

A Magazine for Stanislaus State Alumni, Friends and the Region

STAN

WINTER/SPRING 2017

MAGAZINE



**SPECIAL
REPORT:**

FIRST IN COLLEGE

NEXT TO LEAD



A word from the **PRESIDENT**

At Stanislaus State, we are committed to a common vision founded on the idea of advancing the region by making student success a core priority. We accomplish this by supporting our faculty, staff and community.

Our vibrant and diverse student body, the academic performance of our students and our impressive faculty who are committed to excellence in teaching and scholarship make Stan State stand out in the California State University system. We are very proud of the impact we make.

Stan State has achieved important distinctions. Our campus is a federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and we enroll one of the highest percentages of first-generation college students. Also, our campus enjoys a high percentage of tenure-track faculty, 61.6 percent — the second-highest percentage in the CSU — so our students have greater access to Ph.D.

and terminal degree, permanent faculty. Not surprisingly, this has a positive influence on our students and Stan State has achieved strong student retention and graduation rates within the CSU system.

With more than 55,000 graduates, the vast majority who have settled within a 50-mile radius of our campus, we know we are advancing the region. Stan State Warriors are fueling our region's future growth and contributing to our state's economy. We have reason to celebrate!

I am deeply honored and pleased to share that as the newly appointed 11th president of Stanislaus State, the campus will be hosting the presidential inauguration ceremony on the morning of March 30. The ceremony gives the Office of the President the opportunity to publicly establish institutional goals, visions and priorities that will benefit the campus and our regional communities. Inaugurations also commemorate an institution's history and reaffirm its mission. They provide an environment for honoring the tradition of learning and discovery, and most importantly, inaugurations foster the coming together of our campus and community and the renewal of ties that bind.

I've spent my first seven months as Stan State president meeting, engaging and listening — to our students, faculty, staff and to the region's business, community and civic leaders — for the purpose of identifying and fine tuning the University's contributions. We've created a University Strategic Planning Council to examine priorities and establish goals that will refine and fortify our mission and values. And we've made a commitment to embracing and enhancing the academic success of our students, which begins by making sure every student sees and understands their clear path to graduation on a diverse and inclusive campus.

We know that improving graduation rates is a process that begins before a student ever steps into a college classroom, therefore we will continue to strengthen programs that reach into our high schools and junior high schools in the region to ensure that students have access to the learning tools needed to be well-prepared for college. We also will continue work with community colleges to build pathways to four-year universities. And we will reassure our students that we know who they are — nearly 80 percent of the first-time freshman who entered Stan State in fall 2016 identify as first-generation students. Entering college can be daunting for any new student, but being the first in one's family creates unique needs and challenges.

Stan State freshmen and transfers are welcomed with New Student Orientation, which introduces the programs and services available to aid their success and inform their path to graduation. Additionally, this year I reintroduced Stan State's Freshman Convocation — an important step toward educating our freshmen about the importance of getting involved early with their peers and faculty members.

This spring we're implementing Smart Planner, which is software that analyzes students' course needs and develops scheduling models that can identify courses and course sections to be added based on need. Additionally, programs with proven records of success will be expanded, such as our Academic Success Center, Faculty Mentor Program and walk-in Tutoring Center. And to better meet the needs of our students' post-graduate success, we're revitalizing our Career Development Center and will seek connections with regional businesses and industries to establish internships and develop courses to train students to meet our region's specific needs.

We are embracing student success to advance the region.

Our vision to be a major center of learning, intellectual pursuit, artistic excellence and cultural engagement for California's greater Central Valley is as vital today as it was when we opened our doors in 1960 at the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds. We've grown alongside our community and we will continue working closely with our University's philanthropic Foundation Board and University Advancement team to build more ways for our alumni, and the businesses and industries that employ them, to support Stanislaus State.

In each issue of STAN Magazine we share stories about our students, faculty, staff and alumni that we hope will inspire you to feel pride, to get involved, to give back or to come back to campus. I hope that you will be able to attend one of the many wonderful inaugural events we have planned over the next few months.

With warm Warrior pride,



Ellen

Inaugural SEASON EVENTS

Homecoming Week

February 12-18
csustan.edu/homecoming

President's Athletics Breakfast

February 28 at 7:30 a.m.
Event Center

Vines

March 16 at 6 p.m.
Main Dining

Athletics Crab Feed

March 18 at 5:30 p.m.
Main Dining

Peace Pole Dedication Ceremony featuring Dr. Arun Ghandi

March 28

Inauguration of Dr. Ellen Junn

March 30 at 10 a.m.
Fitzpatrick Arena

Gala Fundraising Dinner supporting the First-Generation Presidential Scholars Program

March 30 at 6:30 p.m.
Fitzpatrick Arena

Cesar Chavez Celebration

March 29 at 5:30 p.m.
Event Center

Cesar Chavez Ethnic Studies Conference

March 31 at 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Event Center

Women's Leadership Forum

April 7 at noon
Event Center

Pride Week

April 17-21
csustan.edu/asi-usu

Warriors Giving Back: Earth Day

April 22 from 8 a.m.-noon
csustan.edu/asi-usu

Commencement Ceremonies

May 25-26
University Amphitheater

For a full list of
inaugural events, visit:
csustan.edu/inauguration

Embracing
STUDENT SUCCESS
advancing the REGION

CONTENTS

14 | SPECIAL REPORT: First-Generation Students

Of the 1,330 freshmen who stepped on the Stan State campus last fall, 1,060, or 79.7 percent, self-identified as being the first in their family to seek a four-year college degree. That exceptionally high number puts Stan State in a unique position not only to mold the immediate future of our region, but to set a new trajectory for hundreds of families for decades to come. In this issue of STAN Magazine, we take an in-depth look at the opportunities and challenges that come with welcoming such a high number of first-generation students into the Stan State family.

8 | Warrior Athletics

9 | Partnerships Enliven the Arts

10 | Better Together

12 | Leading from Experience: John Jacinto

22 | Hands on Science

24 | A Campus to Call Home

26 | Janet Diaz: A Work of HeART

*On the cover: Some of Stan State's proud first-generation students, faculty and staff gather in Naraghi Hall.
Above: Stan State student Yesenia Fernandes and Communication Studies Professor Nancy Burroughs.*

STAN MAGAZINE Winter/Spring 2017

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 9,000 at two locations in the Central Valley — a beautiful 228-acre campus in Turlock and the Stockton Center, located in the city's historic Magnolia District. 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 24 master's degree programs and a doctorate in educational leadership.

NEWS BRIEFS



GRADUATION INITIATIVE 2025:

Focusing on Student Success to Improve Grad Rates

When Shawna Young sees the immediate impact that efforts in response to Graduation Initiative 2025 have already made for Stan State students, she can't help but get excited.

"We are saving students one or more semesters of time and tuition," said Young, interim associate vice president for academic affairs. "Of the 277 Stan State students who were identified and contacted about being on the cusp of graduation, some weren't aware that they were so close to graduating."

Graduation Initiative 2025, initiated by the California State University and launched at the local level in September 2016, established new benchmark four- and six-year graduation rates for all 23 campuses to meet the workforce demands of California's innovation economy in the years and decades to come. In an effort to better prepare and assist students, the CSU has established a plan to remove obstacles to receiving a baccalaureate degree. Campuses received one-time funding to execute short-term student success plans and identify long-term, sustainable programs to meet those goals. Stan State's share of the one-time funding was \$1 million.

Stan State President Ellen Junn established GREAT (Graduation Rate Excellence and Assessment Team) to provide oversight of Stan State's student success plans under Graduation Initiative 2025.

