"It is in human stories," Sundaram said. "When I hear about the women and the men who are participating in the program, and they come through and they're successful and they are able to argue for themselves and negotiate better for themselves or become better at negotiating the challenges that they have in the workplace or in their personal life ... that is the impact this program has."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Sharon Don spoke about brand building, competing in today's marketplace and addressing the "fear of missing out."

Arboretum

FROM PAGE 1

that will become a hedge around the front of the wall. The rest of the patio is open, and it looks out over the garden into our rare fruit grove and our perennial bed, as well as the drought-tolerant landscaping that we have surrounding the space itself."

Much of the patio can be covered by a retractable canopy, so it can be shaded or unshaded depending on the weather, Pongetti said.

The timing of The Terrace's completion could not be more perfect — spring is the most colorful season in the Arboretum, which provides visitors with a peaceful oasis of nature.

"Springtime here is just a great time to be in the garden," Pongetti said. "April is one of our most flowery months, I would say."

The wisteria arbor, for instance, with its big lavender blossoms, is a popular draw for visitors. "It's a relatively large arbor, so it makes a pretty big impact," Pongetti said. "Our California native meadow has been looking quite nice. It's a mixture of annual wildflowers and a lot of perennials and grasses," he said, adding that visitors like to pose for photos in front of the blossoming peach and nectarine trees.

Another spring standout is the proliferation of bright orange poppies. "We have a lot of California poppies all over the place that are blooming," he said. "They're the state flower and are made to be here, so we pretty much let them grow wherever they'd like." But every section of the garden has particular spring blooms. "You really just have to take a walk around the whole Arboretum," Pongetti added.

The Arboretum and Botanical Garden spreads over 26 acres of land owned by Cal State Fullerton at the north end of the campus. It features drought-tolerant landscapes with plants, trees and shrubs from around the world. The Arboretum plays an integral role in numerous Cal campus classes.

It's also the setting for popular spring events that take place this month. The Flea Market in the Garden, hosted by event planning students, will take place at the Arboretum on April 17. Overlapping



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Attendees enjoy a beautiful day at the ribbon-cutting event for the new Friends Terrace.

that is Veggie Palooza which will take place over three days, April 17-19. Herbs, vegetables and annual flowers — all grown from seed and tended by volunteers — will be for sale.

The Veggie Palooza is so popular that the Arboretum now features a special opportunity for members to order plants before the sale begins to ensure they buy the plants they want before they run out. All the funds from this sale, as well as other plant sales held throughout the year, help support the Arboretum. "It all goes back into the Arboretum and helps fund the garden," Pongetti said.



Cal State Fullerton Living Collections curator Gregory Pongetti

VISITOR INFORMATION

Fullerton Arboretum and Botanical Garden visiting hours
9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Sunday

Veggie Palooza
12-4 p.m. Thursday, April 17
12-4 p.m. Friday, April 18
9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, April 19

TRACK AND FIELD

Coach looking to maximize talent, regain the Big West men's title

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

Perhaps Ian Dossman had those words ringing in his ears when he broke his own school record in the 200 meters for the second time in 20 days. The words that CSUF track and field coach Marques Barosso kept repeating as a mantra-meets-cordially-delivered-order. "Finish the job."

Since the end of the 2024 outdoor track season, Barosso had seen enough almost, enough nearly and enough of just-not-enough. He'd seen enough of great practice times chased by average-to-good race results that drove him crazy. That, in turn, led to an overreliance on other teams to take away points and finish the job the Titans couldn't. As Barosso put it, "That's a recipe for losing."

And that recipe followed the script. More on that in a moment.

There was talent there across the board. But where was that talent when it mattered?

Barosso wasn't sure. But he was going to find out. And if that meant becoming an earworm to his charges like an overplayed song on the radio, well. ... "Finishing is the theme to the season. We have to finish the job," Barosso said. "For us, we have to finish to win championships. Last year, we went into the (Big West) Conference as favorites, the first time that ever happened on the men's side and we didn't finish the job. All year, that's been our thing: We have to finish the job."

"When you looked at our indoor races, there were good times and good performances, but when we got in close races, we'd beat ourselves by tightening up and not finishing our race plans. Mentally, we'd throw out our race plans and not execute what we'd do at practice."

All this neatly explains how Cal Poly threw out the Titans' chances for a four-peat as men's conference champions last year. After winning the conference title in 2021, 2022 and 2023, CSUF finished 17 points behind Cal Poly last year. That would have been the Titans' seventh conference crown in the last eight years.

"If we did what we were supposed to do and finished the races, we would have been fine. We beat ourselves," Barosso said.

