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President Fram Virjee addresses a fundraising event.

IT TAKES A TITAN

CAMPAIGN WILL ENRICH UNIVERSITY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Fundraising exceeded original goal by \$95 million

By **Jenelyn Russo**,
contributing writer

In what was Cal State Fullerton's first-ever comprehensive philanthropic campaign, "It Takes a Titan" saw the campus and community come together to raise more than \$270 million for the university.

Publicly launched in March 2020, right before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the effort became a true Titan success story, as the seven-year initiative raised funds far exceeding the campaign's original \$175 million goal. These donations will continue to be applied toward projects that "enhance academic innovation,

empower students, transform campus structures and enrich the greater community."

With nearly 75,000 individual donors, including almost 45,000 alumni donors, a 150% increase in endowment funds and more than \$21 million distributed in scholarships, the impact on the students of CSUF is where this endeavor will be felt the most.

"Behind every one of those gifts and all those really impressive numbers is a student who actually was able to go to college, did not have to worry necessarily about the finances ... or was able to have a certain level of support structure," said CSUF Vice President for University Advancement Greg Saks.

An example of that support structure was the \$600,000 raised to support basic needs and emergency grants for students who experienced hardships due to pandemic-related shutdowns.

"So many of our students work in the service industry, in the retail industry, and in many other areas that they were out of work just like that," Saks said. "This is just one example of how our greater Titan community and donor community came together at a really difficult time to support our students."

For the 60% of Titans who are first-generation college students, CSUF's "I Am First" program provides a path for mentor relationships, leadership development and career skills through a co-

hort system. The program experienced more demand than it could satisfy. After receiving a \$250,000 gift from Donnie Crevier, "I Am First" will be able to expand its reach.

"This is a program that came to fruition during this campaign, and I think it has developed a pretty awesome ripple effect that will continue even more down the road," Saks said.

From the campus improvement side, philanthropy efforts have served as a catalyst for many areas of physical change that will continue to upgrade the spaces where students gather and engage on a daily basis.

Renovations, additions and new

GIVING » PAGE 5

INITIATIVE

Project Rebound comes of age in a spacious location

Expansion in Pollak Library

By **Lou Ponsi**,
contributing writer

When Project Rebound, the Cal State University initiative that assists formerly incarcerated individuals attend college, came to Cal State Fullerton in 2016, the program operated out of an 8-by-10-foot, windowless office containing a desk, a phone and a computer, tucked away in Langsdorf Hall.

The program was overseen by one part-time director and operated with minimal funding.

Guided by the belief that a college education is one of the best ways for formerly incarcerated men and women to successfully reintegrate into the mainstream, Project Rebound has succeeded to the point where a larger, more visible space became necessary.

So, on March 15, with program administrators, former and current Project

REBOUND » PAGE 5



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
CSUF president Fram Virjee and Project Rebound staff and students dedicate the Center for Hope and Redemption.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM

Training future teachers to provide equitable, inclusive education

Urban Learning focuses on community issues

By **Jenelyn Russo**,
contributing writer

Beginning in fall 2024, Cal State Fullerton's College of Education will offer its first bachelor's degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Learning.

The interdisciplinary program is for those who have an interest in elementary or special education and will prepare educators in providing a "just, equitable and inclusive education in schools."

Once launched, the program will be more than three years in the making, spearheaded by the efforts of CSUF College of Education Dean Lisa Kirtman, chair and associate professor of special education Calli Lewis Chiu, and director of the SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union Center for Careers in Teaching, Aimee Nelson.

The need for a program of this type can be found right in the university's

backyard, as many CSUF education graduates head back into the community to teach in local schools.

"We have such a rich community, and we have so many students in our own backyard with such diverse needs," Lewis Chiu said. "Instead of referring to an achievement gap, there's an opportunity gap. So we're really excited about this opportunity because we know that we have the students and the faculty that are passionate about leveling the playing field for these students."

There are 45-plus majors across CSUF

TEACHERS » PAGE 5

Correction

Alexis Johnson is the manager of education partnerships at Segerstrom Center for the Arts and Kristina Macias is a Cal State Fullerton student who participated in The Arts: Avenues to Learning workshop. Because of a reporting error, the names were misspelled in a story on Page 3 of the Cal State Fullerton section in the March 16 edition of the Orange County Register.

TOP

Online Master's
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■ U.S. News & World Report, 2022

Cal State Fullerton
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TITAN VOICES

CSUF's impact starts before arrival on campus with GEAR UP

Cal State Fullerton's impact on my college and career development began nearly 10 years before I became a CSUF student and employee.



Oscar O. Garcia Ortiz
graduate student

Throughout my time at Anaheim High School, I participated in CSUF's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. Established to increase high school graduation rates and encourage postsecondary education among middle or high school students in low-income communities, GEAR UP offers a variety of college prep services and support. As a student, the mentorship and skill-building opportunities I was afforded propelled me through high school with a focus on my future.

Proudly, I became a GEAR UP success story, graduating from high school and going on to UC Santa Cruz. Despite my wonderful time as a Banana Slug, my earlier experiences had played a pivotal role in shaping my educational journey and I returned home with a bachelor's degree and invitation to work for CSUF's GEAR UP program.

As an alumnus and academic coordinator for the program, I recognized the solutions required to advance the local community in an ever-changing work environment. In this role, I coordinated services and activities that engaged students, parents, teachers, faculty and administrators while cultivating a college-going culture and equipping students for success.