As part of its oversight, GREAT has recommended funding 10 programs and activities designed to improve graduation rates and/or eliminate achievement gaps for underrepresented minority and Pell-eligible students. For a complete list of these approved programs and activities and more information about GREAT, visit our website at www.csustan.edu/GREAT.

Stan State Earns High Marks for SERVICE & VALUE

Stanislaus State's ongoing commitment to building and maintaining strong community partnerships was recognized during the fall semester, with the University being named to the national 2015 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Stan State was also designated with the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, which recognizes the University's commitment to service learning and alignment of community engagement efforts with the institutional mission, culture, resources and practices.

"I'm so pleased that our entire University community is dedicated to public service, and delighted that year after year our service is recognized on a national scale," said Stan State president Ellen Junn. "I can't emphasize enough the importance of volunteering as a component of a well-rounded college education."

During the 2015-16 school year, more than 3,400 Stan State students participated in service learning courses, logging more than 184,000 hours of community service with an estimated volunteer time value in excess of \$4.3 million.

Other prestigious lists and rankings in which Stan State was highlighted include:

- 11th straight year on the Princeton Review's "Best 381 Colleges" list
- 21st consecutive year on the U.S. News & World Report's list of best public colleges
- Ranked No. 17 nationally by CollegeNet for efficiently advancing low-income students through graduation and into good careers
- Ranked No. 5 in the nation by Washington Monthly for master's programs, No. 5 in the West for "Bang for the Buck" and No. 100 on the inaugural list of best schools for adult education
- Ranked No. 61 nationally and No. 2 in the CSU by Money Magazine for "value added"





GREER NEW PROVOST and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Kimberly Greer, who has been on the faculty at Minnesota State University, Mankato since 1998, has been appointed as Stanislaus State's new provost and vice president for academic affairs. Her first day at Stan State was Jan. 24.

Greer had served as dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Minnesota-Mankato since 2011. Prior to that appointment, she was a faculty member in the Department of Sociology and Corrections. In 2013, Greer assumed a two-year interim position serving the university as associate provost and associate vice president

for academic affairs before returning to her role as dean.

"Throughout her career, Dr. Greer has demonstrated a passion for assuring access and success for all students as well as a strong commitment to faculty excellence and community engagement," said Stan State President Ellen Junn.

Greer earned both her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice (1984) and her Master of Science in Administration (1991) from Southeast Missouri State University and her Doctorate in Sociology from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (1998).

"I am honored, humbled, and incredibly excited to have been selected to serve Stanislaus State as the next provost and vice president for academic affairs," Greer said. "It is a privilege to join an impressive community of faculty and staff committed to preparing students to fully utilize their knowledge, creativity and passion to engage with and succeed in a dynamic and interconnected world."

Kimberly Greer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Kaul new Vice President for Strategic Planning, Enrollment Management and Innovation

Gitanjali Kaul, who has more than 25 years of experience in executive higher education administration, has been appointed vice president for strategic planning, enrollment management and innovation at Stanislaus State. She began Jan. 15.

"Stanislaus State is a remarkable institution dedicated to upholding the highest levels of liberal education in the country," Kaul said. "I feel very privileged and honored to become a member of this family. I share President Ellen Junn's commitment to campus-wide collaboration and student success. I know that together we can realize local dreams and have a significant impact on the region."

Kaul comes to Stan State from CSU Dominguez Hills, where she was acting vice provost for academic affairs. She also served as the campus' accreditation officer and led implementation of the strategic accreditation planning process. She previously served as the school's associate vice president for institutional effectiveness and assessment. She previously held executive positions at Florida Atlantic University and Cleveland State University.

Kaul earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Delhi in New Delhi, India. She holds master's degrees in psychology and sociology from India's Utkal University and Northern Illinois University, respectively, as well as her Ed.D. in educational psychology from NIU.



Gitanjali Kaul, Vice President for Strategic Planning, Enrollment Management and Innovation



Artist rendering



TURLOCK MAYOR'S AWARD

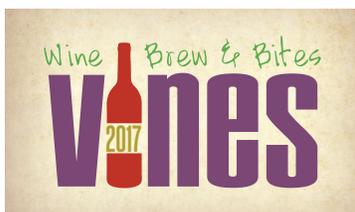
Stan State students Nate Straubinger and Logan Martinez claimed the second Turlock Mayor's Award for Public Policy Research and will use the \$3,000 grant to help increase the number of students that visit Turlock's small businesses.



**READ THE
FULL STORIES AT**
bit.ly/STANmagbriefs

UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION TO GET MAKEOVER

Stan State students voted in favor of a \$52 million Student Union Building renovation, to be completed before the Spring 2020 semester. The expansion project will create a relaxing, state-of-the-art place for students on campus.



WINE, BREW & BITES

Don't miss Vines on March 16. Get your tickets now — only \$60 each — for the annual fundraiser benefitting scholarships, alumni programs and campus projects.



\$7.2 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR STEM

Two grants have been awarded to the Stanislaus State College of Science for the purpose of preparing students for success in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields.



CFA DONATES \$35,000 TO THE CAMPUS CARES FUND

The Stan State California Faculty Association has donated \$35,000 to the Campus Cares Fund to help students facing hunger, homelessness or emergency expenses.



BUSINESS FORECAST REPORT

Twice each year, Foster Farms Endowed Professor of Business Economics Gökçe Soydemir takes a look at economic trends that affect the San Joaquin Valley.

Read the full stories at bit.ly/STANmagbriefs

Warrior Athletics: WINNING ON & OFF THE FIELD

By Brian VanderBeek

It seems as though there isn't a single aspect of Warrior Athletics that hasn't been touched by significant upgrades over the past few years. The success of the teams has run parallel with vast improvements to the facilities at Stan State, and that's a trend that shows no signs of slowing.

During the summer, Fitzpatrick Arena was equipped with air conditioning for the first time, which might seem like a minor renovation unless you've sat through sweltering basketball or volleyball games, or any function during the summer months.

"THIS WAS AN INTERESTING FALL SEASON SINCE FOR THE FIRST TIME WE WERE PICKED NEAR THE TOP IN SPORTS LIKE VOLLEYBALL."

*- Mike Matoso
Director of Athletics*

"I feel like the air conditioning upgrade to the arena raised the level of professionalism of our athletic program and the University," said Mike Matoso,

director of athletics. "We are no longer propping doors open with loud fans running during our games, and because of it the people who attend our games are having a better experience."

Changes to Fitzpatrick Arena will continue this summer when a new playing surface will be installed and the seating areas replaced. The new retractable seating will have a raised first row and many of the seats will have chair backs, another move to improve the fan experience.

"This is roughly a \$900,000 project with a generous lead gift from the Fitzpatrick Family," Matoso said. "We are also looking at upgrading the scoreboards and refurbishing the main lobby."

Even as the upgrades continued through the planning stages, the Warrior teams enjoyed a successful fall season, led by the emerging Stan State volleyball team, which not only advanced to the postseason for the second straight year, but in reaching the semifinals of the California Collegiate Athletic Association tournament claimed the program's first-ever postseason victory. Also, senior Blair

Erlich became the first Warrior volleyball player to earn Division II honorable mention All-American honors.

"This was an interesting fall season since for the first time we were picked near the top in sports like volleyball," Matoso said. "In a lot of ways, we're going through the most difficult transition in trying to go from being good to being great."

In December, Stan State was one of 24 schools to be named a finalist for the 2017 Division II Award of Excellence, which recognizes positive campus and community engagement events. For the Warriors, it's just a part of being a well-rounded program — on and off the field.

