



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Alum and attorney Raúl R. Tapia shares his wealth of experience with political science major Colson Houck Teal and other students in the Cal State DC Scholars program.

HONORED ALUM

# RAÚL R. TAPIA SHARES EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS TO PAY IT FORWARD

Attorney and entrepreneur credits CSUF for success

By **Larry Urish**  
*contributing writer*

For many years, Cal State Fullerton alum Raúl R. Tapia has had a significant hand in creating success stories. That makes sense, given his altruistic nature and the fact that, having made his way from laboring in the Southern California lemon fields to advising a U.S. president in the White House, he himself is an extraordinary success story.

Despite his achievements, Tapia, who earned a bachelor's in political science in 1972, considers the help he's given others to be among his greatest honors.

Those honors could fill a textbook. An all-too-brief snapshot: After graduating from Harvard Law School and earning a master's from Harvard in public administration, Tapia served on Jimmy

Carter's staff, as deputy assistant to the president for Hispanic affairs. He later worked on the finance and steering committees for the John Kerry, Al Gore and Clinton-Gore presidential campaigns.

As an entrepreneur and attorney, Tapia created and heads Tapia & Associates and works as an independent consultant, focusing on strategic planning, crisis management, telecommunications, municipal services, health care and public affairs. He is the founder, and former chairman of the board, president and CEO of the Republic Communications Corp., and was the founder, director, president and CEO of the AMO Broadcasting Co. In addition, he continues to serve on a number of for-profit and nonprofit boards of directors.

The multitude of awards Tapia has received through the years is no less im-

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PHOTO COURTESY OF RAÚL R. TAPIA

Tapia served on the finance and steering committees for the Clinton-Gore presidential campaign.

FORECAST CONFERENCE

# Challenges ahead to hit California harder, economists say

## AI will continue to drive growth

By **Lou Ponsi**  
*contributing writer*

As economist Anil Puri addressed a gathering of policymakers, business leaders and academics, the former dean of the College of Business and Economics at Cal State Fullerton didn't mince words when providing his in-depth analysis and three-year outlook for California's economy at the recent Economic Forecast Conference.

Puri, who serves as director of the university's Woods Center for Economic Forecasting, and economist Mira Farka, who serves as co-director, presented their forecast for global, U.S., California and Orange County economies on Oct. 30 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Irvine.

"The state's problems are not isolated incidents; they are deeply interconnected," said Puri and Farka. "This nexus spans climate change, wildfires, high insurance costs, elevated oil prices, constrained energy supplies and strict environmental regulations."

The state's reputation as an economic powerhouse is under threat, Puri said, as evidenced by a wave of corporate departures and rising housing costs.

Many major companies, including Chevron, Oracle, Tesla, SpaceX and McKesson, have moved their headquarters out of California over the past three years, Puri noted.

The departures stem from significant regulatory burdens on the state's businesses compared with the U.S. as a whole, Puri said.

Economies of Southern California are expected to see much slower employment growth over the next two years compared with their historical trend, Puri and Farka noted in their report.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Cal State Fullerton economists Anil Puri and Mira Farka presented their 31st annual Economic Forecast to more than 500 Orange County business leaders.



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# Tapia

FROM PAGE 1

pressive. A few examples: He garnered the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia and was recognized as the Role Model of the Year by Latina magazine.

Closer to home, Tapia earned CSUF's Presidents Award as the outstanding graduate of the Class of 1972 and, 22 years later, was honored by the university with the Vision & Visionaries: Distinguished Alumnus Award.

How did Tapia go from the farm fields to the White House and beyond? It began with a stellar work ethic — and life-altering help from Cal State Fullerton.

"I learned about the value of hard work early on," said Tapia, the son of a seamstress and a steelworker. "My first job was at age 11, picking lemons in the foothills of Upland and Rancho Cucamonga." He later worked as a grocery store box boy, among other menial jobs. "I didn't think I had the grades to succeed in a university."

Fortunately, CSUF thought otherwise, inviting Tapia into New Educational Horizons, a university program that brought together young students with similar backgrounds.

"The people at Cal State Fullerton have always assisted diamonds in the rough," Tapia said. "They gave me an opportunity and a sense of direction. ... My professors furnished me with a lifelong love of learning. For example, my freshman English teacher assigned me extra writing assignments outside of the regular coursework. My writing skills, which hadn't been strong but are critical for any lawyer, improved dramatically due to her feedback and encouragement."

Thanks to his commitment to help others, Tapia has served as a mentor in Cal State DC Scholars, a program in which students earn academic credit while interning in the nation's capital. Over the past two decades, more than 650 CSUF students have been involved in the program.

