



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOULDING, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Renderings of the completed structures are displayed at the CSUF College of Engineering and Computer Science Innovation Hub Construction Milestone Ceremony on Feb. 9.

## TECHNOLOGY

# INNOVATION HUB: EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S ENGINEERS AND COMPUTER SCIENTISTS

Future center 'a catalyst for discovery,' new industry ideas

By Lou Ponsi  
contributing writer

University leaders, students, faculty, donors and industry partners gathered at the construction site on the Cal State Fullerton campus where the Engineering and Computer Science Innovation Hub is taking shape.

Situated adjacent to the engineering and computer science complex, the three-story, 42,000-square-foot Innovation Hub will serve as a "catalyst for discovery and industry innovation," officials within the College of Engineering

and Computer Science said.

The gathering was held to commemorate construction and campaign milestones.

The space will "empower tomorrow's engineers to solve real-world challenges, fuel economic growth and elevate Orange County as a global technology leader," officials said.

The Innovation Hub represents a profound shift in how the university prepares the next generation of engineers and computer scientists, said Sang June Oh, dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

"This will be a place where learning extends beyond lectures, exams into

hands-on discovery, where students move from solving technical problems to addressing global challenges," Oh said. "It will break down traditional silos and create shared spaces where engineers and computer scientists collaborate across disciplines, alongside faculty and industry partners."

The Innovation Hub is being constructed to accommodate enrollment growth and to prepare the next generation of workers for highly skilled and technical careers in the region.

Expected to open by fall 2027, the facility will include a GPS/navigation and critical systems lab, cybersecurity range and data center, advanced manufactur-

ing lab, advanced computer and artificial intelligence lab, drone experience lab and bio and health technology lab.

The collaborative space also features a 120-seat multipurpose room.

"Last summer, we stood right here on this site just to break ground," CSUF president Ronald Rochon said. "And now, right behind me, we see this amazing edifice just growing day by day. Today, we are seeing real progress take shape. We're driving at Cal State University Fullerton to enhance student learning experience, engagement and productivity."

"This work includes the incredible

INNOVATION » PAGE 2



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

CSUF President Ronald Rochon serves as Grand Marshal during the Orange County Black History Parade & Festival on Feb. 7.

## CSUF joins in Black History parade, festival

More photos » PAGE 5



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FUNDRAISER

# Cleveland Guardians pitcher Bibee wouldn't trade his Titan training

Cal State Fullerton

Former Titans baseball standout Tanner Bibee recalled how Cal State Fullerton prepared him for the big leagues while imparting important values and lessons he carries with him as a Cleveland Guardians starting pitcher.

"The underdog mentality and the grit were exactly what I was looking for. I wouldn't trade my time here for anything," said Bibee, who made his Major League Baseball debut in 2023.

"I know I would not be where I am today without my experiences at Cal State Fullerton and how they shaped me."

Bibee, who began his professional baseball career in the Cleveland Guardians' minor league system in 2021, was the keynote speaker at the 2026 Dinner With the Titans baseball fundraiser.

More than 400 supporters, current and alumni players, family members and coaches attended the Jan. 23 event. Nearly \$194,000 was raised for the baseball program, including a \$20,000 donation from Bibee.

Jim Donovan, director of athletics, thanked the rousing crowd for their support and said that 100% of their donations stay with the baseball program. Donovan said coach Jason Dietrich helps to determine how their contributions are spent on the team, including for student scholarships.

Donovan called this year's team the most exciting since 2018: "I believe all the stars are lining up for an outstanding season."

Over Bibee's four seasons at CSUF, the Mission Viejo native had a 3.82 ERA and 236 strikeouts. He landed a spot on the team in 2018 and pitched until 2021.

While he called his collegiate career challenging at times for him and the program, he also mentioned highlights such as making his NCAA postseason debut. He helped the Titans earn a 5-2 victory over Stanford to advance to the NCAA Super Regionals.

"I cherish those moments every day," said Bibee, who earned a bachelor's degree in communications-public relations. "I was in the minors for less than two years, and without the traits that Fullerton was able to instill in me, I might still be there."

