

Highlights & Signature

STORIES

2024 NEWSLETTER

Stories of Achievement in the Humanities and Social Sciences



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COVER PHOTO:

Guests attending 2024 "A Taste of HSS" Donor Appreciation dinner.

This year we're welcoming a new dean...

Dean's Checklist 2024



Students Thriving

My biggest joy is seeing our students show off the expertise they have spent years cultivating. In Fall, I traveled to the Fitchburg State Eastern Regional competition in Massachusetts with Sebastian Ruiz, Colson Houck Teal, Jazmyne Womble, and Ayanna Grunwald, four of our sixteen CSUF Moot Court competitors. They had studied constitutional law with Dr. Pam Fiber-Ostrow and spent months preparing to argue both sides of a case involving reproductive rights. Now, they were going toe-to-toe with 94 students nationwide to see who could persuade judges of their legal interpretation. They whizzed by much of the competition (see you later, Duke University!). Ayanna earned the first prize speaker award! More than their successes, seeing these students support each other in perfecting their arguments was the greatest gift.



Industry Partnerships

In the Spring, I joined executives and staff at Edwards Lifesciences to motivate our humanities and social science students to pursue careers in medicine, science, and technology industries. This event was part of our Passage to the Future program, designed to augment students' academic degrees with skills and networks that will pave the way for their success after graduation. I firmly believe that the world will be a more just and equitable place with our HSS alumni holding key positions across various industries and organizations. This year we will continue building our science and technology pathways and creating curricular, co-curricular, and internship opportunities in the non-profit sector.



Graduation

We graduated 2,152 undergraduate and 131 graduate students in three commencement ceremonies, 766 of whom earned higher than a 3.5 GPA, receiving honors! During my commencement speech, after assuring our graduates that we have given them the skills to have a life full of professional success, I urged them to hold close the tools we gave them for a life of contentment: "When you need solace, your hand will be guided to poetry; when you need justice, your hand will turn and reach for the philosophers; and when you are retired and you thirst for new knowledge, you know to find your way back to a passion awakened here, at CSUF."



2024

Let's build Native American Studies!

It has long been our priority to offer students more courses in Native American and Indigenous Studies and to support our Native American and Indigenous students better. But we need more faculty to design these courses and serve as mentors. This year we are running searches for faculty who can fill this void and will become part of the HSS community in Fall 2025.





Passage to the Future Career Readiness program prepares HSS Students to enter the workforce

Passage to the Future is a career exploration and work readiness program that saw expansion, collaboration, and great success during its third year. In this program students realize the importance of having humanists and social scientists embedded in all sectors. They are inspired by alumni and industry leaders in Passage courses and events, and are placed in a paid or fellowship-supported internship. In August 2023 Passage welcomed Chérie Rolapp as the HSS Business and Community Strategist and coordinator of the program!

The goal in 23-24 was to build pipelines to STEM industries, and the priority in 24-25 is to expand into the non-profit sector. In October, five students traveled to Philadelphia to attend the Gordon Cain conference: Science in Humanities, Embedded Connections, sponsored by the Science History Institute. The conference emphasized the importance of humanist and social scientist perspectives in STEM, given the vast expansion of technology.

In April, leaders at Edwards Lifesciences hosted 22 students for a dynamic day of touring their world-class campus and manufacturing facilities. Students participated in a panel discussion with Edwards executives on their jobs and how our Humanities and Social Science students might design their careers within the biotech industry, in areas such as corporate responsibility, program management, and in the legal division. Students left inspired, hopeful, and excited about the possibilities for their future!

In June, four students were invited to attend the BIO INTERNATIONAL conference in San Diego. The diverse range of presentations and panel discussions broadened their understanding of

current topics and innovative technologies within the field. The BIO Heritage Awards offered an excellent opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Sue Desmond-Hellmann and to meet exceptional pioneers who have shaped the industry. This was an opportunity of a lifetime for these students, in spurring three to pursue biotech careers. A senior at CSUF, Emily Del Real, commented, "The insights we gained from attending the BIO conference were invaluable. I particularly appreciated the sessions on emerging biotechnologies and their healthcare and environmental sustainability applications. These discussions provided new and interesting perspectives and showed us what the future has in store for the industry. It has inspired me, and I am excited to pursue a career in biotech."

