



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Sylvia Alva, Cal State Fullerton's new president, speaks Sept. 14 at Meng Concert Hall during Convocation.

CONVOCATION

NEW PRESIDENT PLANS TO BUILD ON STUDENT SUCCESS, INCLUSIVITY

Upgrades to infrastructure and academic programs support her vision

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

Delivering remarks during her first convocation since becoming president of Cal State Fullerton, Sylvia Alva lauded the university's accomplishments over the past year, while outlining goals for the new academic year.

Two priorities are to continue to build on CSUF's standing as a leader in degrees earned by first-generation and underrepresented students and to fine-tune methods to provide "a welcoming and inclusive university experience," the president said.

Speaking in front of a packed Meng Concert Hall on Sept. 14, with hundreds more watching via livestream, Alva drew on her own experiences as a child of Mexican immigrants and a product of the CSU system, mirroring in many ways the demographic makeup of a significant portion of current CSUF students.

Alva took over as CSUF president in August, returning to the institution where she began her career as an educator 30 years ago, as an assistant professor of adolescent development.

"Today feels very special, like a homecoming beyond my imagination," Alva said. "It is a privilege, and quite frankly, a bit surreal, to have the honor of serving as your president. This is a beautiful and

fulfilling full-circle moment that reaffirms why the CSU is the greatest driver of social mobility in California and the nation."

In pointing out accomplishments, the president noted that CSUF granted nearly 11,000 degrees in May.

"That is more than the total headcount of several other CSUs," Alva said.

This year, the university welcomed an incoming class of 7,100 first-time freshmen, 4,000 transfer students and more than 1,800 graduate students, making it the largest incoming class in Titan history, Alva said.

By graduating 11,000 and enrolling 12,900, Alva noted that enrollment is up. CSUF is also No. 2 in the state for

degrees earned by women, No. 3 in the nation for degrees earned by Latinx and underrepresented students and No. 7 in the nation in social mobility, she said.

Additionally, the university was awarded the national Seal of Excelencia for its distinction as a Hispanic Serving Institution.

"We must recommit ourselves to assure that every one of our students is given the opportunity to achieve their full potential and goal of earning a degree from this impressive university," Alva said. "To do that, we must center equity in everything we do. We must continue to build on our data and technology infrastructure to guide and support our

PRESIDENT » PAGE 2

TECHNOLOGY

AI-powered platform to help STEM-career bound students

Psychology professor gets Science Foundation funds

By Jenelyn Russo,
contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton associate professor of psychology Yuko Okado has been named a 2023 National Science Foundation CAREER Award recipient. The \$979,212 grant award will fund Okado's five-year project "Improving Persistence of Underserved Students in Psychological Science Using an AI-Based, Personalized Career Exploration Platform."

Okado's project, which will run from September 2023 to August 2028, utilizes artificial intelligence technology to assist psychology students who have a desire to pursue STEM-related careers. She is the seventh CSUF faculty mem-

ber, and the first from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, to receive the NSF CAREER award.

This project will build upon Okado's previous project: CareerFair.ai. As the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold, Okado saw an unmet need for mentoring and career guidance, so she sought out a way to make career information more accessible to CSUF students.

She collaborated with Benjamin Nye, the director of Learning Sciences at USC's Institute for Creative Technologies and used his virtual mentor technology to create CareerFair.ai, a platform that allows CSUF students to engage with virtual-agent mentors that provide guidance on STEM career paths.

"I thought, why don't we create a project based on that to see if we could create a career fair-style portal for students free of charge," Okado said. "It would be something they can access 24/7 so they don't have to worry about making appointments or having the resources to travel to a mentor."

The virtual agent-mentors are similar to chatbots, but they are real-life mentors with CSUF-specific, prerecorded video content that provides a more

STEM » PAGE 4



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSU Fullerton associate professor of psychology Yuko Okado is a 2023 National Science Foundation CAREER Award honoree.

#3

Enrolling
TRANSFER STUDENTS
in California

■ U.S. News & World Report, 2023



Cal State Fullerton.



EDUCATION

Partnership fosters student diversity, family engagement

CSUF News Media Services

When educator Gilanie Thomas was a middle school student, she recalled how her teacher supported her in and out of the classroom, pushed her to go above and beyond, and gave her a sense of belonging.

“School was a safe space for me,” Thomas said. “I was fortunate to have amazing relationships with many of my teachers from elementary school to college. My dream has always been to do the same and provide an inclusive education for my students.”

As a Cal State Fullerton education graduate student, Thomas is now gaining a better understanding of creating inclusive classrooms for all students, including diverse students learning English and those with disabilities.

She is among four students — called inclusive fellows — in the College of Education’s “Inspiring and Engaging Children and Families Through Innovative Practices” project, led by Rosalinda Larios, assistant professor of special education.

“An inclusive classroom is a safe space where everyone is respected and celebrated,” said Thomas, working toward earning a master’s degree in educational leadership. “It’s a learning environment where students have a sense of belonging and receive support academically, socially and emotionally.”

The university received a \$113,158 grant for the project from the Global Hispanic-Serving Institution Equity Innovation Hub at Cal State Northridge. The funding is part of the first round of California State University Hispanic-Serving Institutions Community Grants.

The partnership between the CSU, state and California-based Apple aims to transform HSIs to increase student success and equip Latinx and other historically underserved students with skills for high-demand careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

For the project, the faculty and student team is partnering with Tomorrow’s Leadership Collaborative Charter



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Education graduate student Gilanie Thomas is an inclusive fellow in the grant-funded “Inspiring and Engaging Children and Families Through Innovative Practices” project.

