

STANISLAUS STATE

STAN

FALL 2018 MAGAZINE

COURAGE
to SUCCEED

Warriors Share Their Stories

A Word From the

PRESIDENT



Like most institutions of higher education, our story lies in the success of our students and alumni and the achievements of our faculty and staff. For Stan State, these accomplishments

extend to our communities. The success of our students and alumni is closely aligned with their families and local community. Stan State Warriors are quietly leading change and transforming their cities in the Central Valley and beyond. They possess strength, fortitude and determination. They are relentless in defining their personal success and impact. They are Warrior Strong!

During the 2018 commencement ceremonies, Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs challenged Stan State to answer the call — “What are you prepared to do, Stan State Warriors? ... Armed with your degree and your experiences and support from faculty and family ... so that 50 years from now a child will have more opportunity than they are currently born with ... What are you prepared to do with this great opportunity?”

I'm proud of the many Warriors who have answered this call through their work in leading humanitarian efforts, protecting the environment and advocating for social justice.

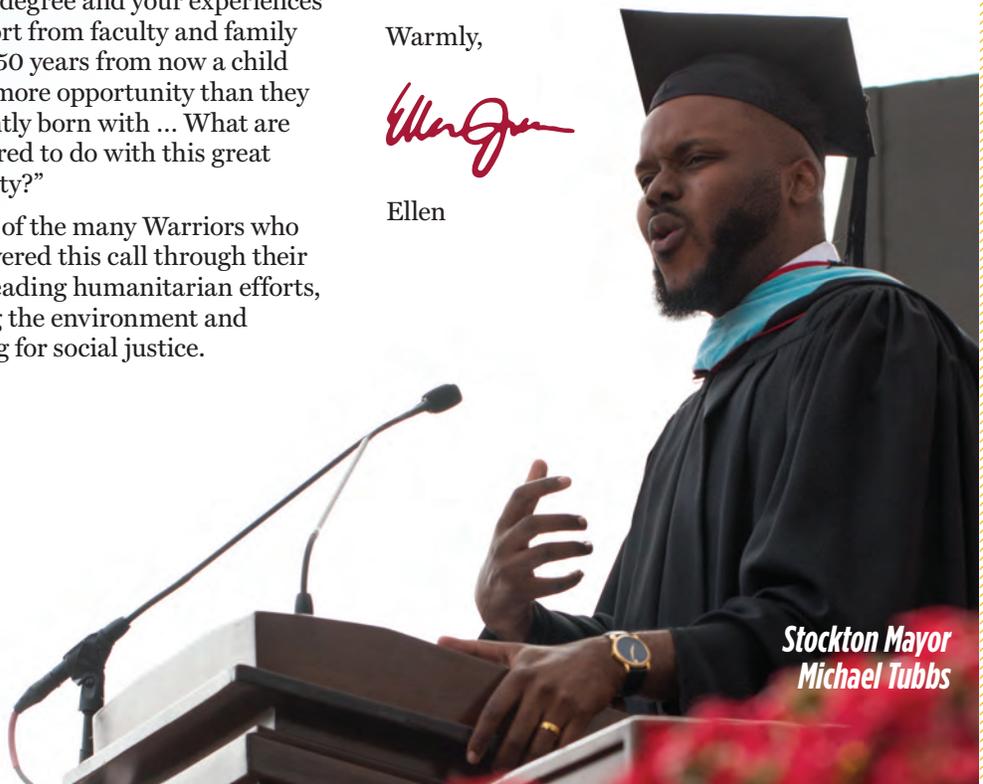
Warriors like Mila Amerine Dickens, Founder and CEO of Central Valley Autism Project. And like Sedrick Mitchell, California State Parks Deputy Director, about whom you can read more on page 16. And like Stan State senior Victoria Martinez, an intern for the Tuolumne River Trust, contributing to watershed research. And like alumnus Alejandro Martinez, who just started law school at UC Davis with the goal of becoming an advocate for victims of domestic abuse.

We are rising to the challenge. This issue of STAN Magazine highlights Warriors who are courageous in their individual missions to make a difference in the lives of others. They are putting their Stan State education to work, not just for the betterment of their lives and the lives of their families, but to have a positive impact on communities right here in the Central Valley.

Join the rallying call. “What will you do, Stan State Warriors?” Submit your stories and videos with **#WhatWarriorsDo**.

Warmly,

Ellen



**Stockton Mayor
Michael Tubbs**

Mayor Tubbs' Speech
Visit <http://bit.ly/Tubbs-Speech>
to view the speech in its entirety.

STAN Magazine is published by the Office of Communications and Public Affairs in the Division of University Advancement at Stanislaus State.

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If you receive more than one copy of STAN Magazine, please pass it along to a friend of Stanislaus State. If you would like to support Stanislaus State, visit csustan.edu/giving.

Stanislaus State serves a diverse student body of more than 10,000 at two locations in the Central Valley — a beautiful 228-acre campus in Turlock and the Stockton Campus. Widely recognized for dedicated faculty, high-quality academic programs and exceptional value, the University offers more than 100 majors, minors and areas of concentration, along with 15 master's degree programs, seven credential programs and a doctorate in educational leadership. We are a proud member of the 23-campus California State University system.



Students investigating plants in the Stan State Greenhouse.

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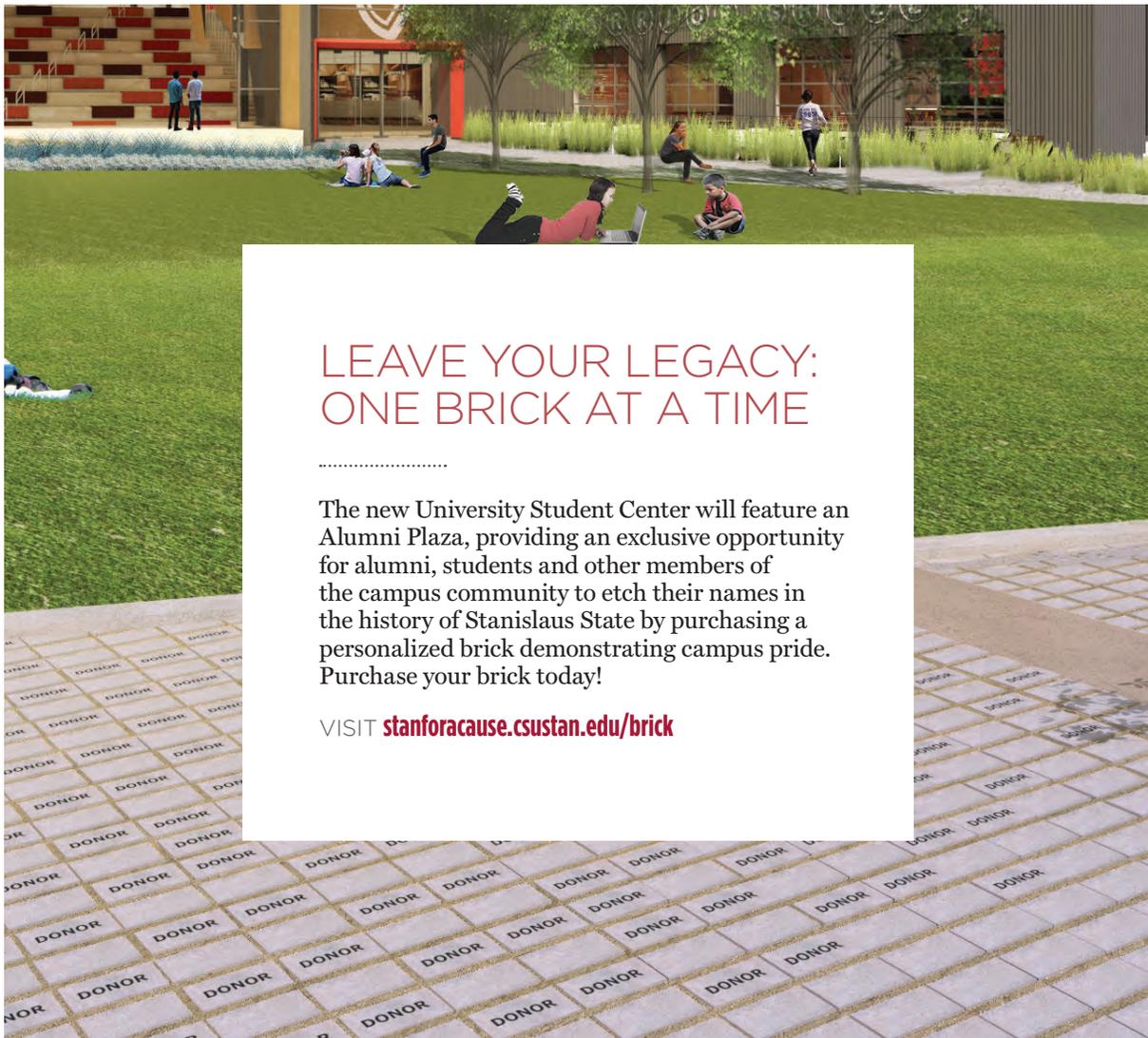


Stanislaus
State

STAN STATE SHINES IN NATIONAL COLLEGE RANKINGS

The success of Stan State's mission to propel the region through affordable, high-quality education was noted by Washington Monthly, which ranked the University No. 1 in the West in its "Best Bang for the Buck" category. This came on the heels of Money magazine boosting Stan State into the top 50 of its national rankings of "Best Colleges for the Money" and Forbes moving Stan State up 185 spots to No. 101 on its list of America's "Best Value" colleges. In addition, the Princeton Review named the University to its list of the nation's top 384 colleges for a 13th straight year, and U.S. News & World Report ranked Stan State the No. 10 public university in the West Region.