"As the season went on I was really happy to see women's soccer step up and fight their way into the playoffs," Matoso said. "Cross country had a strong showing at regionals on the women's side and our new head coach Darren Holman did an outstanding job. The men's soccer team just had one of those years, but Dana Taylor will have his program back on top again next year." s



Partnerships ENLIVEN THE ARTS

By Kristina Stamper

Steinbeck Under the Stars

After seven years of successful Shakespeare productions in the University Amphitheater each spring, the Department of Theatre at Stanislaus State will be bringing a different production to life under the stars this spring.

Citing a desire to feature a playwright with roots in the Central Valley, Department of Theatre Chair John Mayer said plans are underway to stage two plays by John Steinbeck in the beautiful space of the amphitheater. Steinbeck Under the Stars will kick off May 2-7 with "Of Mice and Men" and in 2018 will feature "The Grapes of Wrath."

The event is supported by a \$25,000 gift from Emanuel Medical Center as the presenting sponsor for 2017 and 2018.

"Our Shakespeare productions in the University Amphitheater have been a wonderful gift that benefits the community," Mayer said. "With the support of our community sponsors, we have been able to produce these wonderful shows free to the public. And with sponsorship from Emanuel Medical Center we are able to continue this wonderful tradition for the next two years."

And it is particularly fitting that the story "Of Mice and Men" is about bringing people together. Part of the role of the University is to be a cultural center for the community, and Emanuel Medical Center is making that possible.

"Emanuel Medical Center is incredibly proud to partner with Stanislaus State for this production of Steinbeck Under the Stars, which will provide an opportunity for the community to experience live theatre in a beautiful outdoor setting, right here in Turlock" said Sue Micheletti, chief executive officer of Emanuel Medical Center. "We believe the arts are a vital part of a healthy and vibrant community."

The cast will include a combination of Stan State students, community members and professional actors, including Rush Pearson, who will be returning to the amphitheater stage for a second year. He was featured in last year's production of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" in the role of Launce.

"Of Mice and Men" is a beautiful story of a friendship with both happiness and heartache," Mayer said. "It also shares the importance of people looking out for each other in difficult times. It's an American classic and I know that many people will really look forward to it."

Partnership Grows Young Musicians

The Modesto Symphony Orchestra Association is continuing its longstanding partnership with the Stanislaus State Department of Music to provide opportunities for young musicians.

In place for more than 10 years, Department of Music Chair Stuart Sims explained that the goal between the two organizations was to create a sustainable partnership that would provide critical resources for both the Department of Music and the Modesto Symphony Orchestra Association.

The Department of Music provides ongoing rehearsal space in the Music Building on the Stan State campus for the Modesto Symphony Youth Orchestra, in addition to loaning large percussion instruments to the ensemble. Consequently, the opportunity to work with young musicians in rehearsal and performance creates a music education lab setting for Stan State music students.

"Immediately, this partnership creates teaching opportunities for our students," Sims said.

"MSOA also provides an internship program, outreach events, and music education and appreciation events that involve our students and enrich their education."

Working with professional arts organizations in the area allows music students to gain real-world, professional skills in the arts including experience in education, outreach, administration and management. Through these professional networks, many Stan State music graduates have been hired by and taken on leadership roles in local and regional professional arts organizations. ☺

ART SPACE
ON MAIN

features:

Instinct Extinct: The Great Pacific Flyway

Jan. 24-Feb. 25

An interactive, inter-media
experience

csustan.edu/art-gallery/art-space-main



BETTER TOGETHER

Your Gift to Stan State Connects You to Student Success and to the Growth of Region



Of the 23 California State University campuses, Stanislaus State rises to the top in educating — from within a distinct geographical footprint — the next generation of college graduates. Of the 9,762 students enrolled at the University, more than 80 percent come to us from six counties: San Joaquin, Merced, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Calaveras and Mariposa. And when they graduate, upward of 70 percent continue to live in the area.

This relationship we have with our neighbors is special in many ways — like how those who call (or have called) the Central Valley their home support Stanislaus State. Where people live and how it influences charitable giving is gaining more attention in the literature on philanthropy. For instance, studies have shown that the demographics of donors vary from region to region — and not always in ways that one might think. The Chronicle of Philanthropy recently reported that giving is greater and more frequent from all income brackets in communities that face economic challenges. We see this in our giving data, too.

At Stanislaus State, the majority of private support comes from individuals who live and work in our six-county service region. They own and operate small to mid-sized businesses, lead corporations, work for civic and community organizations or run family farms. Take a look at the roster of our philanthropic Foundation Board members on page 13 and you'll see what I mean.

Some Stan State donors continue to give even when they leave the area. For example, read the story on the next page about Mr. Francis Sarguis, who emigrated from Iran to Turlock at the age of 12 and now resides in Santa Barbara.

Others support the University because they care deeply about the students — like the Stanislaus Chapter of the California Faculty Association that started an endowment to address student food and housing insecurity. And some donors, our Stan State alumni, give back because they remember how the University started them on a trajectory to their personal and professional success (such as John Jacinto, who you can read about on page 12).

We are honored to carry the torch of educating the region's workforce and equally honored by the support we receive for doing it.

Dr. Michele Lahti
Vice President for University Advancement

Strengthening Families and the Central Valley:

FIRST-GENERATION PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

President Ellen Junn has identified a new fundraising priority at Stanislaus State to create unique scholarships for students from California's Central Valley who do not have a family history of higher education. The First-Generation Presidential Scholars initiative will be the first of its kind at Stanislaus State and the first in the California State University system to affect and attract students from a specific geographic footprint.

President Junn has studied the research on first-generation college students and understands the challenges these students face as they enter and move through higher education. She's also aware of the economic and socioeconomic challenges affecting the Central Valley. Collectively, these factors create a situation that can deter a path to college for many academically prepared students in the region.

Through the generosity of donors, the First-Generation Presidential Scholars initiative will bolster Stan State's efforts to cultivate a diverse and supportive learning experience for students from the Central Valley with demonstrated academic talent. The scholarship awards — starting at \$25,000 for transfer students (\$12,500 each year for two years) and \$50,000 for entering freshman (\$12,500 each year for four years) — cover tuition and fees, books and a laptop. Moreover, these scholarships are designed to offer students targeted internships and/or mentorships with industry and civic leaders.

Recipients will be competitively selected and the number of awards will be based on the level of donor engagement. Proudly, President Junn is one of the first to sponsor a four-year, first-generation student at \$50,000.

Opportunities are available for donors to be a part of the success of first-generation students right here in the Central Valley. Gifts to support a First-Generation Presidential Scholar transfer student or entering freshman can be fulfilled over the course of two or four years, respectively. ☺

**For questions about supporting Stan State,
contact a member of our development team.**

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Francis Sarguis Modern Assyrian Heritage Collection Unveiled

When Francis Sarguis' generous gift established a fund at Stanislaus State in 2015 for the purpose of purchasing books and other materials, it was his way of enabling generations of learners to discover and, in turn, preserve modern Assyrian culture.

Already, the Francis Sarguis Modern Assyrian Heritage Fund is proving to be much, much more than a bookshelf collection.

"This collection is likely the first of its kind in California," said Stan State President Ellen Junn. "This collection will grow, as will our efforts to create curriculum, degree programs, certificate programs and to hire a faculty member with a specialty in Assyrian studies, as this donation from Francis Sarguis has made possible."

Sarguis, who maintained a successful private law practice in Santa Barbara, attended Modesto Junior College and earned his bachelor's degree and teaching credential from UC Berkeley. He earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Southern California and his master's

degree in law from Yale University Law School.

"Heritage is a part of us, because it's in our genes," Sarguis said. "Heritage does not fully determine who we are, but it provides an important marker as to where we started in life."

The collection at the time of unveiling included 241 titles, with 129 books on-hand, 23 e-books, six journals and a number of back-ordered books and additional publications scheduled to be ordered.

Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicut, a Stan State history professor, said that since Stanislaus County has one of the nation's highest concentrations of Assyrians, Stan State is a natural spot to become the center of modern Assyrian research.

"We know that there are 150 distinct Assyrian dialects spoken in this area," he said. "Some are spoken by only a few families, so many are dying languages. Scholars from around the world are particularly interested in this area as they attempt to reconstruct Assyrian history through language." ☺

Leading from EXPERIENCE

Stanislaus State Alumnus John Jacinto Steps into Role as Foundation Board President

By Kristina Stamper

Hope. For Stan State alumnus John Jacinto, hope is an important result for students who achieve a college education. The hope for a better future for themselves, their family and for their community. It's a chance to change the trajectory of their lives.

As a first-generation college graduate, Jacinto knows first-hand the difference a college education can make in a person's life. And he points out that first-generation students often bring determination and grit with them in their pursuit of an education.

"I don't think that I'm unique. So many kids in this area who are the first to go to college face the same challenges I did," Jacinto said. "And they have the benefit of knowing what it takes to overcome adversity."

Jacinto, who served as an adjunct professor at Stan State and as the Chair of the Alumni Advisory Council from 2008-2015, became a member of the Foundation Board in 2015 and in October he was appointed its president.

Jacinto comes from a family of farm workers who, like so many in the Central Valley, worked hard just to put food on the table. Growing up, college was not really something that was on his mind, or that he was ever encouraged to pursue.

"THIS IS A UNIVERSITY THAT HAS SHOWN A GREAT WILLINGNESS TO PROPEL FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS."

— John Jacinto, '96

After graduating from Grace Davis High School in Modesto, Jacinto attended Modesto Junior College for the opportunity to be involved in athletics, but that quickly changed when Frank Espinoza, a counselor at Stanislaus State, saw potential in the young student that Jacinto had never seen in himself. Coming from a similar upbringing, Espinoza was able to convince Jacinto that he could achieve more than he believed.

"His encouragement meant so much to me during my days at Stanislaus," Jacinto said. "No one had ever told me that I could achieve more than I could see in front of me. And I actually believed him. The faculty and staff have the biggest impressions on Stan State students. They create an environment where

students can feel that they are on a level playing field, that they really do have the ability to compete."

That encouragement was the launching point for Jacinto to complete his bachelor's degree in finance at Stanislaus State, and he went on to earn an MBA from the University of Phoenix. In 2003, he co-founded Vistech Manufacturing — one of the nation's leading producers of automotive acoustical trim — with more than 400 employees and annual sales exceeding \$60 million.

"Attending this University has made a huge impact on decisions I've made in my life," Jacinto said. "When I consider the charities I give to, my family and the people I am able to employ, all of them have benefited from my decision to go to Stanislaus State. This is a University that has shown a great willingness to propel first-generation students."

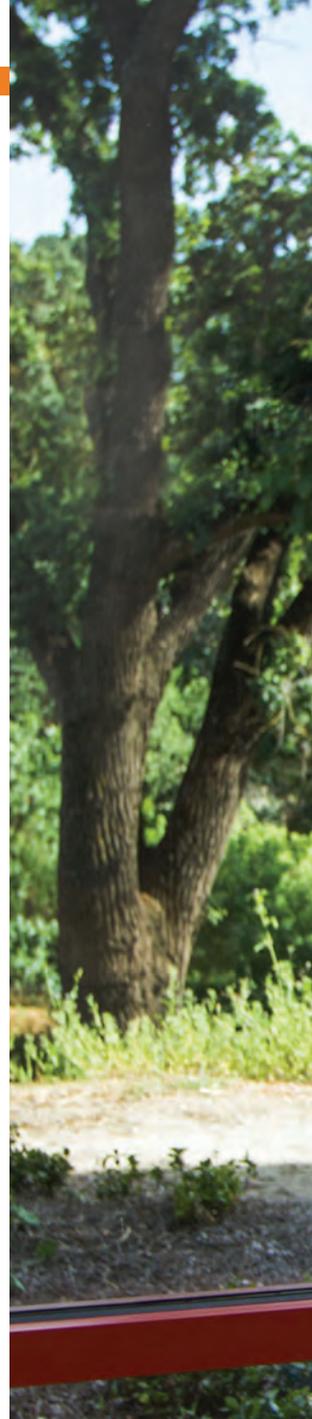
Now in a position to give back to the University, Jacinto is poised to leverage his experiences — his journey from being a first-generation college student to a successful entrepreneur — to ensure the efforts of the philanthropic Foundation Board he now leads make the greatest difference possible.

"In my role as the president of the Foundation Board, I'm looking forward to continuing to make sustainable progress in support of the University," Jacinto said. "I'm hoping that people will be interested in giving if they see that someone like me, someone from the other side of the tracks, believes in the value of education and in giving back."

Jacinto values partnerships and outreach as elements of the Foundation Board's approach to raise financial support for the University. He envisions outreach efforts that will connect students to resources, bolstering their success while also building strong ties with their alma mater to encourage them to give back to the University when they become alumni and reach their earning potential.

"A four-year degree is something that once you have it, no one can take it from you and you have a connection to your University for life," Jacinto said.

"What makes me most proud of our Stan State students is that they are me. I know that path. I've walked it. Once you have that degree, it doesn't mean that your education stops, but it does signify that you can achieve your goals — it's up to you to go out and get them." 📍





I'm hoping that people will be interested in giving if they see that someone like me, someone from the other side of the tracks, believes in the value of education and in giving back.



JOHN JACINTO, '96

STANISLAUS STATE FOUNDATION BOARD

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SPECIAL REPORT:

FIRST IN COLLEGE, NEXT TO LEAD

**Stan State Thrives at Educating
First-Generation Students**

By Brian VanderBeek



Above, left to right: First-generation college graduate and Stan State staff member Roubina Yadegarian, first-generation Stan Students Jose Hernandez, Amy Oropeza, Gissell Bracamonte and Joel Garcia.



Every Stanislaus State commencement ceremony includes an inspirational moment when the members of the graduating class are asked to stand if they're the first in their families to earn a college degree.

The reactions of the assembly are identical and occur in the same order every time. They begin with a moment of shyness, as some students don't want to seem too eager to stand up. That's followed by a smattering of applause from the back of the amphitheater as family and friends recognize the achievement of a loved one. Then, as more students stand, the applause grows into a torrent of admiration and an audible gasp as the crowd suddenly realizes the overwhelming majority of the class are first-generation graduates.

Laying the foundation for the region's future success by educating its first-generation students is a major part of what Stanislaus State does best.

"Providing the opportunity for a better future for all students is at the core of our University's mission," said Stan State President Ellen Junn. "At the same time, since roughly 75 percent of our students will be the first in their family to earn a college degree, we have to be aware and sensitive to their needs and challenges, and our faculty, many of whom were first-generation college students themselves, do a wonderful job in that area."

"PROVIDING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL STUDENTS IS AT THE CORE OF OUR UNIVERSITY'S MISSION."

*- Ellen Junn
President, Stanislaus State*

Who exactly is a first-generation student? It turns out there are two commonly used definitions. The Federal TRiO programs for federal outreach and student services and the Common Application join many elite universities, including Harvard and Brown, as defining the term to include students whose parents do not have a bachelor's degree or higher. But another definition, the one used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), identifies first-generation students as those whose parents never attended college.

Using either definition, the percentage of Stan State students who can be called first-generation is staggering. In the group of first-time freshmen entering Stan State for the fall 2016 semester, 79.7 percent self-identify as first-generation students per the TRiO definition. The numbers remain high among those students who transferred from other colleges into Stan State in the fall 2016 semester, with 75 percent coming from homes with parents who don't have bachelor's degrees and 43 percent from homes with parents who never attended college.