"DC Scholars is a great program," Tapia said. "However, I've been mentoring others long before that. ... Being a good mentor involves stoking the em-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RAÚL R. TAPIA

Raul R. Tapia, shown here with Hillary Clinton, earned a law degree and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard and served as deputy assistant to the president for Hispanic affairs under Jimmy Carter.

bers that you see in a person and building that into a flame; that flame is hope. Rather than push, a good mentor suggests and provokes thought, and the most successful mentees I've worked with are intellectually curious."

Tapia credits Jack Mandel, a lawyer who later served as an OC Superior Court judge, as a key mentor. The two first met when Tapia was a CSUF junior, and Mandel later assisted Tapia in his acceptance into Harvard Law School.

CSUF political science major Colson Houck Teal, who served in the Cal State DC Scholars program in the spring of 2024, as well as last summer, credits Tapia with helping him apply to law schools, while sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience. "Mr. Tapia has told me about what I can expect in law school, and he's been helping me, in particular, with my law school application. ... Not only is the information he provides incredible, but his positive

spirit has also had a real impact. He's shown me the kind of person I want to be, not just in my accomplishments but in how I want to live life in general."

Tapia remains grateful for the help of others. "I've received far more than I've given," he said. "I stand on the shoulders of my mentors and teachers. People believed in me and gave me hope and encouragement. And the debt I owe, one I can never repay, is the debt to Cal State Fullerton."

## ONE STUDENT'S PATH

# From Marine to data science and a graduate program

Cal State Fullerton

Growing up in Santa Ana, Anthony Nava Camacho always wanted to study at Cal State Fullerton.

"When I returned home after serving for four years in the Marines, I knew it was time to focus on earning my degree. I applied to multiple schools in Southern California, but Cal State Fullerton was always where I wanted to be," said Nava Camacho, a 2025 bachelor of arts graduate in business administration-information systems, who is currently pursuing his master's degree in information systems.

After enrolling in a data analytics course in the College of Business and Economics, Nava Camacho discovered his passion for using statistics to identify patterns, build models and drive data-informed decision-making.

Inspired by his newfound interest, Nava Camacho joined the Business Data and Analytics Club, where students learn about data analysis tools and statistical methods that are used to solve real-world issues.

Club members network with industry professionals and develop their technical skill sets through specialized workshops that focus on various analytics programs. Nava Camacho said these workshops taught him how to use professional platforms like Tableau to analyze large data sets and create portfolios.

"I'm building connections with future industry experts and professionals," Nava Camacho said. "These relationships will be helpful as I establish my career."

In addition to the connections he's making as a graduate student, Nava Camacho is already part of a Titan business network that is more than 88,000 alumni strong and is a driving force in the Southern California business community.

Nava Camacho credits business faculty member Majid Kermani for encouraging him to pursue information systems and for writing a letter of recommendation that helped him secure a spot in the master of science in information systems graduate program at CSUF.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Anthony Nava Camacho, information systems graduate student

"Anthony consistently demonstrated remarkable analytical skills, intellectual curiosity and a strong commitment to excellence. His professionalism, integrity and exemplary conduct made him a standout student," said Kermani, lecturer in information systems and decision sciences.

As a student veteran, Nava Camacho said he's also found community and camaraderie in the university's Veterans Resource Center, which provides academic support and professional resources to help students achieve their goals.

"There's a solid community there," said Nava Camacho, who worked as a student assistant in the center. "It's nice to connect with and talk to people who can relate to my experience and understand what it means to transition from military service to college."

The former Marine was honored for his service at Cal State Fullerton Angels Night at Angel Stadium: "That was a moment of pure pride for me. It means a lot when people recognize veterans and the work we do."

After completing graduate school, Nava Camacho plans to pursue his doctorate in statistics before launching a career as a data scientist in the financial industry.

"Cal State Fullerton has prepared me to achieve my academic and career goals," said Nava Camacho. "We're not just learning about different theories and concepts. We're learning how to apply what we've learned to real-world issues that we're going to face in the industry."



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## FUNDING

# Couple's \$4.5 million gift supports innovation and ingenuity

## Conrey Center hosts student competition

By Lou Ponsi

contributing writer

Each year, the Conrey Center for Entrepreneurship, an initiative of Cal State Fullerton's College of Business and Economics, organizes a competition in which student entrepreneurs are given 90 seconds to present a business concept to a panel of professionals and academics serving as judges.

Titled "Titan Fast Pitch," the competition is designed to celebrate the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that make a positive impact on the community — hallmarks of the Conrey Center.

Titans Julie Yun and Dhara Panchal, both computer science and engineering students, took second place for developing Novvhex, an AI-powered home security platform that detects suspicious behavior before theft occurs.

CSUF entrepreneurship student Daphnay Pino took third for developing Blink Clean, an eco-friendly, refillable double-sided stain remover pen.

The ingenuity, sense of purpose and vision displayed by the students are at the heart of the mission of the Conrey Center for Entrepreneurship.