LEAVE YOUR LEGACY: ONE BRICK AT A TIME

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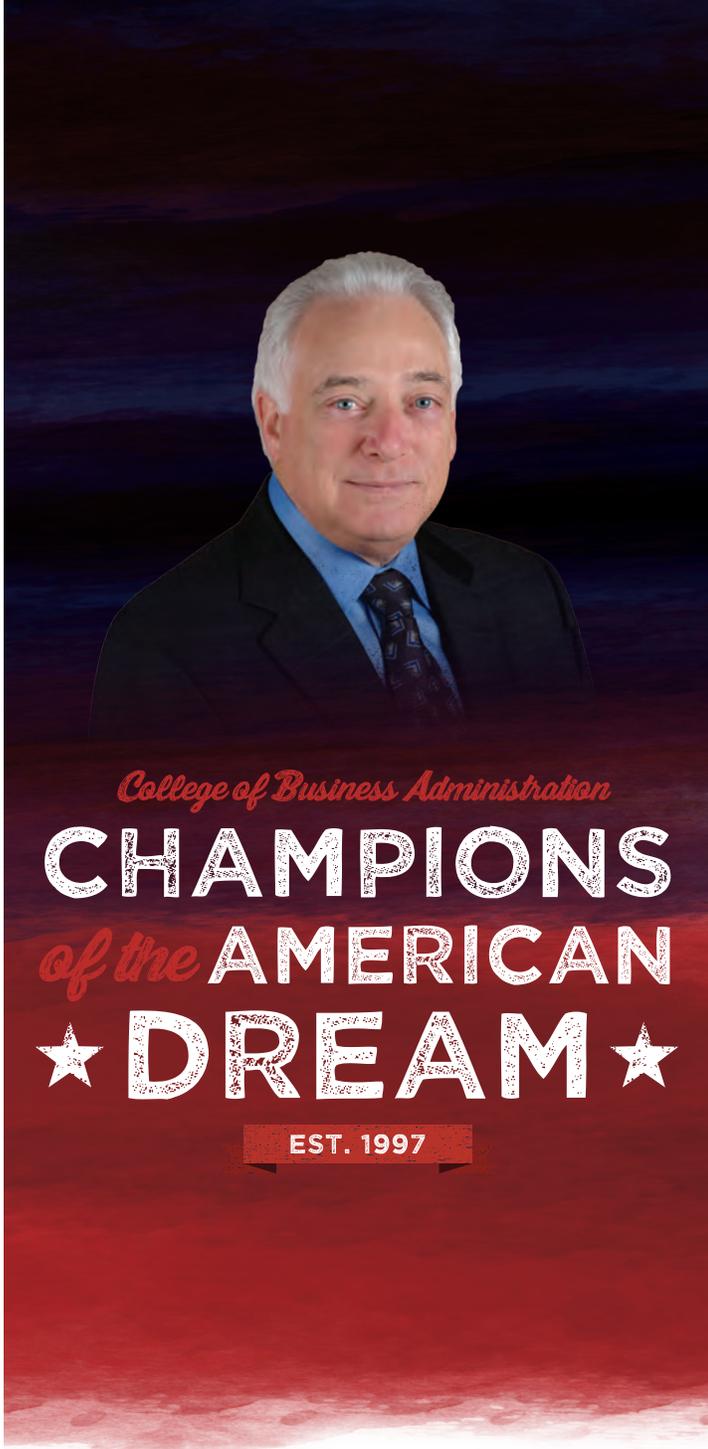
The new University Student Center will feature an Alumni Plaza, providing an exclusive opportunity for alumni, students and other members of the campus community to etch their names in the history of Stanislaus State by purchasing a personalized brick demonstrating campus pride. Purchase your brick today!

VISIT stanforacause.csustan.edu/brick



CLASS OF 2022 TAKES THEIR SEATS

Stan State leaders welcomed the incoming Class of 2022 on Aug. 20 at Freshman Convocation in Fitzpatrick Arena. “This is a huge step in life for all of you, and we are very excited to be on this journey with you at Stan State,” President Ellen Junn told students.



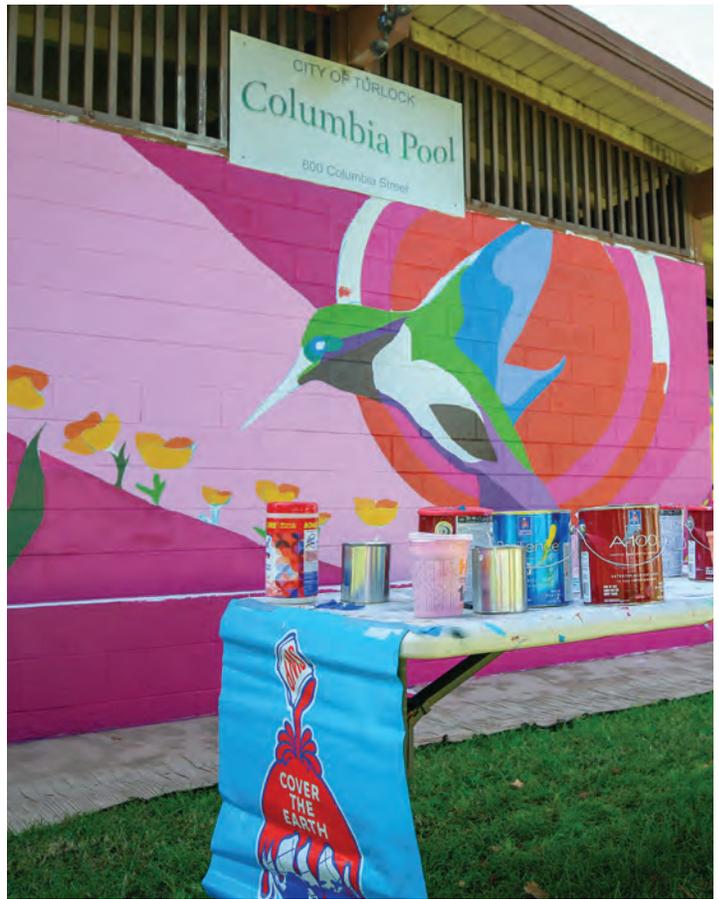
College of Business Administration

CHAMPIONS of the AMERICAN ★ DREAM ★

EST. 1997

PORGES RECEIVES CHAMPIONS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AWARD

Norm Porges, founder of Central Valley carwash chain Prime Shine, was recognized by the Stan State College of Business Administration on April 26 in Snider Recital Hall as the latest recipient of its Champions of the American Dream Award. Porges has distinguished himself as an outstanding and innovative entrepreneur while being a dedicated supporter of education and the region as a whole.



