CSUF ECONOMISTS DELIVER MIXED FORECAST TO BUSINESS LEADERS

High interest rates vs. consumer spending, hiring

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

I n the opening minutes of the Economic Forecast Conference, Anil Puri, director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting, set a bleak picture of the world. As always, partnering with Puri for the forecast was Mira Farka, professor of economics at Cal State Fullerton and the co-director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting.

The presentation, “Getting Real: Unscripted/Reality TV production internships to offer hands-on experience” took place Oct. 19.

As always, partnering with Puri for the forecast was Mira Farka, professor of economics at Cal State Fullerton and the co-director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting. The event was co-presented by CSUF and the Orange County Business Council, which collaborates with leaders in academia and government to help bolster the county’s economic development.

“This event is really a symbolic gesture, a symbolic expression of the relationship that we have with the business community,” Puri said. “They all value and hold these relationships very dear,” CSUF President Sylvia Alva said. “They’re important to our students. They’re important to our community.”

Farka and Puri predict that a recession will likely hit Southern California and the nation during the second half of 2024. However, unlike the Great Recession that crippled the global economy from 2009 to 2012, the economists predict it will be a normal or “garden variety” recession.

“Ever since the Fed embarked on its unprecedented rate-hiking cycle, raising the interest rate 11 times over the past 18 months, the U.S. economy has been on the verge of a recession,” the economists said.

But despite the hikes, real GDP is still growing, and employment has increased by 5.6 million jobs, much faster than the normal rate of growth.

Additionally, the unemployment rate has picked up only slightly.

“So, it seems like whatever the Fed forecast”

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton students had the opportunity to learn about full-time paid internships in unscripted/reality television production from professionals in the industry.

The presentation, “Getting Real: Unscripted Internship Program,” took place Oct. 19 in the Laveder Multipurpose Room on campus, and was put on by the Television Academy Foundation, the charitable arm of the Television Academy.

Part of the academic’s mission is to promote creativity, diversity and innovation toward the advancement of the telecommunications arts and sciences.

“By sharing his experience with the 30 or so students in attendance was co-ordinator/producer Grant Cotter, who was an intern in the program in 2022.

Also sharing his experience with the 30 or so students in attendance was comedian Grant Carter; Jonathan Murray and Cris Abrego, chair and vice chair, respectively, of the Television Academy Foundation; and Bey-Ling Sha, dean of the College of Communications.

Anil Puri, director of the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting, presents at the Orange County Business Council Fall Economic Forecast at The Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim.

WHAT’S AHEAD

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COMMUNICATIONS

Reality TV production internships to offer hands-on experience

Professionals promote diversity, inclusion

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

Through paid internships, the foundation aims to promote the voices and stories of underrepresented communities and increase diversity and inclusion in the field.

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Sports-broadcast students prepare for prime time

biggest names in reality television, said Hunter Hargraves, associate professor in cinema and television arts, and working on campus to interact with students can prove to be a valuable experience. 

"It’s in the interest of universities to get their students into these opportunities," Hargraves said. "It’s not the only way for students to get on-campus opportunities." 

Hargraves recently published his first book, Uncomfortable Television, which examines the methods television uses to engage audiences. His message: to make sure students find pleasure through feeling desired.

Allegro, who graduated from CSUF in 2018, said she has returned to campus several times and has fond memories of her experiences and the foundation he built for his career in television. 

"It’s going to be coming back here because this is where I kind of really cut my teeth in the business," Allegro said. "I attended CSUF on a wrestling scholarship. It’s really where I started, and I had to become even more passionate about television.

Allegro said he was pleased to see not all of the students at the presentations were in Communications.

"There were a handful of students present who were business majors, and there are definitely opportunities in the business side of the television industry, he said.

"People think about this industry as a way to get into media, but it’s not always the case. This isn’t necessarily the only way to get started, he added.

Student Julia Klidaras said the pre-season broadcast shows how this experience puts them above others who were business majors, and there are definitely opportunities in the business side of the television industry, he said.