"The work ethic and mental fortitude that Fullerton helped me create are one of the reasons why I was able to fly through the ranks so fast."

During his remarks, Bibee recalled how Cal State Fullerton has been in his blood since he was a boy.

Bibee played on a baseball travel ball team, led by former Titans players, and at a young age, learned the "Fullerton



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE ALBERTSON

Tanner Bibee, former Titans baseball player and starting pitcher for the Cleveland Guardians, delivered the keynote address at "Dinner With the Titans" baseball fundraiser.

way" of toughness and the ability to make sacrifices to succeed.

He and his parents also frequented Goodwin Field to watch the Titans play.

"My parents and I started going to games," he recollected. "I always loved walking up to Goodwin Field under the lights with the smell of funnel cake and kettle corn in the air."

After touring the campus, watching legendary Titans such as MLB players Matt Chapman and Michael Lorenzen, and being constantly exposed to CSUF, Bibee knew he wanted to be a Titan.

"The development, the history, and the winning were undeniable; it stared you right in the face," he said.

Bibee gave some parting advice to the 2026 team that, just by being a Titan, they'll be ready for any curveballs life throws along the way — during and after their baseball careers.

"Work hard, study hard, win hard and most importantly, have fun hard — and carry pride putting on the Titan logo," he said.

The 2026 Titans baseball season opened Feb. 13 at Goodwin Field against California Baptist University.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON ATHLETICS

Players on the 2026 Titans baseball team cheer from the dugout.

## Innovation

FROM PAGE 1

support from many partners here today, distributing pathways for current and transfer students in all of our STEM fields, expanding mentorship opportunities, providing career readiness, and skills training from emerging tech fields."

Administrators acknowledged the key role that donors, alumni, community partners and industry leaders have played to make the \$85 million project a reality.

Alumnus Bill Ruh, lead donor and Innovation Hub co-chair, recounted his time as a Cal State Fullerton computer science student who went on to become chief executive officer of GE Digital.

Ruh has also served as adjunct faculty and is a generous donor to the university.

"This is about enabling students and faculty to envision the future, to allow them to create, explore and lead in innovation," Ruh said. "And if you think about it, it goes beyond that. It becomes a gravitational force from which the business community, the broader Cal State Fullerton family, and the entire OC community can come together, and

they can take that innovation and make it happen."

To memorialize construction and campaign milestones, attendees were invited to write inspirational messages on a steel column on the new building.

Haley Barrios Gomez, 21, a mechanical engineering student, said the building represents the future for students who will discover their capabilities and go on to become innovators and scientists.

Gomez, who has worn a prosthetic left arm since she was 2 years old, designed her own prosthetic.

After transferring from Irvine Valley College, Gomez was selected for an eight-week research project at CSUF offered by Project RAISE, which stands for the Regional Alliance in STEM Application.

The innovation hub will provide the opportunity for Gomez and other students to assess and collaborate on STEM projects, she said.

"The Innovation Hub is more than just a new place on campus," said Gomez, who was also selected for the Apple Next-Gen Innovators mentorship program. "It is a place where ideas will be tested, collaborations will spark and then next generation of innovators and scientists will discover what they are capable of."



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOULDING, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

CSUF President Ronald Rochon and mechanical engineering major Haley Barrios Gomez are all smiles after putting their names on a beam during the CSUF College of Engineering and Computer Science Innovation Hub Construction Milestone Ceremony.

**JOHNSTON NGUYEN LEADS WITH PURPOSE ON STAGE AND BEYOND**

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## VISION &amp; VISIONARIES

# Alum finds taking the nontraditional path often pays off

College president, clinical psychologist began at CSUF

By **Jenelyn Russo**  
contributing writer

*In celebration of their accomplishments in their respective fields and their service and support of the university, Cal State Fullerton is recognizing five Distinguished Alumni on Feb. 28, as the 2026 CSUF Vision & Visionaries Award recipients.*

For clinical psychologist Robin Holmes-Sullivan, the decision to attend Cal State Fullerton was driven primarily by where she wanted to play college basketball. The starting point guard dominated the court for the Titans while earning a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1986 and a master's degree in experimental psychology in 1990.

