

MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

First Sign *of* Success

An inspiring tale of one student's path to earning a doctoral degree



The Bulldog Culture of Grit

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Whether it's navigating a global pandemic, facing and reimagining the handling of Title IX on campus, or striving for higher levels of excellence in our region, our campus community rises to the challenges of the moment. We collaborate. We troubleshoot. We innovate. We care for one another and maintain a can-do attitude. A vibrant culture of "grit" permeates every facet of Fresno State, which grows from our region's unparalleled sense of resilience, clear focus and determined hard work.

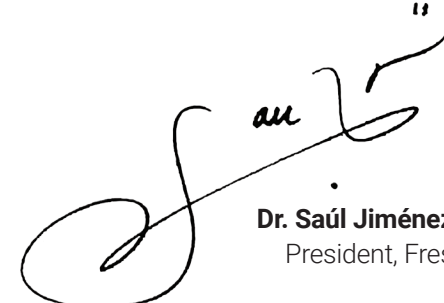
That's why renowned author and researcher Dr. Angela Duckworth resonated so clearly with campus and our community during her recent lecture at Fresno State. Her ideas about grit spoke to our shared values, and to the indomitable spirit that allows Fresno State to triumph over obstacles. I wanted the first President's Lecture Series of my presidency to be truly reflective of our region's character.


I believe grit summarizes the resolve of our students and the faculty, staff, alumni and community members who have come together during this challenging time. We are proving our mettle amid adversity, and we are resolved to build a future worthy of our talented and diverse students, past and present, for the benefit of where we all live.

In this edition of Fresno State Magazine, we find grit in the commitment and tireless efforts of our students, faculty, staff, alumni and community. This issue spotlights the incredible dedication of Qiaofei Catherine Obrero, who is a true inspiration as the first Deaf graduate to earn a doctoral degree in physical therapy at Fresno State. She is on her way to a rewarding career serving patients in our area, and someday she hopes to return to Zhejiang Province in China to help patients where she was born.

The stories of accomplishment in the face of immense challenges aren't just a theme in this issue of the magazine; they're characteristic of those on our campus and in our community. As we continue to build a legacy that stretches beyond each of us individually, our regional grit is the foundation on which we will build the next generation of Bulldog success.

Go, 'Dogs!


Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval
President, Fresno State



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Fresno State serves the richly diverse region of Central California. We are proud to have the U.S. Department of Education designate our University as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution.

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CONTENTS

RED EYE	2
FRESNO STATE NEWS BRIEFS	4
IN THE KNOW ACADEMICS	10
FIRST SIGN OF SUCCESS	14
DONOR-IMPACT	22
SPORTS	24
ALUMNI CONNECTIONS	28

Cover: The illustration of hands represents the American Sign Language signal for "first." Qiaofei Catherine Obrero in May became the first Deaf graduate in the history of Fresno State's Doctoral of Physical Therapy program. The illustration also represents other aspects of her story, including her practice of physical therapy and patient care.

Left: The Services for Students with Disabilities center at Fresno State provides academic accommodations for students while strengthening partnerships with the campus community to eliminate barriers and raise disability awareness. Photo by Cary Edmondson

Stay in touch!

We welcome your comments about Fresno State Magazine at magazine@csufresno.edu.

If you receive more than one copy, please pass it along to a friend of Fresno State. If you would like to support the University, visit fresnostate.edu/givenow to make your contribution. Thank you.

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Hello, Future!

Photo by Cary Edmondson

Fresno State celebrated its class of 2022 graduates with a return to the Save Mart Center for in-person commencement ceremonies in May.

College of Arts and Humanities graduate Cory Fa'amausili (*pictured*) was one of 5,980 graduates eligible for degree conferral.

Because of pandemic precautions, last year's commencement celebrations were held outdoors at Bulldog Stadium for the classes of 2020 and 2021. It was the first time Bulldog Stadium hosted commencement since 2003, months before the Save Mart Center opened.

Class of 2022 by the numbers:

- 5,077 baccalaureate degrees
- 903 post-baccalaureate degrees
- 81 doctoral degrees

Largest graduating class:

- College of Health and Human Services (1,044)
- College of Social Sciences (965)
- College of Science and Mathematics (947)

Top 3 majors of graduates:

- Psychology (554)
- Criminology (472)
- Liberal studies (452)

Professor, Poet Named Pulitzer Finalist

Author and Fresno State professor Mai Der Vang was honored May 9 as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, for her groundbreaking book of documentary poetry, “Yellow Rain.”

The book integrates archival research and declassified government documents to examine the biological warfare that threads through wars involving Hmong people. In lyrical poems of witness that defy historical erasure, “Yellow Rain” acknowledges those who perished and the trauma of those who survived.

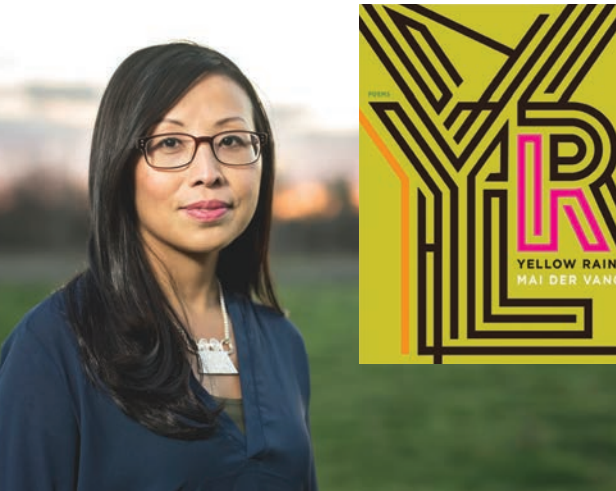
Vang, an assistant professor of English, is the first Hmong American to be recognized in the 106-year history of the Pulitzer’s arts and letters prizes.

She is the fourth Fresno artist to be recognized in arts and letters, following William Saroyan, the 1940 winner in drama; Dr. Leslie R. Bassett, the 1966 winner in music; and Philip Levine, the 1995 winner in poetry. Bassett was a Fresno State alumna in music (1947), and Levine was a Fresno State professor emeritus of English (1958-92).

Vang called the Pulitzer finalist news a tremendous honor. She said the news surprised her.

“To even think that a daughter of Hmong refugees, who was born and raised in Fresno, can be part of shaping the present and future of literature in this country both astounds and inspires me,” Vang says. “For me, this means the work of Fresno writers, the lineage of Hmong poets and the stories of ancestors will continue to reverberate and be shared.”

—Jefferson Beavers



DONOR IMPACT

Spanish-language Programming for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

As children of Mexican migrants who worked up and down the Valley picking crops and packing fruit, Dr. Robert R. Davila and his seven siblings initially spoke only Spanish and began school later in childhood.

At 8 years old, Davila contracted spinal meningitis and, as a result, became Deaf. His challenges were the catalyst to his esteemed career, which included serving as president of Gallaudet University — the premier higher education institution in the U.S. for the Deaf and hard of hearing.

Today, Davila continues to support the Deaf and hard of hearing community and the San Joaquin Valley through the Robert R. and Donna E. Davila Endowment in the Silent Garden at Fresno State. Named after himself and his late wife, Donna, the \$250,000 endowment will support Spanish-language programming within the Silent Garden.

The Silent Garden in the College of Health and Human Services at Fresno State was created in 2008 to foster opportunity, understanding and awareness for the Deaf and hard of hearing in Central California. The program provides free educational conferences and resources to the community, as well as scholarships for Deaf education and interpreting students.

The San Joaquin Valley is home to nearly 150,000 Deaf children and adults who come from Spanish-speaking homes.

“I have not forgotten my early years in the Valley and the impact my deafness had on my family,” Davila says. “Although times were difficult at first, my deafness eventually led to efforts that allowed my family to grow and become educated. The Silent Garden can offer that same opportunity for the many Spanish-speaking folks in the Valley who are probably raising and perhaps worrying about how to help their Deaf children develop.”

— Melissa Tav



Cary Edmondson

CSU Students Honor New Fresno State President

Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Fresno State’s president, has received a vote of confidence from the student organization that represents the nearly half a million students in the California State University system, the nation’s largest public higher education system.

The Cal State Student Association selected Jiménez-Sandoval as the 2021-22 recipient of the Robert C. Maxson President of the Year award, given annually by the association to one CSU campus president. The award was presented at the California State University Board of Trustees meeting on May 23 in Long Beach.