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Reducing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder

Physiological resilience helpful, researcher finds

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

Cal State Fullerton public health lecturer Mark Dust was 28 when he deployed to Iraq in 2005 and spent his 30th birthday in a guard tower at Ali Al Salem Airbase. During his tour, in Iraq, he was nearly killed by a roadside bomb, engaged in deadly combat and multiple times came upon the aftermath of a suicide bombing. But he did not realize for he had returned to the U.S. that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Eventually, he recognized the symptoms and started on a journey to study ways to manage and prevent the damaging effects of chronic and traumatic stress. His research on building physiological resilience was recently presented in the professional journal *Psychology.*

Post-traumatic stress disorder can develop when a person witnesses or experiences a traumatic event that is shocking, terrifying or life-threatening, according to the Sub- drome Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website. Symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, hallucinations, irritability, and being highly vigilant can begin months or years after the event.

“I knew I had a short temper, and I would have intrusive thoughts,” said Dust, describing his return to the U.S. “And I noticed that I was always just tense around all the crowds.”

Even going to Disneyland with his kids was difficult. He felt threatened all the time. The sight of a pile of trash on the side of the road while driving triggered sudden, acute fear.

While working toward a master’s degree in business administration, Dust signed up for a course called Executive Leadership and Management, hoping it would calm his nerves and help him go back to what he felt made good decisions.

“I started noticing that I wasn’t being reactive as I was before,” he said. He also realized that in certain situations his body would tense as if he were threatened, even when his mind knew that he was completely safe — and here the beginnings of his research inquiries took hold.

After he completed his MBA, he began working toward his doctorate at the School of Community and Global Health at Claremont University. He earned his degree in health promotion sciences with a concentration in neuroscience.

“[I had to know, it is possible for us to control our nervous system to try to prevent] any trauma happening after a traumatic event?” Dust said.

While serving as a support group at the Veterans Administration, he became engrossed hearing the stories from the veterans sharing traumatic experiences. Just as he’d been troubled in crowds, his body reacted to the stories as if they were happening in the present. Could calming thoughts prevent a stress reaction?

“If the brain doesn’t know the difference between you telling a story and it actually happening, then why can’t we use that for positive?” he said.

The pilot study Dust conducted looked at people who practiced either a visualization technique or a breathing technique to see if they could build resilience against stress. The visualization group’s results trended in a positive direction against stress. The visualization exercise uses the power of the brain not knowing the difference between hearing someone else’s fight-or-flight response from the thoughts, we generate a rest-and-relaxation response by telling ourselves a positive story that gives us a sense of comfort, safety or joy.

“Instead of generating a fight-or-flight response — the antithesis of fight or flight — we generate a rest-and-relaxation response by telling ourselves a positive story that weaves stories,” he said. “Instead of generating a fight-or-flight response, we flip that and exercise our nervous system to try to prevent the stress reaction.”

Ramírez and her students tested different sides, “One side of the antimicrobial resistance problem is drug-resistant bacteria. They are not the only ones tackling the problem of drug-resistant bacteria,” said CSUF’s Marcelo Tolmasky, who also applied for the professor position here.”

“One of the main things that we are trying to do through our research is to understand why the bacteria are gaining resistance. That’s why we also do a lot of studies at the molecular and also transcriptomic (RNA) level, exposing the bacteria to different drugs. We also study at the genomic level the presence of novel genes, or mutations in genes, that can explain why the bacteria is no longer resistant to certain antibiotics or groups of antibiotics.”

Recently, the professor and her students discovered a potential treatment against the bacterium called Acinetobacter baumannii, which is found in hospitals and is resistant to antibiotic therapies.

“Our physiology can drive our fight-or-flight drive and, in turn, keep us threatened, even when our mind knows that we are not, that we are completely safe,” said Ramírez.

“In other countries, in other institutions, there are many people working on our research in Argentina until I met the PhD I did my Ph.D. under the mentorship of my professor in a research career in Argentina until I met me. I also encourage them to apply to fellowships.”

Ramírez said, “I am a first-generation Mexican American and I was afraid of other heritage were scientists, they encouraged Ramírez to pursue her education and achieve her goals.”

She has published numerous papers in scientific journals, attended numerous conferences, for instance, Gutierrez Tolmasky, who also worked for the project.

