

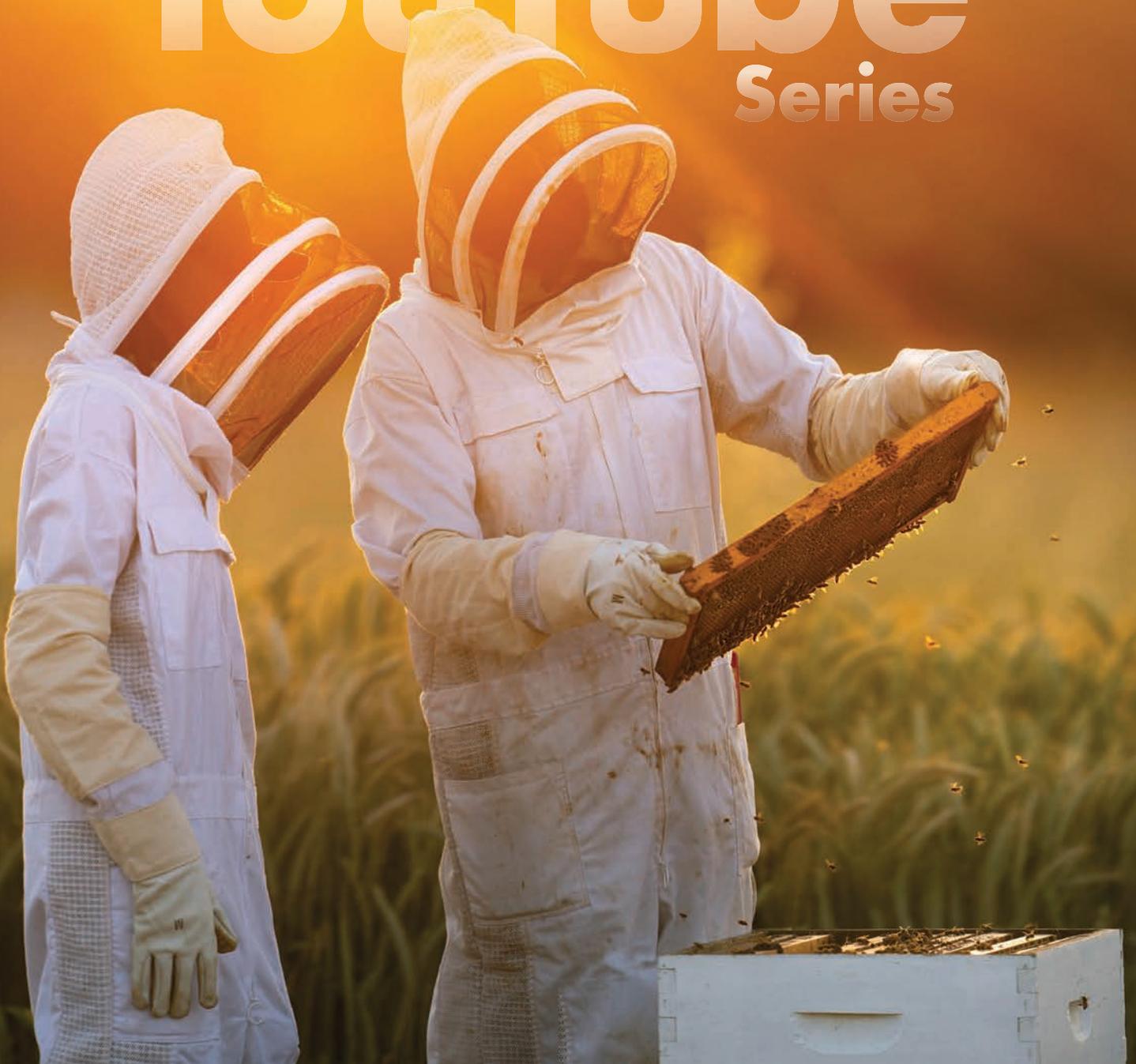
FRESNO STATE[®]

MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Classes So Cool,
They Could Be a

YouTube Series



Buzzing

With Purpose



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Some of the most unforgettable college moments happen not in lecture halls, but in the hands-on, one-of-a-kind classes that challenge us to see the world differently. That's the spirit behind Fresno State Magazine's new "Course Spotlight" series — a dynamic window into the instruction that our students never forget.