Established in 1958 to support students throughout the CSU system, CSSA is a non-partisan, membership-based advocacy organization composed of representatives from each of the 23 CSU campuses. The President of the Year award is named after Robert C. Maxson, a former president of CSU Long Beach.

“In his tenure as president of Fresno State, President Jiménez-Sandoval has embodied an honest value for student-

centered leadership and the principles of an all-encompassing shared governance,” said CSSA President Isaac Alferos. “Especially during these turbulent times, he has been a model for honest, empathetic and driven leadership that has garnered the trust of students across the system.”

Jiménez-Sandoval became Fresno State’s ninth president in 2021, after Dr. Joseph I. Castro left to become chancellor of the CSU system. He has been with Fresno State since he joined as a faculty member in 2000. Since then, he served as professor of Spanish and Portuguese, coordinator of the Spanish master of arts degree, chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, interim associate dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, and provost.

— Lisa Bell

“In his tenure as president of Fresno State, President Jiménez-Sandoval has embodied an honest value for student-centered leadership and the principles of an all-encompassing shared governance. Especially during these turbulent times, he has been a model for honest, empathetic and driven leadership that has garnered the trust of students across the system.”



ISAAC ALFEROS
President of Cal State Student Association

Water Polo Repeats as Conference Champs

Fresno State water polo won the Golden Coast Conference Tournament championship for the second straight year, defeating Loyola Marymount 11-8 in Riverside.

In just the fifth year of competition since launching the program, the No. 8 Bulldogs (19-7, 7-0 GCC) also punched their ticket to the NCAA Tournament for the second straight year. Fresno State fell 15-9 to No. 2 seed USC, which went on to lose the national championship game to Stanford.

The Bulldogs were led by GCC Coach of the Year Natalie Benson, GCC Player of the Year Emily Nicholson, a senior from Auckland, New Zealand, and GCC Newcomer of the Year Fanni Muzsnay, a freshman from Budapest.

— Eddie Hughes



Tennis Earns Mountain West Championship

Fresno State finished the regular season unbeaten in the Mountain West to earn the regular season conference championship. The Bulldogs (19-3, 10-0 MW) were led by Mountain West Coach of the Year Denise Dy and MW Player of the Year Pang Jittakoat, a junior from Bangkok.



Pang Jittakoat

CLUB HOPPING



Ricardo Madrigal

Club Rugby Wins National Championship

Fresno State's club men's rugby team completed its undefeated season with a 22-17 win over Kansas to earn its first American College Rugby DI-AA national championship at Choctaw Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

"Being able to lead the team as we make history for Fresno State feels like nothing I've felt before," says team captain C.J. Banuelos as the team prepared for the game. "Just thinking about winning that trophy makes me tear up a little, and I know it gets the rest of the boys fired up."

Unlike NCAA-sponsored varsity scholarship sports at the University, such as football and softball, rugby is a club sport and none of the athletes receive athletic scholarship aid.

Fresno State beat San Diego 46-7 and Western Washington 52-15 in the West Regional championship to earn a berth in the final against East Regional champion Kansas.

— Marisa Mata

AROUND THE FOUNTAIN



2022 Best Colleges

Fresno State is among the nation's best colleges when it comes to quality, affordability and outcomes — ranking No. 29 out of 623 colleges nationwide in Money's 2022 Best Colleges list. The University also ranked No. 25 for Best Public Colleges and No. 17 for Best College in the West.



'Zoo U'

Fresno State and the Fresno Chaffee Zoo signed an MOU in March to expand a partnership that will facilitate opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate in biology and ecosystems, marketing, interior design and service-learning experiences and internships at the zoo.



Economic Opportunities

For the fifth straight year, Fresno State ranked among the top five universities for social mobility, creating opportunities for students to move from one socioeconomic class to another. Fresno State placed No. 5 out of 1,549 schools in the 2021 Social Mobility Index developed by CollegeNET.



'Victor E. Lap'

After nearly seven years as Fresno State's live mascot, Victor E. Bulldog III is preparing to pass the collar. Victor E. Bulldog IV will be introduced in fall 2022, and will be trained by his predecessor before a ceremonial passing of the collar in spring 2023.



Spirit of Service

Neuroscience student Ali Fakhrudin Dadawalla received the 2022 Paul DeRuosi Memorial Community Service Scholarship of \$1,000 for his commitment to service through the Cub Scouts program. He volunteered for numerous community partners to achieve his goal of becoming an Eagle Scout.



DONOR IMPACT

Mission to Provide Quality Education to Early Learners

Research doesn't show anyone how to prepare for a pandemic, let alone how to put a 3-year-old in front of a computer camera for weeks to learn.

But the Joyce M. Huggins Early Education Center within Fresno State's Programs for Children was up to the task, having set the bar high for innovation and teacher training over the years thanks to the support of the Fansler Foundation.

After a four-month closure early in the pandemic, the Programs for Children reopened in August 2020 to provide the children of student-parents, faculty and staff with hybrid learning options: engaging and creative online interaction for those who chose to stay home, or onsite learning in a safe and sanitized environment.

The Huggins Center and the Fansler Foundation have long shared a mission to provide quality education to young children. The foundation has awarded grants to Programs for Children since 2002 to help with programming and professional development. Programs for Children provides services for about 155 children ages three months to 12 years.

In October, Fresno State received a \$150,000 gift from the Fansler Foundation to support the endowment for

the D. Paul Fansler Endowed Chair for Leadership in Early Childhood Education and to continue the work of the Huggins Center. Fansler was the nonprofit's founder, who with his wife, Marlene, set out to help special needs and socioeconomically disadvantaged children in the Valley. He passed away in 1990, and his wife continues to lead the foundation.

In recent years, Programs for Children started incorporating STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) into its teaching. That includes having equipment like light tables, microscope pens, a digital microscope, coding robots and coding blocks for the children while adapting online apps like Scratch Junior for early learners.



"Many of our children are not from wealthy families," says Dr. Pei-Ying Wu, Fansler Chair and assistant professor in the Department of Literacy, Early, Bilingual and Special Education. "Children from disadvantaged backgrounds don't have resources to receive high-quality, advanced STEAM education. With the Fansler Foundation's generous support, we are able to provide that education to young children and their families."

— BoNhia Lee

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Good Chemistry

Growing research activity leads to major boost in Fresno State's classification

By Chuck Radke

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. For Fresno State senior track athlete and chemistry student Sophie Jiménez, they have been fast steps, indeed.

Jiménez, who became a Bulldogs scholar-athlete, has been running full-speed since she was in the fourth grade.

"I was always fast," she says. "People expected me to win."

More often than not, she did, running away from the track and field competition at Central High School right into a scholarship at Fresno State, where she posted a personal best 2:12:84 in her specialty event, the 800 meters.

A knee injury and some time away from competition gave Jiménez the chance to reset and rediscover her first love — science — which she inherited from her father. She has been cultivating that passion in Professor Masaki Uchida's lab since fall 2020. Uchida was hesitant to take on a research student amid a global pandemic, but upon interviewing Jiménez, he couldn't turn her away.

"I went through a presentation and Sophie had brilliant questions," he says.

Jiménez will go straight from her undergraduate work into a doctoral chemistry program and has narrowed her choices to UC Merced and UC Santa Cruz.

Uchida has been impressed by Jiménez's grasp of protein cages, which function as chambers for chemical reactions and delivery vehicles for therapeutics — which are important in the study of disease prevalence, vaccine production and immune response. Jiménez's own research involves "molecular Legos," cage-like proteins that build upon



Cary Edmondson



▲ Sophie Jimenez, a chemistry student and member of the track and field team, is one of many Fresno State students whose growing research efforts have helped Fresno State earn Carnegie classification as a "Doctoral University - High-Research Activity."

each other. Getting those proteins to assemble in an ordered array, then improving upon their structure, are primary goals of Jiménez's work.

"If we can figure out the structure, we can improve upon it," she says.

Uchida's lab, and others like it at Fresno State, has contributed to a significant growth in research activity in recent years. In February, Fresno State was elevated to "Doctoral University-High Research Activity," or R2 status, according to the most recent Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Only 14 California universities share this designation, including seven universities in the California State University system.

"The R2 designation recognizes the hard work of our faculty, staff and administrators and their grant writing, submission and research award activity on our campus," says Dr. Joy Goto, interim dean of the Division of Research and Graduate Studies at Fresno State. "Our research activities also represent many grants and contracts that advance our scholarly and creative work with our community, region and international collaborations."