CSUF is pleased to host the Passage to the Future speaker series throughout the year. Last year, over 300 attendees heard from experts in AI, the car industry, and the gaming industry about how best to gain access to careers in their fields.

Please join us for future Passage to the Future events: speaker series, alumni receptions, and other events throughout the year. We welcome alums to speak at our series events or in the classroom. Students need mentors to open doors to internships in various fields. If you are interested in more information about how you can open doors for our students, please contact Chérie Rolapp, CRolapp@fullerton.edu.



Creating the new Ubuntu Africa Scholarship Fostering Diversity with Jarret Lovell



HSS: Can you please tell us more about the Ubuntu Africa scholarship?

Lovell: All of the study-abroad trips that are offered to our students are fantastic, but there needs to be more study-abroad destinations on the African continent. Creating this scholarship will encourage students to travel to African destinations and continue supporting the South Africa and Ghana programs. It's a way to increase diversity in the kinds of study-abroad destinations HSS offers.

HSS: That is so important! Can you share more about your connection to Africa with us?

Lovell: South Africa is a microcosm for many ideas relevant to people who care about social justice. Can you end racism without having a bloody Civil War? Can you have restorative justice rather than punitive justice? My degree is in Criminal Justice, but I focus more on social justice. The kind coursework I have taught in South Africa takes on two issues: when we break the law due to injustice and animals as victims. South Africa blends them so flawlessly that by the end of the study abroad program, students will no longer be able to tell which reading is for which class. The same arguments that were used to treat non-white South Africans as second-class citizens are the same arguments that people use to justify treating animals in the same manner.

HSS: It is amazing how travel can make you reflect on the issues you face back home.

Lovell: One of the first things that happens is that students become humbled. I still hear from students from past trips who will sometimes email me and ask if they listened to this story about South Africa or if they heard that story. It allows students to return and reassess how they do things without being afraid to borrow ideas from others.

HSS: What experiences do you envision your scholarship would provide for an HSS student?

Lovell: It's a modest amount which I hope will be enough to give them spending money or to help defray the cost of airfare or to provide them with food, transportation, and you know some other perks while they're gone. It will make the decision to travel a little bit easier because there would be a source of income. The other thing I hope it will do is get students to consider traveling to destinations that aren't typically ones they would think of for a study abroad destination.

HSS: We're all very appreciative of everything you've contributed to the study abroad program!

Lovell: The opportunity to lead a study abroad program in HSS was the greatest experience I've had in my 22 years at Cal State Fullerton. It has been life-changing, the most rewarding aspect of teaching, and there was just no second thought about creating a scholarship to help continue the program and give other students the opportunity, so I want to give back.

HSS: Thank you so much, Jarret, for taking the time to talk with us today! We hope your story will inspire others to support our HSS students!

And the Cornerstone Award goes to...

In a grand celebration of generosity and support, the College's esteemed Taste of HSS Donor Dinner took place this spring, extending heartfelt thanks to its prominent benefactors. Amid the annual festivities, the highlight of the evening was the presentation of the prestigious Corner Stone Award, an honor bestowed upon individuals whose gifts to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences strengthened the very cornerstone on which the College was built. This year, the accolades were awarded to Owen Holmes and Cindy Togami, for their service to the university and longstanding dedication in supporting programs that promote student, faculty, and staff social and civic engagement. Their achievements were celebrated as part of the college's ongoing tradition to

acknowledge those who go above and beyond in aiding the institution's mission and values.

"We hope winning this award inspires others," said Holmes. "It was and is such an honor to be selected as the HSS Cornerstone recipient. We encourage others to enthusiastically support HSS programs important to them," he continued.