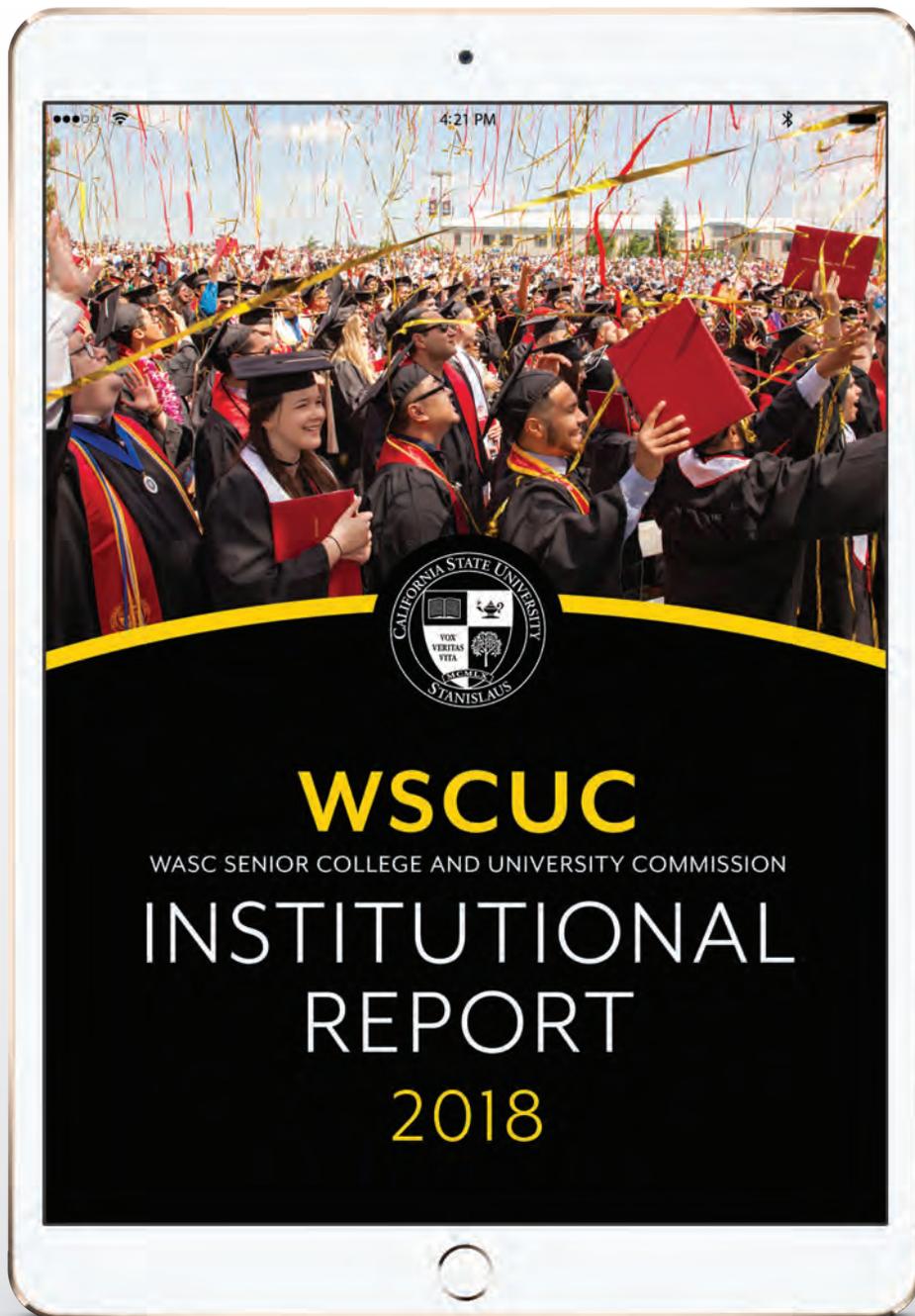
COLUMBIA PARK GETS NEW MURAL

Work is underway at Turlock's Columbia Park on a 1,216-square-foot mural project led by students from Stanislaus State's Art Department and funded by the Mayor's Public Policy Award. Community input was gathered by students to design artwork that reflects the landscape and water features of Turlock. The mural will be painted on a stretch of cinder block wall by Stan State art students and community members.

DONOVAN LEADS WARRIOR ATHLETICS



Terry Donovan brings his 18 years of Division I college athletics administration to Stan State, taking over as the University's director of athletics on May 1. Donovan previously worked at Fresno State, Syracuse, Arizona State and Nevada (his alma mater). He most recently was Fresno State's Senior Associate Athletics Director for Business Operations.



WASC REVIEW ENTERS HOME STRETCH

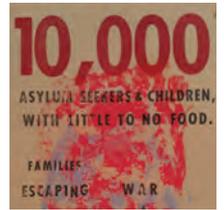
Two years of intense self-study helped prepare Stanislaus State for its WASC Senior College and University Commission reaffirmation of accreditation review. Stan State received its last reaffirmation in July 2010. The University's recent self-examination led to reshaping some institutional processes and services, a self-improvement journey documented in the Institutional Report submitted Sept. 18. In April, the campus will host a WASC Senior College and University Commission evaluation team site visit, the final step before the Commission makes a determination regarding reaffirmation of accreditation.

LEARN MORE AT cstan.edu/wasc-report

SEEKING ASYLUM IN EUROPE

Turlock native Anne Di Grazia's documentary "Asylum Seekers: Moria" was screened at the University Art Gallery alongside an exhibit of 50 works created by artists from across the world. The film focuses on the refugee crisis in Europe and its devastating effects on the island of Lesbos, Greece. Once a transitional camp, the Moria camp has transformed into an inhumane place where asylum seekers cannot find a way out.

LEARN MORE AT csustan.edu/art-gallery



Stanislaus State

**WARRIOR ACE PICKED
IN MAJOR LEAGUE
BASEBALL DRAFT**

Stanislaus State right-handed pitcher Joe Ryan became the highest draft pick in the history of the baseball program on June 5 when he was selected in the seventh round by the Tampa Bay Rays. Ryan, from San Anselmo, was named an All-American this spring after going 8-1 with a 1.65 ERA and leading all NCAA divisions with a school-record 127 strikeouts. He began his professional career on June 22 with the Hudson Valley Renegades of the New York-Penn League.

JOE RYAN

Pitcher



STAN STATE NURSING STUDENTS GET \$400,000 GRANT

The Stanislaus Community Foundation gifted \$400,000 from the Stanislaus Health Careers Fund for scholarships to help current nurses, nursing students and graduating high school seniors earn bachelor's degrees in health care at Stanislaus State. The goal is to grow the healthcare workforce regionally.



GENETIC COUNSELING GRAD EARNS CSU RESEARCH HONOR

Mara Hernandez, a 2018 graduate of Stan State's master's program in genetic counseling, won a first-place award in the Health, Nutrition and Clinical Sciences category at the annual CSU Statewide Student Research Competition held at Sacramento State. Her presentation dealt with how genetic counselors handle the discovery that a patient's presumed parent is not their biological mother or father.

ALUMNI SURVEY RESULTS

Recently, Warrior alumni shared their thoughts and opinions in our Alumni Attitude Survey. We learned a lot about Stan State experiences and we want to share what we heard!

BEING A WARRIOR WAS YOUR CALLING...

93% of alumni said it was a good or great decision to attend Stan State

94% of alumni said they promote Stan State to others

91% of alumni said they had a good or great student experience

YOU FEEL AWESOME ABOUT...

- The accomplishments of students and faculty
- Opportunities we provide for scholarships
- Our accolades and rankings
- Your personal Warrior pride

THIS IS STAN STATE...

Phi Alpha Theta
 Credential Program Student Leadership Program
 Faculty Mentor Program Track and Field
Warrior Day Student Teaching
 Alpha Xi Delta Theta Chi Study Abroad
 Meet the Firms Honors Program
 Intramural Sports Theatre
 Art Mecha Associated Students
 ASI Geography Phi Sigma Sigma

BE A STUDENT READY UNIVERSITY

Always on the go. The verve and excitement of students in the Naraghi Hall of Science for the first day of the fall semester, captured here in time-lapse. Faculty and staff diligently prepared to provide an environment on campus that fostered student success from day 1.



DESIGNING YOUR

TOMORROW

BY NAN AUSTIN

An innovative continuing education certificate course introduced this year at Stan State teaches students to look ahead and connect what they study now with who they want to be.

“Designing Your Tomorrow” uses a mix of guided discussion and guest speakers to help students lay out personal goals and plan ways to reach them.

“We have other career courses, but this is a very different way of approaching vocations. It opens up thought processes,” said Professor Harold Stanislaw, who co-founded the program at Stanislaus State after faculty members attended training at Stanford University’s Design Your Life program. “I think this approach is much more helpful. We are preparing students for jobs in a paradigm that doesn’t exist yet.”

“I expected to get a bunch of advice on how to get along after college, like how to write a resume,” said Branden Escobar, a senior in computer science who took one of the pilot sessions during the spring semester. “But I’m taking a class in design principles for production, and this really was about applying design principles to my life. I thought that was really cool.”

One of the spring guest speakers was Mila Amerine Dickens, founder of the Central Valley Autism Project. In her college days, she vacillated between majors and graduated with no clue what to do next. She applied to Stan State’s graduate program in psychology, where volunteering to help an autistic child drew her to the cutting edge of a new industry. Over the next 30 years, her child-focused passion evolved into a major organization, calling for business skills she never imagined she might need.

“Do your homework. Know what’s waiting for you out there when you



graduate,” Dickens advised students. “I didn’t have a plan, but I didn’t hesitate when an opportunity presented itself.”

Listening at tables spread with pizza and notebooks, students said the life stories of zig zag paths from school to successful careers were inspiring, giving them a range of ideas on how to tackle their own obstacles.

The interactive weekly sessions are team-taught. One of the sections this fall will be led by President Ellen Junn and Provost Kimberly Greer. Both said they are excited by the program and the opportunity to get back into the classroom.