In addition, Fresno State earned Carnegie's Community Engagement Classification since 2015, which recognizes the partnership between the University's knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity.

Only 60 universities nationwide can boast both designations, and six of those are in the CSU system.

In the 2020-21 academic year, more than 12,000 students, faculty and staff at Fresno State contributed over 1 million hours of service to the community. The milestone marked the 12th straight year the University community topped 1 million hours.

"Being one of only 60 universities across the nation classified as both a Doctoral University - High Research Activity and a Community Engaged university recognizes the breadth of our academic, scholarship and service accomplishments," says Chris Fiorentino, director of the Jan and Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning at Fresno State.

Jiménez has found all of this and more at Fresno State.

"I came wanting to do all the stuff I saw on the science channels," she says. "Now, I want to use my research to help my community."

Her plan is to return to Fresno after her doctoral program and teach at the university level, just like her mentor and many others who guided her along the way.

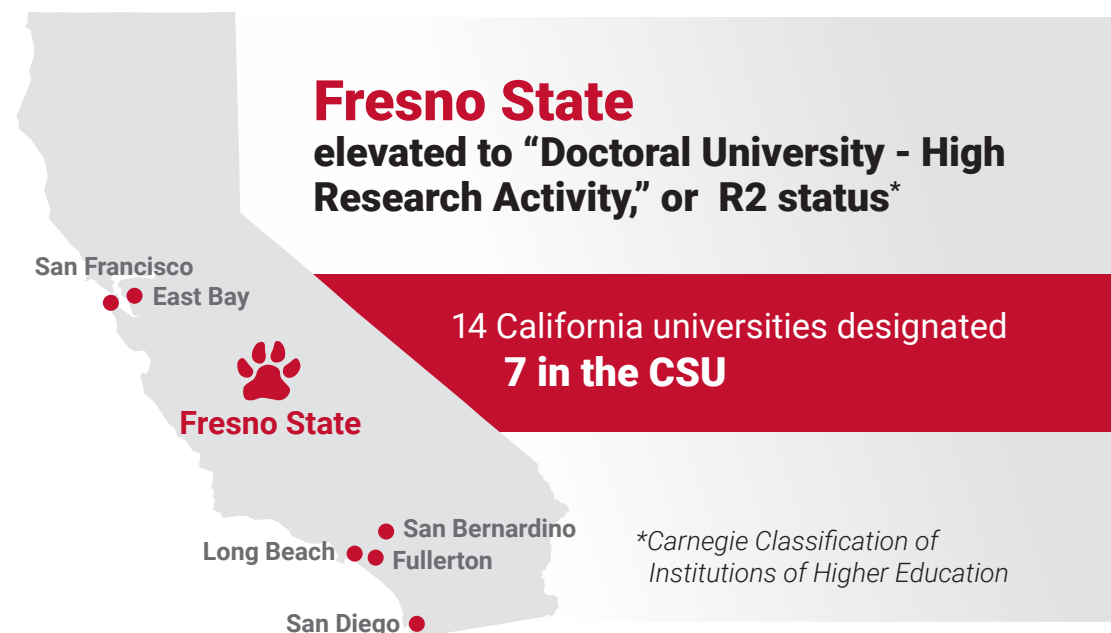
"Fresno State has been very supportive," she says. "And Masaki has been very patient."

Jiménez also credited the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation and the Research Training Initiative for Scientific Enhancement for removing barriers and helping facilitate her success in her scientific endeavors.

Thanks to these programs, along with Fresno State's other resources and the love of family and community, Jiménez's research journey, like her running career, is on the fast-track to success.



— Chuck Radke is a dissertation and thesis consultant in the Division of Research and Graduate Studies at Fresno State.



Access to Achieve

Helping students with disabilities get on common ground

By BoNhia Lee

► With help from Services for Students with Disabilities at Fresno State, Juanita Silva was provided the resources she needed to earn her bachelor's in psychology in 2018 and is now pursuing her master's in clinical rehabilitation and mental health counseling.

Juanita Silva knew at 7 years old she was different from her two older sisters.

She was learning at a slower pace and it took her twice as long to read, memorize passages and understand the concepts. She was tested at school by a psychologist and diagnosed with a learning disability.

Silva, now a graduate student at Fresno State studying clinical rehabilitation and mental health counseling, was in a special education program most of her life. When she transferred to Fresno State from Madera Community College in 2016, she was also diagnosed with a mild case of intellectual disability. But that didn't stop her from moving forward with her academic and career goals.

With help from Services for Students with Disabilities at Fresno State, Silva received the services she needed to successfully earn her bachelor's degree in psychology in 2018 and to work on her master's degree — through the COVID-19 pandemic — so she can become a clinical therapist to advocate for students with learning disabilities. She expects to graduate in 2023.

"I've been able to overachieve any goals that I set for myself thanks to the accommodations that I had," Silva says. "I'm able to be productive and able to be part of society. I have a bachelor's, and now I'm a master's student to become a therapist. You don't see a lot of students with my type of disability even getting past college. I couldn't have done that without the accommodations that I really, really need."

The Services for Students with Disabilities center provides academic accommodations for students while strengthening partnerships with the campus community to eliminate barriers and raise disability awareness.

The office serves about 800 students who self-identify as having a disability, which can range from being Deaf and hard of hearing to having a learning disability, a physical impairment or other identified disability.

"What we're trying to do is create that environment where they are at the same level as their peers," says director Jennie Johnson. "I think sometimes people think it's an advantage, but it's really putting them at that same level, giving them that same opportunity. I like to say we provide access, we don't provide success. Students have to put in that effort. They have to put in that work in order to be successful. We just make sure that they're given the tools they need to be able to do the work."

Incoming students have to provide verification of disability and must apply for services before meeting with an access specialist to determine the help they need. The services offered to students vary depending on disability, but include:

- Testing accommodations such as extra time or access to enlarged print.
- Accessible materials like text-to-speech software or blue or pink paper if color helps a student focus.
- Note-taking services such as a volunteer note taker or a digital recorder to record lectures so a student can focus in the classroom.
- Transportation for those who have a temporary disability or a severe physical limitation.
- Assisted technology like a Livescribe smartpen that records while being used to write notes.
- American Sign Language interpreting or captioning.

The most requested service is for testing accommodations, which can be justified for a variety of reasons, Johnson says. Maybe someone

has a learning disability or a visual impairment that makes taking a test a little harder or longer. Note taking is also much needed and seems to have grown a lot over the years, Johnson says.

Silva has received testing accommodations and note-taking services throughout her undergraduate and graduate studies at Fresno State. She gets time-and-a-half beyond the allotted testing time to take her exams, separately from her peers. She can also request someone to read to her if needed. And Silva gets help from a note taker in case the professor is speaking too fast in class and she can't keep up with her own note taking. She stresses that she is responsible for taking her own notes, but having an extra set of hands is helpful.

Services for Students with Disabilities has eight full-time staff members and 17 hourly employees who work as interpreters and captioners. The office also employs student assistants for the front desk and to work on the production of accessible materials. The program also works with other departments across campus, including TRiO Student Support Services - Disabilities.

Silva was accepted into the TRiO program, which helps students develop the academic skills and personal development to complete a college degree. Now she is a mentor, helping other students with disabilities on the road to success.

"It feels good to be helping people out and to tell them, 'Hey, look I'm doing it,'" Silva says. "I'm breaking the barriers that say people with learning disabilities can't do it. If I can do it, you can do it, too."

— BoNhia Lee is a writer in University Communications at Fresno State.



Cary Edmondson

First Sign of Success

An inspiring tale of one student's path to earning a doctoral degree

By Melissa Tav | Photos by Cary Edmondson

Erin Ruiz and Dianna Clayton have attended hundreds of hours of physical therapy classes, clinics and even a complex cadaver and anatomy lab during the past three years — but they're not the ones who just graduated with a doctoral degree. That would be Qiaofei Catherine Obrero, who, in May, became the first Deaf graduate in the program's history.

As two of her American Sign Language interpreters, Ruiz and Clayton were by Obrero's side through every lecture, evaluation, shoulder rotation and knee bend en route to her doctoral of physical therapy degree.

"We have all been on this doctoral journey together," Obrero says. "I don't think I would have had the confidence or growth I have now had it not been for the immense support of my interpreters and the many doors they opened for me."