School in Orange and using technology to address the needs of the “whole child through a fully inclusive model of instruction.”

The inclusive fellows collect and analyze data from the school’s families, students and staff, which helps prepare them for their education careers. In the future, CSUF teacher candidates will observe culturally responsive practices by the school’s teachers and participate in student teaching.

The fellows are embarking on a range

of opportunities within the field of education, including becoming early childhood special education teachers, education specialists, administrators and researchers.

TLC is the only fully inclusive school in Orange County and has about 200 students in transitional kindergarten through sixth grade, Larios said. Nearly one-third of the students speak another language at home while learning English, and about 12% receive special education services.

“All students, regardless of ability, language, race, gender or ethnicity, are taught in the same classroom throughout the school day. Teachers meet the students where they are academically and see their value as individuals and community members,” Larios said. “Our project will show that inclusion is possible and beneficial for all students.”

Others spearheading the project are Maritza Lozano, assistant professor of educational leadership, and alumna Rohanna Ylagan-Nicanor (bachelor’s degree in child and adolescent development, 2001; multiple subject credential, 2003; master’s, education-elementary curriculum and instruction, 2006). Ylagan-Nicanor is a lecturer in elementary and bilingual education and the college’s director of assessment and curriculum.

The project focuses on increasing family engagement and tapping into the culturally and linguistically diverse assets families bring to the school, including when preparing individualized education programs for students with disabilities.

To provide equitable access to technology and reduce barriers, Apple supplied laptops and iPads to TLC teachers and students and innovative educational technology and design support.

Thomas, an educator for 11 years who has taught elementary and middle school grade levels, is also working on completing the credential program for school administrators. Last year she stepped out of the classroom to serve as coordinator of data and accountability at Scholarship Prep Public Schools, a charter school with several campuses, including in Orange County.

By assisting in research, data collection and analysis, Thomas is learning how to support her school community and empower families to have a voice and choice in their children’s education.

“This project is allowing me to take what I am learning in my master’s program and put it into practice,” she said. “I am excited to share this new knowledge and skills from my classes and this project with my current job and school community.”

President

FROM PAGE 1

students in achieving key success milestones and being ready to intervene in a more proactive and integrated way when they need our support.”

Another highlight was the completion of the largest and most successful comprehensive fundraising campaign in CSUF history.

The original goal for the “It Takes a Titan” campaign was \$175 million, but after Mackenzie Scott’s gift of \$40 million, the goal was raised to \$250 million, Alva said.

Ultimately, more than \$270 million was raised, providing the means to accomplish several priorities and key initiatives.

Several infrastructure projects are either underway or will be launched in the coming months.

Those include construction of a new Visual Arts Complex, scheduled to open in fall 2024.

Designs are in progress for the Center for Leadership, known as Landmark Hall, with occupancy scheduled for November 2025.

In December, construction is scheduled to get underway on student housing phase 5, with occupancy expected for fall 2026.

Construction of the Titan Gateway Bridge is scheduled to begin in October 2025 and the design phase for the new Engineering and Computer Science Innovation Hub will begin soon, with occupancy expected in July 2026.

Alva is also calling on the entire campus community to contribute to finalizing the 2024-29 Strategic Plan.

Last spring, the universitywide Review and Reflection activities attracted 5,100 participants, including 2,609 students, and nearly 2,500 faculty and staff.

The Strategic Plan Development Committee worked over the summer to begin analyzing the input collected in the spring into a strategic plan draft.

“So, we have a road map for a new generation of Titans to grow and thrive under our stewardship,” Alva said. “In this call to action, we need to prioritize a holistic model of equity-centered student success that addresses strategic enrollment management and refines the student journey.”

Studying trends in a changing enrollment landscape will also be necessary in the wake of a variety of shifting data points, from declining birth rates shrinking the size of high school graduating classes to the spike in California residents leaving the region and state in search of more affordable housing.

Also, all community colleges offer two years free of tuition and are working to get state approval to offer more bachelor’s degrees.

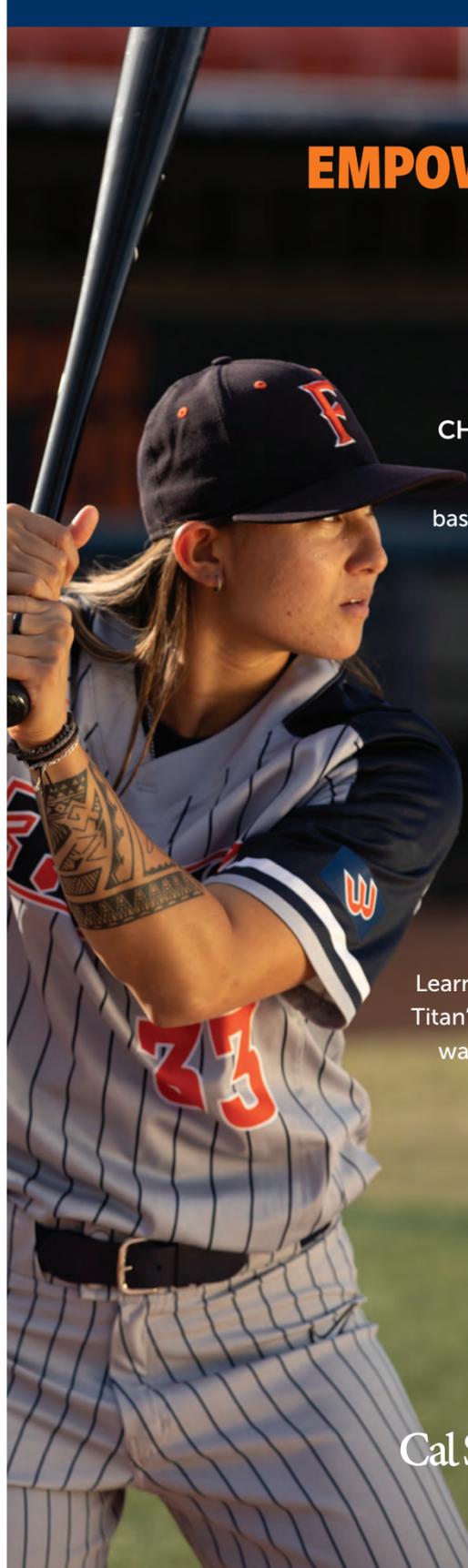
“When done correctly, an enrollment plan is a road map,” Alva said. “We are intentional in shaping the incoming class and overall student population, and we decide what is the right enrollment target for the university, based on a realistic and sustainable financial model that secures the resources needed to reach and serve new audiences.