While I have painted houses for the elderly, beautified poverty-stricken neighborhoods and served meals to the homeless, I feel the direct service programs offered by CSUF's GEAR UP are far more effective in creating sustainable change by fostering positive educational experiences for local youth. My understandings of educational activism, civic engagement and ways to bridge the gap between private and public sectors through collaborative relationships stem from CSUF's commitment to serving the underserved.

Inspiring youth on their academic endeavors only fueled my own motivation for increased public service and I enrolled in Cal State Fullerton's Master of Public Administration program in

fall 2021.

Shortly after becoming an official Titan, I was encouraged by an MPA classmate to apply for the position of senior coordinator of Parent & Family Relations at Cal State Fullerton. In this new role, I manage the delivery of services, communication, resources, scholarships and events to CSUF families so they can better participate in and support their student's college journey. Most recently, our team raised \$6,000 for scholarships that will provide three Titans with financial support this spring.

The diverse connections I've made with CSUF over the last decade have amplified my knowledge and empowered me to develop effective policies and programs that serve others in meaningful ways. As I strive to improve the quality of service and support I bring to CSUF students and families, it is rewarding to combine the skills I derive from my new position with the theories and models I learn in the classroom. Likewise, ongoing engagement in the Municipal Management Association of Southern California enhances my research and analytical skills, and expands my leadership abilities as I prepare myself for

a managerial position in public service.

The CSUF MPA program maintains deep-rooted values that foster government leaders with an emphasis on "a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry." Inspired by this, my professional dreams continue to flourish at Cal State Fullerton. After graduation, I aspire to become an associate professor in political psychology and link my passions as an educator and administrator. If education serves as a tool for social mobility, CSUF is a guiding blueprint that plans, prepares and transforms dreams into reality. Go Titans!

Oscar O. Garcia Ortiz is a graduate student in Cal State Fullerton's master of public administration program and serves as senior coordinator for the Parent & Family Relations team within the Department of Central Development at CSUF.

Garcia Ortiz is a member of the Anaheim High School Alumni Association, Municipal Management Association of Southern California, Psi Chi honor society and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships' Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs Alumni Association.

ADVANCEMENT

Leadership, hard work and generosity are key

Donations grew in stages

By Nicole Gregory,
contributing writer

The seven-year "It Takes a Titan Campaign" has concluded, raising more than \$270 million dollars that will benefit current and future students for generations to come.

In a webinar presentation on March 10, Ellen Treanor, associate vice president for Strategic Communications, spoke with Greg Saks, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation, about the stages of this campaign and the hard work and happy surprises that went into raising this large sum of money.

"It Takes a Titan" was Cal State Fullerton's first-ever comprehensive campaign, meaning it was intended to raise money for several goals, rather than one specific goal as in, for instance, a capital campaign for the construction of a building. "We found through this campaign an incredible eagerness to help our students and campus reach new heights of success. Supporting students has dividends beyond the classroom and Orange County," Saks said.

He and his development team focused on key priorities. "One is academic innovation," he said. "We want to make sure our faculty have all the tools they need, including funds for professional development for faculty and research funds for faculty-student collaboration."

Second, Saks said, was student empowerment. "We want to eliminate barriers to student success," he said. This might include funding for scholarships or tackling food insecurity.

The third priority was campus transformation — physical improvements for the campus such as the new baseball/softball complex. And fourth is community enrichment, supporting such efforts as the Center for Healthy Neighborhoods.

The first stage of the campaign involved assessments and planning. "It was our first time embarking on an ambitious fundraising effort," Saks said.

He and his team looked at data and the needs of the Cal State Fullerton community. "We asked what we could raise." A working goal was put at \$175 million. It was a stretch, Saks admitted, "but a reasonable stretch."

"We also looked beyond our advancement staff and asked, 'Who wants to help us tell the world about how important this campaign is for Cal State Fullerton?'" he said. "By the end, we had over 140 staff, faculty, administrators, students, alumni, parents and other stakeholders who served as campaign ambassadors."

Next came the leadership phase — identifying campus groups and organizations that could lead the way with significant investments.

"So many times, I was blown away by the generosity (of groups)," Saks said, and in particular the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation. "The board wanted to be a lead donor at the \$10 million mark." This goal was met in six months. "They said, 'Let's grow this goal to \$12 million' — and they met that goal again," Saks said. "So, they said 'Let's go with a goal of \$15 million.' This was reached as well."

At that point, the campaign was ready for its official launch. "This is a crucial time in a campaign, when you declare to the world your goals," Saks said. During the launch event in February 2020, the Nicholas and Lee Begovich \$10 million gift was announced. This put the campaign at 63% of its goal at the official launch. President Fram Virjee then bumped the campaign goal to \$200 million.

But then the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world, and the "It Takes A Titan" campaign had to pivot its efforts. "We focused on virtual engagement," Saks said. Many students lost their jobs because of the pandemic, and meeting basic needs suddenly became difficult. The college community raised \$600,000 to help students get through this time.

Work on the campaign continued through the pandemic and by spring 2021, it had reached 90% of the goal.

Then came an unexpected surprise. The university was chosen as a recipient of an unrestricted gift of \$40

million from MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett. "It really validates the work that happens at Cal State Fullerton every day," Saks said. "Here is one of the most sophisticated philanthropists in the world. I am proud of that level of recognition," he said.

This large gift gave Saks and others the chance to rethink the campaign goal once again. "We went to \$250 million," he said. And that still wasn't the end.

"Due to the amazing generosity and incredible work of our development team and advancement team, the alum-

ni engagement officers, our incredible deans and cabinet of the university, and all our faculty and staff, we continued that progress," Saks said. As of Dec. 31, when the campaign officially ended, \$270,270,777 had been raised.