These distinguishing elements were motivating factors for Jerry Conrey and his wife, Dr. Victoria Shook Conrey, to bequeath a \$4.5 million gift to the College of Business & Economics to further the advancement of the entrepreneurship center.

The generous gift, one of the largest single contributions in support of entrepreneurship education at Cal State Fullerton, along with the couple's decades of service to the center, prompted the College of Business and Economics to rename the center in their honor.

In July, the center was named for Conrey, who is the founder and agency principal of Conrey Insurance Brokers and Risk Managers, an Orange County-based, independent firm specializing in insurance and risk management.

Conrey attended Cal State Fullerton as a finance and political science major from 1981 to 1987.

"Our hope with this gift — and with the naming of the Conrey Center for Entrepreneurship — is that it becomes a launchpad for bold ideas," said Conrey, at the naming ceremony in October. "We want this to be a place where students are encouraged to take risks, to learn from setbacks, and to create ventures that make a difference in our communities."

Conrey said Cal State Fullerton was pivotal in shaping his own career path, and he sees this donation as a way to "pay it forward" for future generations of entrepreneurs.

"Over the years, both Vicki and I have seen firsthand, through scholarships, mentorship and engagement,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Sri Sundaram, dean of the College of Business and Economics, left, thanks donor Jerry Conrey for supporting students and entrepreneurial education at CSUF.

the extraordinary promise of Titan students," Conrey said. "It is both a privilege and a joy to give back in this way."

Conrey sees entrepreneurship as a means of turning ideas into opportunities that not only make a profit but make a lasting impact.

He views entrepreneurial education as a touchstone for innovation and preparing students to succeed in competitive environments.

Conrey stressed mentorship and hands-on engagement as being critical to student success.

"Our hope is that this gift will help future generations of entrepreneurs pursue bold ideas and create ventures that uplift our communities," he said.

The university's expression of gratitude for the gift opened a line of communication between Conrey and the university.

Conrey and his wife were made to feel like family, the business leader said.

Through the relationship, Conrey learned more about the university on a broader level.



From left, Sri Sundaram, center director Scott Taylor, Jerry Conrey and Dr. Victoria Shook Conrey and CSUF President Ronald Rochon were among those who celebrated the Oct. 2 naming of the Conrey Center for Entrepreneurship.

"They treated us really well and engaged with us and showed us all things that are going on that maybe the public doesn't always see," Conrey said. "I never knew about the music program and the Christmas concerts that they do and got exposed to that because the university acknowledged our gift. And so, we started to see the university on multiple levels."

Sri Sundaram, dean of the College of Business and Economics, said the gift

and renaming of the center represent a transformational moment for the college.

"Jerry and Victoria's extraordinary generosity strengthens our mission to empower students and impact the Southern California community through entrepreneurial innovation," Sundaram said. "Their legacy will inspire future Titans to pursue bold ideas, build impactful ventures and lead with purpose for years to come."

## RECOGNITION

# Theoretical chemist receives Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award

Cal State Fullerton

For theoretical chemist Andrew Petit, his dedication as a teacher-scholar is evident in his work of mentoring 75 student researchers over the past decade at Cal State Fullerton.

His students have presented award-winning work at over 80 scientific conferences, co-authored 15 peer-reviewed publications, and many have gone on to prestigious graduate programs.

"I'm excited to provide my students with the opportunity to engage in cutting-edge, computational research in collaboration with experimentalists," said Petit, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry. "This allows students to experience firsthand the interplay between theory and experiment that drives modern science."

For his work as a mentor and researcher, Petit has received the 2025 Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award from the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation. He is one of eight Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholars selected this year from universities across the country.

Petit is the third CSUF faculty member in the chemistry and biochemistry department recognized with the prestigious national award, which supports early-career faculty in the chemical sciences at primarily undergraduate institutions.

Michael Groves, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, received the award in 2024. In 2000, Fu-Ming Tao, professor of chemistry and biochemistry, was given the accolade.

"I'm honored to receive an award that recognizes my student-centered efforts in both teaching and research. It gives enormous credibility to the excellent work of my research team," said Petit, who began teaching at CSUF in 2015.

Niroshika Keppetipola, chair and professor of chemistry and biochemistry, said Petit fosters scientific discovery and the professional growth of the next generation of chemists.

"Dr. Petit has established a highly productive and impactful research program that exemplifies the integration of

innovative scholarship with exceptional student mentorship," Keppetipola said.

"Through his leadership, he has created a vibrant and inclusive research environment, where undergraduate and graduate students receive rigorous training in advanced computational chemistry and high-performance computing."

Petit's research focuses on using computational tools to answer fundamental questions about what happens after molecules absorb light.

"My research involves photochemistry. The idea is that when a molecule absorbs the right color of light, it becomes excited, which causes dramatic changes in its chemical properties," Petit said.

