



Joanna Cisneros, center, takes portraits Oct. 9 in the Visual Arts Complex. The complex includes work space for film, animation, gaming, and painting and drawing, as well as offices and computer labs.

BUILT FOR THE FUTURE

NEW VISUAL ARTS COMPLEX FOSTERS STUDENT COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Gallery space and green-screen room among innovations

By **Larry Urish**
contributing writer

Students, faculty and the local arts community are benefitting from a major upgrade to Cal State Fullerton’s College of the Arts. Originally planned seven years ago and completed on schedule in August, the Visual Arts Modernization Project includes two new buildings and major renovations to two existing structures. The result: enhanced collaboration between students and significantly great-

er engagement between the College of the Arts and the outside community. In addition, students now have greater access to all manner of technical resources that will better prepare them for work in today’s ever-changing arts world.

Constructed in the 1960s, the original Visual Arts Complex was planned for 1,100 students. Today, CSUF is home to 2,600 visual arts students. “We’ve done some amazing things with the 1960s buildings,” said Arnold Holland, dean of the College of the Arts, “but as the arts change, it’s important that we

change with them and create spaces that serve our students in their work for the years to come.”

Holland stressed greater community engagement as a focal point of the project. Building G — a one-story, 15,000-square-foot addition that houses the Nicholas and Lee Begovich Gallery, three student galleries and an arts research library — does just that. Before, galleries were in separate locations; now they’re in one space.

“The building is dedicated to exhibition spaces, which we didn’t have before,” Holland said. “With the addition

of our gallery spaces, we now have a facility that enhances the way our community engages with the visual arts. Our graduate gallery was only open when the exhibiting students were present: between classes and on nights and weekends.” Now, he added, staff members will keep all the spaces open, and the public can visit far more often.

A key element of Building G, outward-facing windows, makes CSUF’s visual arts, well, more visible. “If you walked around our prior gallery (with inward-facing windows), you had no

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PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton

FACILITIES

‘Living laboratory’ that is the Arboretum expands horizons

Faculty and students utilize resources

By **Jenelyn Russo**
contributing writer

Chemistry students performing soils and groundwater testing. Art students installing senior project exhibits. Business students conducting capstone class strategic research. These are just a few of the experiential learning opportunities that Titan students are taking part in at the Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton.

A 26-acre site at the north end of CSUF’s campus, the Arboretum is a world-class “living laboratory” and home to some of the most unique plant collections both locally and from around the world.

In addition to its mission of promoting education, research and conservation, the CSUF-owned Arboretum seeks

to partner with faculty from across the university’s eight colleges by offering a distinctive setting for student instruction.

“We want to hear from the faculty member what it is that they’re looking for and what their needs are, and then we figure out how we can meet those needs,” said Arboretum Director Greg Dymont.

Faculty can initiate the process by filling out an online interest form describing what type of class and activity they would like to host at the Arboretum. Whether the request is to host a literature lecture, a kinesiology yoga session, an arts exhibit or a botany research project, the Arboretum can accommodate the request.

“We ask them to expand on some of the concepts they are learning about in their class and to share some of the learning outcomes from their syllabi that are being met via the experience that they plan to have at the Arboretum,” said Academic & Environmental Program Coordinator Justin Villasenor.

Villasenor’s role is to interface with CSUF faculty to determine how the Arboretum can best achieve the desired

ARBORETUM » PAGE 5



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LITERATURE

Pride of ‘Frankenstein’: The lasting power of the creature

Why Shelley’s character grew into a pop culture icon

By Greg Hardesty
contributing writer

David Sandner’s yard is filled with Halloween decorations. Surprisingly, not one of them is the fictional creature from the classic novel that occupies a big chunk of his teaching and writing activities: “Frankenstein,” the 1818 masterwork by Mary Shelley that, in recent decades, has been acknowledged as the world’s first science fiction novel — in addition to being a horror milestone about the iconic monster fashioned from human and animal parts. Sandner, professor of English, comparative literature, and linguistics, is an expert on “Frankenstein,” Shelley, science fiction, horror literature and fantasy literature. As Oct. 31 approaches, he talked about the lasting power of Frankenstein (although Shelley didn’t give him a name in her novel, the creature also is commonly referred to as Frankenstein) and two works he completed in the last year, as well as one in progress. Not surprisingly, all three are about Shelley or Frankenstein. “ ‘Frankenstein’ was such a prescient book,” said Sandner, noting that the novel was published at the height of the first Industrial Revolution that mostly was confined to Britain. It was an era in which the basic materials of iron and steel were introduced, along with coal, the steam engine, electricity, the internal combustion engine and petroleum. “The novel was written at a time when technology really was threatening to break out in many different ways – a theme that feels so amazingly modern to us,” he explained. “It’s a book about that, as well as many other things. “Many readers respond to the character of the creature as a person who is suffering and feeling monstrous, but the novel also is about this onrush of change and how alienated we feel in