Saks can't stop expressing his admiration for the individuals and groups that stepped up to make this campaign a success. "It was really the generosity of our donors and the incredible work of our campus stakeholders who were willing to tell the story of Cal State Fullerton that helped us reach so many milestones."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Greg Saks, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation

1st in California
bachelor's degrees earned at public universities

College of Health and Human Development

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ADVANCEMENT

Center for Leadership renamed to honor a distinguished alum

Giles' involvement includes \$1 million gift

By Lou Ponsi,
contributing writer

The contributions of a CSUF alum, an accomplished leader in a wide range of endeavors, will help to ensure that current and future Titans have the tools to become leaders themselves in their chosen professions.

During a ceremony held March 15 in the courtyard outside the CSUF College of Business and Economics, the college's Center for Leadership was renamed the Giles-O'Malley Center for Leadership.

The center is named for 1970 CSUF graduate Terry Giles and his wife, Kalli O'Malley.

"I am feeling so humbled and so grateful and so incredibly lucky," Giles said of the naming honor.

Owner and president of Giles Enterprises and member of CSUF's Philanthropic Foundation Board of Governors, Giles provided a \$1 million gift to further the Center for Leadership's mission and activities.

"This is a center not just for our business school," Cal State Fullerton President Fram Virjee said. "This is the center for the building of the future of this campus. Every student should be and will be affected by this Center for Leadership. The opportunity will be provided for them to learn what it means to be a leader."

Along with Virjee, notables in attendance included Jay Barbuto, the center's director and professor; Sridhar Sundaram, dean of the College of Business and Economics; Charlie Zhang, real estate developer and founder of Pick Up Stix; and many of the center's corporate partners.

Giles, 74, grew up in an impoverished

family and attended 21 schools in a 10-year period before going on to earn a debate scholarship at CSUF and a law degree from Pepperdine.

Giles' achievements include the establishment of 35 businesses, one being a successful criminal law firm.

He owned the third-largest Canon copier distributorship and turned a failing Toyota dealership into the world's fifth-largest.

The CSUF alum established Giles Enterprises, a holding company for his family's array of business ventures.

Giles credited his success in large part to the education he received at CSUF, particularly on the university's debate team.

"My experiences in the courtroom and the boardroom would not have happened at all, I don't think, if it hadn't been for debate at Cal State Fullerton," Giles said.

In 1994, Giles was presented with the Horatio Alger Award, given by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans to leaders who've displayed personal initiative and perseverance, embrace the free-enterprise system and aspire to achieve a better future, often in the face of adversity.

"When you think about where he started and what he has achieved, the award is almost handwritten for someone like Terry," Barbuto said. "He has a great eye for success and knows a great investment when he sees it. He is a master of finding a way."

Giles' endowment will go toward helping the center's current initiatives and programs expand and grow, Barbuto said.

The center offers an executive speaker series, executive shadowing and networking opportunities with the center's corporate partners that include the Honda Center, the Anaheim Ducks, Southern California Edison, Walt Disney International, the Orange County Business Council and others.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF alum Terry Giles speaks during the renaming event for the Center for Leadership at the CSUF College of Business and Economics.

The center also curates a local television program on YouTube, "The Leadership Voice." The show engages Orange County-area executives in discussions on leadership excellence and development while incorporating field research by CSUF faculty.

Each episode features a business or community leader who shares their experiences and knowledge to provide viewers with insight into leadership ideas. Giles himself was featured in an episode titled "Become One of the Fifteen Percent."

The center also hosts an annual Leadership Awards banquet that recognizes Orange County and Southern California organizations in different categories of leadership.

Giles became involved with the Center for Leadership about 15 years ago when he was asked by other CSUF alumni if he would help fund the new center, which was in the planning stages at the time.

"It has turned out to be one of the

best decisions that I was talked into in my entire life," Giles said.

He also praised the work of Virjee and Barbuto for the center's growth and impact on the CSUF campus and the community.

"The Center for Leadership wouldn't be what it is today if it wasn't for the hard work and dedication and passion that Jay brings to the table," Giles said. "I'm so grateful the school brought him in to drive the program. I can't say enough in appreciation for the job he has done."

Giles' \$1 million gift, along with a \$250,000 donation from Zhang and significant donations from philanthropists MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett, will help fund the construction of a three-story building just east of the College of Business and Economics that will be the Center For Leadership's new home.

With construction scheduled to get underway later this year, the new center will feature a library, auditorium, conference room and faculty and staff offices.

IT TAKES A TITAN

Alum pledges \$4 million to support desert science

CSUF News Media Services

In the late 1970s, Cal State Fullerton alumnus Brian Rennie started climbing the towering, rugged rock formations at Joshua Tree National Park.

Rennie, who earned a bachelor's degree in biological science in 1970, is an avid outdoor enthusiast with a passion for the natural world — especially the desert.

By the mid-1980s, Rennie bought a 5-acre parcel next to the entrance of the Southern California high-desert national park, near Palm Springs. He wanted a place where he could camp under the stars and climb during the day.

An expert-level rock and mountain climber, Rennie has reached the summit of some of the world's tallest mountains: the Matterhorn in the Alps, Mont Blanc in Europe, Aconcagua in Argentina and El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. He's climbed Mt. Whitney, California's tallest mountain, 34 times.

In 1994, Rennie built a 2,500-square-foot Santa Fe pueblo-style home on the Joshua Tree property. The house is perched at the base of a rock-covered hill and surrounded by Joshua trees. On occasion, wildlife like bighorn sheep, road-runners and bobcats visit the property.