Throughout the three-year doctoral program, Ruiz and Clayton worked directly with Obrero for six to nine hours most days, and even on occasional weekends. They say it was inspiring to see what Obrero accomplished at the University.

"It's been really special to witness how much Qiaofei has grown from our initial meeting when she first started at Fresno State to where she is now," Clayton says. "As an interpreter, you get to see a lot of moments that others don't, from their victories to their disappointments. With Qiaofei, I saw her through all of these moments and watched how much she flourished in the field."



"It's been really special to witness how much Qiaofei has grown from our initial meeting when she first started at Fresno State to where she is now. As an interpreter, you get to see a lot of moments that others don't, from their victories to their disappointments. With Qiaofei, I saw her through all of these moments and watched how much she flourished in the field."



DIANNA CLAYTON

Lead interpreter and communications coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities

◀ Physical therapist Qiaofei Catherine Obrero hopes to one day return to her birth family's village in China to care for residents and children at the orphanage where she spent her earliest years. In May, Obrero became the first Deaf graduate in the history of Fresno State's Doctoral of Physical Therapy program.

Redefining Health Care

Born in the Zhejiang Province of China, Obrero was adopted as a toddler by Leo and Patty Obrero, who raised her and her siblings in Reedley. At a young age, Qiaofei (pronounced Ch-yow-fay) Obrero experienced hearing loss that got progressively worse over time, ultimately leading to complete deafness in one ear and severe deafness in the other.

Throughout her life, Obrero relied on hearing aids and a cochlear implant to hear, and lip reading and visual cues to communicate. She did not learn American Sign Language until she attended community college.

Despite her challenges, Obrero aspired toward a career in health care. As a child, she recalls her parents encouraging words and gentle reminders that a career in health care was possible, but might not come easy.

Obrero experienced this firsthand and remembers hospital visits where interpreters were either inaccessible or difficult to find. As the patient, she realized early on how important communication and language access in the medical field truly is.

“My drive to pursue a career in physical therapy comes from the natural belief that no person should have to walk into a doctor’s office and wonder if they will have issues with communication or language access,” Obrero says. “After all, everyone deserves to understand their own health needs.”

While observing hours at a local physical therapy clinic, Obrero had the opportunity to work with a Deaf child. Although they were years apart, their ability to communicate via sign language forged a momentary bond between them that no one else understood. For Obrero, that life-changing moment — as well as the ability to work with patients one on one in a close, intimate setting — affirmed her passion for the physical therapy profession.

A Campus that Cares

When Obrero first arrived on the Fresno State campus in fall 2015, she was taken aback by the amount of support she received. Prior to Fresno State, Obrero attended a college in Oregon and says she did not receive the proper accommodations



“In our center, we really like to emphasize open communication and collaboration with our students. They need to know their voices are important when determining reasonable accommodations.”



JENNIE JOHNSON
Director of Services for Students with Disabilities

◀ Dianna Clayton (top left) served as one of the primary American Sign Language interpreters for Qiaofei Catherine Obrero while she pursued her doctoral degree. Obrero credits her interpreters for being by her side for lectures, labs and patient evaluations throughout her time as a student.



◀ American Sign Language interpreter Erin Ruiz (left) is dedicated to helping Fresno State’s Deaf and hard of hearing students like Qiaofei Catherine Obrero get the necessary services to excel on campus while preparing for their professional careers.

needed for her to learn effectively. Without access to interpreters, Obrero had to study even harder just to keep up with her classmates. Eventually, she decided to move closer to home, and she says it’s one of the best decisions she has made.

At Fresno State, Obrero utilized interpreting and captioning services offered through the Services for Students with Disabilities center on campus. These services were essential in her pursuit of her bachelor’s degree in kinesiology (exercise science), and later as she excelled in her doctoral program.

The on-campus center works to cultivate a community that is inclusive of students with disabilities by providing equal opportunities for academic success. It ensures students, like Obrero, receive individualized care according to their specific needs.

“In our center, we really like to emphasize open communication and collaboration with our students,” says Jennie Johnson, director of Services for Students with Disabilities at Fresno State. “They need to

know their voices are important when determining reasonable accommodations. For Qiaofei, we collaborated with faculty from the physical therapy program to ensure we had the right accommodations in place for her. The more open communication and collaboration we have, the easier it is to ensure access for our students.”

Obrero was among 23 students on campus who required sign language interpreting services, as well as real-time captioning. Ruiz and Clayton were two of Obrero’s five core interpreters during her time at Fresno State.

Clayton is the lead interpreter and communications coordinator on campus. Her role is to ensure students’ accommodations are met in accordance with communication accessibility. She works closely with Ruiz, who is the lead interpreter for the Office of Innovation and Digital Excellence for Academic Success. Ruiz coordinates interpreting services for faculty and staff, but also served as Obrero’s interpreter.

► As of 2015, a doctoral degree is required to become a licensed physical therapist, according to the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education. Of 18 accredited physical therapy programs in the state, the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Fresno State is the only one of its kind in the San Joaquin Valley. Since 2012, an average of 34 students have been enrolled each year into the three-year program.



“Services for Students with Disabilities has been my safe place. They have stepped in and advocated for me, and helped me navigate challenging situations.”

QIAOFEI CATHERINE OBRERO
Doctoral of Physical Therapy graduate

A Doctoral Journey

Together, they have long, but fulfilling days in their roles. A typical day for Ruiz or Clayton (oftentimes, both) included attending physical therapy classes, labs or clinical placements with Obrero, which ranged from one to three hours at a time. Because of the mental and physical toll of the role, it often required two interpreters accompany Obrero.

As interpreters, Ruiz and Clayton got an inside lens into the challenging three-year doctoral program — and even learned a thing or two themselves.

Other than a professor teaching five days a week, there may not be anyone on campus who has attended as many classes as Obrero’s interpreters.

“You only retain probably about 30% of what you interpret if you’re really paying attention,” Ruiz says with a laugh. “However, Qiaofei taught us a lot. She was very patient at the beginning of her program since we had to learn anatomy and about different techniques and terminology. She would teach us before or after class what things meant, which was really helpful. Being part of her college experience was such an honor.”

Clayton and Ruiz both earned their bachelor’s degrees in interpreting from Fresno State, and soon after graduating in 2008 began working as interpreters for the University. At most campus events, the two of them can be seen at the front of the room, their hands moving quickly and swiftly. In essence, they are the line

of communication for those who can’t hear. But according to Obrero, they are more than that.

The trio built a close relationship outside of the classroom, spending time together and with others from the local Deaf community.

When asked why the center has been so impactful to her, Obrero takes a deep breath and thinks carefully about her answer.

“Services for Students with Disabilities has been my safe place,” Obrero says. “They have stepped in and advocated for me, and helped me navigate challenging situations. The immense support I received was a deciding factor on why I wanted to stay here for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program.”

► Qiaofei Catherine Obrero's hard work as a Doctoral of Physical Therapy student culminated on May 21 when she celebrated her graduation with a hooding ceremony at the Save Mart Center.

Honoring Home

According to the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, there are about 9,600 Deaf individuals, ages 18 through 49, who have earned a doctorate degree in the U.S. For doctorate degrees specifically in health care, that number is even slimmer. Of the 750 Deaf individuals working as physical therapists, 198 have a doctoral degree.

"Qiaofei had to work twice as hard to process information, but her desire to achieve her doctorate was worth all the obstacles she faced," says Dr. Jenna Sawdon-Bea, chair of the Department of Physical Therapy at Fresno State. "Qiaofei not only brings a very unique set of skills to the physical therapy profession, but an awareness and understanding about Deaf culture that is much needed in this field."

For Obrero, Fresno State will always be the place that gave her a profound sense of identity. She considers the tight-knit campus her home.

Obrero says earning her doctorate is a special way to honor her family in the U.S. who provided her limitless possibilities, and also her birth family in China, whom she reconnected with in 2018.

Obrero has vivid memories of watching her birth mother suffer from chronic neck pain, the result of carrying wood

750
Deaf individuals work in the
U.S. as physical therapists

ONLY 198
Have a doctoral degree

she had to sell as a child. Obrero's greatest hope is to one day return to her birth family's village, this time as a licensed physical therapist, to help her family and residents, as well as children at the orphanage where she spent her earliest years of life.

But, for now, she plans to stay and serve local.

"I'm excited for what's next and to see what other doors open up," Obrero says. "The Central Valley has given me so much in terms of community and connections, and I can't wait to give back."