David Sandner, professor of English, comparative literature, and linguistics

our work lives. “Capitalism still thrives, and we live in a technology-obsessed culture, and those things go hand in hand. We have this promise of democracy and yet this problem of us being more valued as cogs in the machine rather than as individuals, and that’s a theme that ‘Frankenstein’ took on and that still speaks to us nearly 210 years later.” **Busy writer** Sandner, in his 21st year at CSUF, had his historical fiction novella, “His Unburned Heart,” published this spring. In two connected short stories, the novella tells the story of Shelley and her quest to claim her husband’s heart

when it didn’t burn on his funeral pyre (that’s in the historical record). One critic calls the work “a Valentine’s gift of the most morbid kind.” In November 2023, Sandner edited “The Afterlife of Frankenstein: A Century of Mad Science, Automata, and Monsters Inspired by Mary Shelley, 1818-1918,” an anthology of works by writers influenced by “Frankenstein.” Now, he’s working on a novel about Shelley called “The Frankenstein Singularity.” At CSUF, he’s dressed up as Viktor Frankenstein, the creator of the creature, for students and has helped students build a database of some 400 novels, plays and stories influenced by

Shelley’s novel called The Frankenstein Meme. “I always liked monsters,” said Sandner, who grew up in the Bay Area and whose adult daughter teases him about how many editions of “Frankenstein” he owns. Sandner, who earned his Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Oregon and his master’s degree from San Francisco State University, also has a non-Frankenstein project coming up. In November, a novel he co-wrote with Jacob Weisman, “Egyptian Motherlode,” will be published. It takes readers on a wild ride through 20th-century American music, from jazz and blues to psychedelic rock and funk.

Horror’s meaning Sandner is looking forward to the upcoming Guillermo Del Toro movie, “Frankenstein,” starring Oscar Isaac as Viktor and Jacob Elordi as the creature. The Netflix production will be the umpteenth movie based on the novel that pretty much created the genre of monster flicks. He loves Danny Boyle’s 2011 directorial take on the stage production of “Frankenstein” in London in 2011, and he’s a fan of the 2013 novel “Frankenstein in Baghdad” by Ahmed Saawadi. Asked what it is about works of horror that continue to fascinate, Sandner said part of it has to do with the mystery of life – mystery with a capital “M.” Said Sandner: “We pretend life all makes sense. We’d like for it to have meaning, but when we are dealing with horror, when we’re dealing with the unknowable, we confront the fact that we’re taking things on faith, and that’s very unnerving. “Are people just telling us what we want to hear about God or the universe or anything else? What is moral and right? In horror, we can ponder that there is no meaning. But then we can walk out of the theater or close our book away and get back into the light. “It’s good to put horror in fiction and art and confront it. That’s one of the reasons we need a literature that addresses it.”

Visual

FROM PAGE 1

idea what was in it,” Holland said. “So, we created spaces where people can see art and art classes being taught. You get to see teaching and learning happening in a way that is unprecedented.” The two-story, 37,000-square-foot Building H is the Visual Arts Complex’s other new structure. Its first floor is home to the dean’s office, computer labs, computer commons (spaces where students can work between classes or after hours) and lecture and seminar spaces. The second floor furnishes spaces that, Holland notes, focus on digital work: entertainment arts and animation, gaming art, graphic design and more. This includes a green-screen (motion-capture) room, a film screening area and computer labs. “The green-screen room is unique in arts colleges,” Holland said. “It’s the same technology that students will use when working at Disney, Pixar and Blizzard Entertainment. ... Two of the spaces (in Building H) that I’m most proud of, a critique room and a seminar classroom, include floor-to-ceiling glass.” Buildings A and E underwent significant renovations. Now home to the Department of Visual Arts offices, Building A formerly housed the Begovich Gallery. “We took that space and created a number of studios for grad students,” Holland said. This includes a studio space, painting and drawing areas, and a collaborative makerspace. Along with drawing and painting