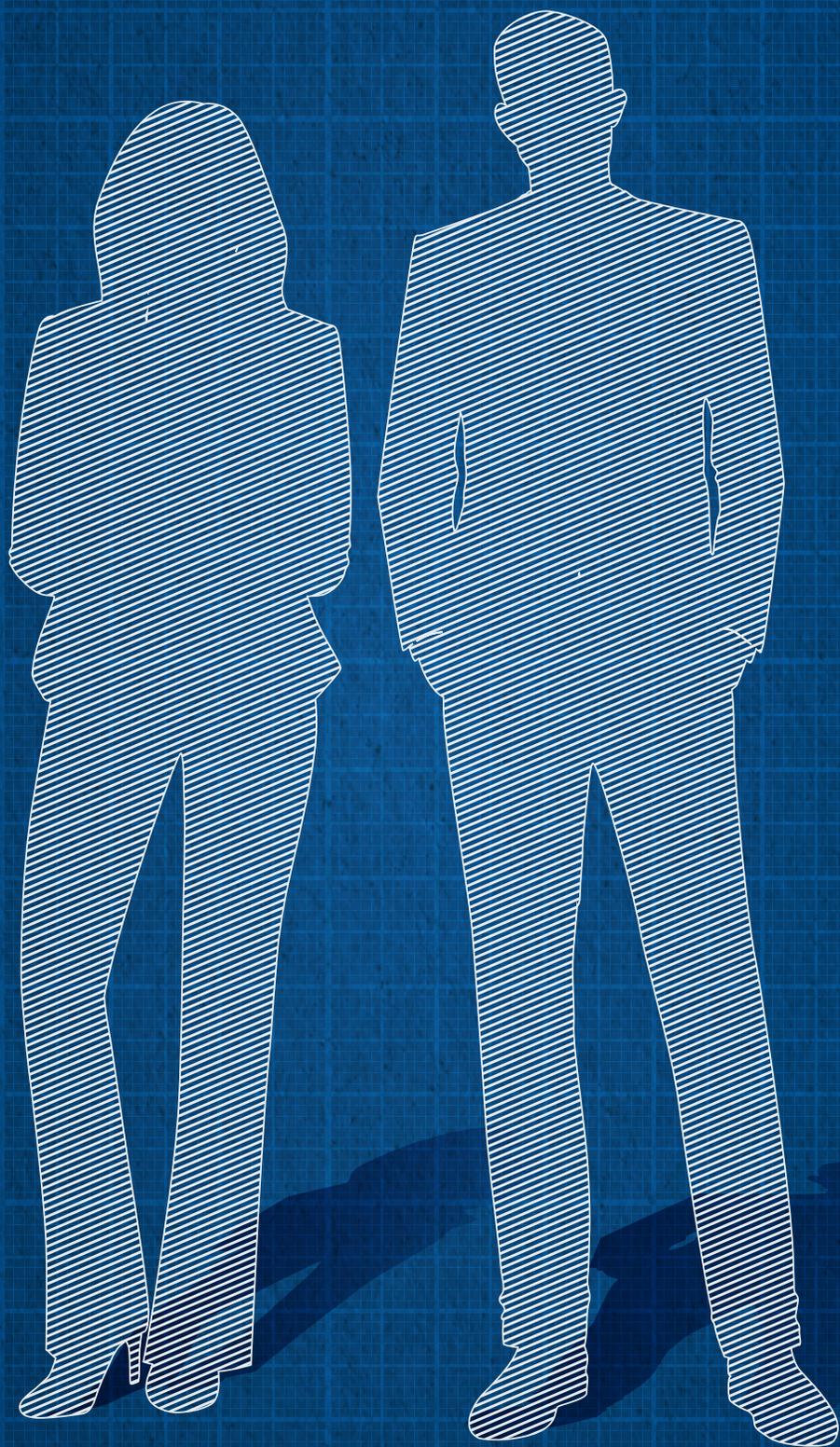
“Rarely do students get to do this while they are undergraduates,” Junn said. “We want to help students contemplate their future professional lives with intention and with support. College should expand horizons. We want students to not just plow through a checklist of courses. They need

“We want to help students contemplate their future professional lives with intention and with support.”

- President Ellen Junn

to explore and entertain ideas and dream.”

The pop-up courses allow juniors, seniors and graduate students to explore career opportunities and offer completion certificates and Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The program is supported by a \$50,000 CSU Innovation Development Grant, which will also support the development of courses for high school students exploring their higher education options; college freshmen and sophomores finalizing a choice of major; and alumni and community members wanting to explore where they are in their careers and life choices. ❸





A BRIGHT IDEA

BY NAN AUSTIN

PHYSICS STUDENTS HAVE LOCAL AND GLOBAL IMPACT

These Solar Suitcases have done some traveling. Over the fall 2017 semester, they trekked from Stan State to Dutcher Middle School to teach students the basics of electricity. In the spring, they hopped an international flight to Kenya, where they landed at a girls' boarding school and a secondary school at a refugee camp to provide much-needed power.

The ongoing service learning project — coordinated by Biological Sciences Professor Mark Grobner for Stan State physics students to work with local K-12 students — generates lasting benefits here and abroad.

Each suitcase is a treasure chest of education, literally light bulb moments.

University students said they took part in the project for the practical experience and to open doors for future scientists. The hands-on lessons they gave Dutcher Science Club members provided the middle school students a strong grounding in electrical circuitry. The solar set-ups they built here made it possible for students in Kenya to have light to read and do homework in the evening. ☺





Maria Marquez Mendoza

*President
Associated Students Inc.*

COURAGE *to* SUCCEED

By Nan Austin and Gina Oltman

What does it take to change the trajectory of your life and realize your dreams? For Sedrick Mitchell, Maria Marquez Mendoza and Soua Lee, education and the support network they found at Stanislaus State helped them find their answers. ►

Sedrick Mitchell

Sedrick Mitchell found his dream job building community connections with state parks. A 1983 Stan State graduate in political science, Mitchell interned for state Sen. Patrick Johnston and went on to work with the California Legislature. He left his post as senior consultant to the Senate Appropriations Committee to take the leadership role with California State Parks in 1999.

His appointment as deputy director of external affairs began with Gov. Gray Davis and continued through Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Gov. Jerry Brown. It has been a good fit, Mitchell said, as his family grew up hiking, climbing and camping in the spaces he now works to help all families enjoy.

“That feeling you’re part of something greater than yourself stays with you. It’s what gives you the confidence and courage to keep stepping forward.”

- Sedrick Mitchell

“We are really the stewards of history and of nature, as one of the most diverse and largest park systems in the world,” Mitchell said. “The biodiversity of California is incredible. You can go from desert to snowy mountains to the beach in the same day. It’s just a remarkable place to be.”

Beyond sheer beauty and wonder, parks can be places of personal transformation, noted the longtime Boy Scout leader. Mitchell spent a week in August working with Outdoor Youth Connection, a camp program for underprivileged teens he founded as a collaboration of California State Parks and the nonprofit Pacific Leadership Institute.

“If you can have the opportunity to live a life where you’re making a difference and be a part of something bigger than yourself, changing peoples’ lives, you can have a life well-lived,” he said. “It’s not about how much money we make it’s not about how many projects we do. It’s really about social justice,

which is a value I gained while I was at Stan State.”

A young Mitchell stepped onto the Stan State campus at a time when he recalls professors’ first lectures started with handing out their home phone numbers. His coaches on the baseball and soccer teams, the faculty in his major and fellow Warriors became his second family.

“Being a first-generation college student, I really didn’t know what to expect. I just knew that I should be there,” he said.

A network of support and a sense of being valued helped him through, Mitchell said, “That feeling you’re part of something greater than yourself stays with you. It’s what gives you the confidence and courage to keep stepping forward.”

It was while competing for a Sacramento internship against students from larger, better-known schools, that he realized his education at Stan State was top tier. “We were actually better prepared than others because we

weren’t just a number. At Stan State, we were individuals and we were challenged,” he said. “The professors never let you slide by. They took the time to understand your ability and then expected you to reach that.”

Throughout his career, Mitchell has called on his Stan State mentors for advice. And he was recently named the first recipient of the First-Generation Alumnus of the Year Award in recognition of his contributions to the community as a Stan State graduate. He stressed what a University education offers goes well beyond grades and degrees.

“The most important thing I learned at Stan State was the power of what I could become — the vision of what I could do if I kept believing in myself and believing that all things are possible,” he said. “It’s not about discovering yourself, it’s about discovering the person you can become.”



Sedrick Mitchell ('83, political science)

*Deputy Director, External Affairs
California State Parks*

Maria Marquez Mendoza

The daughter of a farmworker, Maria Marquez Mendoza is a student finishing her undergraduate degree in communication studies.



For Maria Marquez Mendoza, Stan State has felt like home from her first visit. She is on track to graduate this spring with a bachelor's degree in communication studies, concentrating in public relations and media.

Today she looks forward, weighing graduate school and a wide arc of career choices, rather than dwelling on a difficult past.

Mendoza grew up in East Salinas. Her mother worked in the fields to provide for the family, while her brother, eight years older, helped raise Maria and a younger sister. Her abusive father left when Maria was 4 and returned only briefly when she was in the sixth grade.

The trauma of those early years likely factored into her developing a stutter noticed by her second-grade teacher. During recesses that year, Mendoza stayed in the classroom and read books aloud or worked on pronunciation with audio books. She entered third grade a book lover and strong reader.