“Easy? No, but we got this,” the president said. “We are Titans, right?”



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Amir Dabirian addresses Cal State Fullerton’s Convocation.

TITAN OF EMPOWERMENT



**CSUF ALUMNA
CHANGING THE GAME**

Many professional baseball players launched their careers at Cal State Fullerton.

Kelsie Whitmore is no exception.

The former Titan softball standout made history when she became the first woman to play in a Major League Baseball partner league.

Learn more about how one Titan’s passion is paving the way for women in sports:



Cal State Fullerton

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CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP

Mobile team for mental health-related crisis calls planned

Campus police, counseling services collaborating

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

A partnership between the CSUF Police Department and the Counseling & Psychological Services department will likely result in a more rapid response to calls involving a mental health crisis.

Expected to launch in the spring of 2024, the CAPS & UPD Mobile Crisis Team will consist of unarmed, unsworn safety specialists partnering with licensed mental health professionals to respond to nonviolent crisis calls, CSUF Police Chief Anthony Frisbee said.

"For the university specifically, the vast majority of our calls for people in crisis don't involve violence, aggression or weapons," Frisbee said. "So, for us, rather than tying or partnering the CAPS professional with a campus police officer, we're connecting and partnering them with an unarmed safety professional."

The new model frees up police officers to focus on prevention, intervention and responding to calls involving violence or criminal activity, the chief said.

Calls for service involving a student in crisis are fairly common, Frisbee said.

From January to August, campus police responded to 35 calls involving individuals on campus wanting to harm themselves, Frisbee said.

Other mental health-related calls for service involve welfare checks, domestic disputes, substance use and issues related to homeless individuals, he said.

Creating a mobile crisis team connecting safety counselors with mental health professionals was one of Frisbee's main priorities when he took over as chief in March.

"One of the things we hit the ground running with here was really looking at holistic safety through a tiered response," Frisbee said. "Changing that paradigm of having the right person and the right professional respond to the right calls."

The chief reached out to Jaime Sheehan and Kevin Thomas, director and associate director, respectively, of CSUF CAPS.

CAPS offers a full spectrum of mental health-related services to CSUF students, ranging from preventative education, online resources, drop-in groups, psychotherapy groups and case management to short-term individual therapy, psychiatric services and crisis services.

Sheehan and Thomas have also been exploring options for launching a mobile crisis team.

Currently, CAPS counselors typically meet with students in its offices or uti-



The Counseling and Psychological Services department is partnering with the CSUF police department to provide rapid response to calls involving mental health crises.

PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

lize the Orange County Crisis Assessment Team when needed, Sheehan said.

"We have noticed that there has been a gap for our students when it comes to crisis services," Sheehan said. "As we all know, not all crises happen inside a therapist's office. Many students can experience a crisis during class, in their dorm room, or anywhere on campus. We wanted to build on the success of outside psychological mobile crisis teams and bring that to Cal State Fullerton."

Individuals in crisis sometimes become "anxious and stressed out" when interacting with a police officer, Thomas said.

This can create more stigma surrounding mental health and a reluctance to ask for help, he said.

"The goal of this program is to reduce stress and anxiety so that we can make sure we are maximizing the help being offered to our students," Thomas said. "This will create a great pairing of a mental health professional who is skilled in de-escalation techniques and the campus safety specialist who is knowledgeable

about community resources and campus procedures to respond to students in a different way."

From the police side, campus safety specialists have been hired and are currently being trained, Frisbee said, and CAPS is in the process of hiring two trained mental health specialists.

When the program gets underway, one mobile crisis team will likely be on duty from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, "which covers a majority of the calls we receive here at the university," Frisbee said.

Frisbee played a significant role in implementing a similar program in 2022 while serving as interim police chief at UC Riverside, where he implemented a tiered response to calls involving a mental health crisis by using non-sworn, unarmed safety personnel.

The initiative at UC Riverside also included the addition of trained behavioral health specialists who were deployed to handle a variety of mental health crisis situations.

Frisbee also spent 17 years as a police

officer at UC Irvine, where he oversaw the UCI Health Public Safety Division, leading an effort to incorporate police with public safety professionals to create a multilayered response to mental health calls.

At CSUF, CAPS and the Police Department researched mobile crisis teams at other universities to help determine best practices for its own initiative, Sheehan said.

Last spring, Cal State Long Beach became the first in the Cal State University system to have a mobile crisis unit with mental health professionals responding to mental health emergencies in place of campus police.

"One thing we really embrace at CSUF CAPS is research," Sheehan said. "We sought input from numerous universities. We wanted to learn what went well for them and what they would change. One thing that we have pledged to do with the creation of this new team is to track and evaluate our program to ensure we are helping in the most meaningful way."