As for her interpreters, a smile forms on Obrero's face as she says, "I wish they could come with me — but I know we'll always be connected."



— Melissa Tav is a communications specialist in the College of Health and Human Services at Fresno State.

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State**



To support dedicated students like Qiaofei Catherine Obrero, as well as Deaf education at Fresno State, visit <https://bit.ly/magazinegive>, use your smart phone's camera feature to scan this QR code or mail a check payable to Fresno State Foundation, to:

California State University, Fresno
5200 N. Barton Ave., ML49
Fresno, CA 93740-8023



◀ University President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval (left) presents his red Bulldogs necktie to Joseph Slotnick, who, along with his wife Mary, gifted \$1 million to support graduate-level Deaf education at Fresno State.

A Gift of an Education

Longtime University supporter gives \$1 million to support graduate-level Deaf education

By Chuck Radke

When Joseph Slotnick was 3 years old, spinal meningitis took from him the ability to hear. It was the 1930s, a time when Deaf children were rarely given an opportunity at an education. But Joseph's parents, Dr. Morris M. and Esther B. Slotnick, advocated for their son, ultimately laying the foundation for his graduation from Harvard and his success as a computer engineer.

▶ The Silent Garden at Fresno State was established by professor emeritus Dr. Paul W. Ogden (back), a longtime friend of Joseph and Mary Slotnick.



Claire Takahashi

To honor the memory of his parents, Slotnick and his wife, Mary, recently gifted \$1 million to establish the Joseph S. Slotnick Distinguished Fellowship in the Silent Garden to support graduate-level Deaf education within the Department of Communicative Sciences and Deaf Studies at Fresno State.

"This heartfelt and transformative endowment from Joe and Mary Slotnick will continue to make a lasting impact," says Dr. Denise Seabert, dean of the College of Health and Human Services. "This gift provides limitless opportunities for our faculty in Deaf education to expand their service and research in this growing field."

The Silent Garden supports free educational programs and outreach for the region's Deaf and hard of hearing community and was established by Fresno State professor emeritus Dr. Paul W. Ogden, a longtime friend of the Slotnicks.

Fortunately for Slotnick, his parents believed in education regardless of his ability to hear. They sent him to one of the nation's few boarding schools for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he excelled.

After graduating from eighth grade, Slotnick entered a private high school for hearing students and was immediately advanced to his sophomore year. He quickly adapted



▶ Scholarship recipient Jessica Ceballos (left) presents Joseph and Mary Slotnick (right and center) with a token of appreciation. The Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Studies at Fresno State, with the support of people like the Slotnicks, helps ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing children have full access to educational and professional opportunities.



to learning in the hearing world, graduated fourth in his class of 28, and went on to study at Harvard University. With encouragement from his father, a mathematician and himself a Harvard graduate, Slotnick became the fifth Deaf person to graduate from the university. He did so without the help of note-takers or interpreters.

Slotnick went on to have a long career in computer programming and systems analysis including work with System Development Corporation, a pioneer in computer software. He was also involved with the development of the TTY telecommunication device for the Deaf or hard of hearing.

"Having highly trained teachers early in life proved critical to my success, and my hope is that my gift will allow

Fresno State to continue to educate qualified teachers of the Deaf now and forever," Slotnick says. "This is my lasting legacy as well as that of my parents."

The Slotnicks also have an established scholarship within the College of Health and Human Services to directly support Deaf education and interpreting students.

The Deaf education program at Fresno State trains graduates to work with Deaf and hard of hearing children, their families and other professionals. The program's goal is to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing children have full access to educational and professional opportunities. More than 1,500 alumni have graduated from the program.



A Winning MINDSET

40 years in the making: The story of the team that started it all for Bulldog softball

By Eddie Hughes

The fall issue of Fresno State Magazine recognized 100 moments and milestones that helped shape Fresno State athletics. Within that feature were numerous achievements from one of the most storied programs on campus – Bulldog softball.

It's a program that, for decades, proved to be one of the nation's elite. A national record 30 straight NCAA Tournament appearances. Twelve Women's College World Series appearances. A national championship. Attendance records. All-Americans. Olympians.

But before any of that came the team that started it all.



A **Back row** (L-R): Donna Pickel (coach), Kim Muratore, Alyce Rodriguez (kneeling), Barbara Cambria, Caroline Mullin, Ella Vilche, Edna Figueroa, Rene Polanco, Debbie Camacho, Shell Voorhees, Sue Tompkins (trainer), Rhonda Williams.

Front row (L-R): Barbara Avila (assistant coach), unidentified, Judy Tucker, Denise Ketcham, Wende Ward, Janee Silva, Denise Fabris, Sandra Taylor, Roberta Garcia.

B Catcher Denise Ketcham.

C All-America pitcher Wende Ward.

D Fresno State softball advanced to the first-ever Women's College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska, finishing as the national runner-up.



The year was 1982. Coach Donna Pickel had previously coached both women's basketball and softball, but shifted her focus solely to softball (and teaching) at the University. It was the first year Pickel was able to hire part-time assistant coaches (Barbara Avila and Ralph Salazar).

Most of the softball players on campus were not heavily recruited, nor did they receive scholarships — but they did receive one unit of course credit for signing up to play.

Denise Ketcham, who later became a standout catcher, recalls learning about the team in 1979 as a student when she picked up a copy of The Daily Collegian student newspaper. After seeing the team practice, she remembers chasing down Coach Pickel near her office in the South Gym.

"I honestly ran Donna down in the hallway and said, 'Excuse me, excuse me, how do I sign up for that team?'" Ketcham recalls. "And Donna said, 'Well, it's in the course catalog under Women's Intercollegiate Athletics.'"

A couple years later, 1982 marked the first year college softball teams competed within the NCAA, after previously being governed by Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (IAIW). Pickel led the team to a 43-11 record, including 17-3 in the NorCal conference before advancing to the first-ever Women's College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska.

"Maybe at the time we didn't realize, but now, looking back, that was a big thing," Pickel says.

After an early setback to Western Michigan, the Bulldogs beat Oklahoma

State, Nebraska and Arizona State to earn a spot in the national championship game against UCLA. They battled to extra innings, eventually losing 2-0 to All-American pitcher Debbie Doom and the Bruins.

"We didn't know we were supposed to lose," Ketcham says. "We knew we had a good team. We didn't talk about it, but we just knew. Losing was never in our mindset, no matter who we played."

The Bulldogs had an All-American pitcher of their own in junior Wende Ward, who went on to become the first softball player at Fresno State to have her jersey (No. 19) retired in 1987. They also had freshman Barbara Cambria in the circle, who that year threw the first perfect game in program history (Ward threw the second perfect game one month later).

When the team flew home, they were surprised by a group of about 100 Red Wavers waiting to greet them at the airport and they cheered as Ketcham carried the national runner-up trophy out of the airplane and down the stairs to the runway.

“I remember I wanted that trophy in my hands,” Ketcham says. “There was a crowd of people to greet us. I think we were all pretty surprised by it. We could see them from the windows of the airplane and it was like, ‘Wow, look at that, they’re here to greet us.’”

Forty years later, Pickel saw footage of that airport greeting for the first time, thanks to the ABC30 archives. Because her mother had passed just a few months earlier, Pickel drove to Oklahoma after the national championship to check on her father for a few days while most of the team flew home.

“I was shocked to see such a crowd,” says Pickel upon seeing that footage for the first time.



Courtesy of ABC30

“You don’t know the impact you’re going to have on people. Maybe those teams that came after us didn’t understand or recognize the impact that ’82 team had on the softball program, but over time our team came to appreciate that. Somebody had to be the torchbearer.”

DENISE KETCHAM

There were about 100 fans there that day at the airport — but it was only a sign of what was to come for Fresno State softball. The Bulldogs parlayed that success into a return to the Women’s College World Series and a fifth-place finish in 1984, before Pickel retired in 1985.

Her successor, Margie Wright, led the Bulldogs back to the Women’s College World Series 10 times from 1987 to 1999, including three consecutive runner-up finishes from 1988 to 1990. In 1998, the Bulldogs won the national championship — the University’s first Division I team national title in any sport.

Fresno State softball had become a true national powerhouse — and it all started with that unassuming 1982 team, a group of women who bonded together, played for the love of the game and just won and won and won while crashing the biggest party in college softball.

◀ Fresno State’s 1982 team started a string of a national-record 30 straight NCAA Tournament appearances — in the first 30 years the tournament existed. The Bulldogs have been to 12 Women’s College World Series, beginning with that 1982 appearance.