After they married in 2003, Rennie and his wife, Lori, made frequent trips from their home in Placentia to Joshua Tree, where they spent the weekend hiking and climbing. He introduced her to the great outdoors. Together, they've hiked many trails, including the Machu Picchu Trail in Peru and the Haute Route in the Swiss Alps.

The couple permanently moved to their desert oasis in 2013 and relocated Rennie's successful commercial photography business, Benchmark Studios, to the property.

Now, Rennie and his wife want the desert estate preserved in all its vast beauty and turned to Cal State Fullerton to protect their legacy. The couple has pledged a gift valued at \$4 million to support desert science studies, conservation and climate change research.

The gift is part of CSUF's first-ever comprehensive philanthropic campaign, launched in March 2020. The "It Takes a Titan" public campaign, which ended in December, has raised more than \$270 million.

The bequest includes 20 acres of desert land, their architecturally unique residence and funds to maintain the property. The couple also made two previous in-kind gifts of equipment to the College of Communications and College of the Arts.

"I learned to love the desert through my years of rock climbing in Joshua Tree," Rennie said. "The house could be used by the university for events, a base station and for research. Lori and I are in total agreement with this gift."

"We were seeking the right organization to respect the land and the desert as much as we do, and to continue to utilize it in a way that supports our intentions," he continued. "We feel confident that this will happen through our gift to the university."

The donation is structured to support faculty and student travel, research fellowships, field camps or specific initiatives that expand the College of Natural Science and Mathematics' programs in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Alumnus Brian Rennie and his wife, Lori, have pledged a planned gift valued at \$4 million, which includes their Joshua Tree home and property, to the university. Their gift will support desert science studies and research.

the Mojave Desert and in desert science.

Marie Johnson, the college's dean, expressed gratitude for the philanthropic investment: "This gift will allow our faculty to expand their research efforts in desert environments, which in turn will create impactful learning experiences for our students."

"We often say our university aspires to be a steward of place. Brian and Lori's gift will allow us to fulfill that aspiration by creating the conditions for deep, meaningful engagement with desert ecosystems and our arid Southern California environment."

During Rennie's college journey, he studied marine science under the mentorship of the late Donald Bright, who taught biological science and served as a department chair.

Rennie, a private pilot and flight instructor, flew Bright to Mexico and other places to conduct research. He worked on various projects, including researching the impacts on marine life in building Dana Point Harbor.

While in college, Rennie worked nights and weekends for a Fullerton photographer processing color prints in a darkroom and took photos for the Biological Science Department.

Instead of pursuing a marine biology career, Rennie started a photography business in Anaheim.

"Looking back, it was the best decision I made in my life. I grew the business from nothing into one of the largest creative studios in Orange County," he said. "We not only did commercial photography, but TV spots, brochures, ads and eventually websites."

Now retired, his clients included such companies as Morgan Stanley, Carl Karcher Enterprises (Carl's Jr.), Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa), auto manufacturers and many others.

"Clients relied on me to bring them



Brian and Lori Rennie at their Joshua Tree home

creative photography and advertising," he said.

While Rennie has stepped back from his photography career, Lori continues to work on client projects, such as website design.

Rennie's CSUF education taught him how to think globally and learn independently — skills that helped him to become an accomplished business owner for over 50 years.

"When I decided to change direction on my career path in biology and pursue a commercial photography career, I had to get up to speed on how business works. I taught myself accounting, sales and everything else that is necessary in owning a business," he said.

"In those days, there was no internet

or YouTube to do the research; it was through books and asking business mentors. Studying science provided me with the tools to learn and make decisions logically."

As for the couple's gift to the university, they hope it will inspire and spark students' curiosity to study how all life in the desert is interconnected.

"I have always been in touch with nature, not only through my biology research, but by backpacking and climbing all over the world," Rennie said.

"Having climbed some of the world's most significant mountains and being in these remote places, makes you understand how insignificant we are as individuals but how great our impact is as a society."

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

\$1.4 million in grants develop pathways for OC students

CSUF News Media Services

Cal State Fullerton has been awarded \$1.4 million in grants from the Orange County Department of Education to promote career and college readiness for K-16 students by creating regional education-to-career pipelines.

The “OC Pathways Regional K-16 Collaborative Program” grants are funding six CSUF projects — with awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$360,000 — that focus on engineering, computing, education, social work, business and visual arts. Funding also supports hiring a project coordinator to serve as the administrative liaison between the university and regional partners.

“The goal of this project is to establish and grow partnerships that support education and career development for youth in Orange County,” said Estela Zarate, vice provost, who is directing the university’s OC Pathways grant projects with Binod Tiwari, associate vice president for research and sponsored projects.

“For CSUF, this approach of funding pathways also supports program innovation and helps us build a pipeline of future Titans,” she said.

The OC Pathways grants are part of a state-funded program to provide new pathways to career opportunities for students in their local communities and address longstanding equity challenges in higher education and workforce participation. The Orange County Department of Education is the lead agency, which received \$18.1 million in state funding.

Project partners are OCDE, CSUF, UC Irvine, Chapman University, Rancho Santiago Community College District, Coast Community College District, South Orange County Community College District and North Orange County Community College District.

One of the grant-funded projects aims to increase the number of plurilingual candidates entering the teaching profession and prepare future educators who can uplift, inspire and engage all students, said Fernando Rodriguez-Valls, professor of secondary education, who is directing the project.

“Project Propel,” which is receiving a \$211,000 grant, partners with local school districts, including Anaheim Union High School District and Garden Grove Unified School District. Students will be mentored from high school through post-secondary education to obtain a teaching credential and return to their communities to become positive change agents in the classroom.