"Learning has always stimulated and nurtured us. We are always excited to hear of ways our students can similarly benefit," said Togami. "We hope our philanthropy provides students with tangible opportunities for self-discovery, as they learn important professional and practical skills and their value in a wider world," she explains.



From Campus to Capitol:

THE CAL STATE DC SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Imagine standing on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, looking up at its iconic dome, knowing that inside, history is in the making—and you're a part of it. Since 2006, the Cal State DC Scholars Program has been transforming such visions into reality, offering students an unparalleled opportunity to study and intern in Washington, D.C. Juniors, seniors, and graduate students from all majors across the California State University system are invited to apply, with the program welcoming diverse perspectives from every political and ideological spectrum.

Students dive into internships that span an array of fields. They might find themselves advocating for change in congressional offices, unraveling the intricacies of policy at think tanks, or engaging with history at world-renowned museums. Each internship opens the door to new realms of knowledge and experience, with opportunities as vast as the student's ambitions.

Alumna Sabrina Wiggins' internship at the John W. Kluge Center in the Library of Congress was more than just a summer job—it was a transformative experience that shifted her career and life trajectory. "Because of these experiences, moving across the country and pursuing roles I would have been intimidated by before now feels exciting and attainable," Wiggins reflects.

Courses taught by CSU faculty are designed to integrate seamlessly with the internship experience, providing academic grounding that enhances applied learning. This thoughtful approach ensures that students are progressing toward graduation and are equipped to leverage their experiences for future success.

Alumnus Marco Sanchez attributes his career success, including roles in the Biden White House and the Department of Commerce, to the support network formed during his internship with the United Nations Foundation.

Similarly, Alumni Ruby Robles and Gelane Diamond credit the program for significantly influencing their career paths by helping set professional objectives, values, and developing crucial skills such as networking and time management.

The Cal State DC Scholars Program is not just an internship opportunity; it's a catalyst for change, a launchpad for future leaders, and a transformative journey that shapes its participants' personal and professional lives.



Virtue and Affect for Social Robots

This year's Philosophy Symposium — hosted by the Cal State Fullerton Philosophy Club in collaboration with their faculty advisor, Professor of Philosophy, Dr. JeeLoo Liu — took on the theme of Virtue and Affect for Social Robots. With guest speakers attending from Yale, Tufts, USC, UCSB, the US Naval Research Laboratory, and the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, the symposium aimed to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on crucial traits for "social robots" to exhibit — i.e., robots that interact with humans on multiple levels: socially assistive robots, care robots, robot companions, and so on.

Convening experts from Human-Robot Interaction, computer science, social robotics, philosophy, cognitive science, and psychology — this year's Philosophy Symposium broached a wide range of philosophical quandaries. Do we need genuine virtue and genuine affect for social robots, or would apparent, functional virtue and affect suffice? Should designers consider race and gender when designing 'humanoid' robots? Could social robots augment — rather than replace — human activities and achievement?

Could robots ever become moral agents if they cannot care on a genuine, emotional level?

By taking a forward-looking approach — anticipating the potential impacts of a rapidly advancing technology — this Symposium proposed a thorough collection of traits and heuristics to consider when designing social robots. The overarching goal is to enable social robots to interact safely and successfully with humans. Addressing the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence, Dr. Liu opened the symposium with a quote from the director of the Creative Machines Lab at Columbia University, Hod Lipson: "We must steer, not fear, the future development of AI and social robotics."

The 2024 Philosophy Symposium drew more than 150 students, faculty, and alums of Cal State Fullerton — with an engaging Q&A and discussion for each session. The symposia are unique in the role that philosophy undergraduates play in organizing each event. This year's Symposium allowed students to serve as session chairs, commentators, and event coordinators. With a lively afterparty following this two-day event, the Fullerton Philosophy Symposium (a tradition started in 1971) demonstrates how the conversation between fields and disciplines are necessary to address such socially significant developments as Artificial Intelligence and Social Robotics.