rooms, a 2D foundations classroom and additional instructional space, the first floor of Building E contains faculty offices. “As we grew since the 1960s, we put faculty wherever we could, in different locations,” Holland said. “Now nearly all of our faculty members are in a single suite. It’s easier for the students.” Building E’s second floor hosts the photography department, with two studios, a room for large-scale printing, a darkroom and a photo computer lab. Despite the ever-expanding focus on digital art, “We’re one of the few programs committed to maintaining some of the (traditional) foundational labs, such as ‘wet’ darkrooms,” Holland said. The overall design of the complex helps to bridge gaps between students studying different arts disciplines. For example, “Our motion-capture room is a place where visual and performing arts students can work together,” he said. Dance students, he noted, can strut their stuff in front of the green screen. And, while the old complex separated students by arts specialty, the new design allows a variety of disciplines to be taught and observed in shared spaces. Holland is understandably proud of the new facility. “We’re now the largest visual arts department in the CSU system, which makes it one of the largest in the state,” he said. ... Cal State Fullerton has been a hub of arts and culture in the region for a while. This new complex will only enhance that. We’re bringing in tens of thousands of people each year, and we hope that we can grow that number and engage that much more with Orange County.”



PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Part of the expansion of the Visual Arts Complex is a two-story, 37,000-square-foot building.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Newport Beach Film Festival features event planning experience

CSUF News Media Services

Just last fall, Bernadette Velasco was a communications student in Cal State Fullerton’s Event Planning and Management course, where she gained hands-on experience planning the Newport Beach Film Festival.

One year later, she’s putting those skills into action in her new role as director of community partnerships for the festival.

“Taking the Event Planning and Management course was a turning point for me,” said Velasco, who graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in communications-entertainment and tourism this year. She was originally interested in a career as a physical therapist. She credits the class for helping her discover her true passion.

The eight-day festival, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, offers communications students practical opportunities to work with international teams, local media and community organizations. In the course, students are divided into teams based on the countries the films originate from, for example, Team Australia, Team Korea, Team Japan, Team Mexico, and Team Italy.

Throughout her time working with Team Mexico, Velasco developed her management, critical thinking and communication skills while also learning how to effectively collaborate with partners to plan an event of this scale. Seeing the festival come together at the end of the experience inspired Velasco to pursue a career in event planning and communications.

“The theater was packed because it was sold out, and everyone had a good time at the after-party. Seeing that and knowing that my team came up with all of those ideas was a very rewarding experience,” said Velasco.

Her work in the course led to an internship with the Newport Beach Film Festival before she graduated, eventually opening the door to her current leadership role.

“It’s been an amazing growth experience,” said Velasco.

In her professional role, Velasco oversees collaborations with more than 60 local nonprofits and community organizations in Orange County. This year, the festival will feature more than 300 films from more than 50 countries.

Returning to CSUF this fall to share her expertise with current students who are planning the festival, Velasco said she is eager to help students hone their skills.

“Event planning and communications is not a single-player game. You have to be a team player, and you need to build strong relationships,” she said.

“The job market is tough, and this course gives students real-world experience that will make them stronger communicators. It can make a huge difference in their careers.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL

The Oct. 17-24 Newport Beach Film Festival will feature more than 300 films from over 50 countries.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAIPO CAVANH
Bernadette Velasco, CSUF alum



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL

The Newport Beach Film Festival is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Students learn while gaining experience

CSUF students working with the Newport Beach Film Festival is part of a larger tradition established by Gregg Schwenk, CEO of the festival and lecturer in communications at CSUF.

Schwenk, who has taught the communications course for 23 years, designed the program to give students hands-on experience in business development, outreach and event planning.

“The course gives students the opportunity to put theory into practice. They’re working in a very safe and nurturing environment, but it comes with real-world challenges and expectations,” said Schwenk. “It’s a unique experience that prepares them for the industry.”

Schwenk has seen many of his former students, like Velasco, go on to work in professional roles, with some of them returning to guide and hire the next generation of festival organizers.

“It’s exciting to see my former students hiring current students and continuing that cycle of growth and opportunity,” Schwenk said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL
Gregg Schwenk, lecturer in communications and CEO of the Newport Beach Film Festival

BEYOND THE CONVERSATION

‘Wicked’ star Cynthia Erivo: ‘There is no one else like you’

CSUF News Media Services

Tony, Emmy and Grammy Award-winning actress Cynthia Erivo knows what it feels like “to look different, to walk differently and to enter a space differently than anyone else.”

It’s one of the reasons she immediately recognized herself in Elphaba, the fiery and brave Wicked Witch of the West and protagonist from the famous novel and Broadway musical “Wicked.”

“When you play characters, you become one in the same even if you have nothing in common with the characters. Somehow, you find that wonderful kismet connection. But with Elphaba, it was really special because I understood her,” said Erivo, who will appear on the big screen this November as Elphaba in director John Chu’s newest film “Wicked.”