In this issue, you'll step into labs, test kitchens, fields and theaters — spaces buzzing with discovery — where faculty bring learning to life in remarkable ways. Whether students are developing innovative dairy products, studying the sensory science behind winemaking, constructing puppets for future classrooms or managing major entertainment venues, these courses reflect what makes a Fresno State education unique: real-world application, bold creativity and a deep connection to community.

These spotlights are just one glimpse of the extraordinary talent and impact found across our university.

Everywhere you look on campus, you'll find stories of perseverance, innovation and pride — told through the people who make this place special. Our faculty are advancing knowledge and mentoring the next generation of leaders. Our students represent the rich diversity of the Central Valley and bring with them a sense of purpose that drives change far beyond our campus. And our alumni are making a difference in boardrooms, classrooms, farms and clinics across the region and beyond.

Fresno State contributes nearly \$1 billion annually to the regional economy — a powerful reminder of our role as both an educational institution and an economic engine for the San Joaquin Valley.

In a time of constrained resources and tough choices, this impact has never been more important. Even amid budget reductions, our commitment to student success, inclusive excellence and community engagement remains unwavering. We will continue to advocate for the support needed to sustain the life-changing work that happens here every day.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in the mission of Fresno State, and for championing the people and programs that make this university — and this region — stronger.

Go 'Dogs!

Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Ph.D.
President, Fresno State

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!

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Senior Editor
Eddie Hughes ('05)

Senior Graphic Designer
Todd Graves ('03)

University Photographer
Cary Edmondson ('03)

Web Coordinator
Adriana Etchart Knutsen ('99)

Contributors
Lisa Bell ('95), **Jaguar Bennett**, **Victoria Cisneros Soto** ('19, '21), **Yesenia Fuentes** ('18), **Benjamin Kirk** ('22), **Angel Langridge** ('20), **BoNhia Lee**, **Marisa Mata** ('19), **Olivia Pape** ('19), **Jeff Phillips** ('11), **Jessica Piffero** ('09, '25), **Savannah Stoeckle** ('19), **Melissa Tav** ('07), **Daisy Thao** (student), **Geoff Thurner**.

President
Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval

Associate Vice President for University Marketing and Communications
Lauren Nickerson ('10)

Senior Director of Marketing and Communications
Ashley Ilic

Director of Strategic Communications
Esra Hashem ('13, '16, '21)

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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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Cover: Plant Science 170T "Bee Biology and Apiculture" is a unique course giving students the opportunity to learn about the biology of bees and how to care for hives in commercial or residential settings.

Left: The complex role of honeybees in agriculture has been a hot topic in recent years as society learns more about the critical role of bees in farmers' ability to grow food.

Fresno State Magazine

5200 N. Barton Ave., UL49
Fresno, CA 93740-8023

Phone: 559.278.2795



For change of name or address contact: advhelp@csufresno.edu or 559.278.4036.

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Capping it Off

Photo by Cary Edmondson

More than 6,000 new graduates were celebrated May 16 and 17 at Fresno State, including 153 international graduates from 35 nations across the globe.

As is tradition at the international convocation, graduates toss their caps in the air to celebrate, making for a picturesque moment. With an enrollment of more than 24,310 students, 574 come from other countries to study in the Central Valley.

Class of 2025 by the numbers:

About 68% of the graduating students in the class of 2025 are first-generation students whose parents do not have bachelor's degrees, while many others continue a proud family legacy of being second- or third-generation Bulldogs.

By sheer numbers of the 2025 graduating class, the College of Science and Mathematics is the largest with 1,042 graduates, followed by the College of Health and Human Services (1,008), College of Social Sciences (887), Kremen School of Education and Human Development (783) and Craig School of Business (760).

The following areas are the top five majors of students in the 2025 graduating class:

- Psychology (545).
- Liberal studies (429).
- Biology (197).
- Criminology-law enforcement (191).
- Kinesiology-exercise science (169).





▶ International graduate student Ayuba Abaka conducts research on nematode pests.