“The shift in demographics, and globalization in general, and the need to produce a highly trained workforce has created a high demand for plurilingual teachers able to deliver effective instruction in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts,” Rodriguez-Valls said.

“By leveraging our relationships with



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES
One of the Cal State Fullerton “OC Pathways Regional K-16 Collaborative Program” grant projects is the “Pathways for Careers in Manufacturing and Engineering.”



Estela Zarate, vice provost

our community partners, we have designed a pathway that addresses three goals: providing just, equitable and inclusive education; preparing highly trained educators; and guaranteed job placement with industry partners.”

The “Pathways for Careers in Manufacturing and Engineering” project, which is receiving a \$211,000 grant, is a collaborative project between Extension and International Programs and the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

This collaborative will create streamlined pathways from high school to post-secondary education and into the manufacturing workforce, said Sagil James, associate professor of mechanical engineering. Sagil is co-directing the project with Debbie Vengco, director of marketing and enrollment management for Extension and International Programs.

California, the nation’s largest manu-



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

facturing state, currently faces a massive gap in the skilled workforce in advanced and smart manufacturing since new employees do not meet the demands of this technology-intensive sector, James said.

“This project will set the stage for preparing the next-generation smart manufacturing workforce and develop technology-rich innovative learning environments that inspire K-12 students to explore manufacturing careers,” James said.

The other OC Pathways program grants for CSUF projects:

- **\$211,000**, Doina Bein, professor of computer science, College of Engineering and Computer Science
- **\$211,000**, David Chenot, professor of social work, College of Health and Human Development
- **\$211,000**, Jenny Zhang, associate dean for undergraduate programs and student success, College of Business and Economics
- **\$5,000**, Elizabeth Holster, professor of art, College of the Arts

This effort is part of the California Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program, a statewide strategy for strengthening education-to-workforce pathways and ensuring that education, vocational and workforce programs work in partnership to address the income, racial, and gender inequalities in education and employment.

GIFTS TO CSUF

Students reflect on how funding has helped them

Eventual goal of giving back

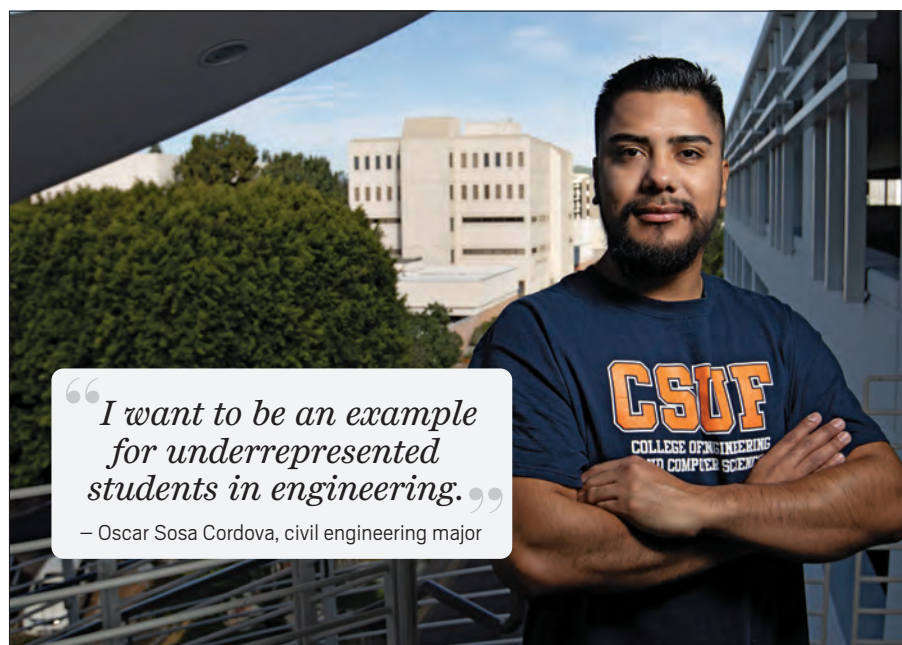


PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Oscar Sosa Cordova

“I want to be an example for underrepresented students in engineering.”

— Oscar Sosa Cordova, civil engineering major

I’m intrigued by the development of bridges, high-rise buildings and other architecture — and how our civilization built the infrastructures we see today. This inspired me to learn more about professions in civil engineering.

As a civil engineering major, my career goal is to help develop infrastructure in California, such as building homes. Ultimately, I’d like to give back by teaching at a community college or university and encouraging future underrepresented students in the fields of engineering.

Being awarded the Gayton Scholarship has taken a lot of weight off my shoulders. I no longer have to question if I have enough funds for tuition, rent, food and books to graduate. I won’t have to ask myself what more I’ll have to sacrifice to complete my civil engineering degree.

After graduation, I plan to pursue a graduate degree and attain certifications, including a Professional Engineer (PE) license, which will allow me to design structures with a seal of approval.

— Oscar Sosa Cordova

About the funding

The Ann and Fred Gayton Scholarship Endowment will provide more than \$30,000 in scholarship support annually for historically underrepresented students pursuing undergraduate degrees in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

“I created the Gayton Scholarship at Cal State Fullerton in honor of my

parents, Ann and Fred Gayton,” said Beth Gayton Bangert, who earned a bachelor’s degree in history in 1971. “My father, Fred, was an electrical engineer and encouraged others to study in the STEM fields. This scholarship endowment continues our legacy of championing higher education and supporting women and underrepresented students in the STEM fields.”

Supporting mothers during labor, birth



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Evelynn Dronberger

“I want to help my patients feel heard.”