Petit, who earned his doctorate in chemical physics from Ohio State University, said photochemistry has a range of applications from solar energy and medical imaging to green chemistry.

His work aligns with green chemistry by using light to modify the pathways chemical reactions follow, making them more efficient and environmentally friendly. Petit's research has the potential to impact the production of pharmaceutical drugs, plastics and dyes, as well as lead to the discovery of new molecules with essential properties.

As part of his award, Petit is receiving a \$75,000 grant to support his research. His work also includes serving as associate director of the Titan Supercomputing Center.

With the funding, he plans to purchase additional compute nodes, which perform complicated computational tasks quickly, for the center's Turing supercomputer. The award will also support student travel to research conferences.

Outside of research, Petit's goals include teaching students how to ethically and effectively use artificial intelligence and data science tools, preparing them for advanced degrees and the workforce.

"I'm interested in helping our students develop literacy in AI and data science," he said. "I believe that these tools will continue to be an important component of modern science in both academia and industry."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Andrew Petit, selected as a 2025 Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar, explains to his students how electron distribution is changed by the absorption of light.



Theoretical chemist Andrew Petit mentors chemistry graduate student Hayden Harkins.



GETTING A BOOST

# Program helps prepare first-generation art students for careers

Networking, communications skills two of the tools

By Nicole Gregory  
contributing writer

“I Am First, I Am An Artist” is a program at Cal State Fullerton designed to prepare first-generation arts students for a career in the arts by teaching professional networking and communication skills, confidence building and other tools for success.

Launched in spring 2020, the six-week program was founded by Stephanie Reyes, senior associate director of the CSUF Career Center.

Art student Skylar Williams, 21, who is studying animation, has taken full advantage of the program. Now a junior, Williams wants to become a professional animator and specifically sought out CSUF because of the animation classes it offers.

“It was my dream to be down here in Orange County and go to Cal State Fullerton and major in animation,” said Williams, who comes from Hayward, near San Francisco.

She is the first in her family to attend college. When she expressed her desire to attend a four-year university, her family initially resisted the idea due to the potential debt associated with tuition fees. But after Williams learned about Cal State Fullerton’s animation classes at a young age, she was determined to find a way to attend. By working, obtaining scholarships, and with some help from her family, Williams has accrued no college debt, while remaining focused on her academics and interests.

“I want to be a storyboard artist,” Williams said, explaining that a storyboard artist takes the script created by a writer and director and turns it into a comic book form called an animatic. This is a series of panels organized in the sequence of a story that serves as a guide for producing the final animation.

Williams was inspired by the work of American animator Rebecca Sugar, who created the show “Steven Universe,” and she dreams of one day becoming the first African American woman to create her own show for Cartoon Network.

Furthermore, Williams wants to create shows featuring people of color — and she feels this is a real possibility, unlike previous decades when “there weren’t people who looked like me in cartoons,” she said.

Getting ahead in any creative field takes work, and Williams participated in the “I Am First, I Am An Artist” program last summer to expand on skills she’d learned in high school business classes. “The program teaches you how to make a resume, how to introduce yourself, how to make elevator pitches and basic business knowledge, but for artists,” she said.

First-generation students may have limited access to professional networks in the arts, Reyes said. “This program teaches them how to connect with in-



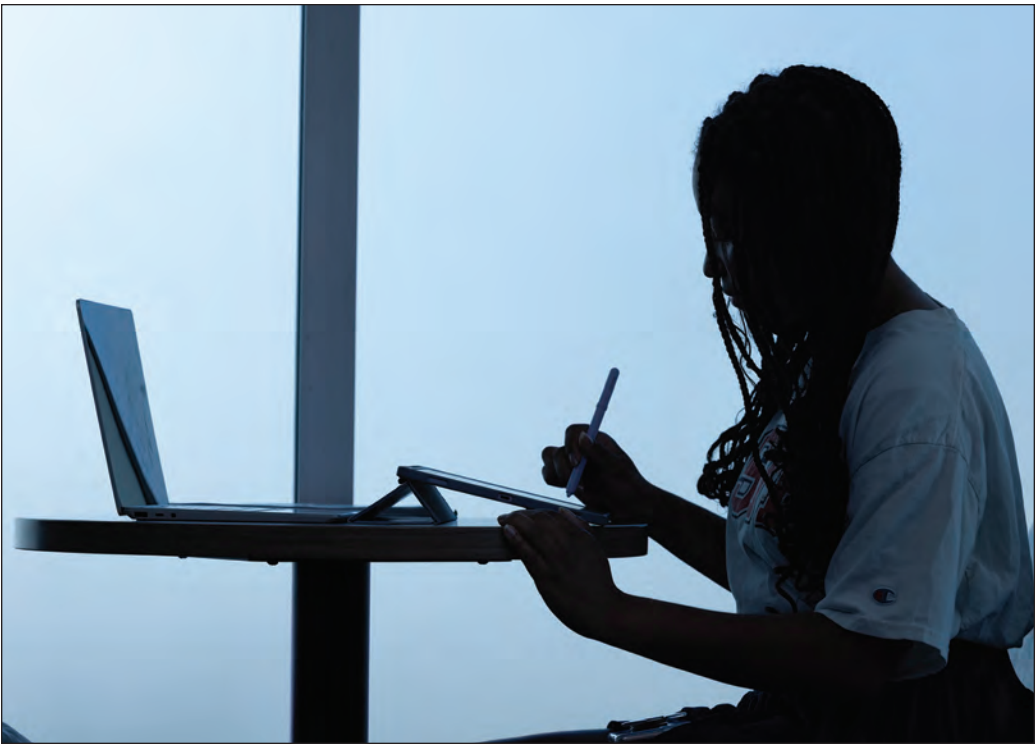
Art major and first-generation college student Skylar Williams