Dedicated to Research

Research continues to grow at Fresno State, allowing students, faculty and staff to advance scholarly and creative work that can benefit the campus and the greater community.

The university's R2 research designation, first earned in 2022, was renewed by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. An institution is designated R2 status if it awarded at least 20 research doctorates and had at least \$5 million in total research expenditures during the classification update year.

Fresno State awarded 25 research doctoral degrees and spent \$11.4 million on research expenditures in the 2022-23 academic year. The university offers a Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership (Ed.D.), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).

“The continued R2 designation shows that we are competitive and it recognizes the quality of the research work that is being done at our university.”



– **Dr. Jason Bush**
Interim associate vice president, Research and Sponsored Programs

“The continued R2 designation shows that we are competitive and it recognizes the quality of the research work that is being done at our university,” says Dr. Jason Bush, interim associate vice president of Research and Sponsored Programs at Fresno State. “The prestige of being an R2 institution also helps with recruitment of faculty and students and lets our community of potential donors know that we are a research university.”

Only eight of the 23 universities in the California State University system share this designation. This year, 139 institutions nationwide received the R2 designation. During the 2023-24 academic year, Fresno State received more than 400 grants and contracts for a total of \$78.3 million, setting a record in research funding for the sixth consecutive year.

– *BoNhia Lee*

New Central Utility Plant Complete

The project to replace and modernize the university's Central Utility Plant was completed in January. The 33-year public-private partnership between Meridiam, a leading infrastructure investment firm and sole owner of Bulldog Infrastructure Group and Fresno State to design, build, finance and maintain Fresno State's central utility infrastructure system. The project is funded through a 30-year green bond and equity provided by Meridiam.

This project was the first public-private partnership for major utility infrastructure in the CSU system. The project consists of replacing and modernizing the campus' Central Utility Plant, hot- and cold-water distribution network, and other energy conservation measures. The project installed a cost-effective mix of building efficiency and infrastructure improvements, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning controls; energy management systems with reliable HVAC delivery; and lighting and domestic hot water upgrades to reduce energy consumption and the university's carbon footprint.

The project guarantees energy savings of over 33% and a 73% reduction in natural gas usage. Going forward, the project will contribute to yearly reductions of 7,902 tons of carbon and 7 million gallons of water. During the project's underground works, 246 trees were successfully protected.

Other benefits to the community and campus include eight scholarship awards and 13 internships provided to date with two scholarship awards and one internship per year committed for the project duration.

– *Lisa Bell*

Project Benefits

33% energy savings

73% reduction in natural gas usage

Yearly reductions of:

▶ **7,902 tons** of carbon

▶ **7 million** gallons of water

246 trees protected

8 scholarship awards

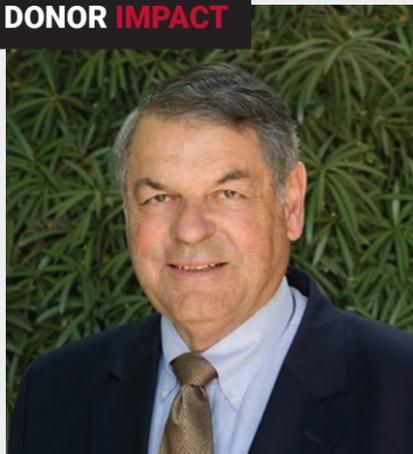
13 internships

▶ From left, Debbie Adishian-Astone, Fresno State vice president for Administration and chief financial officer emerita; Jeff Prickett, director of Facilities Operations and Services; Nicolas Rubio, CEO Americas for Meridiam; President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval; and Michael Bouwman, director of construction with NORESO, celebrate the ribbon cutting as live mascot Victor E. Bulldog IV stands by.



Cary Edmondson

DONOR IMPACT



Remembering Bill Lyles

Dr. William M. Lyles, an engineer, businessman, longtime community philanthropist and ardent supporter of Fresno State, passed away on March 26. He was 91.

"Bill Lyles and his family have been pillars of our community, embodying the true spirit of generosity, leadership and dedication," says Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval. "Bill's entrepreneurial vision and his commitment to empowering future generations have left an indelible mark on our university and the entire Central Valley. His legacy will continue to inspire and guide us, reminding us of the power of compassion, community and the pursuit of excellence. We are deeply grateful for the privilege of being part of Bill's lasting impact, one that exemplifies the very best of humanity."