— Evelyn Dronberger, graduate student in nursing-women’s health concentration

During my pregnancy and labor, I was constantly told what was going to happen and never asked what I wanted to do. It took a midwife, whom I saw postpartum, to explain what happened and to provide support processing my son’s birth.

I was inspired to become a midwife because of the birth stories I heard from friends and my own birth story. One shared thread in these stories was our mistreatment by the medical system. Midwives seemed to be the key to maintaining patient autonomy and respecting labor and birth.

I chose CSUF because the midwifery program was designed to accommodate working nurses, which is rare to find. Many working nurses attend online programs, but being on campus was important to me because I love interacting with my professors and classmates in person.

As students, we benefit from such amenities as the School of Nursing’s new Fudge Family Women’s Health Simulation Lab and Training Center. The lab provides a realistic environment to practice patient interactions with simulated manikins — an invaluable experience.

As a queer, nonbinary person, I am proud of the diversity of CSUF’s nursing cohorts to reflect the communities that we serve. My goal as a midwife is to incorporate shared decision-making into all interactions with patients. I want to help my patients feel heard and in charge of their care. I also hope to provide fertility assistance to queer couples. These goals feel attainable thanks to my education at Cal State Fullerton.

— Evelyn Dronberger

About the funding

The Fudge Family Foundation made a transformational gift to support the School of Nursing’s new Fudge Family Women’s

Health Simulation Lab and Training Center. The center features state-of-the-art examination rooms, two ultrasound machines, and mother/baby manikins that can simulate delivery and emergencies.

Giving

FROM PAGE 1

equipment for the Nicholas and Lee Begovich Center for Gravitational-Wave Physics and Astronomy were made possible by a \$10 million planned gift from the couple to advance research opportunities for students in these areas of science.

Many of the construction projects that happened over the past few years, including new baseball and softball complexes and a new visual arts complex in progress, have included a philanthropic component to outfit the facilities with the latest equipment and accessories. And the Center for Leadership in CSUF's College of Business and Economics is constructing a building that will be 100% funded by philanthropy.

Saks said that in addition to the dollars, the campaign had an intentional focus on a series of auxiliary goals, including the concept of planned giving and helping people understand the value of including the university in their estate.

"We spent a lot of time and energy

making sure that people understood how they could support our students long term ... and how to create a legacy at an institution that you care about for all time, while at the same time making sure your family is well cared for, too," Saks said.

This can be seen in the 160 new planned giving commitments, which was 114% of the original goal of 140 new planned gifts, and the \$87 million raised, which was 124% of the campaign's original goal of \$70 million.

"Just about all of that is endowment gifts, so gifts that will last in perpetuity, gifts that will always be able to provide funding to support our students for years and years into the future," Saks said.

As the third-largest campaign of its kind in CSU history comes to a close, Saks pointed to two rewarding takeaways — that CSUF is an investment-worthy institution and, as the campus thinks about what's next, philanthropy will be part of that discussion.

"I believe we've created a culture of philanthropy on campus," Saks said. "We've created a process and an initiative that really was Titan communitywide. There were staff, faculty, administrators, students, parents and community members that were part of this process and were all doing everything they could to



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Greg Saks, vice president for University Advancement, talks about the fundraising campaign to a group of potential donors.

help make sure we were able to be successful.

"People think about the value and the impact that giving can have on being able

to achieve the goals of the institution," Saks said. "It was really inspiring as we came together to make this happen, and it gives great hope for what comes next."

Teachers

FROM PAGE 1

that can ultimately lead to teaching careers, and the College of Education currently offers one-year teaching credential programs for those future teachers. The new urban learning degree will allow students to receive additional instruction in the area of implementing just, equitable and inclusive practices in the classroom.

"This is an opportunity for us to have a longer period of time with students to really talk about what's happening in the field, to talk about what's happening with parents and what's happening in communities," Kirtman said.

In addition to hand-selected classes from a broad range of areas across the university, five new classes were developed specifically for the project-based learning program with a focus on the school environment, such as Structural and Institutional Bias in Schools, Curriculum as a Lever for (In)justice in Schools and Urban School Policy and Practice.

"We're peeling back the layers and really looking at all the inequities that do exist at many different levels," Lewis Chiu said. "We're going to examine all the problems that exist because that's crucial for our students to know, but we're not stopping there. We're going to look at what we do next."

The program will be partnering with CSUF professor of secondary education Fernando Rodriguez-Valls and "Project Propel," which received a \$211,000 grant to help increase the number of plurilingual education candidates entering the teaching profession.

"We are connecting with school districts and hoping to create grow-your-



CSUF professor of secondary education Fernando Rodriguez-Valls

own programs that focus, in part, on students who have a seal of biliteracy coming out, hoping that they will come into our major and then working with specific school districts to try to make sure they come back in and teach in those communities," Kirtman said.

Students in the urban learning degree path will have a dedicated adviser, and the program will be cohort-based, which will foster a sense of community among the students from the onset.

"Our graduates are going to leave this program and our credential program with really strong connections going forward so that they know where to look to one another for support and resources," Lewis Chiu said.

The team is working on developing a number of co-curriculars to accompany



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Lisa Kirtman, dean of the CSUF College of Education

the program, including undergraduate research and observation opportunities, along with study-abroad experiences. Students can also participate in programs on campus such as Titan Future Teachers Group and Men of Color in Education that are run out of the Schools-First Federal Credit Union Center for Careers in Teaching.

"Any student who is interested in teaching can join," Nelson said. "We do a lot of workshops to help them prepare for the credential application and get them ready for the credential while they are undergrads."