dustry professionals and alumni, helping them establish relationships that can open doors to internships, mentorships and job opportunities.”

Students are also taught how to initiate career conversations, network with peers and professionals, and explore a variety of career paths in the arts — “skills that are often not taught in traditional coursework,” Reyes added.

Williams has a resume, and on it she lists her current part-time job working at Disneyland as a captain on a Storybook Land Canal boat. This job enables her to be part of the Disney Aspire scholarship program, which, in partnership with Cal State Fullerton, covers some tuition fees for Orange County employees. Last year, Williams took one semester off for an internship working in the costume department at Disney World in Florida.

She has also worked as a Titan Ambassador, giving campus tours, and she’s currently vice president of the Women In Animation collective on the CSUF campus, a role in which she relies on networking to invite professionals to share their experi-



Skylar Williams aspires to a career in animation.

ence with students.

Feeling confident to reach out to professionals is key to building connections that can lead to job opportunities, post-college and throughout life. “Students develop skills in using LinkedIn to identify alumni with arts degrees and explore their profiles to learn about diverse career paths,” Reyes said. “They are then encouraged to reach

out and connect with these alumni to initiate career conversations.”

Such conversations are also facilitated by connecting students with alumni mentors in relevant careers. The “I Am First” program also organizes alumni panels and career expos so first-generation students can begin their journey to a successful career with knowledge, skills and confidence.

HELPING NONPROFIT

# Marketing students develop strategies to attract bone marrow donors

Cal State Fullerton

For Cal State Fullerton business administration-marketing major Lauren Schuerger, researching ways to persuade young people to sign up as bone marrow donors wasn’t just a class assignment.

It boosted her resume, built her confidence and gave her the satisfaction of helping people.

Working with NMDP, formerly the National Marrow Donor Program and Be the Match, was a rewarding process that taught Schuerger about nonprofit marketing and gave her practice gathering and analyzing data.

“This was more than just getting a grade. It was ultimately helping the bone marrow foundation increase registrants and save lives in the long run,” Schuerger said.

NMDP maintains a registry of about 42 million people worldwide who are willing to donate bone marrow or blood stem cells to compatible patients with cancers and other disorders of the blood.

Because the likelihood of a successful transplant is greater with younger donors, NMDP’s target demographic is donors who are 18 to 35 years old and ethnically diverse, so “college campuses are absolutely where we need to be,” said Jackie Chandonnet, the NMDP Foundation’s West Coast development director.

Partnering with the nonprofit, CSUF students drafted research proposals, created a questionnaire, gathered data and checked its quality, and produced a final report with recommendations on how to increase NMDP’s visibility and the most effective ways to reach young people.

The report’s suggestions include creating a mascot to appear at campus events, collaborating with health organizations, partnering with influencers, reaching out to students majoring in health- and science-related fields, and using NMDP’s mobile app to offer transparency and keep potential donors engaged.

NMDP is now implementing some of the ideas from the students’ research. Chandonnet said the organization re-



CSUF students recently formed a campus chapter of NMDP, which keeps a registry to match bone marrow donors to patients who need transplants.

cently established a chapter on campus and hopes to add others across the California State University system.

“These students’ feedback and work on this project are critical to our success, not just at Cal State Fullerton, but to really inform how we can work better with students and campuses and colleges across the country,” Chandonnet said.

The partnership has been great for students, too. Neil Granitz, CSUF chair and professor of marketing, said companies want to hire graduates with real-world experience, and they look for soft skills like being able to communicate well, give a presentation and work with a team.