CSUF Honors HSS Alumna with Prestigious Vision & Visionaries Award for Transformative Work in Affordable Housing



Established in 1994, the Cal State Fullerton Vision & Visionaries awards acknowledges individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty for the Titan community. In 2024, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences was pleased to recognize alumna Laura Archuleta '86 who graduated from the Division of Politics, Administration & Justice. Laura serves as the President and CEO of Jamboree Housing Corp, a non-profit organization that provides high-quality, affordable housing and services to strengthen communities and transform lives.

Archuleta is an active member in the local community, serving on the California Building Industry Association and the United Way Orange County Leadership Council. She also stays connected to her alma mater, serving on the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation Board of Governors.

Under the guidance of Laura Archuleta, Jamboree has transformed from a modest entity with 750 homes to a statewide beacon of hope with over 9,000 homes across 96 communities.

Her dedication to affordable housing is deeply personal. "My mom grew up in public housing back in Boston, and I believe that having access to safe, high-quality housing is the key to strong communities," Archuleta stated, highlighting the impact of her family's history

on her career path.

A native of Whittier, California, Archuleta's journey began alongside her sister at Cal State Fullerton, driven by a childhood marked by the love and support of her family. Her father was a dedicated truck driver for Sears and Roebuck's delivery service, and her mother was a homemaker. Reflecting on her upbringing, Archuleta shared, "We had a great childhood; we did a lot of camping, got outdoors, and had a lot of fun. I had no idea what I wanted to do when I first came to Fullerton."

Archuleta's time at Cal State Fullerton was transformative, awakening her to the world's myriad of opportunities. On her first day as a student she was introduced to the concepts of philanthropy and leadership, eventually leading her to the Public Administration program. This experience ignited her interest in making a meaningful difference at the local government level, culminating in her pursuit of an MA in Public Administration with aspirations of becoming a city manager. Archuleta's story is a testament to the power of personal history, education, and determination to drive change and build more robust, inclusive communities.



Alumna Laura Archuleta

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Fullerton
Commencement 1986

English Scholar Awarded Carnegie Fellowship for Conspiracy Theory Research

Elise Wang Receives \$200,000 to Pen New Book on Identifying Dangerous Conspiracy Theories



Elise Wang created a YouTube account and began tracing her steps. Within four clicks, she found herself overwhelmed with conspiracy theory content.

That's how easy it is to find conspiracy theories, even when you're not looking for them, said Wang, a Cal State Fullerton Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English, Comparative Literature and Linguistics. Although the internet and media have increased people's access to conspiracy theories, they are not new. An expert in Medieval Literature, Wang said conspiracy theories can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Her upcoming project will investigate how these theories shape people's belief systems.

Out of more than 360 nominations, Wang was selected as one of 28 scholars in the U.S. to further her study as part of the 2024 Andrew Carnegie Fellows Program. She is one of six from California, and one of two within the California State University system. The fellowship supports high-caliber scholarship and research in the social sciences and humanities by providing researchers with a \$200,000 stipend to fund a two-year project.

As a 2024 fellow, she will write a new book, "That's What They Want You to Think: Identifying Dangerous Conspiracy Theories,"

which will use narrative analysis to explore what makes conspiracy theories popular and likely to spread.

"In Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Prioress' Tale,' we see the conspiracy theory about blood libel. We also see stories about miracles and sainthood," said Wang. "The way that people approached those stories is very similar to the way people approach conspiracy theories today."

She'll start by looking at miracle stories in medieval texts before moving onto more recent theories, including ones about 9/11 and government scandals involving powerful politicians.

"Conspiracy theories are stories that are created by people who have something to gain by spreading them," said Wang.

"They're used to divide people because they take you out of this nonfiction realm and put you in the realm of belief and identity. Those belief structures cement divisions and keep people from coming back from them."