As the leader of the Lyles Group for more than five decades, Dr. Lyles lived by the mantra, "joy is in the building." His passion for construction was rooted in his work with the family business, W. M. Lyles Co., which was founded in 1945 by his parents, Bill Sr. and Elizabeth Lyles, in Avenal. Dr. Lyles, a Purdue University civil engineering graduate and U.S. Navy officer, rejoined the family business after serving abroad.

In 1965, after the death of his father, the third-generation engineer assumed leadership of W. M. Lyles Co. Under his visionary direction, and with the support of his brother Gerald Lyles and a dedicated team of employees and partners, the company grew and evolved into Lyles Diversified Inc. His companies have been involved in construction, real estate, development, underground pipeline and utility construction, and heavy concrete and mechanical construction.

Dr. Lyles was a longtime strategic adviser and benefactor to Fresno State, assisting with numerous projects at the university. He served on the Craig School Business Advisory Council, the Maddy Institute Board of Directors, the Board of Governors for the California State University, Fresno Foundation and was a longtime member of the university's President's Circle. In recognition of his service, advocacy and contributions, Dr. Lyles was awarded the California State University, Fresno Foundation Service Award in 1999 for meritorious services or contributions made to Fresno and Fresno State, and, in 2001, was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters by the California State University trustees.

In 2003, Dr. Lyles partnered with Fresno State in creating the Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. A generous gift from the Lyles Family Foundation funded the dream of a new facility, which opened in April 2006. Another transformative contribution was his support of the Lyles College of Engineering at Fresno State. In 2008, Fresno State took a major step forward in educating more students in the Central

Valley for careers in engineering and construction management thanks to a generous gift from the Lyles family.

In 2017, Dr. Lyles was awarded the Fresno State Alumni Association's Arthur Safstrom Service Award which honors an alumna or alumnus, faculty, staff or friend of Fresno State who has made significant impact on the university through dedication of time, talent or treasure.

"Bill had an extraordinary passion for student success. He often spoke about the power of upward social mobility and deeply valued the opportunities available to students in the Lyles College of Engineering," says Dr. Ram Nunna, dean of the Lyles College. "In his meetings with students, he would share stories from his own life journey, expressing genuine admiration for their resilience and achievements — often moved to tears by their determination and dreams. The faculty, staff and students of the Lyles College of Engineering are forever grateful to Bill Lyles and the entire Lyles family for the lasting and transformational impact they have made on our college and community."

— *Esra Hashem*

"His legacy will continue to inspire and guide us, reminding us of the power of compassion, community and the pursuit of excellence."

— **Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval**
President, Fresno State



▶ **Dr. William M. Lyles (right) enjoyed meeting with students on campus and admired their achievements, says Dr. Ram Nunna (left), dean of the Lyles College of Engineering at Fresno State.**



Geoff Thurner

▶ **Fresno State horticulture nursery manager Ernesto Duran gives a presentation during an open house at the campus nursery.**

Greenhouse Upgrades

Before stepping into the role as nursery manager at the Fresno State Horticulture Unit over a year ago, Ernesto Duran had already witnessed how greenhouses can foster research and education to benefit students, researchers, industry professionals and the broader community.

As both a high school and college student, he worked alongside USDA research staff at the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center in Parlier.

Duran's expertise helped guide a series of renovations and upgrades at the Fresno State Horticulture Unit's greenhouse facilities. The facility features seven greenhouses — including one certified organic — a developing vertical farm, rose garden collection and a 10,000-square-foot lath house for shaded cultivation.

It also houses a propagation and tissue culture lab, a certified organic herb garden, a vegetable demonstration garden area with raised beds, two acres dedicated to student-led crop research/production and a plot for nursery-cut flower production.

Advanced automated systems for irrigation, ventilation, heating and

cooling are designed to boost efficiency while reducing operational costs. New technology allows staff to monitor and adjust these systems in real time from cloud-based software — ensuring optimal conditions are tailored to both plant needs and changing environmental factors.