Leng Chang

Graduate Student,
Single-subject Credential Program

Starting at Stan State, Leng Chang immediately recognized college would be challenging. His parents never attended college, but encouraged him to go. They pushed, but he pushed harder.

"I have a degree and I will push for my kids to attend college. Stan State is my alma mater, so I'd encourage them to come here."



Christy Gonzales

Professor, Liberal Studies

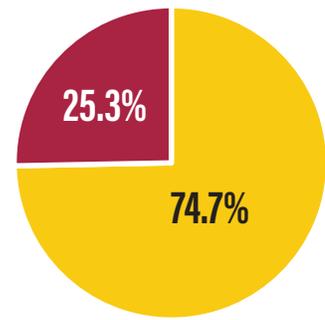
Christy Gonzales fought against family expectations to pursue her education, and sought outside help to make her academic dreams a reality. The experience inspired the kind of educator she is today.

"My educational experience included a faculty mentor, who took personal interest in my educational aspirations. Now, I can be a mentor to first-generation students."

Total Number of Stan State First-Generation Students vs Not First-Generation Students

- First-Generation Students
- Not First-Generation Students

Source: Stan State Institutional Research (Fall 2016)



Of the 8,604 undergraduates at Stan State during the fall 2016 semester, 6,429 (74.7 percent) were first-generation students.

Using the narrower NCES definition, Stan State's first-generation student population more than doubles the national average. The New York Times, citing NCES statistics, reported that nearly 20 percent of the nation's 7.3 million full-time undergraduates at four-year institutions are first-generation students. Stan State also stands out among its fellow CSU campuses in serving first-generation students. System-wide, 55 percent of the 2015 incoming freshmen came from families in which neither parent held a degree and 33 percent came from families in which neither parent attended college.

CollegeBoard.org takes a different tack in defining the first-generation student, evaluating the numbers and coming up with an analysis of what those students typically have overcome to attend college.

"First-generation students can come from families with low incomes or from middle- or higher-income families without a college-going tradition," CollegeBoard wrote. "Some have parents who support their plans for higher education; others are under family pressure to enter the workforce right after high school. Often these students don't know what their options are regarding higher education, and they may have fears about going to college and misconceptions about college and its costs. These students may come from families who speak languages other than English at home or from cultures outside the United States with different education systems."

The CollegeBoard definition stresses the point that first-generation students can be found at every point of the socio-economic spectrum, but other studies indicate that if the first-generation student comes from a low-income home, the chances of matriculation decline dramatically. Several publications, including the education blog LearnForward, have compiled lists of the common characteristics and challenges facing first-generation college students, and indeed many of these traits were mentioned frequently by Stan State students and faculty.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES FACING MANY FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

1. OVERALL LACK OF CONFIDENCE

At Ceres High, Miroslava Torres said she really didn't get involved in clubs and organizations until her junior year, and if she hadn't self-initiated that first step she likely would not have gained the self-confidence needed to apply to college. For her, it was the confidence to ask basic questions about college without embarrassment, which she could not do at home since no one in her house had ever attended college. In those final two years at Ceres High, Torres learned that it wasn't a show of weakness to ask questions, and she had many when she arrived at Stan State.

"When I first came here I asked a lot of naïve questions and I had to trust that

I wouldn't be questioned why I was in college if I had to ask about such basic things," said Torres, a mathematics major. "I learned late in high school how important it is to get involved. If I hadn't gotten involved I might not have had the courage to ask the right questions about college. I might not have attended college at all."

2. LIMITED ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

As part of not having a parent who had attended college, there is an inherent lack of understanding about how to be a college student, especially as it applies to taking those first steps following high school. For Ester Rivas, a Stan State senior who attended Central Valley High in Ceres, not being aware of the resources meant she had to learn on the fly.

"I do see that students who had parents who went to college seem to come to college with a better understanding of the process, like how to get into programs and how to apply for scholarships," Rivas said. "My mom didn't know any of that, and we had to learn that along the way. My older sister went to Modesto Junior College first and she was the first to fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and she showed me how to do it. I had to take the initiative to learn the processes of a four-year school."

3. LESS HOUSEHOLD ENCOURAGEMENT TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Many first-generation students, even those who may have been high achievers in high school, face a lack of excitement in the home about attending college from parents who want them to immediately enter the job market, especially when compared to their classmates whose parents did attend college. The lack of enthusiasm often comes from those who have had success in their careers despite not having attended college and thus question the value of higher education. The commonality is that most first-generation students may be encouraged by

their parents to attend college, but since those parents can't draw on their own college experience there might be a deficit of enthusiasm and lack of understanding, which could lead to a reticence to offer financial help.

"My parents understood that after high school there is another step, but they really had no way to understand what college was like," said Leng Chang, a spring 2016 graduate from Stockton who is entering the single-subject credential program. "They pushed me and my siblings to go to college, but at the same time they realized that college wasn't for everybody and if you weren't fit to go to college you went out and started working. I pushed for college first, and they've been able to support me with transportation and with some financial help."

4. RISK OF FAMILIAL REJECTION

In the May 2000 edition of Opportunity Outlook, The Journal of the Council for Opportunity in Education, Paul Thayer wrote that beyond a lack of support, first-generation students can face shunning or outright banishment from families who may feel personally or culturally threatened when a child seeks and attains higher education.

"Entering the university means not only that they must leave home for an unfamiliar academic setting, but that they also must enter an alien physical and social environment that they, their family and their peers have never experienced," wrote Thayer, retired director of the Center for Educational Access and Outreach at Colorado State University. "In fact, first-generation students may find themselves on the margin of two cultures, and must often renegotiate relationships at college and at home to manage the tension between the two. Given these many possible obstacles, it is not surprising to find examples of students whose shock at college entry took years to overcome."

While being shunned by one's own family might seem extreme or rare, it can be very common and one of the most difficult hurdles to overcome. In fact, it



Ann Strahm

Associate Professor, Sociology

Going to a large university, Sociology Professor Ann Strahm often felt lost in the hustle and bustle. She relied on counselors and provided programs to make it through.

"I took a class in Latin because I thought I would need it if I wanted to go to law school, but no one told me that they assumed their students already had taken three years of Latin. I tell my students today that nobody gives you a secret decoder ring that tells you what college life means."



Sarai Meza

Graduate Student, Public Administration

Growing up in Farmersville with immigrant parents, Sarai Meza had a front row seat to the hard work her parents put in every day to find success.

"The message was that we had a chance to pursue lives that were polar opposites. We could stay home and not go to school and work in laborious jobs or we could get a degree and open up all sorts of options."

was a situation faced by Stan State Liberal Studies professor Christy Gonzales, who grew up as one of 10 siblings in a traditional Hispanic home in Turlock.

“I am sad to say that my own educational achievement was met as a threat to my immediate family,” Gonzales said. “To this day I do not speak about my academic accomplishments and those family members never ask.”

But Gonzales persevered to complete her undergraduate studies at Stan State, and now uses her experiences not only to enrich the lives of her students but to inspire the next generation of lifetime learners.

“What I am inspired by is the fact that in my own immediate family all of my children have gone to college,” she said. “I have also mentored and encouraged three nieces and a nephew to seek higher education. Through my educational challenges and experiences I have helped to pave the way for my own family and for those nieces and nephew who wished to enrich their lives through education.”

5. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE REGARDING TIME MANAGEMENT, FINANCES AND GETTING AHEAD IN CLASSES

Elizabeth Murdock, a junior mathematics major, was a self-starter at Modesto’s Gregori High and put herself in advanced placement courses with an eye on college. Taking AP courses introduced Murdock to the time-management skills and a level

of academics that would help her at Stan State, but not knowing the ins-and-outs of how to pay for college ended up hitting Murdock hard as a freshman.