"You would think that a girl who faced physical abuse, verbal abuse and other struggles would have lost all the hope she had for her future a long time ago," Mendoza said. "I am proud to say that I am a resilient Chicana." Everyone has struggles, but take the time you need and keep a positive outlook, she tells others adding, "Things happen for a reason."

In junior high, Maria was accepted into the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college prep program where she learned about financial aid and navigating college admissions. Field trips took her to a number of Bay Area and Central California campuses, but it was moving her cousin into the dorms at Stan State that settled her choice.

"You don't know where your home is until you step onto it," Mendoza said. In 2014, she became the first in her immediate family to go to college, taking advantage of academic help from Student Support Services (SSS) and the social and leadership opportunities of Associated Students, Incorporated (ASI).

This year, Mendoza is balancing study time with her responsibilities as ASI president and a research project through the McNair Scholars Program. Her work examines how people reveal their concept of self in social media and if that identity varies between platforms.

Reaching this level of involvement and empowerment took persistence and lots of help, she said. Faculty members Keith Nainby and Marcy Chvasta are among her mentors, along with Jesus Verdugo of SSS and Cesar Rumayor, executive director of ASI and the University Student Union.

"Maria exemplifies our highest aspirations for our Stan State Warriors," said Nainby, chair of the Department of Communication Studies. "She approaches learning opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, with curiosity and vigor. She searches for ways to make meaning out of new information and experiences — all so she can advance her personal commitment to being a change agent and ambassador for people in her community who yearn for education."

"Being a student here has given me the confidence to learn from my failures and the courage to explore new opportunities."

- Maria Marquez Mendoza

Mendoza credits the steady support of peers and professors for her academic success and new life path.

"Stan State has been my family every step of the way," Mendoza said. "Being a student here has given me the confidence to learn from my failures and the courage to explore new opportunities."

Soua Lee

Nothing about Soua Lee's early childhood foreshadowed her life today. She holds a doctorate from Stan State, shares a beautiful home with her husband and four children, earns a good income at a job she enjoys and is eyeing career advancement.



But 37 years ago, and nearly 8,000 miles away, Lee was born into an entirely different scenario, one of poverty and hardship. It took perseverance, faith in the power of education and years of encouragement from family,

educators and fellow students to overcome the circumstances of her childhood and achieve the life she dreamed of.

Her story can be traced to the mountains of Laos, where years before her birth her parents were among the thousands of Hmong people fighting communism in what is often called the Secret War of Laos during the Vietnam war in the mid-1970s. To escape persecution and likely execution, Lee's family fled into the jungle and then made the difficult trek into Thailand. In 1979, they crossed the Mekong River and settled in the massive Ban Vinai refugee camp. Lee was born there two years later.

For the next eight years, Ban Vinai was the Lee family's home. Sanitation and living conditions were poor in the overcrowded camp. The Thai people wanted the camp closed, and a refugee resettlement process started.

Sponsored by a church group in Nebraska, the Lee family immigrated to Omaha. The family lived there for a few months, then moved to Fresno where some relatives had settled. Without being fluent in English, they found it difficult to find good jobs in America. "My family really struggled financially for so long," she said. ▶

“Life is fluid and people change. Your dream job might not stay your dream job forever, and then you can make a change. Believe in yourself.”

- *Soua Lee*



“My parents worked factory jobs and other production jobs, but the work was not steady. Pay and working conditions were poor, and they had no benefits.”

A shaman and cultural musician in Laos, Lee’s father regularly talked about the importance of education and pointed out examples of well-educated people achieving success to Lee and her five brothers. “His hopes and dreams were for his children to have good educational opportunities,” said Lee. “He was so proud of educational accomplishments. He was my inspiration.”

On weekends, Lee helped with cooking and cleaning. During harvest season, she joined her mother working 12-hour days picking crops.

“I had to learn English quickly because my family needed me to translate,” she said.

The family moved to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area when she was a teen. Lee earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Concordia University and a Master of Arts in Social Work from the University of Minnesota. She also married and had three children. In 2012, her husband retired from his career in the U.S. Army and the couple decided to move to California, where they had both lived before, for the warmer weather and a sense of home.

It was while working as a counselor and faculty member at Modesto Junior College that she decided to pursue her doctorate at Stan State. She started the program in 2015, but life threw her a curve — pregnancy. “When I found out, I just thought, ‘I can’t do this,’ and I decided to quit,” she said. Her fellow students, however, started a campaign to get her back into class.

“My classmates texted me, ‘Come one last time, you might change your mind.’ Then my professors contacted me and told me about other students who had been in the same situation,” she said. “Everyone just kept saying that I shouldn’t quit.”

She finally decided everyone was right. She caught up on the course work she missed and continued with the doctoral program. She successfully defended her dissertation in March and received her Ed.D. in May with a 4.0 GPA.

“After I defended my dissertation successfully, I called my father and said, ‘Now people can call me doctor. I completed my studies successfully,’ and he just started crying,” she said. Shortly before her hooding ceremony, however, her father lost his battle against a longtime illness. “He couldn’t come to my ceremony because he passed away, but he knew I achieved my doctorate.”

With her final degree in hand, Lee has her eye on the future. She would like to move up the career ladder of higher education leadership. For now, she is continuing in her work at Merced College, helping students plan their futures.

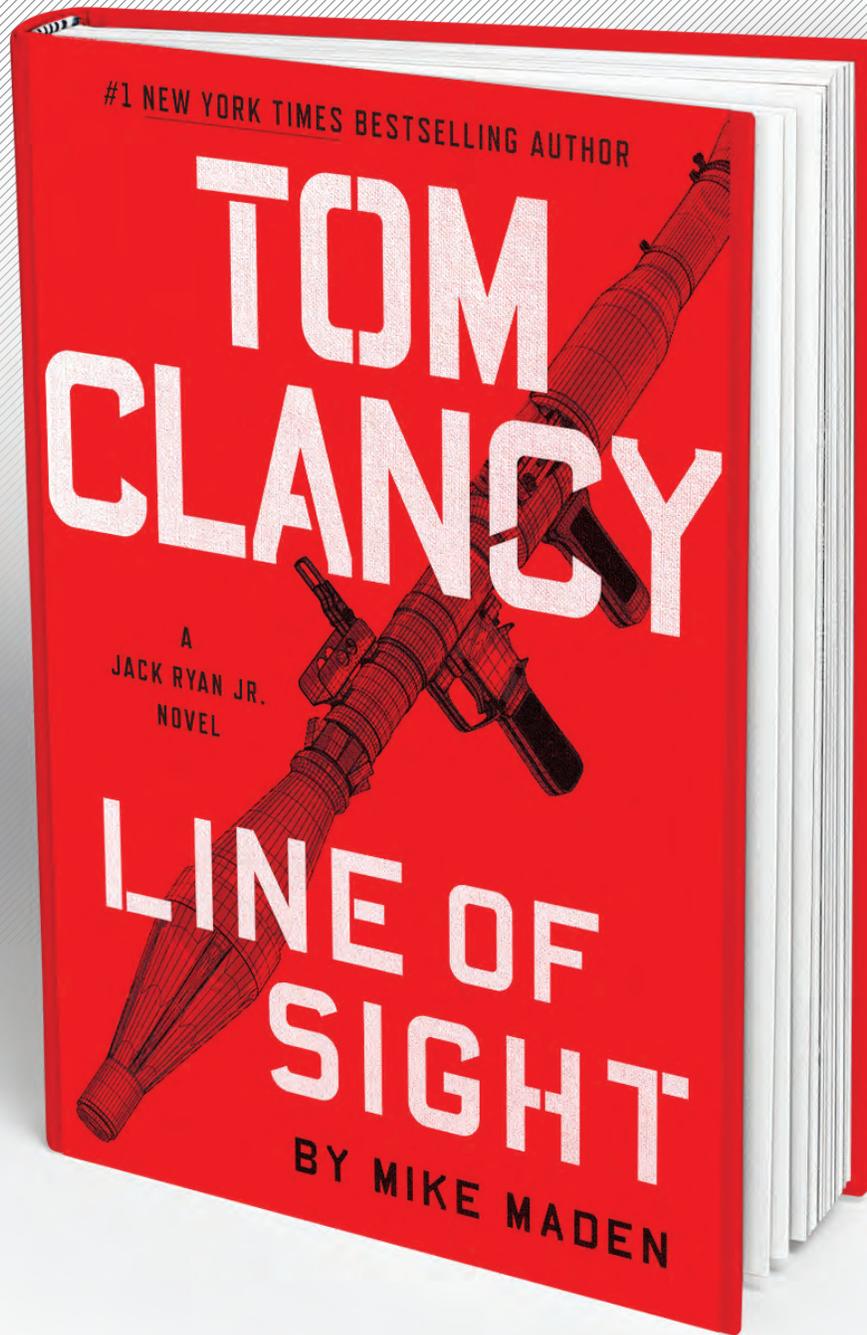
“Sometimes, they think I have a crystal ball or a test that will tell them what to do,” she said. But a career plan is never perfect or final. Lee encourages students to view their first job as an extension of their education, a place where they will learn job and people skills.

