

# TITAN REPORT



## Alumni Honored as OC Teachers of the Year

Four Cal State Fullerton alumni were honored with the 2024 Orange County Teachers of the Year Awards for their dedication to student success and innovative hands-on education.

The recipients include Vivian Chang '15, '06 (B.S. child and adolescent development, M.S. educational technology), a fifth-grade teacher at Red Hill Elementary School; Kelli Elliot '00 (M.S. biological science), a biology and environmental science professor at Orange Coast College; Matthew Smith '09 (MBA), a math teacher from Red Hill Lutheran School; and Leslie Whitaker '05 (M.S. education-curriculum and instruction), a math teacher at Esencia Elementary and Middle School.

"CSUF was an instrumental force in my journey to becoming a math teacher," said Smith. "I love what I do."

[BIT.LY/CSUF-TEACHERS-2024](https://bit.ly/csuf-teachers-2024)



## Mildred García Appointed 11th CSU Chancellor

The California State University Board of Trustees has appointed Mildred García to serve as the 11th chancellor of the California State University beginning Oct. 1. García currently serves as president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. She is the first Latina appointed to oversee the CSU's 23-campus system.

"The California State University is a powerful engine of change and upward mobility for California and the nation, supporting hundreds of thousands of students in achieving their educational, career and personal aspirations," said García. "I am honored, humbled and excited for this opportunity to serve the nation's largest four-year university system and work alongside its dedicated leaders, faculty and staff, and its talented and diverse students to further student achievement, close equity gaps and continue to drive California's economic prosperity."

As AASCU president since 2018, García has been a strong advocate for public higher education at the national level, working to influence federal policy and regulations on behalf of 350 member colleges and universities.

García served as president of Cal State Fullerton from 2012 to 2018 and led the university to record improvements in graduation rates and nearly tripled new philanthropic gift commitments. As president of Cal State Dominguez Hills from 2007 to 2012, she increased retention rates for freshman and transfer students and eliminated a structural deficit of \$2.8 million — and became the CSU's first Latina president.

[BIT.LY/CSUF-GARCIA-CHANCELLOR](https://bit.ly/csuf-garcia-chancellor)



## Faculty AI Experts Earn CREATE Award

Cal State Fullerton artificial intelligence experts Kanika Sood and Rakesh Mahto are developing a machine learning model to identify students at risk of dropping out of college or needing extra academic support.

The College of Engineering and Computer Science faculty members received California State University's Creating Responsive, Equitable, Active Teaching and Engagement (CREATE) Award for their project, which provides real-time notifications to instructors, advisers and other support staff when a student is at-risk.

[BIT.LY/CSUF-AI-AWARD](https://bit.ly/csuf-ai-award)

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**TITAN** noun | tī-tən  
one who stands out for **greatness of achievement**

## Latinx Lab Students Confront Racism Through Storytelling

Funded by a \$1.2 million grant from the Mellon Foundation, the Latinx Lab's first Social Justice and Storytelling Institute taught 25 students how to combat structural racism by sharing their personal narratives.

"For people of color, singing, dancing, drawing, painting, performing and storytelling are all tools of resistance and restorative practices," said Alexandro Gradilla, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies. "Storytelling liberates people to regain their humanity through small acts of healing."

[BIT.LY/CSUF-LATINX-LAB](https://bit.ly/csuf-latinx-lab)