“One of the biggest dilemmas for me was financial aid,” Murdock said. “My parents knew nothing about it, so in my first year I paid everything out-of-pocket. I didn’t get any aid, which was a huge issue. In my second year, I did FAFSA and got loans. When it came to taking AP courses my parents were supportive but didn’t push me because there was no way for them to realize how much those classes would put me ahead. They didn’t understand the logistics of how some high school classes can help you in college, so I had to discover that for myself.”

6. THE PERCEPTION OF NOT BEING EMBRACED BY THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Whether real or imagined, when first-generation students arrive on campus and see other students quickly finding comfort within the university community, they can feel left out, even after going through New Student Orientation. This problem can be exacerbated when the incoming student is traveling from a distance from a small high school. Sarai Meza has made it through that challenge and is in Stan State’s master’s program in public administration. But when she first arrived from Farmersville High School, located in a rural community east of Visalia, everything about Stan State —



Victor Luevano

Associate Professor, Psychology

Victor Luevano recalls a time when a student emailed him about where to find a book for class. She had no idea there was a bookstore. He attributes this type of confusion to a lack of role models, which, as a first-generation student himself, he can relate to.

“When first-generation graduates are asked to stand during commencement, it chokes me up every time. It’s very nice to see the impact Stan State has on the region.”



President Ellen Junn and Stan State student Prince Carnecer.

“I’ve established the FIRST-GENERATION PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS initiative to help our region’s first-generation college students. It reinforces Stan State’s commitment to shaping the future of the Central Valley. I feel so passionately about this initiative, and I take great pride in personally sponsoring one of the first scholarship awards.”

*- Ellen Junn
President, Stanislaus State*

Read more about the First-Generation Presidential Scholars initiative on page 11.



Laura Rodriguez-Moscorro
Campus Continuity Coordinator, Safety
and Risk Management

Laura Rodriguez-Moscorro, campus continuity coordinator for Safety & Risk Management, said her college experience, as a first-generation student was really sink or swim.

"It was hard. For some of the students in my classes college seemed to be a little easier, and I always thought that was because they had role-models in their home who had gone to college."

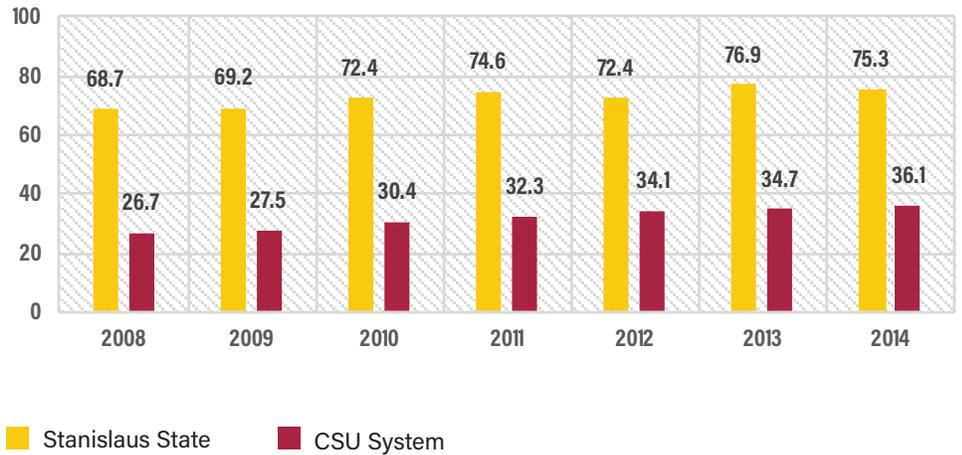


Miroslava Torres
Junior, Mathematics

When Miroslava Torres was in high school, she stepped out of her comfort zone and got involved in school activities. It gave her the exposure she needed to pursue college, even though she didn't know anyone who had gone before.

"Getting involved in high school gave me a lot more confidence to talk to professional adults, which gave me the comfort I needed to attend college."

Stan State First-Generation Freshmen vs. CSU System



Sources: Stan State Institutional Research, CSU Undergraduate Outcomes Report (April 2016)

including the size of the campus and the educational challenge — seemed huge. “The day before classes started I walked around campus, still not sure where everything was and not knowing what to expect,” Meza said. “I went looking for where my classes were. On my first day of class I was in a big lecture hall and I didn’t know any of the procedures. I had to use the restroom and I didn’t know whether I was supposed to raise my hand or not. I was so lost, not knowing whether I needed to ask the teacher. I didn’t know how to interact with my teachers. Even understanding the syllabus, and how it’s your golden ticket, was difficult.”

The common thread with all first-generation students is that the moment they arrive on campus they’re faced with a special set of challenges. Even those who come from the most loving and nurturing homes may have little if any advance knowledge from their parents about the college experience. It then becomes a natural or even expected outcome that the rates of graduation among first-generation students trail those who come from a household in which at least one parent attended college.

According to a UCLA study, the national four-year graduation rate of students whose parents attended college is 42 percent, a figure that drops to 27

percent for first-generation students. For students whose parents attended college the graduation rates are 60 percent within five years and 64 percent within six years. For first-generation students, those figures drop to 45 percent and 50 percent respectively.

Those same numbers within the CSU system for first-generation students are lower than the national figures for the four-year graduation rate (19.1 percent for the incoming class of 2011) but are nearly the same as the national figures at the five-year rate (46.8 percent for the incoming class of 2010) and six-year graduation rate (57 percent for the incoming class of 2009.)

Stan State’s most recent statistics indicate a four-year overall graduation rate of 14.4 percent and a six-year rate of 57.4 percent. Stan State’s graduation rates among first-generation students slightly trail that of the general population, with 12.5 percent graduating in four years and 55 percent within six years.

Considering the hurdles first-generation students must overcome, the fact that their graduation rates closely follow those of the University’s overall rates could be considered impressive. And the credit must be shared by the students who are choosing to persevere in their studies and by the faculty members who have

developed a sensitivity to the needs of first-generation students.

For instance, Michael Fleming, assistant professor of biological sciences, has been on the Stan State faculty for six years. Two years ago, he began to speak in his classes about his experiences as a first-generation student and was impressed with how those words facilitated connections with his students, allowing him in many cases to identify which of his students were first-generation.

“For the first four years I never thought about it, even though we’re reminded all the time that a majority of our students fall into that category,” Fleming said. “Last year and this year I’ve been much more proactive, offering that information in the first few days of class. One way I can identify first-generation students is the way they lean forward in their seats, nodding their head and starting to give me body language that we have a connection as first-generation students. That’s been much more visible to me since I started talking about it.”

Communication Studies Professor Vickie Harvey makes it a point to sense and

recognize the same insecurities in her students that she remembered having as a first-generation student. And once she sees that insecurity, Harvey has seen first-hand how even the smallest word of encouragement can put a student back on course.

“During my first year of college, I felt very alone and unsure of what I was doing,” Harvey said. “I struggled in classes thinking I wasn’t smart enough to be in college,” said Harvey, who has co-edited two books on first-generation students. “I failed two exams because I couldn’t figure out how to take them. It was in my junior year that I received a comment on my final project that a teacher saw something in me that I didn’t see. Being an introspective sort, I felt in that moment it finally might be safe to come out of my shell. This experience I remember more than any other as it was the first time I thought, ‘I can do this college thing.’”

“When I see students struggle in my classes thinking they can’t be creative, or analytical or understand what I’m asking them to do, I know this is my role to express my belief in them, to teach in

such a way that it reaches them and to encourage them to find their voice and share their voice.”