Sixteen years later, Ketcham says it “gave me chills” watching the national championship parade and seeing the firetruck carrying the team down Cedar Avenue while then-athletics director Al Bohl described Nina Lindenberg’s game-winning home run from the 1-0 win over Arizona in the final.

Prior to that, in 1996, Fresno State opened its new venue — Bulldog Diamond — which was the largest on-campus softball stadium in the country. It was renamed Margie Wright Diamond in 2014, and to this day boasts the all-time NCAA record for a regular season crowd — 5,724 fans watched Fresno State vs. Arizona on March 14, 2000. The Bulldogs also hold the all-time NCAA record for regular season attendance with a combined 55,746 fans in 1999.

A meteoric rise for a softball program that Pickel started as an on-campus club in 1976. Perhaps it was that 1982 season that showed what Fresno State was capable of on the diamond. Perhaps those 100 people greeting the team at the airport were foreshadowing of the thousands that would fill the nation’s best stadium.

And perhaps the scholarship endowment the 1982 team is now starting will help ignite a spark as the Bulldogs work to return to prominence under new coach Stacy May-Johnson.

“You don’t know the impact you’re going to have on people,” Ketcham says. “Maybe those teams that came after us didn’t understand or recognize the impact that ’82 team had on the softball program, but over time our team came to appreciate that. Somebody had to be the torchbearer.”

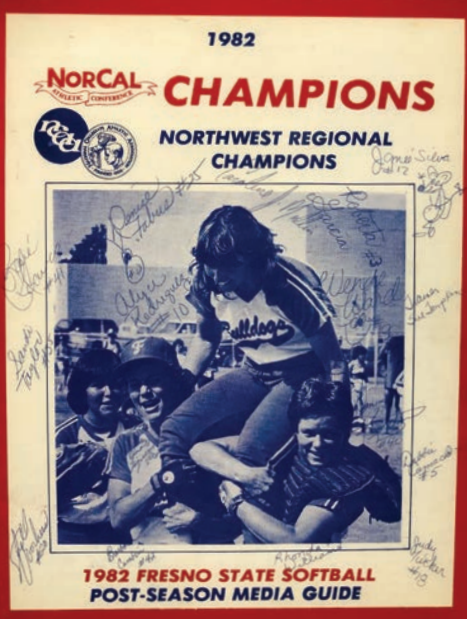
— Eddie Hughes is the senior editor for Fresno State Magazine.



Samuel Marshall

▲ **Back row** (L-R): Edna Figueroa, Barbara Cambria, Denise Fabris, Wende Ward, Roberta Garcia, Sandra Taylor, Ralph Salazar, Ella Vilche, Donna Pickel, Rene Polanco.
Front row (L-R): Kim Muratore, Denise Ketcham, Alyce Rodriguez, Rhonda Williams, Judy Tucker-Shaubach, Barbara Avila.
Not pictured: Caroline Mullin, Janee Silva, Shell Voorhees, and Debbie Camacho (deceased).

▶ In 1982, Fresno State finished 43-11, including 17-3 in the NorCal conference, under coach Donna Pickel before beating Oklahoma State, Nebraska and Arizona State to earn a spot in the national championship game vs. UCLA.



A Responsibility to **HELP**

A relentless advocate for children's mental health, Alma Lopez makes her alma mater proud

By Angel Langridge

Alma Lopez could hear the school's band performing as she walked through the doors of the Livingston Middle School cafeteria for an unscheduled assembly. Her confusion grew as she glanced inside the building and saw her family, the principal who hired her years earlier, members of the school board and many of the students she works with daily. Apparently, she was the last to hear the news.

The assembly was scheduled in her honor — Lopez had been named National Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association.

Lopez learned she was both the first Californian, and first Latina, to win the award. "Once the dust settled, I realized, oh my gosh, I am the face of California — the first one. I am this Latina, from a rural community. What a moment, what an honor, what a responsibility," Lopez says.

Lopez, a Fresno State alumna, has relentlessly advocated to have counseling services available to students at each of the six school sites in the Livingston Union School District, located just over an hour north of Fresno.

As one of five counselors now within the district, Lopez has helped implement a survey giving students the option to express interest in talking to a school counselor. Prior to the pandemic, few students responded to the survey. Now, about 200 students have requested to talk to a school counselor, and Lopez and her team have followed up with each individual.

"Sometimes our heart is broken, our mind is struggling, and so we need to get some support for that and that support could come in a variety of different ways," Lopez says. "I can be that starting point to help them get through it or help them get to the next resource that can provide the service that is more appropriate for them as they go through difficult times."

She says that the counselors' work during the pandemic has meant more accessibility. Technology has enabled them to have easier access to stakeholders. Many parents in her community work in the fields or production plants so they can use Zoom on a break rather than taking a full day off work.

Born the middle child, with four siblings, and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, Lopez grew up in Lathrop,

Cary Edmondson

► Fresno State alumna Alma Lopez was named the National Counselor of the Year by the American School Counselor Association. She has relentlessly advocated to have counseling services available to students at each of the six school sites in the Livingston Union School District.



"What I found is if we give young people space and give them a little bit of an idea, they'll run with it, and they will do some amazing things."

ALMA LOPEZ

National Counselor of the Year
by the American School Counselor
Association

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Cary Edmondson

► Fresno State alumnus Jorge Arteaga, the principal at Livingston Middle School, says National Counselor of the Year Alma Lopez helped justify why every school in the district needed a full-time counselor.

a town of just over 20,000 about nine miles south of Stockton.

Her family had one vehicle, so she carpoled to school. If that fell through, the principal, with his infant daughter, would pick her and her siblings up and take them home when he got off work. Lopez says he taught her the importance of noticing a problem and taking action.

In high school, Lopez remembers seeing a classmate wearing a Fresno State T-shirt. She started asking questions about the University and it made her start thinking about the opportunities born from a college education.

Fresno State was the only college she applied to. If she didn't get accepted, she figured she would find a job and help her family.

She got accepted and her first visit to Fresno was when she asked her parents for a ride when she moved into her Graves Hall dorm. During the nearly two-hour drive, she realized how hard it

was for them to let her go as she was their first child to go to college.

To pay tuition, she participated in the Work Study Program, working in marketing for the Craig School of Business at Fresno State. Incredibly shy in college, her speech classes helped her overcome her fears of public speaking.

Lopez earned two degrees, a bachelor's in psychology, with a minor in speech communication, and a master's in school counseling with a Pupil Personnel Services credential.

She has worked at Livingston Middle School for 15 years. "When I came to this community and started working with the middle school kids, I saw that they are amazing human beings who are far more compassionate, empathetic and kind than a lot of people," Lopez says.

Her knowledge and expertise allowed her to contribute to the conversation about youth mental health and she wanted to be part of making

a difference. Lopez met with her superintendent to advocate for a dedicated school counselor at each school site. Ultimately, he said they would invest \$500,000 and put a counselor at every building, a huge investment for a rural community with 2,500 students.

"She has been relentless in ensuring that all our schools have a counseling program," says Jorge Arteaga, a Fresno State alumnus and principal at Livingston Middle School. "She was relentless working toward justifying why every school needed a full-time counselor."

When she was 7 years old, Brianna Sobrebilla, now an eighth-grade student, met with Lopez for the first time. Sobrebilla had behavioral issues and acted on impulse. She learned how to solve problems, control her actions and de-escalate situations.

"I am thinking about becoming a counselor because of the impact that Ms. Alma has made on me. It has inspired me to want to help other people when I grow up," Sobrebilla says.

Learning about a program in Colorado, she created the BIONIC team: Believe It Or Not I Care. It grew from five students to 50 students. "What I found is if we give young people space and give them a little bit of an idea, they'll run with it, and they will do some amazing things," Lopez says.

Principal Arteaga agrees. "Miss Alma is one of those role models. She doesn't just come to work to do the counseling job, she comes to work trying to make a difference in kids' lives and in this community."



— Angel Langridge is the executive assistant in University Communications at Fresno State.

CLASS NOTES



1960s

Leroy Goehring (1966) retired after working 55 years in agriculture.

Faith Wilding (1965), a renowned feminist artist, writer and educator who is a visiting scholar at Brown University, collaborated with Harry Gould Harvey IV on an exhibition, "Arrows of Desire," at Brown University's David Winton Bell Gallery.

1970s

Marie Baker (1977) is now director of the Idaho Small Business Development Center (Southwestern Idaho).