After more than three decades in higher education, including leadership roles at the University of Oregon and within the University of California system, Holmes-Sullivan was named the 26th president of Lewis & Clark College in 2022. Additionally, she also maintains a private practice as a clinical psychologist.

For her commitment to higher education and her dedication to clinical psychology, Holmes-Sullivan has been named a 2026 CSUF Vision & Visionaries Distinguished Alumni Award recipient.

The daughter of a marine based in El Toro, attending college was a foregone conclusion for Holmes-Sullivan; the only question was where. As a standout basketball player at El Toro High School, she was a highly sought-after recruit, and CSUF's Division I program offered everything she was looking for, including a competitive conference, strong coaching staff and teammates, and a chance to play close to home.

During her time as a Titan, Holmes-Sullivan was a four-year captain. Although she was recruited as a shooting guard, she switched positions and started all four years at point guard, a transition that taught her valuable lessons in growth and maturity.

"I loved my experience at Fullerton, and I loved being a Titan," Holmes-Sullivan said. "It was really such a transformational experience and pivotal in my own growth and development. I had a great time, and I was so glad that I chose to attend."

In the classroom, Holmes-Sullivan had an interest in psychology from the start, inspired by a high school course and the movie "Sybil," in which she was mesmerized by Joanne Woodward's psychiatrist character. Instead of pursuing medical school, she found herself drawn to the educational opportunities that accompanied clinical psychology. Her experience at CSUF was everything she was looking for, both on and off the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Clinical psychologist and president of Lewis & Clark College Robin Holmes-Sullivan

court.

"The academic experience was fantastic," said Holmes-Sullivan of CSUF. "I had relationships with my professors. They helped me hone in to what I wanted to do and how I needed to get there. ... Really solid faculty who were well-known in their fields and just good at what they did, including teaching."

Knowing she needed a doctorate, Holmes-Sullivan first earned a master's degree in experimental psychology at CSUF, which reinforced her desire to pursue clinical training and experience rather than research-focused studies.

"I had great professors who really took an interest in me, and that helped me as I started pursuing my graduate work," Holmes-Sullivan said. "They were pivotal in that, so it was a fantastic experience. If I had to do it all over, I'd pick Fullerton again."

Holmes-Sullivan then went on to the California School of Professional Psychology, a nontraditional path for earning her doctorate that provided the

training and fit she was looking for.

"It was one of those life lessons where you have to think through about what's best for you, not necessarily what people tell you to do or what society tells you to do, and make your best choices," Holmes-Sullivan said.

After completing her doctoral coursework, Holmes-Sullivan interned at a UC Davis counseling center, where she discovered a passion for providing mental health services to college students. She then worked at the University of Oregon for 25 years, joining as a staff psychologist, quickly becoming counseling center director, and later serving 10 years as vice president of student affairs.

In her next move, Holmes-Sullivan returned to California to serve three years as vice president for student affairs for the 10-campus UC system. Missing campus life, and in a move that surprised many, she moved back to Oregon to take the same post at Lewis & Clark College, a small liberal arts school. In 2022, she was appointed president and became the

first woman and person of color to lead the 156-year-old institution.

"Just because something might not look traditional or like the expected path, it doesn't mean that it isn't the right path for you," Holmes-Sullivan said. "This was absolutely the right decision for me to be at an institution where I could have much more engaged interactions with folks in a smaller environment and learn about the liberal arts and their role in American education."

Holmes-Sullivan feels honored to be recognized alongside other CSUF Vision & Visionaries Award recipients. She believes her time at CSUF prepared her in multiple ways for her career journey, and she is grateful for that experience.

"I'm just really proud to be known as a Titan," Holmes-Sullivan said. "Part of something that was quality, that was solidly grounded in really good values and where people cared about you. It was my home ... and so community is what it meant to me ... To feel like you belong to something is just incredible."

## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

## Losquadro leaves his advancement mark at CSUF, CSU

Volunteer, organization work also recognized

By **Jenelyn Russo**  
contributing writer

*In celebration of their accomplishments in their respective fields and their service and support of the university, Cal State Fullerton is recognizing five Distinguished Alumni on Feb. 28, as the 2026 CSUF Vision & Visionaries Award recipients.*

In fall 1983, Michael Losquadro took a job as a grill cook at Cal State Fullerton to help pay his way through school. After earning a business management degree in 1986, he embarked on a 30-plus year career in higher education advancement, serving in both the University of California and California State University systems. In 2021, he retired as senior adviser for campus advancement in the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Concurrent with his career path, Losquadro volunteered for more than 21 years with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, retiring as a reserve lieutenant. Additionally, he has been a longtime advocate for the LGBTQ population, starting with his participation in CSUF's Gay Student Union and then later with the LGBTQ Center Orange County.

In recognition of his work in higher education advancement, his commitment to the local LGBTQ community and his volunteer service with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, Losquadro has been named a 2026 CSUF Vision & Visionaries Distinguished Alumni award winner.

Raised in Orange County, Losquadro set his sights on college after graduating from Kennedy High School in La Palma. But with the reality of having to pay for his education, he knew staying close to home was a necessity and began searching for a nearby, affordable option. CSUF was the ideal solution. He majored in business management and got involved in organizations on campus such as the Gay Student Union and the Society for the Advancement of Management.

But Losquadro's connection to the Titan community was rooted largely in



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Michael Losquadro, entrepreneur, activist and LGBTQ community advocate

campus employment. He started as a grill cook in campus dining, then rose to supervisor and manager. In that role, he helped support many significant and historic campus events, including when Titan Gym served as an official venue for team handball during the 1984 Summer Olympics, an experience that sparked a lifelong passion for the Games.

"Fullerton gave me many opportunities that I would not have had otherwise," Losquadro said. "But they also allowed me to succeed or learn how to do something better. It was a great opportunity for me."

After graduating, Losquadro stayed on with the food service company he worked for at CSUF and landed a posi-

tion at UC Irvine. After a career pivot, he made his way back to UCI for a role in the University Advancement Division as the executive assistant to the chief development officer.

Though he had no prior advancement experience, Losquadro discovered his passion for the field while at UCI, launching a career that would span several decades. Over 17 years, he rose to executive director before becoming associate vice president at Cal State Long Beach, where he led the development department, launched the university's first comprehensive campaign and established the Long Beach State Foundation.

After 12 years at CSULB, Losquadro took what he called a "capstone role"

in the CSU Office of the Chancellor. He served as senior adviser to campus presidents on fundraising, foundation and board recruitment, and stepped in as interim vice president when a campus experienced a vacancy. It was the culmination of more than 30 years in the higher education advancement space.

"I loved working with incredibly generous and visionary people," Losquadro said. "And I worked to help them achieve their philanthropic goals while trying to figure out what the university's needs were. It was magic."

Losquadro's decision to join the Orange County Sheriff's Department Reserve Bureau came after 9/11 when he decided he wanted to take action rather than sit on the sidelines. He was the first openly gay man to complete and graduate from the sheriff's academy, and during his 21-year career as a reserve, he was a member of the search and rescue unit.

His commitment to the community did not end there. After coming out at 19, Losquadro joined CSUF's Gay Student Union and later became a leader, program facilitator, board member and donor at the LGBTQ Center Orange County. He has also organized political campaigns, met with elected officials and helped lead Orange County contingents to marches in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

Losquadro and his husband, Dr. Brian C. Keller, recently committed a significant gift to the university that will establish student scholarships in the College of Business and Economics and provide long-term support for the newly renamed Losquadro Keller LGBTQ Resource Center at CSUF.

Surprised and overwhelmed by the Vision & Visionaries honor, Losquadro is reluctant to call himself a visionary. What he does claim is determination — the drive to carry an idea from concept to completion — a trait he credits to his time at CSUF.