“Life is fluid and people change. Your dream job might not stay your dream job forever, and then you can make a change,” she said. “Believe in yourself.”



Soua Lee ('18, Ed.D.)

*Career Counselor
Merced Community College District*



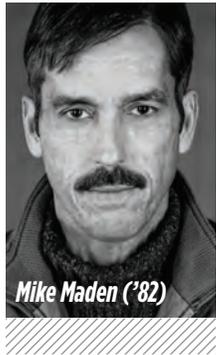
The WRITE STUFF

Three Successful Novelists Trace Their Friendship
and Success to Stan State

By Brian VanderBeek

They were just three normal guys who transferred to Stan State from Modesto Junior College in the early 1980s. They became close friends and kept in touch over the years.

There was very little during their time together in college, including the countless hours they spent playing war simulation games, that indicated all three would become best-selling novelists. It took about 30 years for that to happen for all three, but here they are: Mike Maden ('82, political science), Brian "B.V." Larson ('85, computer science) and Vaughn Heppner ('85, political science). All are familiar names at or near the top of the New York Times and Amazon Kindle best-seller lists.



MADEN: FINDING SUCCESS IN PRINT

Maden, who found success in print with a series of four "Drone" novels, reached No. 3 on the Times' hardcover bestseller list last year with the well-reviewed "Tom Clancy Point of Contact." His second contribution to the Jack Ryan Jr. series, "Tom Clancy Line of Sight," hit the shelves June 12.

Meanwhile, Larson and Heppner have placed more than 110 novels between them on Amazon's publishing and sales system since 2010 and have sold millions of copies between them. All three have found enough success to leave their previous jobs and become strictly self-employed commercial fiction novelists.

"Stan State was the perfect school at the perfect time for me. It was a small college community and I was so encouraged and inspired by my experience."

- Mike Maden

"When Kindle happened, Brian and I put up our books and we started writing the stuff that we saw was having success," said Heppner, who recently moved from Turlock to Nevada. "For a while, Brian's book

would be number one, and then mine was, and then his would move up again."

Larson and Heppner both were prolific writers for more than 20 years — penning dozens of novels that never made it into print — before they started posting their works on Kindle. Maden earned his master's and Ph.D. in political science at UC Davis and was working at a non-profit organization near Dallas when he first attempted to tap into the writing market, and he gives a great deal of credit to Larson and Heppner for showing him how to get established in the world of novel writing.

"I wondered why I should even try to write a novel if they couldn't sell theirs," Maden said. "Both of them eventually got their works onto Kindle and they both blew up."

Because of his friends' e-book success, Maden penned "Drone" with the idea of joining them in the Kindle realm. He first showed the manuscript to a literary agent friend, who saw bigger potential.

"After reading it, he thought he could sell it to a New York publishing house," Maden said. "I didn't think that was possible, but he got the book into a bidding war and I got a multi-book deal from Penguin Random House."

"Drone" was published in October 2013, and has been followed by sequels "Blue Warrior," "Drone Command" and "Drone Threat." About two years ago, an editor from Penguin Random House surprised Maden with a phone call.

"He asked if I wanted to write a Tom Clancy novel," Maden said. "That was both the greatest honor and the most tragic and desperate day of my life because, suddenly, I had committed myself to writing a Tom Clancy novel. It would be like the Queen of England called and asked me to add a few lines to the St. Crispin's Day speech in Henry V."

Clancy rose to fame in 1984 with his first novel "Hunt for Red October," which introduced Jack Ryan to the

world and paved the way for him to write 18 more series entries before passing away in 2013. Since Clancy's death, the series has been continued with annual releases from publisher Penguin Random House that follow two paths — one featuring Jack Ryan, the other centered on Jack Ryan Jr.

“Every techno-thriller written today is the offspring of Tom Clancy's brilliance,” said Maden, who lives in Tennessee with his wife Angela. They have three grown sons, the oldest, Mike Jr., graduated from Stan State in 2012 with a degree in business administration. “In a way, we're all writing Tom Clancy novels.”

HEPPNER: TAKING THE LONG ROAD

Of the three, Heppner has embraced the often-jilting romance of being a novelist the longest. He devoted himself to the craft around 1987, making ends meet for many years by working as a substitute teacher.

“After graduating from Stanislaus State, I didn't know what I wanted to do in life and nothing really appealed to me,” Heppner said. “But I knew that all my angst vanished when I was writing a novel, so I was determined to do that. I'd get up at 4:30 — I learned to drink coffee — and start typing for two or three hours because it was the one kind of work that gave me peace. I knew I wasn't good.”

But he had at least one fan who appreciated what he was trying to do.

“I'd send my novels to Brian and he would correct them,” said Heppner, who did most of his research at Stan State's Vasché Library in those days. “We'd spend countless hours breaking down writing techniques and I give Brian credit for seeing that I was a storyteller.”

LARSON: GIFTED IN MIMICKING STYLES

Larson wrote his first novel while a student at Turlock High School, receiving his first New York publishing house rejection at 17. Seeing how hard it would be to make a living writing, he switched his major at Stan State from English to computer science. He was a tenured computer science instructor at MJC and an adjunct professor at Stan State for about 20 years.

“It's a story of mutual encouragement from all three of us. We had a shared dream.”

- Brian Larson

In 2000, he was asked by a publisher to finish writing a college textbook for an author who had dropped the project, and discovered he had a knack for mimicking the writing style of other people.

“That's the talent that really got me started on this,” said Larson, whose wife Alma also is a Stan State graduate. They have three children, including a daughter who attends Stan State. “I worked for a long time trying to get into fiction. I got some short stories published, but no novels. I got close a couple of times. I got a break when Kindle started and I began putting my work there directly.”

At first, the Kindle revenue stream was meager — not enough to support a household, but just enough to provide inspiration to put-in countless hours at the keyboard.

“In 2010, Brian started putting his things on Kindle. We worked like dogs getting our books on there,” Heppner said. “I made \$200 one month, and then it kept climbing, and people started asking for the next Heppner novel. I'm a religious guy and I prayed every day to be able to make a living as a writer and to have a beautiful wife. Well, through Kindle I made enough to have a girlfriend and that's when I started dating my wife Cyndi. God gave this guy a break.”

“It's a story of mutual encouragement from all three of us,” Larson said. “We had a shared dream — even though Vaughn worked the longest to achieve it. It took us 30-something years to get here, which is something the kids I talk to now don't want to hear about.”

And much of this — the drive to keep writing and most of all the friendship — flourished at Stan State.

“Stan State was the perfect school at the perfect time for me,” Maden said. “I'm grateful for the faculty members I encountered. It was a small college community and I was so encouraged and inspired by my experience.”



Vaughn Heppner ('85)



Brian Larson ('85)

WARRIORS ON THE WAY

SAN JOAQUIN DELTA COLLEGE AND STANISLAUS STATE JOIN FORCES TO HELP SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY STUDENTS

By Nan Austin

Beginning this fall, an agreement between San Joaquin Delta College and Stanislaus State paves a path from community college to a public university bachelor's degree without ever leaving Stockton.

The partnership includes a guaranteed two-year sequence of upper-division courses in three majors at Stan State at the Stockton Campus. Laying out a set plan of courses will allow transfer students in liberal studies, psychology and business administration to complete their degree within two years without having to commute to the main Turlock campus.

“Stanislaus State is committed to ensuring Delta College students, and all students in San Joaquin County, are able to continue their pursuit of higher education.”

- President Ellen Junn

“It’s really great news for our students,” said Delta College Superintendent/President Kathy Hart. “The fact that they can begin their journey at Delta College and then move on to a nearby California State University where they can complete their degree programs is really a huge advantage.”

“Stanislaus State is committed to ensuring Delta College students, and all students in San Joaquin County, are able to continue their pursuit of higher education,” said Stan State President Ellen Junn. “This agreement will help make it as easy as possible for them to do so.”

Delta students who declare their intent to transfer to Stan State become a part of the



AGREEMENT CELEBRATION
President Ellen Junn, Delta College Superintendent/President Kathy Hart, Titus the Warrior and Fierce the Mustang celebrate the beginning of the new partnership.

Warriors on the Way (WOW) program. WOW students who earn an associate degree for transfer and meet Stan State admission requirements will also qualify for an application fee waiver.

While at Delta, WOW participants will have access to additional mentoring and guidance, and a Stan State student outreach counselor will be on the Delta campus part time to help students plan an individual pathway. Delta grads with at least a 3.8 GPA will be eligible for transfer scholarships or internship opportunities.

“The approach is a student-centered one, focused on programs most popular with transfer students,” said Gitanjali Kaul, Stan State’s vice president for strategic planning, enrollment management and innovation. “If students show interest in other programs, the University will explore expanding the partnership.”