The program will initially admit approximately 60-70 freshman students, and as they work with community college partners, a pathway will be developed for transfer students in the near

future.

The Urban Learning Advisory Board is providing guidance as aspects of the program are finalized before launch, and students will be added to that advisory effort to bring in their unique perspectives and voices.

The broad support from Titan faculty, staff and students, along with strong involvement from the larger community, is what has brought this program to fruition — a passion project that aligns with the broader mission of CSUF to make a lasting impact on the region.

"It's about being part of the Orange County community, and I think that's exactly what this program does," Kirtman said. "It's about making sure that we are making a positive impact on the community around us."

Rebound

FROM PAGE 1

Rebound Scholars and CSUF President Fram Virjee on hand, the Project Rebound Center for Hope and Redemption held its grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony in an exceedingly larger, window-laden space bordering a high-traffic corridor in the Pollak Library.

The Center for Hope and Redemption is a space where Project Rebound Scholars can gather to communicate and collaborate, to mentor and be mentored, to grow mentally and emotionally.

"We are in the center of learning," Cal State Fullerton President Virjee said. "We are in the library ... where innovation lives, where the freedom to debate new ideas and new concepts and new approaches to life and changing lives live. We are in the very center of that now. I walk in here and the immediate feeling I feel is we're home. The immediate feeling is family. That we can love each other and be with each other in this space."

Since its inception at CSUF in 2016, Project Rebound has supported more than 300 formerly incarcerated individuals pursuing degrees by providing an array of services such as admissions support, tutoring and counseling.

"It's amazing because we've realized that when you give people resources and support, we can change the world, not just ourselves," said Project Rebound Executive Director Romarylin Ralston, who turned her own life around after being incarcerated at the California Institute for Women for 23 years. "And if we are given a platform that is welcoming and inclusive, we can bring others in. I wholeheartedly believe that higher education is the best practice for reducing crime."

Brady Heiner, founding chair and interim executive director of the CSU Project Rebound Consortium, credited the success of the program, in large part, to the efforts and academic achievements of the program's students, which are referred to as Scholars.

"If (the students) did not show up with all the assets that you bring to this institution and the other institutions that we have worked really hard to make sure you have access to, none of this would happen," Heiner told the Scholars.

Because of her poor academic record due to years of incarceration, former Project Rebound Scholar Ginny Oshiro,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

Visitors explore the Center for Hope and Redemption at the Pollak Library at Cal State Fullerton.

who graduated from CSUF in 2020, had been unsuccessful in multiple attempts to enter college.

After learning about Project Rebound, Oshiro met with Ralston, who then advocated on her behalf.

"The only reason I was able to get into Cal State Fullerton is because of Project Rebound," said Oshiro, who earned a B.A. in criminal justice at CSUF and is now in a doctoral program in criminology, law and society at UC Irvine. "I owe everything to this program."

The achievements of Project Rebound Scholars have given the program credibility, therefore justifying the new center's presence in such a high-profile location on campus, Oshiro said.

"When we were in that small, windowless office, we would have to move the furniture out of the office in order to sit together inside," Oshiro said. "That's how small it was. It's incredible to see what this has become and also incredible to think of the possibilities, but I didn't doubt it."

Project Rebound was founded at San Francisco State University in 1967 by John Irwin, who served five years in state prison for robbing a gas station and then went back to school, eventually becoming a sociology professor.

Arguably the first major accomplish-



Center director Romarylin Ralston hugs Project Rebound's Brady Heiner at the opening of the Center for Hope and Redemption.

ment of Project Rebound at CSUF was the establishment of the John Irwin Memorial House in 2018, believed to be the first transformative housing initiative in the country.

The house serves as a residence for Project Rebound Scholars, who assimilate into a strong social network, developing living skills and receiving mentorship and academic support.

"We often talk about the John Irwin Memorial House, the first transformative housing initiative in the country, as being our program's heart and hub," Ralston said. "Now we have its mind. This is what the center represents. It represents the brain power, the brilliance and the energy of what our students bring to this campus and what they have to share with the world."

SPORTS

Basketball coach reflects on a memorable season

By Brian Robin,
contributing writer

The moment Dedrique Taylor realized what kind of special team he had at his disposal this year came after a five-game losing streak and well in the middle of an eight-game winning streak. Both of which bear testament to the kind of basketball Nirvana he achieved as a coach this season.

It came during a game with the team that eventually ended an eight-game winning streak that brought the Titans to the cusp of their second consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament. That UC Santa Barbara ended Cal State Fullerton's run one game short of a return trip to the NCAA Tournament — which would have been Taylor's third since 2018 (not counting the pandemic-ended 2020 season) — was notable only because of the opponent.

Yet the fact there are no coincidences in life wasn't lost on Taylor. Understanding your ceaseless efforts to get your team to buy into what you're teaching paid off with interest can transpire at any time. That it transpired against the eventual conference tournament champions came with a byproduct that Taylor said defined this year's Titans.

"I noticed a lot of the key elements were present when we played Santa Barbara up there. We had our way with them," Taylor said. "I could feel the energy. I could feel the togetherness of our ballclub. The pace from an offensive standpoint was really, really fast. The ball was on the floor, it went into someone's hands and it went into the hole. We could really mess around with people. ...

"Those elements: our ball movement was at a premium, our decision-making was at a premium. These guys were able to digest our scouting reports and execute the details they needed to move forward. I noticed it in that game. I'm trying to call a play and they're already gone. They're gone. They know the only reason I want to call a play was to ensure we're all on the same page. But they already communicated to each other. They already knew what they wanted to do, and they would go and execute. It's an unbelievable feeling."