"I think (being a Titan) means to be someone who is scrappy, who is determined, who wants to do better for society and wants to bring others along with them," Losquadro said. "Fullerton is where the rubber meets the road. It is not theoretical. It is practical. And we are changing lives one at a time in a very practical way."

## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

## Business student explores public service with Panetta internship

Cal State Fullerton

Melyne Garcia took her first trip to Washington, D.C., as a Cal State Fullerton student through the Business Honors Program, where she developed a newfound interest in public policy.

Looking for additional opportunities to explore the public service field, Garcia applied and was selected as CSUF's 2025 Panetta congressional intern. She returned to the nation's capital eager to develop her professional skills in government, politics and public policy.

Every year, one student from each California State University campus is selected to participate in a fully funded internship in Washington, D.C., that is hosted by the Panetta Institute for Public Policy. As part of the program, founded in 1997 by former U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and his wife, Sylvia Panetta, students gain real-world experience working alongside individuals in government and politics.

As an intern in U.S. Rep. Brad Sherman's office, Garcia attended committee hearings, cataloged constituents' calls, booked Capitol tours, gathered legislative research and drafted policy memos for professional staff members.

"The internship opened my eyes to the many ways I can contribute to my community. It felt good to provide a warm greeting, listen earnestly to what people wanted to say and know their beliefs were being noticed," said Garcia, who is pursuing her degree in business administration-accounting.

As an aspiring CPA with an interest in tax policy, she says the Panetta internship allowed her to strengthen her accounting education with hands-on training in public service. Garcia said she chose to study business because she

admired her mom's career in accounting, and she finds joy in mastering a challenging concept after hours of hard work.

"I'll never forget how happy we all were when I chose to pursue business at Cal State Fullerton. My family and I agreed that it was the perfect fit for me, and it has worked out so well," said Garcia, who chose CSUF for its robust business program.

Throughout her internship, Garcia collaborated and networked with professional staff members who specialize in different areas of government. She said that building these connections and learning about various fiscal policies opened her eyes to future career possibilities, providing her with a "fresh outlook on her educational journey."

"This internship showed me that the career paths in accounting go a lot further than I originally thought. I still want to pursue a career as a CPA, but I don't have to stop there. There are so many more possibilities," said Garcia. "After this experience, I could see myself getting involved in local government because I believe that's where I could make an impact."

Prior to her internship, Garcia gained hands-on business training through the Deloitte Discovery internship program. She worked on real-world client projects that focused on AI integration and mergers and acquisitions, enhancing her technical and professional skills.

"Melyne consistently demonstrates strong critical thinking, curiosity and a genuine care for the people and communities she serves. She brings both competence and heart to everything she does," said Traci Shoblom, lecturer in marketing, who first met Garcia in her business writing course. "I'm excited to see where her path leads next."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELYNE GARCIA

Business administration-accounting student Melyne Garcia interned in the nation's capital as CSUF's 2025 Panetta congressional intern.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELYNE GARCIA

Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, left, Melyne Garcia and Sylvia Panetta

## OPPORTUNITY

## Second Start program gives students a chance to finish college

Cal State Fullerton

While raising two young daughters and working full-time, Magaly Uriostegui's desire to return to college never wavered.

Uriostegui transferred to Cal State Fullerton in 2019 after earning an associate degree from Santa Ana College. During her first semester, she had low grades due to challenges balancing academics, family responsibilities and financial hardship.

She quit college and put her goal of earning a bachelor's degree on hold. Now, the sociology major is getting a second chance at college.

Uriostegui was invited to restart college through the California State University's Second Start Pilot Program — and seized the opportunity.

With the support of her husband and family, Uriostegui re-entered CSUF in spring 2025. She's achieved a 3.94 GPA and is on track to graduate in May, part of the first class of graduating Second Start students.

"Stepping away was difficult, but the goal of earning my degree never left me," Uriostegui said. "It simply took time, maturity and the right support to return. Returning to college was about finishing what I started."

The five-year pilot program, launched in the fall of 2024 at 14 California State University campuses, gives former students a fresh start to finish college.