Marga Cooley (1976) is managing editor for Santa Maria California News Media, Inc.



Brian Lehman (1978, '81) published the crime thriller novel "Finders Takers" in May 2021. He previously published the Vietnam War novel "War Paint" in 2019.

Joseph Oldham (1975), founder and CEO of New Vision Aviation and a Central Valley native, will pilot an electric plane in an effort to set a world record for longest flight powered by renewable energy.

Darrell O'Sullivan (1972) retired as a microbiologist, clinical laboratory scientist and chief administrative officer in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of California, Davis Medical Center.

1980s

Marlon Hall (1982, '91), a longtime educator who has six college degrees, was named interim president of Fresno City College.



Steve Hosey, who helped the Bulldogs advance to the College World Series before becoming a first-round draft pick of the San Francisco Giants, is now an assistant coach for the Fresno State baseball team.



Robert A. Jensen (1988) is a crisis management expert and chairman of Kenyon International Emergency Services, a global leader in disaster recovery and handling disasters involving mass fatalities.

Jensen served as CEO for 18 years. His story was published in a memoir from Macmillan/St Martin's Press.

Bret Kofford (1982) was the primary screenwriter for the award-winning feature film "Christmas in July," which showed in theaters and is now available for viewing on streaming platforms

including Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Google Play, YouTube and Fandango. Kofford also is a full-time lecturer in writing and film at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley.

Cesilia Lomeli (1982) was announced as Cambria's 2021 Citizen of the Year.

Bill Merz (1982) and his son, Anthony, are the co-founders of San Rucci Winery.



Brian Panish (1980) was ranked No. 1 on The Super Lawyers list by 2022 Southern California Super Lawyers.

Tom Wolfe (1982) retired after 31 years with Stanislaus County as an environmental health specialist and solid waste manager.

1990s



Tamara L. Boeck (1990), a Stael Rives LLP partner, was named 2022 president of the Construction Lawyers Society of America. Boeck, who is also a society advisory board member, was

inducted as a fellow of the society in 2017. She was named construction law Lawyer of the Year in Sacramento in 2020 by Best Lawyers.

Diana Cano (1991), who has more than 20 years of human resources experience, launched DC Human Resources Consulting.



Julie Cleeland (1980) has been CEO at EYE-Q Vision Care in Fresno since 2012. She previously worked 18 years at Community Medical Centers in various administration, business development and marketing positions.

Jami Hamel De La Cerda (1994) is the founder of the Diamond Learning Center in Clovis, which serves adults with intellectual disabilities.

Moses Diaz (1999) was appointed city attorney by the City of Corcoran.

Tara Gomez (1998) is the owner of Camins 2 Dreams, which focuses on natural winemaking using grapes sourced from Sta. Rita Hills in Santa Barbara County.



Robin Johnston McGehee (1998) is one of six alums from all 23 California State University campuses selected for the online project "How I Got Here." In 2015, she received the

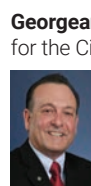
Top Dog Alumna Award from the Fresno State Alumni Association on behalf of the Division of Research and Graduate Studies. McGehee is also featured in the "Made in the CSU" series.

Paul Nerland (1996) was named Fresno County administrative officer.

Soma Norodom (1993), the Cambodian princess, author and philanthropist, was featured on ABC30 for Women's History Month. She has returned to Fresno to serve the Valley.

Ann L. Sin (1996), a Clovis teacher, was featured on an episode of "The Price is Right" on Jan. 21.

Kristina Tons (1995) was named national Distinguished Teacher of the Year by the Mensa Foundation.



Georgeanne White (1992) was named city manager for the City of Fresno.

Jim Yovino (1989) is retiring as Fresno County superintendent of schools.

2000s

Ryan Banks (2005, '11) is now deputy chief operating officer of Turning Point of Central California, Inc. He has worked for Turning Point, which serves people in need, for 18 years.

Lee Ann Eager (2002) is now chair of the State Transportation Commission.

Karl Federspiel (2004) is a success adviser for Ohio University.

Julio Puente Garcia (2009) received the Rudolfo Anaya Award at the International Latino Book Awards.

Yohei Ishihara (2008) works for Trend Micro Incorporated as a security evangelist.



Ryan Christopher Jones (2005) was awarded the 2022 American Mosaic Journalism Prize, a \$100,000 prize given to freelance journalists for excellence in long-form narrative or deep reporting about underrepresented groups. His photography and reporting have explored the intersecting identities of immigrant and farmworker communities in Central California and beyond.

Carlos Santos (2003) is an actor and comedian who was a guest on the "Doughboys" podcast.

Shannon (Sisk) MacAdam (2007) is now senior vice president for American Heart Association, Central Valley Division.

Todd Stermer (2001) was appointed as Fresno city clerk on Nov. 15.



Neftaly Vargas (2003) is now senior sales manager at Giddings Berries USA, where she will be focused on expanding the company's major retailer program and building out the company's sales and customer service teams.

David Vartanian (2008) and **Mehdi Brahim** co-founded Baseline Team, a streetwear clothing company, with former Fresno State basketball standouts **Hanna** and **Haley Cavinder**.



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Steven Were Omamo,
1986

ARTHUR SAFSTROM SERVICE AWARD



Sudarshan Kapoor,
Friend of Fresno State

OUTSTANDING ALUMNI



College of Arts and Humanities
Raymond S. Doumanian and
Jacqueline Doumanian,
1967, '83 / 1974, '81



College of Science and
Mathematics
William R. Silveira,
1999



Craig School of Business
Joshua Easterly,
1998



Division of Research and
Graduate Studies
Philip Neufeld,
1993, '15



Fresno State Library
Jason Hubbard,
2000, '02



Kremen School of Education
and Human Development
Violet L. Chuck,
1978



College of Health and
Human Services
David J. Pomaville,
1986



College of Social Sciences
Ana Jovel Melendez,
2005



Department of Athletics
Rod Higgins,
Alumnus



Division of Student Affairs
and Enrollment Management
Sabahudin Tricic,
1999, '06



Jordan College of Agricultural
Sciences and Technology
Jim Nielsen,
1967



Lyles College of Engineering
Joseph F. Pickett,
1994



► *Davante Adams starred for the Bulldogs in 2012 and 2013 before becoming arguably the NFL's top wide receiver.*

Cary Edmondson

2010s

Davante Adams, who has amassed 8,121 receiving yards and 73 touchdowns in his first 8 years in the NFL, signed with the Las Vegas Raiders and will reunite with his college quarterback Derek Carr.

Rory Appleton (2015) is now a pop culture reporter for Indystar.

Benjamin J. Armfield (2017) is now chief financial officer for Sonoma Valley Hospital.

Nathan Avedian (2015) does supply logistics for Walmart for various produce items.

Cory Ballis (2010), of Ballis Glass, started an open-air market at his east central Fresno storefront to give customers the opportunity to shop unique glassware pieces.

Sara Borjas (2010) is an acclaimed poet who will be part of the Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County's NEA Big Read program.

Carolyn Chase (2017) was named 2022 Florida National Guard Military Spouse of the Year. She received a similar honor in 2020 in California.

Josh Delano (2018), a Navy veteran, is an electrical engineer for PG&E, creating design work for electrical construction.

Gwendolyn Delgado (2014) is now assistant principal at Golden Valley High School in Santa Clarita Valley.

Monisha Edwards (2013) is the owner of Scent & Fire Candle Company.

Jasmin Guzman (2018) and Tony Quezada are the owners of Let's Roll Fresno, making rolled ice cream, crepes, coffee and more.



Rodney Mathews (2015), a former Fresno State football defensive back, was featured as a contestant on Season 18 of "The Bachelorette" on ABC.

Chris Mathys (2015) is running for Congress.

Marcus McMaryion (2019), the former standout quarterback for the Bulldogs, is launching an app that will connect high school and college athletes to his network of professional athletes.

Elsa Mejia (2015) was elected as a Madera city councilmember.



Lauren (Gaither) Nickerson (2010) is now associate vice president for University Communications at Fresno State. She was previously the director of marketing and communications for the Central California Faculty Medical Group.

Steve Ramirez (2014) and his company P. Steve Ramirez Vocational Services hosted its first golf

tournament on Oct. 22 at the Madera Golf and Country Club to provide scholarships to student-athletes at Madera, Madera South and Matilda Torres high schools.