The largest greenhouse has increased its growing capacity by more than 50% through the installation of rolling benches. The modernization of Fresno State's horticulture research facilities is one of several major initiatives funded by one-time state funding to help modernize campus farm facilities.

"These facilities will provide our students, faculty and staff with access to a state-of-the-art, controlled environment agriculture facility," says Dr. Rolston St. Hilaire, dean of the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology. Besides upgrading greenhouse irrigation and control systems to enhance energy and water efficiency, we're expanding student access, supporting research in greenhouse crop production and promoting sustainable management practices."

A vertical hydroponic farming system, generously donated by Jordan College supporter and local resident William Luper, is being installed and will serve as a demonstration of innovative techniques to maximize production space. Multiple generous donors have supported the ongoing upgrades and development of the horticulture unit.

Netafim contributed a variety of advanced irrigation systems, including a misting system for the propagation greenhouse, a field drip irrigation system and an overhead irrigation system for the lath house. Hanford Superior Soil Supplements donated a truckload of outdoor soil mix to support nursery production. Sun Gro Horticulture provided several quality soil products and supplements.

Additionally, Belmont Nursery, Dave Wilson Nursery, Sierra View Nursery and Tree Fresno donated a diverse selection of plants and trees to enhance the nursery's new garden, field and landscape renovations.

— *Geoff Thurner*

'DOG BYTES



New Women's Basketball Coach Introduced

Fresno State announced the hiring of Ryan McCarthy as the 12th head coach of the Fresno State women's basketball program on April 14.

"I am incredibly grateful to join the Fresno State family and serve as your women's basketball head coach," McCarthy says. "The direction the University is headed is very exciting, and the Valley is a place that my family and I are excited to become a part of."

McCarthy comes to the Valley from Alaska Anchorage, where he compiled a record of 309-67 (.822) in 13 seasons. A proven winner, his career head coaching record of 14 seasons is encapsulated by a 323-80 overall record.

"Ryan McCarthy is a winner. His track record speaks for itself, but what really stood out was his vision, his energy, and his relentless style of play," says Fresno State Director of Athletics Garrett Klassy. "His 'mayhem' system is going to bring a level of excitement and intensity that the Red Wave will absolutely love. Ryan is hungry to compete at the highest level, and he's ready to build something special here at Fresno State."

A six-time Great Northwest Athletic Conference Coach of the Year honoree, McCarthy led Alaska Anchorage to the NCAA national title game in 2016. Under McCarthy, the Seawolves produced six All-Americans and three conference players of the year.

To view McCarthy's introductory press conference, visit gobulldogs.com/mwn.

— Savannah Stoeckle



AROUND THE FOUNTAIN



A New Day of Giving Record

Community support for Fresno State's Day of Giving reached a new all-time high on March 26, with gifts totaling \$611,174, a 29.63% increase over the last Day of Giving in November 2023, and surpassing the previous record of \$550,366 in 2019. A heat map of all 50 states and around the world showed where donations came in from — representing 44 states and 12 countries.



High-powered KFSR

Fresno State broadcast radio station KFSR (90.7FM) replaced the station's aging broadcast tower, antenna and transmitter, increasing its broadcast power from 2600 to 4500 watts. With the improvements, listeners in the station's broadcast area will experience improved reception. Planning for the project began over 10 years ago. Thanks to the generosity of station donors, funding for the project was secured over the following years.

Health Reporting Fellowship

The Institute for Media and Public Trust at Fresno State launched a health reporting fellowship dedicated to uncovering and documenting the persistent health inequities faced by residents of the San Joaquin Valley, one of California's most underserved regions. Veteran journalist and alumnus Tim Sheehan will serve as the inaugural fellow, with a Fresno State journalism student acting as a research assistant while gaining valuable experience in investigative health journalism.



Carr Retires from NFL

Fresno State alumnus and New Orleans Saints quarterback Derek Carr announced his retirement on May 10 after an 11-year NFL career. A four-time Pro Bowler, Carr rewrote the Raiders' record book before joining the Saints in 2023. His 41,245 career passing yards rank 22nd all-time in the NFL, and his 257 touchdowns are tied for 22nd. Before graduating, Carr led the Bulldogs to Mountain West championships in 2012 and 2013, becoming the school's all-time leading passer.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

An Architect of Hope

Francine Velasco was born in Dubai, a city known for its innovative and ambitious architectural projects. However, she doesn't recall the glitz of skyscrapers, luxury malls or towering hotels. Instead, she remembers her family shared a cramped apartment with other Filipino migrant families.