"Once people find a theory that fits their perspective, it can be extremely difficult to dissuade them, and radicalization of those beliefs can lead to increased violence", added Wang.

"The more out of control we feel in our personal lives, in our work and in our world, the more we seek patterns to compensate. This preference for patterns over noise is so strong that if the facts don't match our experience of things, we will find a story that does," said Wang.

Jumping Between Medieval and Modern Times

Throughout her career, Wang has studied medieval criminal procedure, the construction of felony, and morality and guilt; finding connections between medieval themes and contemporary issues.

"Between the period that I study and now, there have been many changes, including the plague, that have had the opportunity to overturn society," said Wang.

Yet, when it comes to our social contract, the way we relate to each other and our sense of justice, it's all the same." Her new project will be added to an accomplished cabinet of research, which includes her latest book, "The Making of Felony Procedure in Middle English Literature." Published this year, the book explores criminal procedure in English law, focusing on the construction of felony and how that definition has shaped the current criminal justice system.

At CSUF, Wang has taught such courses as Chaucer and Medieval Literature. She said her favorite part about teaching these courses is helping students find connections between medieval texts and their own lived experiences.

"Being able to reach back into the medieval period and find similarities is the best demonstration of how universal it is," said Wang. "There are ideas and situations that we all understand, and medieval literature can teach you a lot about yourself if you're open to seeing those connections."

Shining the Spotlight: 2024 New Tenure Track Faculty



Igor Acácio | Politics, Administration & Justice

Igor Acácio is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Division of Politics, Administration, & Justice at California State University, Fullerton. He was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow at Tulane University's Center for Inter-American Policy and Research (CIPR) and a Hans J. Morgenthau Fellow at the Notre Dame International Security Center (NDISC). He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Riverside. His research focuses on democracy, civil-military relations, and defense and security issues, with a particular emphasis on Latin America. His work has been published in *Comparative Politics*, *Democratization*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Armed Forces & Society*, and *Public Opinion Quarterly*. His research has been supported by the Fulbright Program and the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC).

Dr. Sean Angst | Politics, Administration & Justice

Dr. Sean Angst earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Management from the University of Southern California. His research focuses on housing, community development, and racial justice. Dr. Angst recently completed his dissertation on housing affordability and neighborhood change in South Los Angeles, which examined the impacts of those processes on survival and stress. His broader research agenda centers around urban poverty and health. For the past ten years, he has analyzed structural inequality and innovative policy interventions at the USC Price Center for Social Innovation and USC Equity Research Institute. He has published articles in the *Journal of Urban Affairs and Housing Policy Debate*, and his past research has been cited by the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*.



Luis Miguel Toquero-Pérez | Modern Languages and Literatures

Luis Miguel Toquero-Pérez is an Assistant Professor of Spanish Linguistics in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. He holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. His work focuses on probing the properties that all languages share in common (i.e. language universals) and the limits on the possible (language-specific) variation. He does so by looking at the syntax, semantics and morphology of natural languages with a particular emphasis on measure words (e.g. more, many, most), number markers (e.g. plural vs. singular) and cardinal numeral expressions (e.g. 2 jewels, 2 pieces of jewelry). He has a strong commitment to studying underrepresented languages by conducting in-situ and ex-situ fieldwork. He has done fieldwork on Alasha Mongolian (Mongolic), rural Iberian Spanishes (Romance), and Ch'ol (Mayan). His research has been partly supported by a Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant awarded by the National Science Foundation (2023-2025, award number BCS 2315167).



Carlos Yebra Lopez | Modern Languages and Literatures

Carlos Yebra Lopez is an Assistant Professor in Spanish Linguistics in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. He holds a PhD in Spanish and Portuguese from New York University and specializes in critical sociolinguistics as applied to language ideologies, (hyper)polyglossia and the revitalization of endangered languages of the Global Hispanophone by digital means. His research focuses on Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), i.e., the language spoken by the Jews who were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, and he is the author of 'Decolonizing Spanish: Ladino and Chavacano as Sites of Global Hispanophonia' (*TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 2022) as well as 'Ladino on the Internet: Sepharad 4' (Routledge, forthcoming).



