Poncho Sanchez Brings ‘Spirit of the Drum’ to Campus

Grammy Award-winning musician Poncho Sanchez and his Latin jazz band headlined an October concert at Cal State Fullerton, raising more than $300,000 for programs and opportunities benefiting CSUF Latinx students. The Celebración de Cal State Fullerton: ¡Somos Titans! (We are Titans) event was co-chaired by Vikki Vargas ‘81 (B.A. communications), NBC4 Orange County bureau chief, and Gaddi Vasquez, retired U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in Rome who received an honorary doctorate from CSUF in 2021.

A well-known conguero (a musician who plays the conga drums), Sanchez has delighted audiences for more than three decades with his mix of Latin jazz, soul music, melodies and rhythms from a variety of Latin and South American sources. His musical director and trombone player, Francisco Torres, is a faculty member at CSUF, and his percussionist, Giancarlo Anderson, is pursuing his master’s degree in music at the university.

Sanchez also conducted a master class on campus, sharing with students the secret to finding “the spirit of the drum.” The purpose of master classes, hosted by the College of the Arts, is to engage students with professional artists, teach them about diverse musical styles and help them develop skills to reach their career goals.
A New Tool to Fight Global Infectious Diseases

To assist in the global fight against infectious diseases, Cal State Fullerton computational epidemiologist Sampson Akwafuo is researching computational epidemiology, a new and rapidly growing field that develops computational tools for modeling, simulating, predicting and visualizing the spread of diseases in the field of epidemiology.

“The demand for computational epidemiologists is huge,” said Akwafuo, assistant professor of computer science. He and his students are working on developing data-driven algorithms and simulation tools for studying disease spread patterns of Lassa fever. While recent Lassa fever outbreaks have occurred mostly in West Africa, some cases and deaths also have been reported in the United States, according to the CDC. Gavi, the global vaccine coalition, has hinted that Lassa fever might be the next pandemic, Akwafuo noted.

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