"Second Start helps former students return to complete their undergraduate degrees by reducing barriers, resetting their GPA and streamlining the readmission process," said Yuying Tsong, associate vice president for student success and academic support.

Tsong said the program is for individuals who left CSUF more than three years ago, did not enroll in a two- or four-year institution and had a GPA below 2.0 when they left.

Currently, 25 continuing students are in the program, and 13 new students were admitted this spring, said Maria Organista, director of academic advising and specialized advising programs, who oversees Second Start at CSUF.

The program, housed under the university's Bring Back Titans umbrella, offers re-entry advising, academic advising, tutoring and other campus re-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Magaly Uriostegui talks to a fellow student at Discoverfest about how the Rotaract Club has enriched her university experience.

sources to support returning Titans.

"Degree completion opens postbaccalaureate, career and professional opportunities that otherwise would not have been available to them," Organista said. "These opportunities often contribute to the social mobility of the individuals and their families."

The first in her family to pursue higher education, Uriostegui said that returning to college is setting an example for her children and nine siblings.

"I want to show them that setbacks don't define us, but persistence does," said Uriostegui, studying social inequal-

ities and minoring in public administration.

"My journey is about breaking cycles and creating new possibilities for my family. With the right support and belief in yourself, it's never too late to reach your goals."

Participating in the Career Center's "I Am First Program" for first-generation college students and serving as treasurer of the Rotaract Club of CSUF have also enriched her university experience.

Through the student club, she has completed over 75 hours of community service at food pantries and toy drives,

as well as at nonprofits that address human trafficking and domestic violence.

Uriostegui aspires to a career in public service or nonprofit leadership, focusing on programs and policies that support underserved communities. She also plans to pursue a master's degree in public administration.

"Knowing there is a community that truly understands my journey has helped me stay focused and confident," she said. "This program has changed my life and my family's future. I will forever be grateful for the support and opportunity Second Start has given me."

## INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

## TitanSafety app promotes security, wide-ranging services

Access to emergency,  
non-emergency resources

By Larry Urish  
contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton students, as well as faculty, staff and visitors, now have access to a comprehensive digital resource that can connect them to emergency assistance, mental health support and many other key campus services, thanks to the release of the new TitanSafety mobile application. In addition to police support, TitanSafety furnishes access to the university's Mobile Crisis Team, Counseling and Psychological Services and much more.

"We wanted to get all of these resources into the students' hands so they wouldn't have to go to several different websites to find them," said Detective Sergeant Christopher Brown of the CSUF Police Department. "Now they can go directly to the app."

The critical focus, Brown emphasized, is all about providing the support and resources to help students stay safe and succeed, regardless of the circumstances. TitanSafety is a simple, powerful tool that aids in this undertaking.

Brown, who spearheaded the development of TitanSafety with Marissa Garza, CSUF Police public information officer, noted that the app leverages the university's emphasis on holistic safety, which stresses a "tiered safety response" model that furnishes specific levels of care based on an individual's unique need.

"Holistic safety means looking at an individual beyond the moment they're in crisis," Brown said. "Not every situation requires a police officer. Safety means different things to different people, and some don't feel comfortable calling the police for help. ... So, this new application employs holistic safety by putting all of these different resources at the students' fingertips, to help them with whatever safety need



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

The TitanSafety app connects students, faculty and staff with a number of resources and services useful for both emergencies and everyday needs.

they have."

To illustrate the power of TitanSafety, one key element of the app, the Virtual Safety Escort, provides users with greater peace of mind while walking from one area of the campus to another. Using the app's geolocation function, it informs the user how long their walk will take. "When they start their trip with the Virtual Safety Escort, they have immediate access to an Emergency Call button that, when pressed, connects them to 911 dispatch and gives us the specific location of their device," Brown said. "It's what we call a 'mini

Blue Phone.' " (Blue Phones, used in emergencies, are located in buildings, elevators and light poles throughout the CSUF campus; a blue light flashes whenever they're used.)