Now, Barosso looks around at the talent at his disposal and his finishing message resonates louder and louder. That's because by his own admission, he's looking at the most talent he's had in his four seasons running the CSUF track and field program. At every meet over



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF track and field coach Marques Barosso shows his school spirit during a competition.

the first month of the season, someone is racking up a mark that is top three, top five, top seven, top 10 in program history.

"We're stronger in every event this year, top to bottom," Barosso said. "On our throw squad last year, we had one guy score consistently. Now, there are four to five potential points scorers. We've brought in heavy hitters in middle and long distance. We're looking better all the way around."

There's Dossman, who broke his own school record in the 200 in the season's first meet: the Ben Brown Invitational at CSUF in early March. Last week, Dossman showed that speed travels, breaking it again at the Texas Relays when he covered the distance in 20.56 seconds. Earlier that day, he clocked a 10.16-second in the 100 meters that would have broken another record, had it not been wind-aided.

Dossman anchored a 4-by-100 relay team that finished third at the Texas Relays. Their 39.56-second clocking was the second-fastest in school history.

There's middle-distance standout Luke Hitchcock, who set the program record in the 800 meters at the UC Irvine Challenge Cup in mid-March, finishing second to UC Irvine's Angel Cordero in 1:49.36. A week later at UCLA's Legends Classic, Hitchcock ran the second-fastest 1,500-meter time in program history (3:44.52).

There are the aforementioned throwers: Brayden Bitter, Hawkin Miller and Kyler Headley.

There's Carter Birade, who missed all but two meets last year due to various injuries. He won the Legends Classic 100 in 10.50, giving the Titans' already deep sprinter room — one that includes Dossman, Dominic Gates, John Clifford (the 2023 Co-Big West Track Athlete of the Year) and Maleik Pabon — another option. Birade also runs the 110 hurdles.

And speaking of the 110 hurdles — along with several other events — there's Abel Jordan. One of the most singularly talented athletes in program history, the native of Madrid, Spain, was the 2024 Big West Men's Track Athlete of the Year after winning the 100 at the Big West Championships in a school-record 10.19 seconds, finishing second in the 110 hurdles (13.76) and helping the Titans win the 4X100 relay. Jordan broke three school records last year: the 100, 110 hurdles and the 4X100 relay.

During the just-completed indoor season, Jordan qualified for the NCAA Championships, broke the European U23 record in the 60 meters (6.54) and broke the Spanish U23 record in the 60-meter hurdles (7.53). He also broke the CSUF 60-meter hurdles record (7.59) at the New Mexico Collegiate Classic.

"He was typically taking it easy his first two years because he wasn't used

to this kind of a workout schedule," said Barosso, who is resting Jordan during the early part of the season due to his indoor-season success. "Now that he's bigger and stronger, he can absorb more work and it's paying off for him."

Led by another international presence, the women's team is also seeing some payoff as it chases its first conference title since 2019. That's Canadian Ashley Odiase, who finished third in the 4X100 relay at the World Athletics U20 Championships last August. She earned a bronze medal in the Canadian U20 Championships in the 200. Barosso said Odiase came back injured from the Worlds, leading him to redshirt her for the indoor season.

There's freshman Emma Samvelian, who smacked Barosso's gob with her unique combination of events: the pole vault, discus and shot put. Barosso said he didn't know what events to send her out in, so he opted for the pole vault and shot put. She set the school record in the indoor pole vault and scored points in the shot during the indoor season.

There's Jahzara Davis, the runner-up at last year's Big West Championships in the 100 hurdles (13.70) and an NCAA West Preliminaries qualifier. She anchored the Titans' winning 4X100 relay team at the Challenge Cup.

"She's everything for us," Barosso said. And there's sprinter Arionn Livingston, who finished third in the 400 at the Texas Relays with the sixth-best mark in school history (54.34). Barosso singled her out for her "crazy improvement" in that event and the 200.

As he ponders how to maximize all of this talent in his fourth season after taking over for longtime coach John Elders, Barosso finds himself preaching patience in one hand and an urgency to finish in the other. He's learning that taking a more proactive approach in communicating the team's actual mission and getting everyone to understand what that mission is — winning conference championships and getting to nationals — is his part of the finishing touch.

"I've learned a lot of patience and that you can never communicate too much," he said. "You learn each student is different. You learn how to coach everyone individually, but as a whole group, which is contradictory. You're managing personalities."

"I always wanted this job at Fullerton. It's been a dream, and I need to make sure I can keep this dream of bringing Fullerton onto the national stage, where I think we can be."

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TO SPORTS

At Cal State Fullerton, I turned my passion for soccer into academic research and found my calling teaching sports philosophy.

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