“Before, people can look to and say, ‘Well, if he can do it, I can do it,’ and get involved in this field. We have lab meetings where we discuss our results. I always try to incentivize to prevent the work in our area when there’s an opportunity here, we get involved.”

Ramin and her colleagues are publishing for journals, for instance, Gutierrez Tolmasky, who also worked for the project. But they are not the only ones tackling the problem of drug-resistant bacteria.

“Other countries, in other institutions, many people are working on this,” Ramírez said. “We need to find new novel approaches or novel strategies to treat the patients that have an infection caused by drug-resistant organisms that we can save that life.”
Examining the complexities of Israeli-Palestinian conflict

GLOBAL POLITICS

During an Oct. 23 panel discussion hosted by Cal State Fullerton’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences, researchers offered academic perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Scott Spitzer, associate professor of political science who teaches a course on the Politics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, explained the importance of understanding and being able to hold the complexities of the conflict, explained the importance of understanding and being able to hold.

Ella Ben Hagai, associate professor of psychology, and Scott Spitzer, associate professor of political science, said that the program was created to teach English to both Palestinian and Israeli people.

“By becoming more culturally competent and taking into account their collective experiences and how they exhibit their trauma, how they cope with trauma, we can learn to recom-
University students design sustainable housing solutions

By Isabella Busch, contributing reporter

From concept to reality, Cal State Fullerton students were given the opportunity to see their visions for sustainable design take shape as nearly 75 Titan representatives and sustainability professionals gathered at the Orange County Sustainability Decathlon hosted by the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa.

The decathlon is held every other year, and this year 20 teams from institutions around the world were invited to participate. One of those teams was from Cal State Fullerton, which organized the event to walk visitors through the exhibits and explain their design concepts.

The Titans put together a full decathlon team comprised of the university's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, its faculty advisors, and several students.

“The process was wide open, so anybody could bring in their ideas,” Mishra said. “The only goal was to identify the problems and come up with sustainable solutions. And then we worked together to say, OK, let’s move ahead with this.”

CSUF professor and chair of the university’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, as its faculty advisor, said the project, which was conducted outside of standard coursework, brought together a wide range of majors, including engineering, art, computer science, business and biology marketing. The students began by putting their heads together to develop unique sustainable solutions that could be implemented in the built environment.

“We kept it incomplete, meaning you can see inside the houses,” Mishra said. “You can see how insulation is done.”

CSUF senior civil engineering major Daniel Santa Maria was the team lead for the insulation portion of the building. The team made a “smart membrane” that incorporated a double-wall construction assembly that reduces thermal bridging, essentially keeping heat out of the structure.

“The biggest problems that we see are standard housing (construction) are that insulation is there, but there are little pockets here and there where heat can slip through,” Santa Maria said. “So to solve that, we decided to emphasize our insulation envelope so that all the way around the house there was consistent insulation.”

CSUF senior architecture major Joslin Jenner is the decathlon’s sustainability specialist. Jenner worked closely with his team to develop market-ready concepts for the public to address climate change, “the competition allowed students to showcase their market-ready concepts for the public to tour over the two-day event.”

As one of the participating schools, the team hosted an open house and exhibition, with other Titans on hand during the event to walk visitors through the exhibits and explain their design concepts.

“We are finally at a turning point where the Fed policy is in search of a soft landing,” Farka said. “And of course, everybody gets very excited that the soft landing is just around the corner. Maybe we’re wrong about everything. Hopefully, your bottom line is better than our forecast.”

“Economists said soft landings and recessions are virtually indistinguishable and kind of going back and forth between the two,” Farka said.

“Some parts of the economy are slowing down while others are picking up, he said. “And although government spending is increasing, the private sector has been healthy after going down a little bit earlier this year.”

The economist said soft landings and recessions are virtually indistinguishable in the first few months of the year. “It’s been very healthy since last year,” he said.

“The backbone of this strength of the economy is the consumers, he said. “Consumer spending has been strong and healthy after going down a little bit earlier this year.”

“The biggest problems that you see in national economy are reflected in many parts of the local economy, he said. “Some parts of the economy are slow- ing down while others are picking up.”