Christopher Rodriguez (2019) will perform as part of the ensemble in "Bless Me, Ultima" for Opera Modesto.

Savannah Stoeckle (2019) is now assistant director for strategic communications with Fresno State Athletics. She is in her seventh year working for the department.

Kenny Wiggins (2010), a former Fresno State and NFL offensive lineman, is the owner of Mayweather Boxing and Fitness in Clovis.

2020s

Jamison Hill, a former Fresno State pitcher, made his Visalia Rawhide debut after being signed as an undrafted free agent by the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Bulldog Born, Bulldog Wed

A Nestor Ballion (2013) and David Colunga were married on March 26, 2021, in Sanger.

B Anabela Bettencourt (2005) and John Bettencourt welcomed their son, Koltyn Cristiano Bettencourt, on May 12, 2021.

C Ryan Vance (2018) and Vivian Tong were married Oct. 10 in Cincinnati.

D Dana Worth (2010) and **Andrew Worth** (2015) welcomed their second child, Paisley Emersyn, on April 11.



FRESNO STATE

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BULLDOG SPIRIT

Fresno State football alumni from all generations gathered for a special reception at the home of alumnus Lyn FauntLeRoy (1979-80) with Jeff Tedford and the Bulldogs coaching staff in April. All together, this year's staff includes coaches who have either played or coached in each of the past six decades dating back to the 1970s. Fresno State opens a promising 2022 season with consecutive home games on Thursday, Sept. 1 vs. Cal Poly and Saturday, Sept. 10 vs. Oregon State.



IN MEMORIAM

‘For thee, our hopes and memories’

Elaine Barfknecht
Oct. 21, Fresno.

Wava Maurice Billingsley-Hocking, Bakersfield.

Nancy Bradley (1991),
Feb. 19, Sanger.

Lester S. Carlson (1957),
Oct. 16, Novato.

David Clark (1966),
March 14, Bakersfield.

Thelma Louise “Lucy” Crawford (1930),
Sept. 20, Fresno.

Mónica Cuevas,
Dec. 13, Fresno.

Valentine DiCerto (1977),
March 26, Fresno.

Anita Dodson, Jan. 31, Sanger.

Dennis Norbert Fode,
Sept. 20, Anchorage, AK.

Melinda Gorham (2001),
Dec. 12, Fresno.

Verdo Gregory (1944),
Jan. 20, Fresno.

Randall Griggs (1997),
Jan 9., Wausau, WI.

Julia Ann Hartley (1987),
Sept. 13, Concord.

Thomas James Hewitt,
April 2, Paso Robles.

Nathan Cavanaugh Hill
(2005), Sept. 17, Tulare.

Kurt Hishida (1989),
Sept. 3, Fresno.

James Hull (1957),
Dec. 26, Petaluma.

Eva Mae Ernestine Ivans,
Oct. 6, Fresno.

Susan Jensen (1991),
Sept. 18, Visalia.

Richard Johanson (2005),
April 27, Fresno.

Imogen Johns (1979),
Oct. 14, Tulare.

Isabelle Kabrielian (1959),
Jan. 24, 2021, Fresno.

Eugene Krum,
March 19, Fresno.

Hazel Olsen Larsen,
Nov. 13, Cambria.

Lance Frederick Mahoney
(1973), June 26, Fresno.

Thomas Ray McCord (1942),
Feb. 24, Fairview, TN.

Patrick McDowell,
Oct. 4, Healdsburg.

Donald McHatten (1977),
Sept. 29, Sanger.

Russell Minck, Jan. 3, Fresno.

T.C. Mohier, Oct. 23, Kingsburg.

Bonnie Jeanne Nelson (1948),
March 4, Carmel.

Richard Petter (1972),
Jan. 7, Santa Barbara.

Wilburn L. Poole (1978),
Oct. 3, Joplin, MO.

George Rogers (1971),
Feb. 5, Fresno.

Charles Sant’Agata (1957),
Feb. 16, Fresno.

Toamalama Scanlan (1998),
Oct. 12, Paramount.

Peter Sharkey, Oct. 22, Fresno.

John Shotton,
Oct. 8, Ashburn, VA.

Daniel Sniffin (1964),
Feb. 28, Fresno.

Betty Sweet (1931),
Jan. 9, Santa Maria.

Debra Taylor (1987),
Feb. 21, Fresno.

Melvin Wapner,
May 31, Fresno.

Jack Wilcox (1958),
March 21, Clovis.

Bruce Williford (1983),
Nov. 4, Fresno.

Curtis Allan Wood,
Oct. 25, Fortuna.

David V. Wyatt, (1966),
Feb. 7, 2021, Fresno

Richard Frank Yoo, May 30.

Michael Zimmerman (1974),
Jan. 17, Livermore.

FACULTY/STAFF

Sydney Bluestone,
Oct. 18, Fresno.

June Gill, Oct. 4, Carmel

Pauline Hatfield,
Jan. 11, Fresno.

Melvin Ray Helm Jr.,
Dec. 24, Fresno.

Helene Joseph-Weil,
July 18, San Jose.

Robert O’Neil,
Oct. 22, Kalispell, MO.

Paul Vander Meer,
Sept. 26, Vancouver, WA.

FRIENDS

Angela “Angie” DiLiddo,
May 4, Fresno.

Nicholas DiLiddo,
May 23, Fresno.

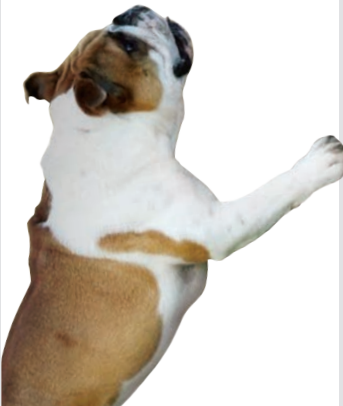
Grant Radford,
March 1, Fresno.

Helen Smades,
Feb. 24, Fresno.

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A Lasting Legacy
to Support Higher Education
and Physics Outreach

When it came time for MaryAnn Dews to plan her legacy,
Fresno State was at the top of her list.

MaryAnn was born and raised in Fresno and was in the very first three year class to graduate from Hoover High School. She graduated from Fresno Pacific College, now known as Fresno Pacific University, in 1970 with a B.A. in English literature, a minor in psychology, and obtained her lifetime K-9 teaching credential in 1971. MaryAnn went on to teach fifth grade at Carden School of Fresno for 25 years; she actively encouraged students to have a love of science and math.

Jon Dews, MaryAnn’s future husband, attended Fresno High School and earned his B.A. in physics at Fresno State in 1959. He went on to pursue his Ph.D. in physics and mathematics at UC Berkeley and then returned to Fresno State in 1965 to begin his teaching career.

MaryAnn and Jon were married in 1972.

As part of Jon’s job, he oversaw the astronomical telescopes that were then located on the roof of McLane Hall. Upon Jon’s retirement in 1991, he was awarded professor emeritus of physics, and Dr. Steven White was hired to replace him. White is currently the director of the Downing Planetarium.

In 1999, friends and faculty established the Dr. Jon R. Dews Physics Research Scholarship after Jon passed away. Each year the scholarship generates funds in Jon’s memory to support students pursuing a degree in physics. MaryAnn continues to contribute to the scholarship each year.

“Jon never had a day that he didn’t look forward to teaching his students.”

MaryAnn chose Fresno State for her planned gift because of Jon’s legacy. When she was teaching, Jon would come to her class and demonstrate various elements of physics to her students. He would bring lasers, liquid nitrogen and more to provide greater exposure to science through these “hands-on” activities and demonstrations. Because of Jon’s legacy, MaryAnn felt that supporting the College of Science and Mathematics with her gift made the most sense.

MaryAnn has designated her future gift to Fresno State to support the Physics Department, the Downing Planetarium and the Dr. Jon R. Dews Physics Research Scholarship. Her gift will go a long way to supporting future physics research and expanding community engagement through the Downing Planetarium.

The entire community will benefit from MaryAnn and Jon’s legacy.

To leave your legacy and enhance the education of students for generations to come, contact the Office of Planned Giving at **559.278.4038**.

Opening Soon

Construction is wrapping up on the Lynda and Stewart Resnick Student Union — set to open in September. The new \$65 million, 84,000-square-foot building was made possible by students in a 2017 fee referendum as well as a generous gift from the Resnicks and other private donors. Students will be able to access meeting spaces, lounge areas, retail dining options, a large-scale conference room and much more.