"If someone using the Virtual Safety Escort doesn't reach their destination within the allotted time on the app, or if they forget to turn the app off, it sends an alert to one of our dispatchers, who calls the individual to verify their safety," Brown said. "And if we can't get ahold of someone (using this feature), we send officers to do an area check."

This brings up the issue of privacy,

an ever-growing concern in this digital age. TitanSafety users, however, needn't worry.

"Privacy is really important to us," Brown said. "TitanSafety's location function is only live after you agree to enable it when you start the application. When you connect with dispatchers, there's a pop-up feature asking if you're willing to share your location. Once your call or on-campus trip has ended, that location information goes away."

One welcome characteristic of this new application, particularly for those easily confused by digital technology, is its intuitive ease of use. For example, the Compass feature, opened by selecting the app's Mental Health button, takes the user through a series of simple questions that ultimately furnish online access to the most applicable resources. These resources include dozens of on- and off-campus options: the Mobile Crisis Team, 911 dispatch, Title IX and Gender Equity and the Dean of Students Office, among many others.

"Compass came about through our partnership with Counseling and Psychological Services," Brown said. "It's a huge boon, because a student may be experiencing something troublesome, but they really don't know what it is. Compass furnishes options to get the kind of help they need in the moment."

Brown stressed that TitanSafety is also available for use by members of the surrounding community. "If there's an emergency as drastic as a hazardous chemical spill or an active shooter, we want to make sure that community members can contact us in a timely manner," he said. "So, this app doubles as a community notification system."

TitanSafety can be downloaded for free at Apple's App Store, Google Play or iFullerton, the university's primary mobile app.

"We're really excited about this," Brown said. "It's a way to communicate with our student body, our staff and our faculty in a manner that we haven't done before. And we're looking forward to interacting with the community through this application."

## BLACK HISTORY CELEBRATED WITH ANAHEIM COMMUNITY

FROM PAGE 1



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

CSUF President Ronald Rochon waves to friends on the parade route during CSUF's Black History Parade.



CSUF Black Student Union members march in the Black History Parade.



The Black Student Union contingent marches behind their banner during the Orange County Black History Parade & Festival.

GOLF

# Drotter pushes team 'to the edge' for mental, physical toughness

## Coach building team with course-savvy play

By Brian Robin  
contributing writer

This time, Jason Drotter had a head start on being a tough guy. This time, unlike last year when he suffered through a 14th-place-out-of-15-teams finish out in the desert — the Cal State Fullerton men's golf coach didn't need an early-spring season tournament meltdown to bring down the hammer. This time, he knew when to formally declare war against his eternal nemesis — mental softness in his players.

No. The fall season, when the Titans finished last in the Big West, gave him all the proof he needed that even though this is a rebuilding year for the Titans, there are certain things Drotter can't tolerate.

"Those are a couple of problems you simply can't play with," he said. "You can never get competitive if you're just soft. And on top of that, we're short hitters. You have a lack of physical strength and a lack of mental toughness, and you simply can't be competitive in today's golf with those two issues."

So, after a 14th-place finish in the fall finale in Oregon, completing an autumn campaign where CSF finished 14th, 13th, 19th, and 13th in its four tournaments, Drotter had seen enough mentally soft déjà vu. He formulated an eight-hour-per-week training plan, gave it to the CSF training staff and turned them loose with one command: Make his players face adversity. And take no prisoners.

"I want you to push them to the edge. If someone's not throwing up every day, you're not working them hard enough," he said.

"I challenged them, telling them, 'If you don't do this and if I find out one person who no-shows or doesn't work hard, we won't practice golf. We'll run bleachers all day.' But at the end of nine weeks, everyone showed up and worked hard. They all gained in their max reps on the bench-press and squats. They gained significant strength, and all of them lost body fat. They all gained weight and muscle, and the best part of it was they felt good about themselves. They were getting those beach muscles and those girl-chasing muscles."