At the first Beyond the Conversation event of the fall semester, Erivo spoke to Cal State Fullerton students, faculty and staff about portraying the iconic green witch, the impact of representation and the magic behind staying true to one’s self. Hosted by Associated Students Inc. and the Division of Student Affairs, the purpose of the speaker series is to inspire further dialogue about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Erivo is the second Black woman in history to be cast as the unique character from Oz, following in the footsteps of Alexia Khadime, who was the first Black actress to play Elphaba in the West End production of “Wicked” in 2009.

Although Elphaba is green in the film, Erivo said she held tight to her personal experience “underneath the green” and used those emotions to create a character that viewers could see themselves in.

“I knew that there were so many people looking at this character as a beacon for their own difference, and specifically other young Black women who’ve seen themselves in this character,” said Erivo.

Her dedication to storytelling and representation has remained a staple throughout her career as she’s stepped into several iconic roles across theater and film. She played American abolitionist Harriet Tubman in the 2019 film



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASSOCIATED STUDENTS INC.

Tony, Emmy and Grammy Award-winning actress Cynthia Erivo speaks at Beyond the Conversation.

“Harriet,” Celie in the 2015-17 Broadway revival of “The Color Purple” and the Blue Fairy in Disney’s 2022 live action film “Pinocchio.”

For students aspiring to careers in entertainment, Erivo advised them to build a strong support network of family and friends, prioritize their mental health and trust that their path will take them where they’re meant to go.

“If you get a no in an audition, it just means that one wasn’t for you,” said

Erivo. “The nos that you get are making room for the opportunities that are meant for you.”

She urged students to stay true to themselves — something she had to learn as a young actress growing in the industry.

“When you are you, and fully you, you allow other people to relax and enjoy the experience of what you bring at the table,” said Erivo. “There is no one else like you in the world.”

Seizing an opportunity

Fourth-year ASI student programmer Kayla Lam has been working with ASI on the Beyond the Conversation speaker series since 2022. In that time, the series has welcomed an impressive lineup of speakers, including actors Danny Trejo, Ke Huy Quan, Tyler James Williams, Issa Rae, Hunter Schafer, Diane Guerrero and Daniel Dae Kim as well as Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps and New York Times journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones.

Throughout the series, Lam has been inspired by the different speakers and their stories. She set her sights on becoming a student interviewer and was honored to be selected to interview Erivo at the Sept. 26 event.

“It was one of those opportunities that I felt like I couldn’t pass up because it’s something that I’ve been wanting to do since I was hired here,” said Lam, a business administration-entertainment and hospitality management major.

Lam said she appreciated Erivo’s insight on the importance of staying optimistic in the face of adversity.

“Beyond the Conversation is not just about one type of person. It’s about bringing to campus a wide variety of people that students can learn from,” said Lam.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASSOCIATED STUDENTS INC.
Kayla Lam, ASI student programmer and fourth-year business major

LATINX STUDENT SUCCESS

Project upGRADS selected as an example of Excelencia

CSUF News Media Services

Cal State Fullerton's Project upGRADS is one of four national programs selected as 2024 Examples of Excelencia by Excelencia in Education for intentionally serving Latino students on their journey in higher education.

Project upGRADS, or Utilizing and Promoting Graduate Resources and Access for Disadvantaged Students, aims to improve access to graduate education for Latinx students.

Over the past five years, the program has improved enrollment, persistence and graduation rates for the university's Latinx graduate students.

Project upGRADS offers advising, mentorship and scholarships and has served close to 7,000 graduate students since 2019, said faculty members Katherine Powers and Volker Janssen, who lead the project.

"This recognition draws attention to the opportunities that Latinx students have in graduate studies at CSUF and is a reminder of our collective work as a Hispanic-Serving Institution in truly serving Latinx students," said Powers, who has directed the grant program since its inception.

The 2024 Examples emerged from 345 nominations from 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, 103 program submissions and 18 finalists, including Project upGRADS.

Each year, four Examples of Excelencia are selected from the associate, baccalaureate, graduate and community-based organization levels for their intentionality and evidence of effectiveness in positively impacting Latino students.

Funded by a \$3 million U.S. Department of Education Hispanic-Serving Institution grant, Project upGRADS addresses the disparities in enrollment, retention and graduation rates between Latinx students and the general graduate student population.

Project upGRADS has helped to increase the number of Latinx graduate students from 30.3% in 2020 to 36% in fall 2023. Janssen said that the three-year graduation rate for Latinx students steadily increased to 74.8% in 2020, higher than for non-Latinx students.

"The increase in Latinx graduate enrollment is due to the proactive advising of Project upGRADS staff members, who offer help and support to prospective applicants in emails, phone calls, Zoom meetings and in-person consultations," he said.