The project is popular with students

because they get to share their marketing ideas with a real organization, and they approach it thoughtfully because it has human stakes, Granitz said

CSUF’s collaboration with the nonprofit originated with Robert Zimmer, professor emeritus of marketing, whose wife, Wanda, received a successful stem cell transplant through NMDP. Zimmer wanted to help the organization that saved Wanda’s life, so in 2016 he and Granitz had students study their peers’ awareness of the marrow donation registry.

Years later, Chandonnet met the Zimmers, whom she called “the heart and soul of the project,” and they began discussing follow-up research to see how NMDP could increase its visibility with

college-age youth.

Granitz worked with them to develop the spring 2025 class project. The Zimmers came to campus to hear the students’ findings, and Wanda said she was impressed, adding, “I am a product of somebody who decided to step up to the plate one day and save a life.”

Schuerger said she felt more passionate when presenting her classmates’ research, knowing that it would benefit others.

After graduation, Schuerger will start her career as a sales representative for an international corporation. Working with the marrow donor nonprofit “gave me the confidence to work alongside companies and actually make a real-world impact,” she said.



SCIENCE

Spider expert likes to share her work with students

Anna Holmquist studying the impact of wildfires

By Jenelyn Russo  
contributing writer

While most people flinch at the sight of a spider, Cal State Fullerton assistant professor of biological science Anna Holmquist is fascinated by them. She sees the eight-legged creatures not as pests but as essential players in ecosystems that offer insights into biodiversity and community ecology.

Holmquist’s passion for spiders and other insects and invertebrates began at a very young age, and she has clear memories of turning over rocks in her backyard and being mesmerized by the hidden world she found underneath.

“Even in kindergarten, I said I wanted to be an entomologist,” Holmquist said. “So it started young.”

Since joining CSUF in July, Holmquist has been introducing Titan students to her worlds of arachnology, entomology and molecular ecology through hands-on labs, fieldwork and research-focused coursework.

“I was really looking for a school that prioritized research, but also prioritized teaching and mentorship,” Holmquist said. “That’s something that I’m really passionate about, working with students and teaching. ... While there is a strong research program here, there’s also emphasis on teaching and mentorship.”

During her undergraduate studies at North Carolina State University, Holmquist researched how the urban heat island effect was restructuring spider communities in trees across the city of Raleigh, N.C.

As a doctoral student at UC Berkeley, Holmquist conducted key dissertation research on an island in Indonesia, studying spider biodiversity and regional species diversification. She returned to Indonesia on a Fulbright Award, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to cut the trip short.

When she came back to the United States, she landed in California and began work in wildfire systems, looking at the 2020 wildfires and asking questions about arthropods, insects and spiders and their response to changing wildfire regimes in the state. The mountains and deserts that are part of this region also provide Holmquist the geography that aligns with her research interests.

“Unfortunately, (this is) the perfect place for me to be in terms of studying the impact of wildfires,” Holmquist said. “And then we have these mountain systems with really complex evolutionary histories of species that live there. And we have our deserts here that provide a whole new angle for me of thinking about environmental challenges and how that drives biodiversity. The locality and all of the research opportunities it provides was also something that I was really excited about.”

Holmquist is currently working with a CSUF graduate student who is continuing work on her 2020 wildfire research, looking at the burn impact on different ground-dwelling arthropods. Assisting on the project are three undergraduate students who have joined the lab and are processing hundreds of burn site samples by removing the insects and preparing them for DNA sequencing.

Holmquist also has plans for Titan undergraduates to begin research on two different spider species to understand their webs and how they use them in specific ecological strategies.

“That’s something we’ll be beginning to study as well from the angle of how



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Arachnologist Anna Holmquist holds a huntsman spider, also called giant crab spiders, found in Southeast Asia.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANNA HOLMQUIST

Fecenia spider web



These spiders and insects were found after Northern California wildfires. They are being studied to understand the impact of wildfires on arthropod communities.

these communal webs and these complex social behaviors could help spiders succeed in an urban area,” Holmquist said.

Holmquist currently teaches ecology courses and is developing an entomology class that will be offered next fall. She also plans to provide undergraduate opportunities to expand and further utilize the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics’ ento-

mology collection. Additionally, she is looking forward to studying the desert systems and unique endemic diversity found in the CSU Desert Studies Center, located on the edge of the Mojave National Preserve.

Of the more than 50,000 known spider species, Holmquist does have a few favorites, including the genus Fec-



Social cobweb spider, called Anelosimus analyticus, found in Orange County, spins complex webs.

nia in the family Psecridae, which builds a distinctive web and is found only in Southeast Asia, and the genus Mesida in the family Tetragnathidae, which has five described species in Indonesia, although her research on Sulawesi, an island in Indonesia, suggests there may be as many as 20 additional previously undocumented species.

Holmquist contends that the fear surrounding spiders is largely misplaced, noting that only about 10 species are medically significant. She believes the focus should instead be on their essential role in ecosystems, where they serve as both predator and prey.