CREATING AN APP

Students use AI and AR skills in Arboretum project

Interdisciplinary project guides visitors

By Nicole Gregory,
contributing writer

Mention artificial intelligence and augmented reality and many people react by assuming these technologies will only negatively impact humans and their jobs. But students in two classes at Cal State Fullerton are learning to use AI and AR in an interdisciplinary project that is practical, positive and fun.

Professor Chen Wang, an award-winning artist who teaches graphic and interactive design, and associate professor Wenlin Han, who teaches computer science, brought their students together to create an app that is a complex virtual environment of the Fullerton Arboretum. With the help of whimsical avatars, the app's users are guided along the pathways of the 26-acre botanic garden in a lively journey of discovery and learning.

Wang's art students were enthusiastic about figuring out the elements of the immersive virtual garden. "When I introduced AI technology to my students, I emphasized that it represented both an opportunity and a challenge, underscoring the critical importance of fostering their capacity for critical thinking," Wang said. "I stressed that we were at the dawn of a new era in which AI tools had the potential to either be a powerful force for creation or destruction."

Students embraced this challenge. "Their response was overwhelmingly positive," Wang said. "They astutely recognized the potential biases inherent in AI data sources, grappled with the complexities of defining design copyrights, pondered the tendency for design to



Students from professor Chen Wang's Graphic and Interactive Design class have created a "virtual garden" project to educate Arboretum visitors.

PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

become stylistically homogenized, and grappled with the ethical challenges posed by AI."

The more his art students worked on the project, the more they saw its creative potential.

"As we ventured deeper into the domain of AI-assisted tools and techniques, students became increasingly engaged," Wang said. "The notion of seamlessly integrating artificial intelligence into the realm of design captivated them, unlocking fresh avenues of design possibilities, broadening their creative horizons and bolstering their workflow efficiency."

They also understood how these skills could benefit their future work lives. "Many students keenly grasped the burgeoning significance of AI in the design industry and regarded it as an opportu-

nity to gain a distinct competitive edge in their future careers," Wang said.

Han's class was also eager to work on the Arboretum project. "My computer science students were extremely engaged and excited to learn how to use AI technologies like chatbots and digital humans," she said. "Many of them were already familiar with AI applications as users, but they had limited experience creating them from scratch."

The Arboretum project was conceived by Wang, who then reached out to Han. "We had several long discussions to align the artistic vision with technical possibilities," Han said. "Our partnership combined art and technology in a novel way for students to learn."

Support also came from the TuffyVerse Lab, Wang noted. "As leaders of this interdisciplinary laboratory, Profes-

sor Han, Professor Jin Rong — also from a computer science background — and I worked closely together throughout the project's development." The collaboration opened doors to new possibilities, he said.

Han's computer science students got hands-on practice training AI models, integrating them into an augmented reality environment and problem-solving through an interdisciplinary lens, she said. "The students were motivated to push the boundaries of what's possible with AI when it's applied creatively," she said.

They had to master a diverse array of skills to bring the Arboretum to life in an app, Han said, including integrating natural language processing for conversational chatbots and leveraging computer-vision techniques for interactive avatars.

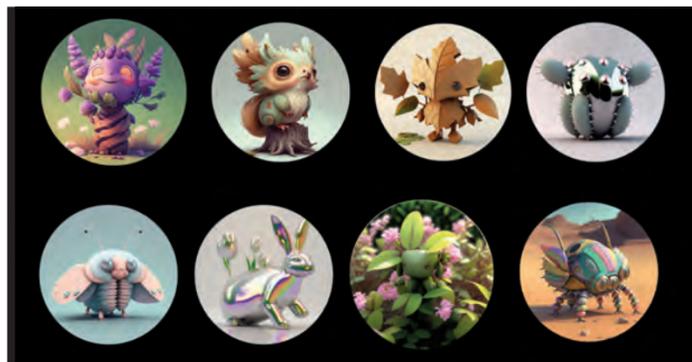
The art students had to think beyond traditional design skills. "In my design class, students embarked on a journey centered around user experiences, user interface design and the creation of assets for virtual environments," Wang said. "Additionally, students conceived a visual identity that unifies all elements, establishing a recognizable brand for the project."

The app, which is not yet completed, has had another benefit: It puts students in the role of creators rather than just users of the newest technology. "The opportunity to tangibly create with AI, rather than just consume it, was met with a ton of enthusiasm and satisfaction from the students," Han said. "They gained valuable perspective on being producers of emerging tech rather than just users."

And both groups of students had to hone their collaboration abilities, Han said. "They had to learn to communicate complex concepts clearly, provide constructive feedback and synthesize different perspectives."

One goal of the app is to promote community engagement and convey the idea that everyone plays a role in the ecosystem.

"It's crucial for students to gain firsthand experience using AI for an ethical, socially conscious purpose," Han said. "Understanding the practical application helps them see beyond the hype and headlines. With the Arboretum project's educational focus, students used AI in a meaningful way that provides value to users. This showed them how, when thoughtfully applied, AI can enhance human capabilities rather than replace them."



PHOTOS COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The interactive avatars designed by students take visitors on a whimsical journey through the 26-acre botanical garden.

FUNDING

Grant is a pipeline for underrepresented data science students

CSUF News Media Services

Cal State Fullerton has been awarded a nearly \$1.3 million California Education Learning Lab grant to develop pathways and overcome equity gaps in data science teaching and learning.

The Learning Lab's Grand Challenge: Building Critical Mass for Data Science grant opportunity selected the university's Project PIPE-LINE (Programs for Institutional Pathway Engagement — accelerating Infrastructure and Education) for funding.