That unbelievable feeling Taylor experienced in that 74-60 victory on Feb. 20 went beyond the Xs and Os on an iPad or whiteboard. Taylor often speaks about a coach's ability to reach his players, that elusive quality that separates the merely technically astute coaches from the truly gifted ones, with the quip that "It's not

about the Xs and Os. It's about the Jimmies and Joes."

This year's Jimmies and Joes bought in. And they kept the receipts, which is why Taylor looked far beyond the 20-12 record and far beyond the eight-game winning streak that spanned 37 days between losses. On Feb. 2, Long Beach State came into Titan Gym and finished off a season sweep of the Titans with an 70-67 victory. The Titans wouldn't lose again until March 11 in Henderson, Nev., when UCSB pulled past a tired Cal State Fullerton team in the stretch for a 72-62 victory in the Big West Tournament finale.

"I thought we got as much juice out of the peach as you could possibly get," Taylor said. "I don't think there was any more juice in this peach."

The juice that came out of that peach came in a season when the Big West was as deep as it's been in at least a decade. Five teams: CSUF, UCSB, UC Irvine, UC Riverside and Hawaii hit or surpassed the 20-win mark. Against their fellow 20-win teams, the Titans went 6-2 in the regular season. They swept a surprising UC Riverside team enjoying its best-ever Division I season and Hawaii and split with UCI and UCSB, the conference's top two teams.

Looking at the numbers explained where Taylor's juice came from. The Titans were third in the Big West in team defense, allowing teams 65.1 points a game. They were second in opponent 3-point percentage (31.2%).

At the same time, the Titans were second in both 3-point percentage (36.9%) and 3-pointers made (253). CSUF led the conference in turnover margin, committing 2.27 fewer turnovers than it forced from opponents. Nobody else in the Big West had more than a plus-.094 mark.

"You know all the things you're trying to impart on your ballclub, all the little things you're trying to accomplish? They were accomplishing it," Taylor said. "They were not only accomplishing it, but accomplishing it together. They could make the adjustments as they saw fit."

"Literally half the time, I would sit and marvel and say, 'Look, they did that. Look at that. That's impressive.' I would watch the film and say, 'Dang. They did that?' I was looking in astonishment at these guys and their ability to be together and their ability to accomplish things and execute the details of the game."

Two players epitomized the lofty basketball IQ Taylor spoke about: junior guard Latrell Wrightsell Jr. and senior guard Tory San Antonio. They both did it in complementary ways that not only



PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

CSUF men's basketball coach Dedrique Taylor confers with the team.

showed off their leadership skills but carried the Titans in key areas.

Wrightsell spent his first two-plus years as a complementary cog in the wheel. This year, he was the offensive hub. En route to earning First Team All-Big West honors, Wrightsell averaged 16.3 points a game (fifth in the conference). His 72 3-pointers (2.4 per game) were third and his 1.5 steals were fourth. All while playing an average of 33.2 minutes a game (eighth in the conference).

Wrightsell's ability to score from anywhere on the court, his innate basketball sense that created scoring opportunities for the likes of transfer Max Jones, who earned all-conference honorable mention honors for his 12.2 points per game, made Wrightsell one of the most valuable players in the conference.

"He didn't come here as a support guy. When we recruited him, we knew he could score at all three levels," Taylor said. "Trellie has an exceptionally high basketball IQ and you could see it before this season, but this year, it was a different limelight focused on him. Last year's team was built for older guys, and his voice wasn't as loud as it was this year."

Wrightsell will be back next year. So will San Antonio, who gets another year due to COVID. You won't find San Antonio's name prominent on any of the conference's statistical leaderboards. He averaged 7.2 points and 4.5 rebounds this season.

But you will find it on the Big West

Defensive Player of the Year trophy. San Antonio became the second CSUF player — and first since Frank Robinson in the 2007-08 season — to be named the conference's best defensive player. Deceptively stronger than his 6-foot-3, 165-pound frame belies, San Antonio found himself guarding the conference's best players: Player of the Year Ajay Mitchell of UCSB, Zion Pullin of UC Riverside and D.J. Davis of UC Irvine for starters. And he often found his way into penthouse suites in their heads.

"Not only did he guard them, but he would shut them down. He looks slender and slight of frame, but physically, he was our most physical guy," Taylor said. "He would beat guys up. ... From a defensive standpoint, he was nothing short of masterful. He would physically guard the other team's best guard. He knew their strengths and their challenges and would take away their strengths."

Wrightsell, Jones and San Antonio are three reasons why Taylor can't wait for next season. He's already scouring the transfer portal, looking to get bigger with that 6-8, 6-9, 6-10 player who can score with their back to the basket on offense and be a human eraser on defense. Already, Taylor has a commitment from 6-11 Kendrick DeLuna of TMI Prep in San Antonio, who played for former CSUF star and longtime NBA player Bruce Bowen.

"I don't like this team," Taylor said, summing up the year. "I love this team."



IT TAKES A TITAN
THE CAMPAIGN FOR CAL STATE FULLERTON

TITAN ^{OF} EMPOWERMENT

Future Pediatrician Exceeds Her Own Expectations

Alexis Ruiz always knew she would graduate from college, but she never imagined she could attend medical school.

It was the words of an assistant dean at Cal State Fullerton that ultimately changed the **first generation** college student's path for the better.

"You made it to CSUF. If you can make it here, **you can be a doctor.**"

Empowered by the support that she received, Ruiz graduated with a bachelor's degree in Childhood Adolescence and Development.

Ruiz plans to pursue her goal of becoming a doctor in **pediatric oncology**.



Cal State Fullerton