As a result, Janssen added that the share of incomplete or withdrawn graduate applications from Project upGRADS advisees in fall 2023 was only



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXANDRA VARGAS/PROJECT UPGRADS

Incoming graduate students in the College of Health and Human Development join Project upGRADS' Volker Janssen, back row, second from right, and Matt Englar-Carlson, front row, center, professor of counseling and faculty training director for the program.

5%. By comparison, for non-Latinx and non-Black students who did not get advised, it was close to 18%.

Standout program

The program's activities for students include workshops on the benefits of graduate school, the admissions process and financial aid to faculty mentoring and professional networking.

Jesus Hoil was eager to participate in Project upGRADS as a first-generation college graduate and a first-year student in the master's program in history with a concentration in Chicana/Chicano studies.

"Project upGRADS was an opportunity to learn what to expect in graduate school and how to accomplish my goal of earning a master's degree," said Hoil, who participated in the program's activities, including the Master's Early Access and Transition summer bridge program.

Hoil plans to write his master's thesis about the Yucatán region and the indigenous Maya people — his family's heritage and ancestry. He aspires to teach at



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Katherine Powers



PHOTO COURTESY OF JESUS HOIL

History graduate student Jesus Hoil

the community college level.

"Project upGRADS has given me a community, and I've benefited from the welcoming environment and connection to campus resources and faculty."

Programs selected as Examples of Ex-

celencia and finalists are featured online in Excelencia's Growing What Works Database for institutional leaders, funders, policymakers and others interested in evidence-based programming for Latino students.

SPEAKER

Political consultant Mike Madrid stresses impact of the Latino vote

CSUF News Media Services

To boost civic engagement and voter participation ahead of the Nov. 5 general election, Cal State Fullerton invited nationally recognized political consultant Mike Madrid to speak with faculty, staff and students about the impact of the Latino vote.

At the Sept. 19 event, Madrid shared research from his newest book, "The Latino Century: How America's Largest Minority Is Transforming Democracy," which investigates why political parties have failed to capture the Latino vote. The event was hosted by CSUF student organizations Pi Sigma Alpha and the Political Science Student Association in partnership with the Office of Government and Community Relations.

Madrid emphasized the pivotal role that Latino voters will play in the direction of the election as 20% of Latinx people in the U.S. will be voting for the first time, including many CSUF students. The university was designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education in 2004 for enrolling more than 25% Latinx students. Today, Latinx students comprise approximately 52.3% of the student population.

"The Latino vote will be bigger than the winning margin in every single battleground state," said Madrid. "One of the key factors here is the emergence of third- and fourth-generation Latino voters."

Historically, Latino voters have voted in favor of the Democratic Party, but in recent years, Madrid said their group voting behavior has changed significantly as new generation voters have different priorities, political opinions and needs than those before them. This shift in political perspective has resulted in more Latino people voting increasingly against both parties.

"Eighty percent of the U.S. Latino population is U.S. born, most of it third generation, and increasingly, fourth generation. This is an extraordinarily different Latino voter," said Madrid. "The vote and voting behavior is moving markedly away from issues that are defined by ethnicity and race, like immigration, and toward this economic populist, pocketbook issue."

Madrid said that one of the reasons for this shift is that politicians and their campaigns have failed to address systemic issues that the population cares about. For example, he said the housing

crisis and lack of affordable housing in the state has led Latinos to generational poverty, affecting their health, ability to pursue higher education and success in the business industry.

"As a community of Latinos, we are more driven and motivated from a political perspective by economics. We are largely working class people," said Madrid. "My book argues that Latino leaders need to start looking at all of the commonalities we have, primarily class-based, and listen to the voters who have been telling them for decades that it is time to develop an agenda that is going to pull people out of poverty as a primary motivating force for our political engagement."

From CSUF to Capitol Hill

Madrid was joined by CSUF alumna Aissa Canchola Banez, who graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in political science and American studies in 2013 and who launched her career in national politics as a student leader in Associated Students Inc. and the Cal State DC Scholars program.

"I was a student leader on campus for several years, and it was ASI that took me to D.C. for the first time," said Banez. "It was such an amazing experience because we were doing lobbying and advocacy visits at a time when California was making critical budget decisions."

During that trip, Banez realized that she wanted to work on education policy that supports and uplifts Latinx communities and students. After graduating, she spent more than a decade working on Capitol Hill for the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension. Today, she is the director of policy for the Student Borrower Protection Agency, a nonprofit organization that engages in advocacy, policymaking and litigation strategy to advance economic opportunities for students.