CSUF Honors Orange County Civic Leaders for Their Public Service

Three Orange County civic leaders were recognized on March 7 at the Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History's "Celebrating Orange County's Political Legacy" dinner.

"These honorees were selected for their long-time public service to Orange County and the state of California in both elected and appointed roles," said Natalie M. Fousekis, Center Director and Professor of History. "Each tells a story about their path to crafting policy, serving the community, and in some cases, running for elected office."

The 2024 honorees included retired California State Assemblymember and Orange County Supervisor Bill Campbell; retired California State Assemblymember Tom Daly; and chief executive officer emeritus Lucy Dunn '76 (B.A. Political Science) from the Orange County Business Council.

The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History was established in 1968 and houses the state's largest regionally focused oral history archive. Driven by the work of Cal State Fullerton students, the center maintains more than 6,500 recorded interviews, transcripts, photographs and other materials.

Left to right: Bill Campbell, Lucy Dunn, and Tom Daly.



Liberal Studies students to benefit from late faculty member's gift



A lifelong learner with a passion for art, music and literature, the late Ronald Clapper found a home in Cal State Fullerton's Liberal Studies program — a campus hub for interdisciplinary studies.

The lecturer emeritus in liberal studies served the university from 1974-2011. Throughout his time on campus, Clapper played an instrumental part in the department's growth; from helping bring in new faculty experts to cultivating a tradition of research excellence. Clapper was passionate about supporting students on their academic journeys.

Clapper, who passed away in April 2023, was a champion of student and faculty success. During his lifetime, he provided several gifts to campus programs and scholarships, including a \$468,000 estate gift to the Liberal Studies department which will be used to establish an endowment to support areas such as faculty research, conferences, study abroad opportunities, and scholarships.

Department Chair, April Bullock added that the endowment will continue to fund opportunities that honor Clapper's legacy. "His gift will help the department continue to be a place where intellectual curiosity and rigor go hand in hand with sociability and friendship," said April Bullock, Chair and Professor of Liberal Studies.

After his retirement, Clapper gave to such scholarship

funds as the Jane Hipolito Memorial Scholarship, which recognizes students for writing outstanding research papers. He also supported departmental conferences that provide faculty and students with opportunities to network and engage with a variety of research topics.

In the Liberal Studies program, students become critical thinkers and problem solvers whose research integrates knowledge from the humanities, arts, natural sciences and social sciences. They are mentored by faculty experts with diverse research backgrounds that include such areas as music aesthetics, theory and religion, literature and science, and the history of food and culture.

"Students come to this program for many reasons. For future educators, Liberal Studies provides solid academic preparation for multiple subject and education specialist career paths," Bullock said. "We prepare them for the challenges of the workforce."

Alumni of the program have gone on to become educators, lawyers, musicians, entrepreneurs, and leaders in their respective fields. "Dr. Clapper's intellectual curiosity and rigor, combined with a gentle and warm demeanor, set a standard that we will keep alive in our department and academic program for years to come," Bullock said.

It Takes a Titan to Leave a Legacy

You too have the power to support the university, and generations of Titans to come, through a planned gift. Ontiveros Legacy Society members have done just that, enjoying the financial advantages that come with a planned gift while feeling a sense of pride and gratification that comes with giving in perpetuity. Helpful planning tools are available online, or you may contact Hart Roussel, Senior Director of Planned Giving, at 657-278-5429 or CSUFplannedgift@fullerton.edu for more information.



A Closer Look at the INSTITUTE OF BLACK INTELLECTUAL INNOVATION

In a world eager for positive change, the Institute of Black Intellectual Innovation (IBII) stands out as a beacon of inclusivity, knowledge, and community engagement. Established in 2019, IBII has reached far beyond its core mission to celebrate Black community on and off campus; it opens its doors to all, inviting a diverse audience to learn, share, and celebrate together.