By funding projects, Learning Lab hopes to create pathways among three tiers of higher education institutions in Southern California, elevate data science educational infrastructure buildout and make the state a leader in data science undergraduate education.

Cal State Fullerton mathematics and computer science faculty are leading Project PIPE-LINE and partnering with UC Irvine, Riverside City College and Rio Hondo College.

The four-year project aims to attract historically underrepresented students into STEM majors, establish institutional pathways and transferable courses in data science among the institutions and foster a sustainable data science culture that inspires and supports a diverse group of faculty and students.

Plans include offering new data science courses at CSUF and community colleges to ensure undergraduate students across the four partnering institutions have access to cutting-edge curriculum and programs, said project lead Jessica Jaynes, associate professor of mathematics.

As part of the project, plans include creating data science major and minor degree programs at CSUF through collaborative efforts with various academic and administrative groups.

"These activities will hopefully motivate the next generation of students — especially those from underrepresented communities — to pursue data science for their studies," Jaynes said. "After productive discussions with the provost, deans and chairs of various academic



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Mathematics faculty members spearheading Project PIPE-LINE, from left, are Dwight Wynne, Armando Martinez-Cruz, Sam Behseta, Kristin Kurianski and Jessica Jaynes. Anand Panangadan, computer science, is not pictured.

units, they share our strong resolve to make this a reality on our campus."

The grant project also is recruiting faculty across disciplines from CSUF and the two community colleges to learn about novel approaches to teaching data science. The faculty fellows will be involved in professional development workshops, conferences, student mentorship opportunities and peer-to-peer collaborations, resulting in a "community of data science learners," Jaynes said.

Faculty co-leading the project are CSUF's Sam Behseta and Armando Martinez-Cruz, professors of mathematics; Kristin Kurianski, assistant professor of mathematics; Dwight Wynne, lecturer

in mathematics; Anand Panangadan, associate professor of computer science; and mathematics and computer science faculty from the three participating institutions.

Cal State Fullerton also is a partner of the National Science Foundation-funded SoCal Data Science Program with UC Irvine and Cypress College to recruit and train data science majors. Jaynes noted that Project PIPE-LINE will build upon the program by developing the infrastructure to prepare and train students in data science.

Behseta, 2022 CSUF Outstanding Professor, said such a robust effort is needed due to the "mindblowing growth of the

data science discipline and its ability to capture the imagination of the business and governmental sectors, as well as the general public."

"On this campus, we have all the ingredients for building successful data science degree programs, including the core curricular structure, faculty expertise and highly talented and passionate students," he said. "But there has not been a unified attempt to motivate and coordinate the work of the relevant academic units.

"Project PIPE-LINE is a pioneering effort and a step in that direction. It will empower all students to join a welcoming and inclusive learning environment."

PHILANTHROPY

Cal State Fullerton closes fiscal year with \$35 million in gifts

CSUF News Media Services

Following the success of its first-ever philanthropic campaign, which exceeded its \$250 million goal with more than \$270 million raised, Cal State Fullerton finished the 2022-23 fiscal year with \$35,044,716 in gifts and gift commitments. This achievement marks the fourth consecutive year the university has raised more than \$31 million.

"On the heels of our 'It Takes a Titan' campaign, donors and community partners continue to generously invest in the success of Cal State Fullerton. It's a testament to the transformative work the university does to help students achieve their goals, support our best-in-class faculty, and develop impactful community partnerships," said Greg Saks, vice president for university advancement.

Philanthropic highlights from the year include:

• **Completion of "It Takes a Titan" campaign:** Cal State Fullerton celebrated the successful completion of its first-ever comprehensive campaign. The university raised more than \$270 million, making it the third largest completed campaign in the history of the California State University system.

• **Inaugural iSomos Titans! ("We Are Titans!") benefit concert:** Headlined by Grammy Award-winning musician Poncho Sanchez and his Latin jazz band, the first-ever iSomos Titans! event raised more than \$300,000 to support programs and opportunities that champion Latinx student success.

• **Record-breaking #TitansGive day of giving:** During the 24-hour online donation event on March 8, more than 2,239 donors contributed to over 150 Titan programs on campus, raising a

total of \$527,969. Over the last three years, #TitansGive has raised \$1.5 million from more than 6,500 donors.

• **Increased engagement across all donor groups:** During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Cal State Fullerton surpassed its donor goals, including the individual donor goal by 127%, alumni donors by 123%, faculty/staff/emeriti donors by 126% and parent donors by 224%.

• **Renewed focused on legacy gifts:** Several notable gifts boosted the university's planned giving efforts, including a \$4 million gift from CSUF alumnus Brian Rennie and his wife, Lori, to support desert science studies and a \$1.5 million gift from CSUF alumnus Michael Losquadro and his partner, Brian Keller, to support the LGBT Queer Resource Center and scholarships for business students.

• **New Alumni Engagement programs:** Alumni Engagement created several new programs, including the Black Alumni Network and Indigenous Alumni Network to connect alumni of color with students of color.

• **Growth of total assets and endowment:** By the end of the fiscal year, the market value of Cal State Fullerton's endowment grew to \$135 million and the total assets of the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation grew to \$200,038,520.

• **Advancing key capital projects:** Leveraging donations from supporters like alumnus Terry Giles and his wife, Kalli O'Malley, as well as other funds, the university made significant strides on the planning of several campus construction projects. These include a new home for the College of Business and Economics' Center for Leadership, the Engineering and Computer Science Innovation Hub and a "The



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

The 2022-23 fiscal year featured some of Cal State Fullerton's most successful fundraising programs.

Gateway" pedestrian bridge over Nutwood Avenue. Modernization of the visual arts complex is currently underway and slated for completion in fall 2024.