Canchola agreed that economic issues have become a priority for third-generation voters. She underscored that the "policies at the national level are not representative of the Latino population," and she's working to ensure that Latinx communities and other communities of color are not disproportionately affected by such economic issues as debt.

"The work I do now is really central to creating policies that make an economy that works for working class people," said Banez.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Mike Madrid, political consultant, talks about politics on Sept. 19.



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Aissa Canchola Banez, CSUF alum and director of policy for the Student Borrower Protection Agency

LATINX LAB

Students build community while sharing their stories

Oral histories impart and preserve heritage

By Lou Ponsi
contributing writer

Through a course titled Cariño in the Time of Pandemic, students at Cal State Fullerton examined the relationships between public health, the COVID-19 pandemic, race, racism and social justice. The course was one in a series of projects taken on by students as part of Latinx Lab for Storytelling and Social Justice. Loosely translated from Spanish, cariño refers to taking care of someone. “But it means a little bit more than just care,” said Mario Obando, associate professor of Chicana/o Studies, who developed and taught the course in Spring 2024. “It’s like tenderness and love as well. So, it’s kind of like this nice word that encompasses all of those.” Established by a \$1.2 million, three-year grant awarded in March 2022 by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Latinx Lab for Storytelling and Social Justice aims to facilitate storytelling by students through methods that delve deeper into the experiences of marginalized communities. Students also have the opportunity to share their own narratives while building community and engaging in social activism. The Latinx Lab is led by CSUF faculty in the Chicana and Chicano Studies Department within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Gabriela Nuñez, chair and associate professor of Chicana and Chicano studies, said the word “lab” was chosen because it represents the spirit of discovery and experimentation. “Many of our Latinx students who come to us without really identifying as Chicana, Chicano, Latinx don’t necessarily know a lot about their histories,” Nuñez said. “And so, for some students, it helps them to learn more about their heritage and their history.”



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Mario Obando, associate professor of Chicana and Chicano studies

Part of Latinx Lab’s mission is to create an online digital hub and archives focused on disseminating Latinx stories and experiences beyond the Cal State Fullerton campus and local communities. For Cariño in the Time of Pandemic, Obando’s students conducted two-part interviews with loved ones and close friends, and those interviews are being preserved as oral histories. Destiny Trujillo, an undergraduate majoring in Chicana/o Studies, was among the 20 students to take the course. She said Obando’s guidance through the proper protocols of conducting professional research gave the course a level of legitimacy. “What I appreciated about this class, specifically, is that Mario took us through the certification of being a researcher of

humanities and social science,” Trujillo said. “It was really awesome because it makes you feel like you’re approaching your work more seriously.” The first interviews were designed to gather biographical information about their subject in order to gain a clear understanding of their backgrounds and the care work they performed. For the second interview, students asked specific questions related to the first year of the pandemic, from initial reports in February and March of 2020 and the shutdowns and life during the quarantine. From the collection of interviews, experiences trended differently, depending on gender and socioeconomic class and within multigenerational families, Obando said.

Interviews also included questions centering around civil unrest in Black communities stemming in large part from the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, the presidential election cycle, and even the raging fires in the San Gabriel Valley at the time. “So, it was an exploration of the pandemic, but also in relationship to social issues and environmental issues, and how folks used the care work that was revealed in the first interview that started to play out in the first year of the pandemic,” Obando said. “And we had some really interesting findings in their oral histories.” Following the interviews, the students met for a series of roundtable discussions about what they learned from the process. The generally accepted narrative emanating from the mainstream was that society was unprepared for the pandemic, Obando said. But the oral histories suggested the opposite was true within underserved populations, the professor said. “Some of us were actually very equipped to deal with the emotional side of it,” Obando said. “Not necessarily the specificity of a virus, but in terms of how do you keep a family together? How do you organize new schedules and quarantine? How do you have difficult conversations? All of that became very clear because of the qualitative work that students were doing.” Trujillo interviewed a friend who she became close with while they worked together at a skate shop in the mall. Trujillo said her friend is a UCLA student with a minor in Ethnic Chicano Studies, a single mother with a strong work ethic and the only female store manager in the region. “We really, really bonded over being these abolitionist feminist Chicana brown women,” Trujillo said. “I really loved hearing about her experiences and also living through these experiences with her ... talking about these real-life, living histories that were happening, and I felt like she really understood the way that we are playing active characters in a role in history. It blows my mind.”