One of the institute's core objectives is to offer engaging and educational experiences. From its monthly discussions on books by Black authors to the celebrated annual Kwanzaa brunch, IBII has created a platform for meaningful dialogue and cultural appreciation. Highlights of the past year include supporting the Urban Agriculture Community-Based Research Experience (UACRE) and launching the "Vision for the Future Program," which introduces Black high school students to our Black Titans, our diversity centers, academic advising and a host of our resources on campus.

Collaboration lies at the heart of IBII's mission. The Institute has worked hand in hand with various partners to host events that not only entertain but also educate. Notable collaborations include the Punk Rock and Culture conference co-sponsored with the Chicano/a Studies faculty and poetry events featuring laureates Lee Herrick and Peter J. Harris, focusing on Asian and Black community solidarity. These events serve as powerful platforms for countering discrimination and fostering a sense of unity among diverse groups.

IBII's dedication to countering marginalization and fostering professional development opportunities has made a substantial impact at CSUF and beyond. The institute's proactive approach to promoting "Titan Pride" and its innovative strategies for student and community engagement are making tangible differences in the lives of many.



CSUF Professor awarded grant for AI-Powered platform to help underserved students in STEM

Yuko Okado, Associate Professor of Psychology, received a \$979,212 NSF CAREER Award in August 2023 for her project, "Improving Persistence of Underserved Students in Psychological Science Using an AI-Based, Personalized Career Exploration Platform."

This project tackles the diversity gap and worker shortage in STEM by exploring the psychological and behavioral elements that encourage STEM career persistence, focusing particularly on underserved students. It introduces "Psychology Pathways," an AI-driven online tool featuring virtual agent-mentors modeled after diverse STEM professionals in psychology to facilitate personalized career exploration and mentorship opportunities. This effort is in collaboration with the University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies' learning sciences group, led by Benjamin Nye and William Swartout.

The project is one of the first prospective, mixed-methods studies on STEM persistence and the first to have a four-year follow-up period. Extensive data will be collected from over 1,000 CSUF Psychology majors, including their feedback regarding their experiences in career exploration, needs for career-oriented resources, and user experience with the Pathways intervention platform.

The project will also benefit CSUF students by incorporating over 30 student research assistants and enriching Dr. Okado's Psychology classes with hands-on exposure to interdisciplinary research involving AI-based web platforms. As part of a broader outreach, the Pathways intervention platform will be disseminated as an open-source project that can be customized and implemented at other educational institutions.

When asked what motivated her to apply for the grant, Okado said "I would have never dreamed of even applying for this grant, which I thought was completely out of reach if it weren't for the inspiration and motivation from my students and the support and encouragement from many vital movers and shakers – including collaborators, my mentors, colleagues at CSUF, family, and friends, and this project's research advisory board. I've also appreciated the support and guidance from many of CSUF's past CAREER awardees and the grants team. As with most research projects, this is truly a community effort."



UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit our calendar for more events!
hss.fullerton.edu



SEPT. 26
HSS Convocation

OCT. 4-6
CSUF Alumni & Family Weekend

OCT. 12-13
Dinner with 12 Titans



OCT. 23
Passage to the Future Alumni Reception

NOV. 19
Pub Fest
A new event where we honor our faculty's publications!

DEC. 13
Institute for Black Intellectual Innovation Annual Kwanzaa Brunch



JAN. 27
CSUF Alumni Mixer & Tasting event

MAR. 12
Titan Day of Giving

MAR. 13
Royce International Symposium



APR. 7-11
HSS Week

APR. 16-17
Deception and Distrust: The Dark Side of Discourse Philosophy Symposium



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Several of the stories featured in this issue of HIGHLIGHTS include programs and experiential opportunities in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences that are funded by private support. If you are interested in receiving additional information about ways you can make an impact, please contact our Senior Director Melissa Martinez at melissamartinez@fullerton.edu or 657-278-4847.



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