"As we begin a new academic year, there are many exciting opportunities to look forward to, including the devel-

opment of a new strategic plan for the university under the leadership of our new president," said Saks. "From the collective decision-making of our strategic planning process, we are considering next steps for the university and how to extend opportunities to our supporters to be involved in shaping the future of Cal State Fullerton."

STEM

FROM PAGE 1

humanized, conversational experience. CareerFair.ai was a broader STEM outreach program open to all CSUF students, but Okado's CAREER Award project will create virtual-agent mentors that are exclusively psychology-based professionals within STEM fields.

"My students want mentors that have earned a psychology degree or have had a psychology training that can tell them about the steps they took to get to where they are now and share real-life information about pursuing a career path in STEM."

Okado said that most undergraduate programs in psychology include extensive training in research methods, statistics and data analysis — all skill sets that have a direct tie-in to STEM occupations, such as neuroscience or de-

velopmental psychology. She feels psychology majors possess many of these 21st-century skills that are in such high demand, and a project like this could help connect these students to STEM careers.

"I saw a need that is unmet that I think technology could solve, based on technology that I knew Dr. Nye had developed," Okado said. "This virtual-agent technology makes it possible for mentors to self-report and edit their own virtual agent so that we can record and showcase a lot of virtual mentors at once."

Okado will begin development of this new platform by conducting a needs assessment with CSUF psychology majors. This will allow her to obtain feedback on the types of careers and mentors they most want to connect with, and from there, mentors will be recruited to match those needs.

These online virtual-agent mentors will then be showcased on the platform, tentatively titled "Psychology Pathways,"

and Titan psychology students will be able to interact with prerecorded content from real-life STEM professionals who have a background in psychology.

Additionally, as students exit their conversations with virtual agent-mentors, the system will be able to analyze the students' interactions with those mentors and recommend personalized resources for further career exploration.

In parallel, research will be conducted to study the factors that influence student trajectories, specifically for underserved and underrepresented students, and how those students' pathways are impacted by different aspects, both internal and external to the university.

"I'm trying to better understand using different sources of information ... where we can best intervene and help," Okado says. "Do our interventions work? Are there additional resources we could provide to support their dreams and aspirations?"

The first project nationally of its kind, Okado's work will track the effects of

mentoring in STEM through the data and feedback collected from more than 1,000 CSUF psychology majors over an approximate four-year period. She sees this project as a way to inform other psychology departments or STEM disciplines across the country that are interested in developing similar framework in the future.

Okado thought it was a long shot to be granted an NSF CAREER Award when she first applied. But she is excited to see this project to fruition and hopes it serves as an encouragement to her students and colleagues that their work and trajectories matter.

"One of the most important messages I want to send home to my students is to let them know that the National Science Foundation thinks that they're the future," Okado said. "This project is intended to help enhance career resources and research training, as well as introduce additional exposure to AI technology and its application in a positive way in our university community."

SPORTS

2023 Titan Hall of Famers' stories are remarkable

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

Martha Wilkinson-Kirouac had to ask for permission to compete for Cal State Fullerton's first women's national title.

Known as Martha Wilkinson then, she was a freshman at California State College, Fullerton, as the school was known then. She wandered the halls looking for someone — anyone — in a position of authority who would give their blessings for her to compete in what was then called the Division of Girls' and Women's Sports Golf Championships.

She received that blessing, then threw a curse on the rest of the field at what passed for a national collegiate championship in the precursor to the AIAW — which was the precursor to the NCAA. All of which was a precursor to Title IX, and a golf team at Cal State Fullerton. Wilkinson didn't have to ask for permission to do what happened next — win Cal State Fullerton's first women's national championship in any event.

Wilkinson-Kirouac is one of five individual inductees and six members overall who comprise the Cal State Fullerton Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2023, which was selected over the summer. The class will be honored at a Nov 3 dinner in Brea.

Wilkinson-Kirouac joins the Cal State Fullerton 1979 baseball team, soccer goalkeeper Karen Bardsley, wrestler T.J. Dillashaw, trainer Julie Max, and soccer standout Eddie Soto in the 10th class of inductees.

Here are capsules on each of the inductees.

The 1979 Baseball Team

This was the team that put Cal State Fullerton's baseball program on the collegiate map for good. The team that illustrated the managerial genius of Augie Garrido, the promising future of a first baseman named Tim Wallach and the scrappy, nothing-is-over-until-WE-say-it-is personality of the Titans' baseball program.

This wasn't CSUF's first trip to Omaha and the College World Series; it went in 1975. But this is where the Titans' baseball program became Cal State Fullerton baseball. The program's first of four national championships over the next four decades. Behind Wallach's .391 average, 23 home runs and a still-school record 102 RBI, the Titans went 60-14-1, including 23-4-1 in what was called the Southern California Baseball Association, the conference they played in at that time.

In the West Regional, the Titans lost their first game, then ripped apart the losers' bracket, beating UCLA twice. In Omaha, they promptly lost their opener, 6-1, to Mississippi State — the last time CSUF would lose that season.

Behind a pitching staff that came into the CWS 45-8 and clutch closer Tony Hudson — who would be the Most Outstanding Player of the College World Series for his three saves — the Titans reeled off four consecutive victories: 8-3 over Connecticut, 16-3 over Arizona, 13-10 over Arkansas and 8-5 over Pepperdine to reach the final game against Arkansas. With that final tie 1-1 entering the sixth, outfielder Sam Favata — who came into Omaha hitting .432 — reached first on an error, stole second and went to third on a throwing error. He'd come home on Wallach's sacrifice fly — his 102nd RBI of the season.