Arboretum

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learning goals. Some classes use the Arboretum once or twice a semester, while others meet in the site’s outdoor classroom for the entirety of the course. “The students are not just learning something in a classroom from a textbook or a PowerPoint, but they’re actually here looking at something, and they can touch what they’re learning about,” Villasenor said. H. Jochen Schenk, a biological sciences professor at CSUF who specializes in plant physiology, has been using the Arboretum for class instruction and student research for nearly 20 years. One of his courses this semester is Global Change Biology, and his students are using the Arboretum to complete a public outreach project that they will present next month. “The projects are supposed to inform visitors to the Arboretum about ecosystem services by plants, specifically the impact of plants, and especially trees, on local climates,” Schenk said. Schenk is also teaching a course this semester called Explore Core: Truth, an interdisciplinary course that examines the intersections between science, liberal studies and philosophy. “So (the students) learn about truth from a philosophical, historical and science perspective, and I take them (to the Arboretum) to take some basic measurements and just get a feel for collecting scientific data, which is the basis for all science,” Schenk said. Other ways Schenk has used the Arboretum as his outdoor classroom include his field botany courses, which have the students on site nearly the entire semester. He and his colleagues in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics also have several students who conduct independent research at the site on a range of subjects. “For us plant-focused people, it’s just irreplaceable,” said Schenk of the Arboretum. “We go up there all the time for all kinds of plant-related things. I can’t imagine not having that,” Schenk said. Beyond the sciences, the Arboretum has provided experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty from across all eight of the university’s colleges. Some recent examples include engineering students who are designing pest management devices, graphic design students who are learning how to use augmented reality and communication students who are learning event planning and management by hosting the Garden Flea Market held each the spring. The Arboretum is also an approved service learning site for CSUF’s Center for Internships and Community Engagement where students can earn service learning hours or participate in a number of on-campus internship opportunities, including the PRISE (Promoting Resources in Informal Science Education) Summer Internship for future STEM teachers and the E3 (Engaging Environmental Experiences) Internship, a program that provides students a pathway to develop leadership and interdisciplinary skills, while



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
A Chinese Zelkova tree in the Arboretum and Botanical Garden at Cal State Fullerton



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
Visitors can enjoy the Arboretum’s peaceful grounds year round.

learning ecological principles and horticultural practices. Additionally, the Arboretum is aligned with several of the goals developed for Fullerton Forward, CSUF’s 2024 – 2029 strategic plan, including enhancing support for student access, learning and academic success, and fostering student engagement and well-being. Much more than a green space, the sky’s the limit for how the Arboretum can serve both the CSUF campus and the Titan community.

“I like to say the only limiting factor to what can be done out here is what we can think of or dream of because you can do virtually almost anything here,” Dymant said. “It’s a great big opportunity on a small campus with lots of people that come here daily.”

SPORTS

For Nico D’Angelo, water polo strategy runs deep

By Brian Robin
contributing writer

Not that he ever second-guessed himself on the wisdom of bringing Nico D’Angelo to Cal State Fullerton; after all, one coach knows a future coach when he sees one. Especially a coach who has been in and around enough pools to know a water polo savant-in-the-making.

But a September afternoon in 2023 validated more than Kyle Witt’s decision to recruit D’Angelo from Golden West College to play an integral role in the Titans’ first men’s water polo team in 38 years.

The Titans were playing Air Force for the second time in 12 days. In a back-and-forth game featuring nine ties and neither team leading by more than two goals, the Titans tied matters at 12 via Dominic Hernandez’s goal with 10 seconds left, sending the game to overtime.

After Air Force took the lead in the first overtime, D’Angelo tied it in the second. The next two extra periods were scoreless, mandating sudden death, which is when the Falcons blinked. Ian Christie committed a foul and the Titans had a penalty shot.

Even before the waves had settled — both in the pool and in the minds of everyone on both benches and in the stands, D’Angelo immediately knew what needed to happen. He needed to take that penalty shot.

“That was the moment where the leadership responsibility was there, and I felt like at that moment, I was ready for the pressure and prepared for the pressure,” D’Angelo said. “I wouldn’t want the feeling of someone else taking it and missing it. I wanted to be the one to put myself in the pressure at that moment.”

D’Angelo earlier beat Air Force goalie Liam Markus with a high shot to the upper right corner. This time, D’Angelo beat him with a low skip shot to the left bottom corner. But an officiating mix-up nullified the shot and D’Angelo needed to shoot again.

This time, he went back to the top right corner, firing a howitzer that no goalie on the planet could save. D’Angelo scraped the water in triumph with his right hand as his teammates swam over to congratulate him.

“That was a crazy, crazy day,” he said.

And yet, even with a four-goal, one-assist outing, it was just another day in D’Angelo’s improbable journey from ignored small-town water polo player to Division 1 difference-maker in one of the toughest water polo conferences



PHOTO COURTESY CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Nico D’Angelo (8) takes a shot against Concordia’s defense on Sept. 14. CSUF won the match 14-9.

in the country. In his first year at CSUF, D’Angelo scored 29 goals, added 26 assists and led the Titans’ field players in steals with 30.