Similar partnership opportunities will be explored with other community colleges in the six-county region. Stanislaus State’s Stockton Campus, opened in 1998, focuses on upper-division courses, many offered in the late afternoon or evening to accommodate working students. It offers 17 undergraduate programs, including accelerated degree programs in social sciences and nursing, as well as six graduate programs. ☺



WARRIORS ON THE WAY



VETERAN LEADERS

Faculty and Staff Share Military Experiences to Help Mentor Students | **By Cristina Soliz**

Every day, the members of the Stan State faculty and staff who served in the military draw on that experience to lead and empower students — teaching them the importance of self-discipline, rigor and perseverance. Veterans Mark Perry, James Bowles and John Sumser use their military experiences to encourage students to push themselves to reach new heights.

Mark Perry, a lecturer in criminal justice, credits the military with expanding his life skill set.

“Four years in the Marines taught me maturity, structure, communication and problem-solving skills needed to overcome the unknowns that come along with being a first-generation college student,” Perry said. “It had a positive impact on my life, equipping me with real-life transferable skills I use in the classroom every day.”

Navigating through civilian life, Perry decided to enroll at Chabot College and ventured down a 14-year path as a student. It took persistence and focus, but in the end he accomplished his goal, receiving his master's degree in public

administration. He truly believes education is the key to success.

“Teaching has been a rewarding and eye-opening experience. I still remember writing up the syllabus and prepping for my first class, it was a dream come true,” says Perry of the criminal justice research and writing course he continues to teach.



Mentored by Chau-Pu Chiang, chair of the Criminal Justice Department, Perry knows the advantages that a reliable support system can offer, which is why he urges his students to seek out mentorship and have the courage to ask for support.

In his previous role as a faculty representative for the Student Veterans Club, Perry had the opportunity to work closely with veteran students who are juggling school, work and family life, while transitioning back to civilian life.

“My time in the service was a valuable experience and allows me to relate to my students on a deeper level, being able to share with them what I have learned



Mark Perry

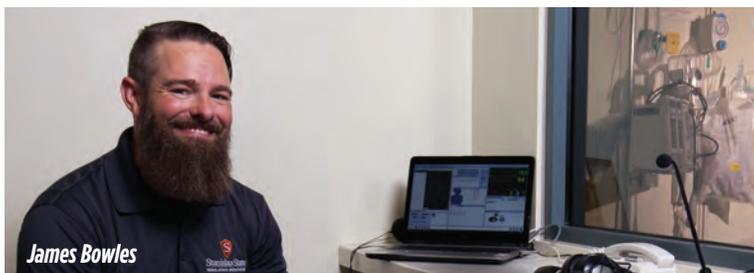
and how to overcome life's hurdles,” Perry said.

BOWLES: CHALLENGING THROUGH INNOVATION

James Bowles leverages his 15 years of military medical experience to navigate the innovative nursing simulation labs at both the Turlock and Stockton campuses. As a simulation operations professional, his mission is to develop life-like medical emergency scenarios to train more than 500 nursing Stan State students each semester.

“With simulation, we're training our students to be more than health care

SHIP



James Bowles

providers — we're training them to be leaders in the nursing industry," Bowles said.

Bowles' extensive Army training as a senior U.S. forces medic, lead instructor and staff sergeant prepared him with the mental endurance and strategic project management skills to guide students to excel in high-pressure environments. As role models, veterans know leaders must lead from the front and display the courage to motivate their team.

With the help of human patient simulators, students can learn from their mistakes and develop the knowledge and confidence to thrive while becoming equipped to encounter similar scenarios in the workplace. Students have the opportunity to learn in a controlled, safe environment with the support and assistance of experts.

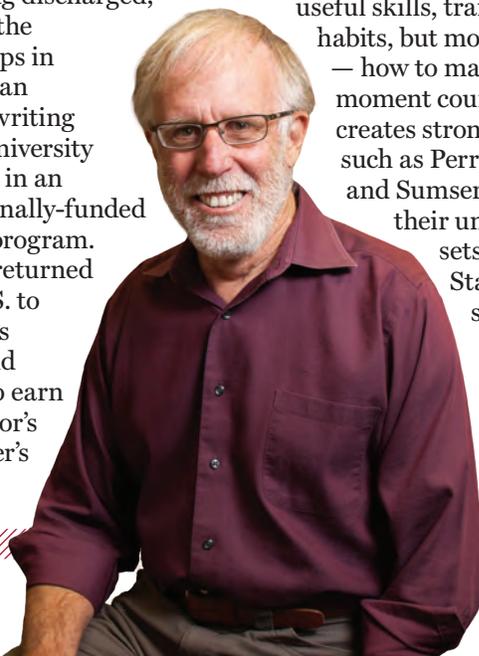
Bowles is transforming the simulation lab program to reach new heights, quadrupling the number of simulations and formulating strategies for program expansion at the Stockton Campus.

SUMSER: EMBRACING NEW EXPERIENCES

"At the age of 19, I was drafted to join the Army," said John Sumser, a Stan State professor of social sciences. "Like everyone in the military, I was given an extraordinary amount of responsibility."

Sumser worked in medical evacuation in Vietnam, at a time when opinions about the war were extremely divisive back home. Serving in the army from 1968-1969 exposed him to a new country and cultural norms, strengthening his tenacity to work in a foreign environment.

After being discharged, he joined the Peace Corps in Afghanistan teaching writing skills to university graduates in an internationally-funded business program. Later, he returned to the U. S. to resume his studies and went on to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees



John Sumser



with the financial assistance of the G.I. Bill.

Today, Sumser is inspiring students to gain confidence through open exploration of worldviews in his courses. He supports students as they navigate through the college experience by offering mentorship and encouraging them to expand their perspectives and analytical skills. "I was a first-generation college student myself and this helps me relate to my students and the challenges they may face by not having the guidance at home," Sumser explained.

Military experience teaches useful skills, traits and habits, but most of all — how to make every moment count. It also creates strong leaders such as Perry, Bowles and Sumser, who utilize their unique skill sets to inspire Stan State students to thrive and find their voices. ☺

By Bradley Whitaker

SCORING A GOAL FOR GENEROSITY

THE GOOD DEED OF AN ALUMNUS GOES VIRAL AT THE WORLD CUP

With his young daughter Addisyn by his side, Stanislaus State alumnus Abel Vera wheeled his way over to participate in one of many interviews he's given since his return from the World Cup in Russia. Vera put on the wheel locks to his black wheelchair, which stood out with its distinctive, neon pink spokes.

"My daughter wanted me to get a wheelchair that was completely pink," said Vera. "I said no way, so we compromised on the spokes."

Nineteen years ago, a motor vehicle accident left Vera — a former Stan State soccer player — paralyzed from the waist down. He remains an avid soccer fan and is committed to coaching soccer and helping kids and adults who have gone through similar situations, leading outreach efforts and working as a behavior specialist at Coalinga State Hospital.

"There are a lot of people in my situation and I want to tell them that there's hope," he said. "There's nothing you can't do. It might make us a little bit slower to change shoes, but you know what? There's nothing you can't do."

As the varsity soccer coach at Coalinga High School, Vera takes great pride in combining his love of soccer with helping those in need through the outreach group "What Pushes You" he co-founded with his friend Marco Lopez. During the 2014 World Cup, both visited the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, some of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the world, to donate shirts, shoes and whatever else they had on them. Four years later, Vera and Lopez decided on a different outreach strategy for the World Cup in Russia.

"I was moving and relocating to Fresno when I saw a bunch of my wheelchairs parked that I was going to throw away," said Vera. "I was like, 'You know what? This worked in past experiences when my friends needed help. I'm going to try to refurbish a wheelchair and take it with us.'"

Vera and Lopez quickly reached their \$400 goal through their "What Pushes You" GoFundMe page to support refurbishments such as painting, wheel replacements and to help with shipping costs. They originally planned on finding an orphanage or hospital to donate the wheelchair, but after arriving in Russia, they unexpectedly found a perfect recipient.



"I often tell people that a good deed does not have a nationality I'm a firm believer in that."

- Abel Vera

"We had only been in Russia for a couple of days," Vera said. "Then, from a distance, from the corner of my eye, I noticed a young man on a wheelchair. I noticed his wheels didn't have any tires, or at least one of them was gone. The frame was almost falling apart, he had a broken flip plate and his front two wheels had no spacers, making it shake. And he had a flat tire." ▶



Abel Vera ('00)

“One thing I believe as a soccer coach, and in my outreach, is that if I can change one person’s life then I’ve done my job.”

- Abel Vera

Lopez ran over to start a conversation with the young man.

“His first reaction was, ‘Who’s this crazy American?’” Vera said. “There was obviously a language barrier, and we were trying to tell him that we had a wheelchair to give him. We tried sign language and Marco took out his phone, showed him pictures that we took and we signed, ‘From us, to you.’ That gave it away.”