President Junn, recognizing the need to engage all incoming freshmen but particularly those who are first-generation students, revived the University’s Freshman Convocation ceremony in one of her first moves after taking office on July 1. The convocation, in concert with New Student Orientation, is designed to introduce all new students to the resources and programs available to them — something everybody agrees is a key to retaining and graduating the region’s next generation of leaders.

“The best thing we can do for our first-generation students is to make sure they’re aware and taking advantage of the support available to all students at Stan State,” President Junn said. “This can come in the form of counseling, mentorship, tutoring, financial aid or just making sure they know they’re a vital part of the University community.”



Above, left to right: Stan State first-generation college students Efrain Ulloa, Raquel Chavira, Ana Arellano, Steven Lelham and Valentina Maldonado.



Professor Alison McNally (center) with Stan State students Anthony Borroel and Rebecca Cortez.

A LIFE COACH ON THE FACULTY

Stan State's Faculty Mentor Program Going Strong in its 30th Year

By Brian VanderBeek

In any given semester, as many as 200 Stan State students — most of them first-generation — are enrolled as protégés to up to 50 faculty members as part of the Faculty Mentor Program.

And it's often difficult to determine which side, the mentors or the protégés, benefit more from the relationship.

The FMP, which was founded in 1987, encourages faculty-student interaction outside the classroom for the purpose of improving academic achievement, student retention and graduation rates.

Frequently, relationships emerge from this formal arrangement that take on a much simpler form. For the students, sometimes the best thing a mentor can offer is a willing ear and an understanding smile.

"My sister went here and she told me to find the Faculty Mentor Program because I would love it," said Anthony Borroel, a sophomore political science major. "She said I'd love it because they'll help me and they'll always be there to talk to me. They advise on anything you need to talk about, not just academics. They're there for life counseling. I signed up to have a faculty friend on campus."

This is only the second year that Alison McNally is a mentor, and the assistant professor of geography already has an unabashed enthusiasm about the FMP.

"It gives the students the ability to engage in the University in a way that makes it OK to ask questions," McNally said. "I don't think all students feel that way. They may feel intimidated or perhaps they don't even know where to start. That's where the FMP can help. It makes students comfortable asking questions, and then they can see how the process works. They open up quite a bit."

Eligible students are identified and encouraged by the Office of Student Leadership and Development to apply for the FMP, while interested faculty members enter into a program of ongoing training. Following an additional interview and screening process, the protégés select a faculty member. Workshops heavy with group discussions are held at least monthly for the students and additional field trips also are organized. At least once a semester, the mentors meet to discuss future activities and talk about their experiences with the students.

"Mentoring isn't a consistent activity but one that varies in direct proportion to the needs of the protégé," said Keith Nainby, associate professor of education and an FMP co-chair. "Sometimes, protégés enter the program later in their academic careers and I've found that they are seeking different things than freshmen entering the program."

"I have a protégé interested in applying for graduate school and while he has an advisor in his major program who can address his questions about the academic work, he comes to me with questions about preparing for the GRE, or how to write a strong personal statement or how to select a graduate program. For some protégés it might be a two-to-three hour meeting once a month, and for others interaction might be a little more casual."

For Rebecca Cortez, a sophomore business major with a geography minor, taking on a faculty mentor was a large step in easing her anxieties about fitting in on a college campus.

"MY SISTER WENT HERE AND SHE TOLD ME TO FIND THE FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM BECAUSE I WOULD LOVE IT."

- Anthony Borroel
Political Science Major

"I was worried about failure," Cortez said. "Being a first-generation student I had no clue what it meant to be a college student, so I was learning everything through my own experience. I was looking for guidance from someone who had walked this path before me. More than anything, faculty mentors emphasize to us that we're not alone, that a lot of people before you have faced and overcome these same problems. For me, that's a great level of support." ☺

Hands on SCIENCE

Using Fieldwork to Motivate
Stanislaus State's Future Scientists

By Nora Heston Tarte



Diku Sherpa works with fellow student Alfred Brennan in the field near South Lake Tahoe.
(Photograph courtesy of Diku Sherpa.)

Diku Sherpa understands the importance of water more than most. Born and raised in Nepal, she often carried water buckets back and forth to her home. Her family didn't have daily access to water, so sometimes those buckets were all they had for days at a time.

"When I was doing that I thought it was normal," said Sherpa, 25. "But now it's kind of sad."

As a first-generation college student, Sherpa came to Stan State to earn a Master of Science in Ecology and Sustainability. Stan State was one of several graduate school options she had, but meeting with Matt Cover, an associate professor of ecology known for his hands-on approach and emphasis on fieldwork, cemented her decision.

She's now in her second year studying stream ecology, hydrology and how it all affects biodiversity, and it's a far cry from the future she first saw for herself as a nurse.

It wasn't until she got involved with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the U.S. Forest Service after moving there with her father at age 13 that Sherpa discovered a way to blend her desire to help others with her love of the outdoors by focusing on hydrology.

"Water has affected all of us in Nepal," she said.

The fieldwork for her studies is completed in Lake Tahoe where she took an initial trip with Cover to develop her research question. During the summer, Sherpa explored the ecological function of Sierra Nevada meadows through surveys of hydrology, plants and aquatic insects.

In the winter, Sherpa spends time in the lab at Stan State, studying her samples. But she's nostalgic for those days spent in the field.

"I'd rather be outdoors and collecting samples than be here in the lab," Sherpa laughed.

For Cover, nourishing this inherent love for the outdoors is what fieldwork is all about. "We need to keep that fascination with the world alive," Cover said. "It's one thing to read about it but to see things out in nature, I think that's really important."

His goal is to engage students, give them the tools needed to be successful in their careers and in graduate school and to help them find confidence in their ability to do science, as opposed to just learn it.

Cover credits his personal school experiences with influencing his fieldwork-heavy philosophy, which he said is shared by the professors in Stan State's biology department. "Being involved in research, making contributions to science really helped my own outlook and level of motivation."



Diku Sherpa surveys Big Meadow Creek near South Lake Tahoe. (Photograph by Matthew Cover)

"He's a very encouraging person," said Georget O raha, 22, an undergraduate senior who is studying water insects with Cover's help. "When you do fieldwork you're taking what you've learned from textbooks and applying it. I think it just builds your confidence."

For students interested in ecology, environmental science and zoology, getting their hands dirty is part of the job, so starting fieldwork in college gives them an edge over the competition. That's why Cover and his colleagues work to create as many

"I'D RATHER BE OUTDOORS AND COLLECTING SAMPLES THAN BE HERE IN THE LAB."

*- Diku Sherpa
Graduate Student*

hands-on opportunities as they can. With approximately 750 biology students and about 15 professors that often means utilizing outside resources.

Stan State students regularly pursue internships with organizations such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Tuolumne River Trust. Cover also takes on about six research students at any given time

and incorporates fieldtrips and on-campus research opportunities into classes.

"All these experiences, like fieldwork, are going to help," Sherpa said of pursuing a career in hydrology. "You learn more because it's hands-on." ☺

A CAMPUS TO CALL HOME

Stan State Housing Eases Transition to Higher Learning

By Nora Heston Tarte

When the rest of campus is quiet, walking into the Stanislaus State housing office is akin to entering a new world. To the left, residents stroll in and out of dorms, mingle and grab snacks. To the right, at a large desk littered with encouraging reminders of campus-wide services, sits a row of smiling staff poised to answer questions. The main office, like a student foyer, is abuzz with chatter; the excitement is palpable.

“This campus is their home,” said Rebekah Gregory, assistant director of Stan State Housing.