“I think for this project specifically, it was challenging,” Mishra said. “We didn’t participate in the full decathlon competition this year. But we were able to put together a house that we integrated into the decathlon event to walk visitors through the exhibits and explain their design concepts.”

“The experience brought sustainable educational opportunities for future projects,” Mishra said. “It’s not just an idea, but actually something that in their mind and getting that experience will make a difference in their careers as they move forward.”

“The strength of consumer spending and robust hiring by businesses has bolstered the overall economic outlook over the past year, but signs of weak- ness are proliferating. Trends in the national economy are reflected in many ways in our local economies, these of the state and Southern California,” Farka typically wears a bit of humor into her forecasts, and that was the case again.

“In fact, in the words of the man who knows the world, Walt Disney, ‘I heard there’s going to be a recession. I decide to keep my head down and I’m sure that’s what actually they’re not interested in and I’m happy to keep on growing.’”

PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Decathlon is the first of its kind locally, OCSD challenged local university teams to develop innovation design ideas and energy-efficient housing solutions that support California’s goal of becoming “100% reliant on renewable energy by 2045.” With the belief that “education is the key to the future,” decathlon is held every other year, and with this experience under their belts, Mishra is confident CSUF will be able to enter a full decathlon team dur- ing the event’s next cycle. As a result of their participation, the Titans not only gained experience in teamwork and leadership but are now challenged to keep sustainability practices top of mind for future projects.

“Sustainability will be the priority for almost any home design and many of the problems that require solving in the future,” Mishra said. “We’re not just an idea, but actually something that we believe could bring in their ideas,” Mishra said. “The only goal was to identify the problems and come up with sustainable solutions. And then we worked together to say, OK, let’s move ahead with this.”

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There are times when Eddie Soto — that 35-year-old Eddie Soto, for the record — focuses that obsession in better ways. When he's walking down the hallway, steps on the Cal State Dominguez Hills practice field and turns back the clock.

And when Soto turns back the clock, it’s not only the hands of the clock turning back the clock.

“I still jump in with guys and show them what I know. I think that’s important,” said Soto, the head coach of the CSUF men’s soccer team. “I read about me and see that I was an All-American and say, ‘You’re not bad. Yeah, I’m bad. I’m double their age.’ You, some things never change.

Disillusioned Eddie Soto can still turn heads on a soccer field. The young man who tore up the Cal State Fullerton practice field and turns back the clock.

In his three years at CSUF, Soto scored 38 goals (tied for second), added 20 assists (tied for third) and scored the 41st and 42nd goals of his career — decisions that showing is better than telling. It’s also 51-year-old Eddie Soto, for the record.

And when Soto turns back the clock, it’s not only the hands of the clock turning back the clock.

“Back the clock. That’s 51-year-old Eddie Soto, for the record,” Wilkinson-Kirouac, former director of sports medicine at Fullerton, said. “He didn’t stay away from the A-League grind. He’s been there before.”

Soto eventually found a home with the Orange County County, where he led the league in goals during his five-year stint in the A-League. By 2000, Soto had enough of the A-League. He retired.

He didn’t stay away from the field long. When he was playing in A-League, he was approached to coach the Elsby Titans, who became Orange County United. When Elsby jumped at the chance, leading an Under-18 team to its league title. For his efforts, he got paid.

“It was the first coaching job I ever had, and I didn’t think I was fired. But I was hooked,” he said. “I love helping. I love giving back. You get those kids who aspire to reach the level I did. I really enjoyed that aspect of it.”

Hooked enough that after he retired, Soto was working at DreamWorks as an animator. He got another blessing disguised as a phone call when Misi-tri called him to offer him an assistant job at CSUF. Soto had to think. Did I want to continue on this path? Did I want to coach full-time?

“I was shocked. We only have one soccer field on campus,” said Soto’s former mentor, Sigi Schmid, who brought him over for an eventual eight-year stint as an assistant.

Schmid, who was approached to coach the Titans to the national semifinals the first time in nine years and Soto was the Titans to the national semifinals the first time in nine years, said: “It wasn’t just UCLA and USC as national powers on the West Coast. It was the CSUF men’s soccer team. We were All-Americans and say, ‘You’re not bad. Yeah, I’m bad. I’m double their age.’ You, some things never change.

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