Once the young man, Petra, realized what was happening, his expression went from confusion to astonishment.

“He couldn’t believe that these two crazy Americans were just like, ‘We want to give you this,’” said Vera. “After everything you hear in the media about America and Russia, that was pretty shocking to him.”

They arranged a time to meet at a later date. Little did they know they were about to become part of an international news story.

The day arrived and it was miserably hot under the Moscow sun. Vera and Lopez gave Petra the wheelchair and that should have been the end of the story. However, the heat was taking a toll on Vera, who had to lie down

in the shade to deal with dehydration. If Lopez hadn’t left to search for water at that time, few would have ever known this story.

“A Russian man came over who saw me struggling in the heat and asked if I needed help,” Vera said. “I told him I was okay. He said, ‘Are you sure? Are you sure?’ He

left, but then he came back again to make sure I was okay, and to ask what brought us to Moscow. I told him, ‘We’re here for the World Cup and to do some outreach.’ And then he asked, ‘What kind of outreach?’”

Vera explained how he had traveled to Russia from America; how he had given away a wheelchair to a young man named Petra. It just so happened the man Vera was talking to was Vasily Vasilyev, an employee for TV Rain, Russia’s only independent television channel.

“A viral video was not our intention,” Vera said. After he took a few phone calls from Vasilyev’s producer, they set up an interview and everything took off from there.

The story went viral on social media, as various media outlets picked up the story in Russia and internationally. A video featuring Vera and Petra, from the popular Russian show “TOK,” received more than 350,000 views on Facebook alone. Upon returning to the states, Vera was contacted by CBS News, the Fresno Bee and many more American news media outlets.



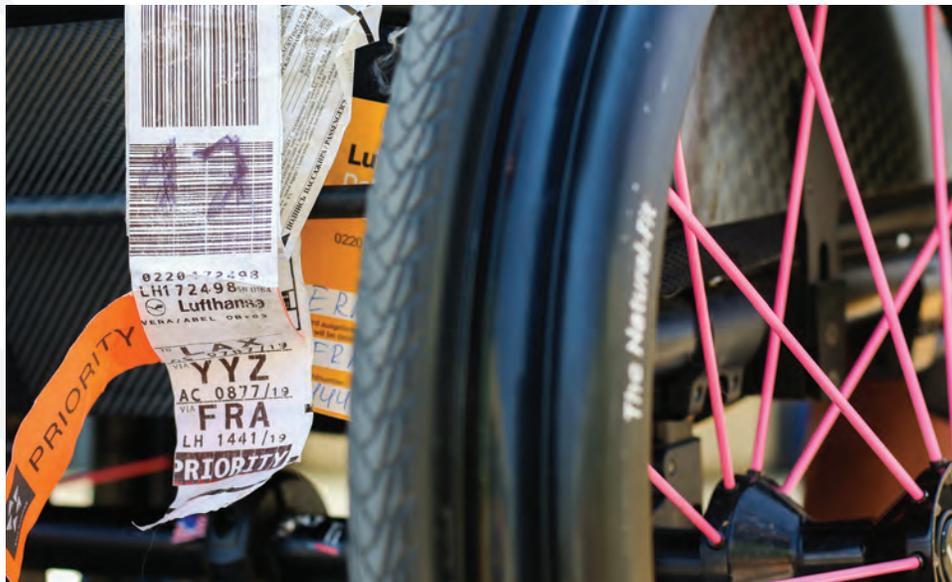
“I often tell people that a good deed does not have a nationality,” Vera said. “I’m a firm believer in that.”

Vera, who attended Stanislaus State on a scholarship, and played goalkeeper for the now-defunct professional league Stanislaus County Cruisers, thinks highly of his experience as a former student-athlete, believing that it helped and motivated him to get where he is today.

“I was at Stanislaus State for three years before my accident happened and I always say those were the three best years of my life,” he said. “If it hadn’t been for my education, I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing now: traveling, meeting new people, doing outreach and touching people’s lives.”

Vera is planning local outreach with organizations such as Valley Children’s Hospital in Madera and the Fresno Kiwanis Club before his next big project at the 2020 Euro Cup. Looking further ahead, Vera plans to travel to Qatar for the 2022 World Cup and wants to do outreach in the United States, Mexico and Canada when the World Cup comes to North America in 2026.

“One thing I believe as a soccer coach, and in my outreach, is that if I can change one person’s life then I’ve done my job,” Vera said. “That’s why I do it.”



Diversity Takes Center Stage

By Gina Oltman



Assistant Professor of Theatre Cynthia DeCure's resume is impressive. She is a well-established SAG-AFTRA and Equity actor with a long list of stage and television credits, a certified speech and dialect coach, a director, a producer, a playwright, a performer advocate and an editor.

In her third year at Stan State, she is intent on teaching student actors how to stay connected to and celebrate their personal identities while transforming themselves into the roles they play.

"I never tell my students that they need to lose the essence of themselves," she said. "They can transform themselves vocally, spiritually, physically and, at the end of the day, keep the essence of who they are."

A bilingual native of Puerto Rico, DeCure understands the challenges students of diverse backgrounds often face and is passionate about helping them overcome obstacles. She will never forget being a high school student new to Southern California and having a counselor tell her to forget about studying drama at the University of Southern California because "there is no room for Latinos in American theater."

She was incensed by his advice. She had been performing and creating plays since she was five years old, and she couldn't imagine wanting any other career. Shortly after that counseling visit, she saw a newspaper article about the acclaimed Puerto Rican actor Raúl Juliá playing a starring role in a Broadway theater production.

"I took the article back to him, and my hands were shaking, and I told him that we do exist. I want to do this," she said, motioning as if she were thrusting the article toward him. "He didn't say anything to me, except to help me. And I went to USC."

As an undergraduate student, she was shocked to find no Latinx faculty members in the theatre department or see her background reflected in the works they performed. She focused mostly on classical and character work, and tried to not put herself into "a box."

Years later, when she decided to pursue a Master of Fine Arts from Cal State LA, she knew she wanted to go into teaching and work with Latinx and other theater students of color. She wanted to help them grow as actors using the unique fabric of who they are.

At Stan State, DeCure has found the opportunity to serve the Latinx community and all students of color.

"Diversity and representation are very important to me," she said. "I want to make sure that students know they have permission to speak, be heard, be seen, to know that they are valid."

Her passion for her work with students has also led her to co-edit "Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices of the New American Theatre" with acting and voice coach colleague Micha Espinosa. The book consists of 35 scenes from various plays by contemporary Latinx playwrights and will be published this fall.

"Diversity and representation are very important to me. I want to make sure that students know they have permission to speak, be heard, be seen, to know that they are valid."

- Cynthia DeCure

This fall, DeCure is teaching a voice and speech class, an introduction to theater honors program class and intermediate acting at Stan State. She also will be directing Lauren Gunderson's "Silent Sky," which is scheduled for performance on campus in November. DeCure will also be on a panel discussing safe spaces and revolutionary acting methods at the upcoming Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference.

She works hard to maintain strong connections to the entertainment business in Southern California. As a professor, she said, it is very important to maintain business contacts because "that is how we keep our students connected to the external workforce."

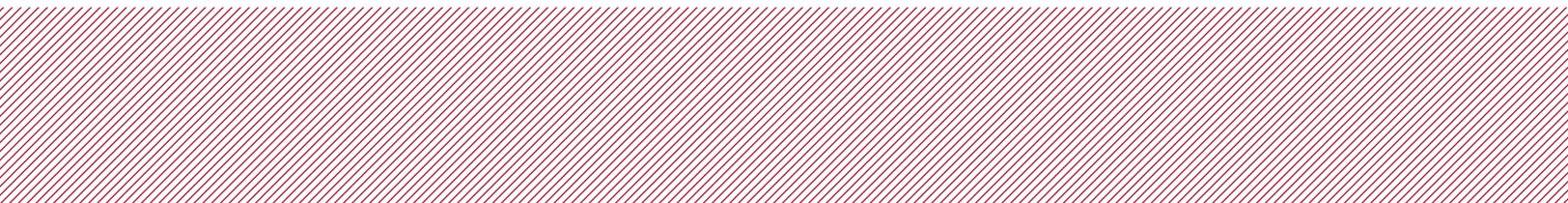
Despite DeCure's many projects and other commitments, which require her to travel frequently, she has firmly planted her roots in Turlock. With her husband and three boys (ages 19, 16 and 11), she said they are "embedded in the community."

"When I was being considered for this position, my family was completely supportive," she said. "My son told me 'Mom, if you get this, we are right behind you. Go get it.' And we are here." s



Stanislaus State

Division of University Advancement
One University Circle
Turlock, Ca 95382



Let's Talk!

BETWEEN NOW AND DECEMBER 13, students from the Stanislaus State Call Center will be calling to update you on what's going on at Stan State and to ask for your support. We hope you will answer the call and make a difference for Stan State.

Selena Gomez
Student Caller