Just like that, the Titans elbowed their way into the collegiate baseball elite. Wallach won the Golden Spikes Award — baseball's equivalent of the Heisman Trophy. He'd be the 10th pick in the Major League Baseball draft, play 17 seasons in the majors and make five All-Star teams. And Garrido's ability to push every motivational and tactical button at the right time would go on display for the next four decades.

Karen Bardsley

Bardsley was a graphic design major — an appropriate major for a goalkeeper who designed one of the best careers by a Cal State Fullerton soccer player in school history. She opened her career as the Big West Freshman of the Year in 2002, stopping 84.6% of the shots she faced.

After breaking her leg 28 minutes into the 2003 season, Bardsley returned to the net in 2004 and was named Big West Conference Goalkeeper of the Year — the first of three times she'd capture that award. That season, Bardsley allowed 0.71 goals per game.



England goalkeeper Karen Bardsley, top, makes a leaping save during the She Believes Cup women's soccer match of USA vs. England on March 7, 2018, at Orlando City Stadium.

In 2005, she set single-season program records for goals-against (a Big West-leading 0.64), victories and shutouts (10). The following year, she'd win her third Big West Goalkeeper of the Year Award, go 12-8-2 — with eight shutouts. Her 128 saves ranked second in school history.

Carrying dual citizenship, Bardsley earned 82 caps for England, competing in three Women's World Cups and the 2012 London Olympics. She played for Manchester City before retiring in May 2022.

T.J. Dillashaw

He's known far more for his two UFC bantamweight titles and a 17-5 MMA/13-5 UFC record. But back in the day when CSUF had a wrestling team, Dillashaw was the program's poster boy who helped give the program needed gravitas at a time when it was struggling. After a freshman season where Dillashaw went 14-16 with a 10-8 dual-match record, he went to Ukraine in the summer of 2006.

Something clicked. Dillashaw went 17-14 and 11-4 in duals, going 5-3 in the Pac-10. The following year, he finished sixth in the University Greco Wrestling Championships. He was a three-time NCAA Division I National Qualifier and finished fourth in the Pac-10 in both his junior and senior years.

After graduating, Dillashaw accepted an invitation from former CSUF wrestling coach Mark Muñoz to join the Reign Training Center. That started his MMA career that ended just last year when Dillashaw injured his shoulder in a bout with champion Aljamain Sterling.

Julie Max

She was the first female student trainer allowed to work football games at Fullerton College, the first female president of the National Athletic Trainers' Association and is the first trainer inducted into the Cal State Fullerton Athletics Hall of Fame.

None of which surprises anyone who knows Max, CSUF's former director of sports medicine and assistant athletics director. From 1979 until her 2022 retirement, Max oversaw the Titans' training staff and sports medicine department, mentoring two generations of student and athletic trainers and bestowing on them the knowledge to not only think on their feet and stay ahead of the athletic training curve but serving as a role model and training talisman. When students, athletes and colleagues speak about Max, they do so using words like "integrity," "respect," "professional," and "smart."

Max is a woman of firsts, but the CSUF Athletic Hall of Fame is her second hall induction. Max was inducted into the NATA's Hall of Fame in 2007.

Eddie Soto

To anyone who watched him play during his three-year career, it should surprise no one that Soto became a successful soccer coach. After all, Soto played the game like a chess master, always seeing the game several moves ahead.

A two-time All-American (1992-93),



PHOTO BY LEONARD ORTIZ, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/SCNG
Eddie Soto had an outstanding career as a soccer player and was an All-American twice. Currently at Cal State Dominguez Hills, he went on to become a successful coach.



AP PHOTO/THE BRUNSWICK NEWS/NANCY R. BARTLETT
As the U.S. Curtis Cup coach, Martha Wilkinson-Kirouac speaks to the media following a practice round of golf May 25, 2004, at the Sea Island Golf Club on St. Simons Island, Ga.

Soto ranks as the No. 2 scorer in CSUF history. He scored 96 points and 38 goals, including a still-school-record 18 in 1994. In 1993, he led the Titans to the NCAA semifinals for the first time in school history and brought them back to the quarterfinals the next year.

For the last five seasons, Soto has coached the Cal State Dominguez Hills men's team, the latest stop in a 20-year coaching career — 17 at the Division I level. He led the Toros to their first 10-win season in 2021, reaching the conference semifinals in a season they were ranked as high as 13th nationally. Last year, they won the conference regular season title.

Previously, Soto coached the men's team at the University of San Francisco, where he was the West Coast Conference Coach of the Year in 2017.

Martha Wilkinson-Kirouac

When Wilkinson romped through the 32-player match-play bracket at Seattle's Sand Point Country Club, she did so as the lone Titan in the field. After beating

Roberta Albers of the University of Miami, 6-and-5 in the 36-hole final, she not only won CSUF's first women's national title in any sport, she did so four years before there was an AIAW championship, five years before Title IX, 15 years before there was an NCAA women's golf championships and 42 years before there was a women's golf team at CSUF.

It was her only year at the school; her talents were far beyond what CSUF offered at the time. Wilkinson illustrated this three years later with one of the greatest amateur campaigns in golf history. She won five prestigious amateur titles, including the biggest one of all — the U.S. Women's Amateur. She played on — and 34 years later, coached — the U.S. Curtis Cup team, the pinnacle team event for women amateurs.

One of the most respected figures in amateur golf and a rules official for eight U.S. Women's Opens and eight Women's Amateurs, Wilkinson-Kirouac lives in Georgia, where she is a member of the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame.



PHOTO BY HANS GUTKNECHT, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS/SCNG
T.J. Dillashaw, left, takes on John Lineker during UFC 207 on Dec. 30, 2016, at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. Dillashaw beat Lineker via unanimous decision.