Those girl-chasing, beach muscles helped somewhat in the Titans' spring-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL STATE FULLERTON

Jason Drotter, right, with the CSUF men's golf team Feb. 3 after they placed first at the Bill Cullum Invitational in Somis

season opener, a one-stroke victory over Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on a difficult Saticoy Country Club course outside Ventura earlier this month. But Drotter credits a different muscle for the season-opening statement, one that featured top 10 finishes from sophomore Will Tanaka (third) and senior Giacomo Comerio (seventh).

The one between the ears.

"I'm proud of them, but on that golf course, you can outcoach the course. Saticoy is a very difficult golf course; it's short, tight, and the greens are very fast," he said. "I put together a course-management plan that was statistically correct and told them to follow it to a T. You can eliminate half the field if you play it correctly. If we do those things, follow the plan and deal with the adversity that comes on that course, we'll be competitive. And we won."

Make no mistake. As Drotter pointed out, this year's Titans are a team in transition. Gone are leaders like Tegan Andrews, the 2024 Big West Individual Champion and two-time All-Big West First Team selection, and Matt Schaefer, who is now the Titans' assistant coach. Gone is a lot of the raw distance off the tee that is a hallmark of 21st century college golf at every level. The 2026 Titans don't have the players who can overpower some of the courses

they're going to see — like Palm Desert's Classic Club, the site of their next tournament this week and the impetus last year for Drotter's initial golfer boot camp. They are going to have to lean in on the power of the mind and that mental toughness Drotter endlessly espouses with the fervency of a TV preacher on a pledge drive.

"We don't have a team of bombers who can hit it 300 yards and relatively straight, but we are getting tougher mentally," Drotter said. "We are getting smarter on the golf course, and some of the younger guys are maturing as players and maturing as people. I feel like we're heading in the right direction, but I had to make a serious U-turn in the fall."

Leading that U-turn were two players who played strong supporting roles behind Andrews last year: Tanaka and Comerio. Both earned Big West Honorable Mention selections in their first year as Titans. They racked up T5 finishes with Andrews at the Big West Tournament last year, earning their second top 10 finishes of the season and finishing with near-identical stroke averages: 73.7 for Tanaka and 73.9 for Comerio.

Tanaka added 15 yards to his game, along with a higher trajectory that helps enhance his strong short game

and putting skills. Along with that, Drotter said, came better course management skills that should eliminate the low-percentage, try-to-be-a-hero shots Tanaka was prone to as a freshman.

"That's why you're starting to see him get more competitive," Drotter said. "He's a tough kid who will give you everything he has. ... Will is going to be solid. My expectation is after this two-year rebuild, Will is going to be the face of this program his senior year. He's got that kind of talent, his game is maturing, and if we can get him to gain some length, he's going to be a stud."

Comerio is the latest iteration of the grinder on which Drotter built the Titans' program: a hard-working, do-a-bit-of-everything-good fighter who makes up for his deficiencies with a tenacity that belies where he is on the course. You never doubt his ability to steal strokes, whether he's 4-over or 4-under-par. He spent the offseason undergoing what Drotter described as "massive intense changes in his swing" that paid off with his seventh-place finish at Saticoy.

After those two, the question marks multiply. There's junior Shibo Wang, a transfer from Division III University of Rochester, who was the Liberty League Player of the Year last year. Drotter said he has the best mechanics and talent on the team but poses a challenge buying into Drotter's system.

"If I can get him to commit to playing statistically correct golf, and if I can get him to get more serious in the gym, I feel like he's going to be pretty good. If I can get through to him, he has a good chance at being a good player," Drotter said.

There's redshirt senior Brenden Ashman, who has struggled to break into the lineup his entire CSF career, playing in six tournaments in his four seasons. Drotter said this is the year Ashman should finally put everything together and harness the potential he's shown various times. If for no other reason than Ashman is one of the Titans' few bombers off the tee.

There's a lot of "there" there with this edition of the Titans. There's also a lot of "if" there. But it behooves you to remember what happened the last time Drotter went thermonuclear on his team's mental game deficiencies. And it happened last year — right around, well, now.

The Titans wound up the 2025 season second in the conference, claiming a win and six top 10 finishes.

CSUE Alumni

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