Stan State Housing residents enjoy a wealth of benefits not available to other students. Resident Advisors (RAs) and Peer Academic Leaders (PALs), who are able to answer questions about everything from academics to roommate problems, are students’ neighbors. And other services are crafted with the goal

of assisting students in their transition to college. After all, 79 percent of residents said living in Stan State Housing helped them successfully transition to collegiate life from high school, according to a fall 2016 resident survey.

“Students are coming out of high schools where they’re used to a lot more support,” explained Jen Humphrey, director of Stan State Housing. And in Stan State Housing, the goal is to continue giving students enough support to succeed while simultaneously pushing them toward independence. “We’re giving them resources to be successful without doing the work for them. It’s like a helping hand.”

“I didn’t have anybody to help me with college,” Sylvia Saavedra, 22, a Stan State Housing resident and first-generation student, said of her freshman year. She

turned to her RA with general questions about college life and academics; questions her parents couldn’t answer because they had never gone to college. “We had scheduled meetings with our RA and outside of those she would just kind of check on me and my roommates.”

In addition to RAs and PALs, living-learning communities (for qualifying first-year students) encourage students to work together. The communities ensure all participants live on the same floor and are in one or two first-year classes together. PALs attend for added support. It’s available exclusively to housing residents and gives students a way to keep each other accountable.

72% of Stan State Housing residents are first-generation students

A typical spot for Stan State students to gather in on-campus student housing.

Since 72 percent of Stan State Housing residents are first-generation students, it's a service many of them need.

"First-generation students can sometimes lack the confidence to feel like they belong in college, so passing those first couple of classes is really important and these communities help with that," Gregory explained.

Social events and outings, a welcome week (a weeklong orientation for residents to familiarize themselves with the campus and with the services offered by Stan State Housing) and living in a building full of informed students and staff empower residents.

"My favorite thing about living on campus that I wouldn't get anywhere else is the amount of support we receive," said Andrew Siliezar, 19, a second-year resident and first-year PAL. "I doubt you

"I DOUBT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT STAN STATE HOUSING GIVES ANYWHERE ELSE."

*- Andrew Siliezar
Second-year Resident*

will be able to find the amount of support Stan State Housing gives anywhere else."

Karina Delgadillo, 21, a Stan State senior and first-generation college student, found the benefits of Stan State Housing so essential that she's stayed for four years.

"As much as my parents wanted to support me, they couldn't," Delgadillo explained. "There are a lot of skills needed to thrive in college that first-generation students aren't exposed to at home."

With more than 700 available beds (of which most go to freshman and sophomores), Stan State Housing fills up annually, and students are quick to praise the accommodations. In fact, 55 percent of 2015-2016 residents tried to return this year (only 44 percent of those who wanted to return could be accommodated) and for those who didn't come back, most cited being ready for more independence as their reason for seeking alternate housing, according to the survey.

Part of Gregory's job is to attend recruiting fairs on behalf of Stan State Housing and she says parents are often concerned about their children living away from home for the first time.

It's especially true for parents of first-generation students because, for them, the concept of going away to school is new.

"I always tell concerned parents that we provide support to our students who are facing personal or emotional challenges," Gregory said. "We bring food to sick students and visit with them. They won't be alone."

"Knowing it's a safe place to live — that was a major thing my parents wanted," Delgadillo said, adding University police officers routinely patrol the area.

Delgadillo says academic counseling, RA and PAL support and a breadth of other University services helped her flourish during her time at Stan State. She cites the convenience of location, meal plans, the positive environment and living with other students as the biggest draws of living on campus.

"Just being with roommates helped me because my roommates knew more about college than I did," Saavedra added.

In addition to resident programs, staff constantly reminds students of campus-wide services, such as financial and academic planning and access to health services.

"They can't not know about this stuff because we drill it into them," Gregory laughed.

While Stan State Housing helps all residents, many programs cater to students who meet risk factors that may contribute to lower graduation rates. For freshman living on campus, risk factors include being first-generation, early-start (students who take English 1000, 1001 or 1006 or math courses 103 or 106, 64 percent) and recipients of financial aid (91 percent).

What it comes down to is this: Stan State Housing is a family. It's a team of people rooting for students and propelling them toward academic success.

"Living on campus gives students a major edge," Gregory said. 📍



Roommates provide support and friendship.

Stan State Alumna

JANET DIAZ: A WORK OF HEART

By Nora Heston Tarte



Janet Díaz created this corona in Angahuan, Mexico. The church seen through the center is the only structure that survived the volcano's last eruption.

For Janet Diaz, 29, being a first-generation college student was both an obstacle and a blessing.

“Being first-generation has been difficult for me, but not impossible,” said Diaz, an alumna of Stanislaus State who completed her bachelor’s degree in fine art in 2015. “For example, being able to speak two languages is sometimes harder than people think.”

When Diaz first started at Stan State, she questioned whether she belonged in college. Her parents immigrated to the U.S. before she was born and she sometimes struggled with her first-generation status.

“I’d struggled through school since I was young,” Diaz said, adding she didn’t see her potential until professors at Stan State helped her see it.

“Her story is the same as many of the students I have,” said Dan Edwards, Diaz’s advisor and professor of sculpture at Stan State. After all, about 75 percent of Stan State students identify as first-generation college students. Edwards himself was one. “What’s unusual about Diaz’s story is how she’s proceeded onto the next level.”

Edwards is referring to Diaz’s success in the art world. After finishing her bachelor’s at Stan State — a feat she admits she wouldn’t have pursued without the guidance of Stan State staff — Diaz was accepted into the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. It is a top-five printmaking school in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report, and she’s halfway through the three-year master’s program in printmaking.

She’s working alongside Margarita Cabrera, a celebrated Mexican-American artist who uses her work to spark conversation about important issues in the Mexican-American community, including border relations, labor practices, immigration, inclusivity and empowerment — issues for which Diaz shares Cabrera’s passion.

Specifically, Diaz worked on Cabrera’s Space in Between project, a collaboration with the Arizona State University Art Museum and Desert Botanical Garden that included a series of workshops where participants helped create soft sculptures of desert plants made from recycled border patrol uniforms and embroidered with personal stories of immigration.

“Art can change someone’s life. It did for me,” Diaz said.

“ART CAN CHANGE SOMEONE’S LIFE. IT DID FOR ME.”

— Janet Diaz
Stan State Alumna

“Janet Diaz is one of the most talented art students at ASU,” Cabrera boasted. “She is an amazing printmaker but is also quite versed as a multimedia artist, making sculptures, videos and community artworks. She is an artist who is not afraid to take risks when she believes something is important.”

For Edwards, Diaz is the type of success story the Department of Art faculty hopes to find with every student. “When she left our program she left with one of the best offers she could get,” he said. “And we helped her get to that place.”

According to Diaz, Edwards may not be aware of the complete scope of that truth.

“During my time at Stan State, I was going through an abusive relationship,” Diaz confessed. “I want to be a voice for those girls and women who are afraid to move on. There is a way out and my way out was through my art and the support I found at school. They allowed me to see things I didn’t see in myself. I was going through a difficult experience and I found freedom and power in making artwork.”

“Graduate school was never in my plans but always in my thoughts. I never thought I was capable of attending a graduate school.”

Edwards credited Diaz with setting an example for all students. For him, she was the first alumna he saw move on in a spectacular way. Diaz, meanwhile, is quick to praise Stan State’s faculty for making her success possible.

“Being able to say that I am now at one of the top-five printmaking graduate schools in the country is an amazing feeling and I couldn’t have done it without the support of the faculty at Stan State and my mentor Daniel Edwards,” Diaz said. “I had a strong support group at Stan State.” ☺



Photograph by Renee Dennison



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