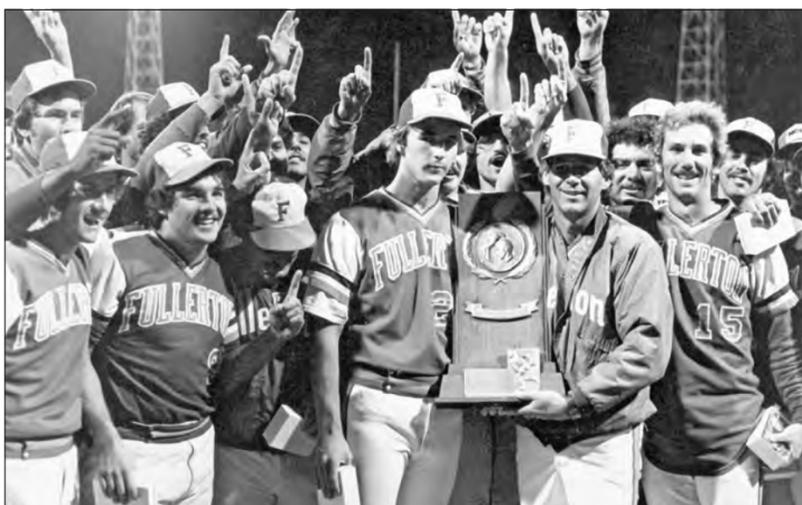


PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Led by manager Augie Garrido, the 1979 Titans baseball team clinched the College World Series after a season record of 60-14-1.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOULDING, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Julie Max, center, works with student trainer Chantal Hart to determine the extent of Fullerton athlete Bri Thompson's injury in the athletic training room at Cal State Fullerton in this file photo.

FINANCIAL AID

Engineering major receives Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement

CSUF News Media Services

From an early age, Anthony Kyle Olson questioned the world around him and developed an aptitude for science and engineering.

Now, as a Cal State Fullerton student and future engineer, he wants to be a problem-solver for issues like environmental concerns, the cost of living, and supply and demand imbalances.

"I would love to help design and discover new technology and improve current processes," said Olson, who will be the first in his family to graduate from college.

A mechanical engineering major, Olson temporarily put his college dream on hold while he served in the U.S. Air Force. After high school, he joined the military in 2011 and trained in logistics. Once discharged, he realized he needed to pursue higher education to achieve his goals.

Like many veterans, Olson faced financial challenges following his military-to-civilian career transition. He depends on his Veterans Affairs benefits and financial aid for his college education.

To help support his goal of earning a bachelor's degree, Olson has been selected as a 2023 recipient of the California State University Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement. As the William Randolph Hearst Scholar, he will receive a \$7,000 scholarship.

"It's a blessing, given my financial circumstances," said Olson, who has a 3.55 GPA and plans to graduate in spring 2025.

The CSU scholarship is awarded to students who demonstrate superior academic performance, personal accomplishments, community service and financial need. One scholar from each of the 23 campuses is selected for the award, the CSU's highest recognition of student achievement. Each award provides a donor-funded scholarship.

"Anthony's experience as a veteran is an asset to our country and our university," said CSUF President Sylvia Alva. "He has overcome obstacles and persevered and is well deserving of this honor. He embodies what it means to be a Titan."

Olson and the other award winners will be honored at the Sept. 12 CSU Board of Trustees meeting.

While in the military, Olson's senior master sergeant praised him for his leadership skills, dependability, professionalism and being a self-starter.

He was part of the Humanitarian Re-



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Mechanical engineering major Anthony Kyle Olson has been selected as a 2023 recipient of the CSU Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement.

lief of Hurricane Sandy of 2012, where his team assisted in restoring power to families affected by the destructive storm. He worked long hours, including 12-hour overnight shifts for a month.

His team was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for their sacrifice and call to duty.

"The biggest benefit from my time in the Air Force was the incredible people I

met and the special connections I built," Olson said. "I also learned a lot about myself and matured quickly. I joined to support my goals and build a starting point for a long-term career afterward."

After leaving the military in 2017, Olson did not have a solid plan for his future.

Olson decided to enroll at Mt. San Jacinto College and study mathematics and computer science. During the coronavirus pandemic, he left college because of the limitations of remote learning in a rigorous STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) major.

"It was critical to physically attend courses for hands-on learning, interact with the professors, build connections and collaborate with like-minded peers," Olson said.

He delayed transferring to Cal State Fullerton in fall 2021 due to the pandemic. While he had six years of logistics management experience in the Air Force, he couldn't land a job in the field.

"I concluded that my best option was to resume my education. Unfortunately, my experience alone in logistics, even if it's from the Air Force, was not enough leverage in today's job market," said Olson, who started at Cal State Fullerton in spring 2023.

"I chose CSUF based on the experiences of my Air Force colleagues who praised the university's programs for veterans, and my fellow high school graduates who spoke volumes about the resources on campus."

Olson said studying engineering provides him the best opportunity to explore his passion for solving problems and designing the next big idea.

"Being back in school is a humbling experience. Now that I am here, I know higher education will accelerate my life to greater heights," he said.

This academic year, Olson plans to get involved with campus organizations, including the Veterans Resource Center, which supports military-connected students. Olson, who played baseball in high school, is passionate about the sport and wants to join Cal State Fullerton Club Baseball.

In the future, Olson looks forward to using his engineering know-how for the greater good, including inspiring, mentoring and leading the next generation of STEM leaders.

"I would love to design and build products and start a company. Financial freedom will allow me to do great things for the world and give back to my community."

#3

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