“They’re incredibly diverse and abundant, and they’ve been often overlooked in science,” Holmquist said of spiders. “Being able to get more students involved in entomology and hands-on research is really crucial for increasing diversity in STEM.”

As a woman in STEM, Holmquist has seen the challenges many students face, and at CSUF, she hopes to provide a community and a lab environment that welcomes students of all backgrounds and offers opportunities for meaningful research.

“Being able to come (to CSUF) and build a laboratory environment that allows all students to come and join and really learn about research and science in a hands-on way is really important to me,” Holmquist said. “It’s one of my main missions.”

Economy

FROM PAGE 1

Economic growth in Orange County is projected at 0.38%, well below its historical average, the economists said.

“Many of the troubles are of its own making,” Puri said. “And there are other areas where the federal government’s actions are making it worse.”

Despite some anxieties, Farka predicts steady GDP growth at the national level, in part, due to AI, which contributes to nearly half of U.S. GDP growth this year.

“AI alone has contributed, almost half of U.S. GDP growth this year,” Farka said. “We do think this trend is going to continue.”

But in California, the statistics create a different picture.

California’s GDP has grown 34.1% since 2015, while Texas has surged ahead with nearly 50% growth, which speaks to the majority of new jobs in the Lone Star State.

The negative trends are not going unnoticed, as three-quarters of Californians expect tough times ahead and half are alarmed by relentless price increases, according to a survey from the Public Policy Institute of California.

“California residents are not happy,” Puri said. “They are in a sour mood. The majority feel that the state is going in the wrong direction.”

And with median home prices topping \$1.4 million statewide and \$930,000 in Los Angeles, affordability is out of reach for many.

California is not building enough homes, Puri said, and minor legislative efforts are doing little to solve the housing crisis.

“They’re not going to make a huge dent in the housing market,” Puri said. “And the homelessness problem that we have in California as a whole, especially in LA.”

Utility bills are also a major concern, with California’s oil production at a historic low.

Gas prices in the state are also about \$1.50 higher than the national average.

Additionally, California ranks 45th in the nation in job opportunity growth since 2020, and population growth is slow due to net out-migration, according to the economists.

The big culprit is net out-migration,” Puri said. “People moving out of the state versus in the state. More people have been moving out, and that is the cause.”

“Construction, agriculture, hospitality, retail sector, they all are dependent on this workforce,” the economist said. “And so, the question is, when you reduce the immigrant population, who’s going to do all these jobs?”

California’s structural issues related to housing and the labor supply intersect with major national policy shifts such as implementation of tariffs, immigration crackdowns and investment in AI technology, creating a more fragile outlook for California compared with the broader U.S. economy.

During the first 10 months of 2025, about 450,000 people have been deported, Farka said.

Farka pointed out that the Congressional Budget Office is projecting that over the next few years, there will be a significant decline in immigrants added to the labor force.

And keeping unemployment steady depends on immigration flows, she said, because fewer immigrants mean fewer



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUG GIFFORD.

Attendees at the economic forecast hear the insights of Anil Puri and Mira Farka.

jobs are needed, but also less vitality in the labor market.

“If immigration is going to be a million people ... we need about 120,000 jobs per month,” Farka said. “If it’s 400,000 like we had this year, we need 50,000. If you have no immigrants, all you need is 30,000.”

In California, the immigration decline hits hard.

“California’s reliance on immigrant labor in sectors like agriculture, health care and technology means that reduced inflows hit harder here than nationally,” Puri said, “especially when housing costs already discourage workers from staying.”



WOMEN'S SOCCER

# Remembering Lauren Turner: Dealing with player’s death

Injured in same incident,  
Gwynn faces long recovery

By **Brian Robin**  
*contributing writer*

Demian Brown wants you to know a few things about Lauren Turner.

The Cal State Fullerton women’s soccer coach wants you to know she was a game-changer on the recruiting front, that landing her from Beckman High School and the nationally recognized Slammers FC club in Newport Beach was “a massive uptick in our recruitment.”

Brown wants you to know why Turner was such a recruiting coup. He can’t remember her missing a tackle in two years, talked with awe dripping from his voice about how she won every ball in the air and possessed brilliant vision that made her a scintillating passer of the ball.

“She made the hard things look really easy,” he said. “God didn’t gift her with blazing speed, but you would never know it because of her positioning and the way she read the game.”

But Brown wants you to know that Turner was more than the owner of a savant-level soccer IQ, more than a slick-passing holding midfielder, center back or fullback —and yes, Brown wants you to know she was that versatile. That she would play anywhere, anytime.

“I started her at holding midfielder. Then, I pulled her over and said, ‘I need you to play center back.’ She said, ‘OK.’ I told her, ‘I need you to get out wide and play there.’ She said, ‘OK.’ If I asked her to play up front, she’d say, ‘OK.’ Nothing was too big an ask for her,” he said.