As the team captain this year, D’Angelo already tallied 35 goals and 22 assists through Oct. 13.

Just another day where D’Angelo illustrated how you can find water polo savants in wine country.

Just another day where Witt, CSUF’s third-year water polo coach charged with building the Titans’ program from scratch, could sit back, nod and know that with D’Angelo in the pool, vintage moments were moments away.

“Smart players learn the ‘how’ of strategy. Future coaches learn the ‘why’ of strategy,” Witt said, explaining why D’Angelo’s water polo IQ is somewhere in the off-the-charts neighborhood.

We’ll get to how D’Angelo is a pool savant momentarily. And this future coach is already a coach — of the U10 and U14 players at Newport Water Polo Club.

But first, did someone mention “Vintage?” That’s the name of the Napa high school D’Angelo attended, where he was a three-time All-Conference First-Team player, league MVP his senior year and owner of school records for career goals, career steals, single-season goals and steals and single-game steals.

Napa may be known for producing world-class wine. It’s not, however, known for producing Division 1 water polo players. D’Angelo had to drive 40

minutes to play club water polo and even then, not even side trips to Napa’s storied vineyards could get college recruiters to see D’Angelo’s vintage play at Vintage High.

“There’s obvious disappointment when you’re trying to go play at a Division 1 school and it didn’t work out. But I knew if I really deserved to be on this path, I’d prove it on the community college level and end up in D1,” he said. “It was more a means to an end, and that was my mindset. If I did my job at a community college and worked my butt off, that would eventually put me where I want to be.”

That pragmatic attitude, along with advice from several mentors, took D’Angelo to Golden West College in Huntington Beach. The five-time California state community college champions were known as an incubator for players like D’Angelo, and it would serve nicely as that means-to-an-end.

First, it would provide a rude awakening.

“College water polo is a different game. The speed of the game, how fast and how strong everyone is around you is such a difference,” he said. “In high school, three or four guys are good. But at Golden West, everyone is fast and smart, and you have to work hard to stand out. It was a really big learning curve. ...

“Drive defense was the biggest transition. I was quick enough in high school where I wasn’t being attacked, and I

could mask it with quickness and intelligence. But immediately once I got to college, I was getting driven on and being ejected (for fouls). So I asked an older player to work with me after practice and teach me how to defend drivers. I had to change my technique and the way I was doing it because I didn’t realize how big a problem it would be. This made me realize I had to work twice as hard to catch up.”

Catch up he did. D’Angelo played on two state championship teams, which drew the attention of Witt. The Titans’ head coach was building the foundation of his program with community college players from top-tier programs and a seven-time state champion in his backyard was a natural starting point.

“Nico was on one of those teams, and his game sense and work ethic in every facet of the game stood out,” Witt said. “I was looking for as many intelligent players as I could find, and he certainly qualified there.

“Lots of players view the battle as scoring or assisting. He’s one of the few that views the small things in our game as battles. He cares about the little details and asks his teammates to do so, as well.”

It was that innate intelligence that caught Witt’s attention. It was there in high school, and even during that difficult transition to college water polo, it never left. D’Angelo was always a player who could see three, four moves ahead amid the thrashing bodies and underwater violence that is a day ending in ‘y’ in water polo.

Some of that was natural, some of that was a product of watching YouTube videos of Italian and Spanish players who play the same creative, shifty game D’Angelo plays. D’Angelo spent hours watching how Brazilian maestro Felipe Perrone, who played 10 years for Spain, could take over a game.

But some of that was a byproduct of the 5-foot-10 D’Angelo’s early realization that he would never be one of the 6-7 gargantuans who could physically take over a game.

“I always tried to be someone who could help the whole team and set up guys by helping put them in the right place. Even at the next level, that ability was still there,” he said. “I felt I always had the right vision and mindset to help my teammates be in the right position. ... I always felt I needed to think and see everything going on.”

Smart players learn the ‘how’ of strategy. Future coaches learn the ‘why’ of strategy. And D’Angelo already tied the two together into a vintage bow.



November 22

7 p.m. / Honda Center

Help paint the Honda Center orange with fellow Titans as we cheer on the Anaheim Ducks in an exciting match against the Buffalo Sabres! Don’t miss out on our exclusive Titan Village festivities, including giveaways and photo opportunities with Tuffy. You will also receive a limited edition CSUF Ducks sweatshirt and an opportunity to take a slapshot on the ice.

Visit AnaheimDucks.com/CSUF for tickets and information.

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