He wants you to know Turner was a great conversationalist and owner of a world-class sense of humor. If there was humor to be shared — by her or at her — Turner was typically either the prankster, or the prankstee. Turner was as versatile with her humor as she was on the soccer field.

And Brown wants you to know Turner’s personality and values meshed perfectly with the team culture Brown works so hard to maintain. On her recruiting visit, Turner immediately bonded with Brown’s daughter, Dalia, the two conversing like they had known each other for years. That was a moment the Titans’ coach never forgot.

Brown wants you to know Lauren Turner was more than a standout soccer player, more than the 1,471 minutes she played in her two seasons. More than her 12 starts. More than a typical No. 5, a number traditionally given to one of a team’s best defenders.

He wants you to know Lauren Turner



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON  
A candlelight vigil was held on Nov. 12 in memory of Lauren Turner, who passed away on Nov. 7 at the age of 19.

was a presence. A presence who will be missed in so many ways by so many people.

When the call from CSUF Police Department Chief Anthony Frisbee came the morning of Sept. 28, Brown wasn’t prepared on any level for Frisbee’s message.

There was an accident involving Turner and sophomore forward Ashlyn Gwynn. Electric scooters, a box truck, north of the campus on Associated Road. The Fullerton Police Department news release about the accident reported that officers found two women “in the roadway with significant, life-threatening injuries.”

“You think it’s a couple scrapes and bruises. You don’t expect or think or imagine something of this nature,” Brown said, remembering his initial reaction to Frisbee’s call. “Reality turned out to be a lot more than that.”

Turner and Gwynn were on their way to watch the Titans’ men’s team take on San Diego State. They were driving their scooters down Associated Road when they were hit by the box truck.

Reality, indeed, turned out to be a lot more than that. Turner and Gwynn were taken to a local hospital. They spent significant weeks in ICU; Gwynn spending a month and Turner six weeks.

On Nov. 7, Christopher Turner, Lauren’s father, shared this message on a GoFundMe page established to help with Lauren’s medical expenses. As of Nov. 23, more than \$111,000 was in the fund.

“Early this morning, our sweet Lauren fell asleep in the Lord. Our hearts are broken, and our family is forever changed. We will miss her beyond measure, yet we take great comfort in knowing she is now in the loving embrace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Brown now had the unenviable and unimaginable task of telling his team. CSUF Athletic Director Jim Donovan ensured he wouldn’t be alone in this task, summoning the entire athletic department to support Brown, his staff and his team, then putting the university’s formidable mental and emotional health resources at everyone’s disposal.

“Jim Donovan has been amazing through all of this,” Brown said, adding that he believes that players have made use of those resources. “We did as good a job as we possibly could have in a situation where there’s no good way to do it. We did a good job supporting the players and making sure they had the resources to deal with this kind of adversity.”

On Nov. 12, the university held a can-

dlelight vigil for Turner at Titan Stadium that brought approximately 1,100 people. Attendees placed tea lights on the field forming the number 5—Turner’s number. Brown said this further illustrates what kind of person Turner was — and the presence she was among everyone who knew her during her 19 years.

Two weeks ago, Brown brought the team together, rolled out the balls and turned them loose in an informal practice that stretched the meaning of the word. They kicked the ball around, worked up a sweat and bonded over the sheer act of togetherness. He wanted them to remember what brought them together, what kept them together and what this game meant to Turner and Gwynn, who is expected to survive as she undergoes an extensive rehabilitation process.

On Gwynn’s GoFundMe page, which raised more than \$68,000 as of Nov. 23, her parents updated her condition, saying that after spending that month in ICU, she has been transferred to a “Step Down” unit, where she will receive daily occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy, the first steps on that lengthy process. Her parents described her recovery as “nothing short of miraculous.”

“The biggest aspect is dealing with our players and our program and keeping Lauren alive through what she loved to do and what we get to do,” Brown said. “I’m dealing with the top 1% of athletes in terms of soccer players, and soccer is what brought them together, soccer is what they love and they love the opportunity to be together.”

“Our team is close, and we were close prior to this. For them to be on the field is something that allows them to be in their happy space. That may sound corny, but that’s what it is.”

Brown met again with his team in mid-November, and he said they declined to speak about Turner. They did speak in a statement issued by the CSUF Athletic Department that read, “Lauren was the funniest, most charismatic, and loving teammate you could ever ask for. She was the first to celebrate other people’s wins. She is the true definition of an amazing person. She always carried herself with compassion, kindness, and happiness. The impact she made on the Titans women’s soccer program is immeasurable.”

“She will be dearly missed by everyone but forever remembered by her Titan family. We love you Lauren, our No. 5 Forever.”

Above all, that’s what Brown wants you to remember about Lauren Turner.

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