Despite their material struggles, her family valued possibilities. Her mother was the first to attend college, supported by her grandmother's work abroad, while her father overcame poverty and periods of homelessness to earn a university scholarship. This perseverance shaped her journey.

Eventually, they immigrated to the United States, settling first in Rhode Island before making their way to Fresno, where her mother promised a brighter future. When Velasco received a full scholarship to Fresno State, just like her father before her, she realized this was the future her mother had envisioned.

On May 17, Velasco graduated with a bachelor's degree in architectural studies and a minor in sociology at the Lyles College of Engineering commencement ceremony at the Save Mart Center.

"My parents are so proud of everything that I've achieved, including graduating with honors and a scholarship," Velasco says. "Education has always been so important to them, and I'm so excited to start working after graduation."

Velasco began attending Fresno State in 2021 as a Smittcamp Family Honors College Scholar. Initially unaware that the architectural studies major was new, she networked at local events, seeking out professionals for shadowing, mentorship and design advice.

The summer before sophomore year, she taught herself basic computer drafting to keep up with her upper-division classmates. By the end of the year, she won first place in the American Institute of Architecture San Joaquin Competition against 35 other students in the region.

Velasco was tasked with conceptualizing a fire station and producing key deliverables such as floor plans and elevations. To accomplish this, she spoke with firefighters to understand

the challenges they face in their current stations and gather insights on how the facilities could be improved for greater efficiency.

That same year, she became TETER Architects and Engineers' first architectural intern in the Central Valley. She worked on public housing projects, K-12 campuses, public infrastructure, private developments and energy-efficient buildings.

"Francine has grown immensely, not just in her technical and design skills, but in her confidence and clarity of vision," says Michele Randel, architectural studies program coordinator. "Over time, she's developed a strong architectural voice rooted in purpose and empathy. She now approaches projects with a thoughtful balance of creativity and practicality, and she has become someone who considers the broader social and environmental

impacts of design. As a future professional, she is well on her way to becoming the kind of architect who not only designs buildings, but shapes communities."

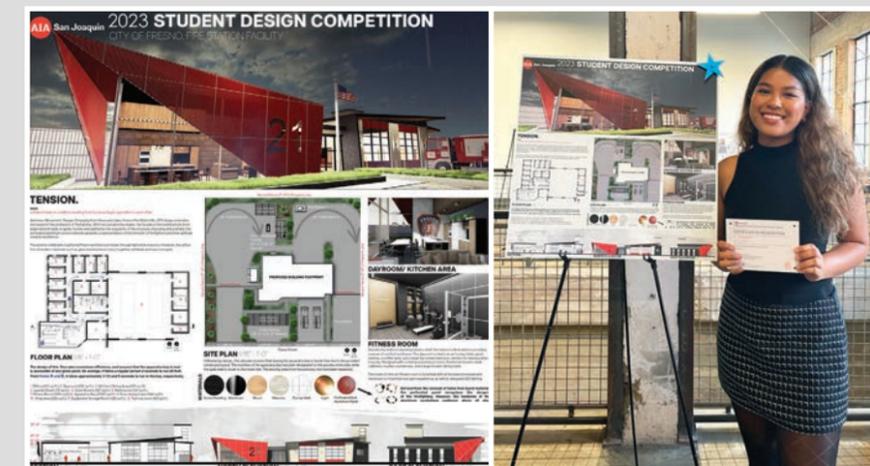
After graduation, Velasco transitioned into an architectural designer role with TETER Architects and Engineers. She plans to pursue a master's in architecture, then return to the Central Valley to help shape a more accessible, sustainable and socially responsible built environment.

— Yesenia Fuentes



Cary Edmondson

► Like her father, Francine Velasco earned a full scholarship to attend Fresno State, growing from humble beginnings and graduating with a degree in architectural studies and a minor in sociology.





Classes So Cool,
They Could Be a
YouTube
Series

New 'Course Spotlight' video series features the types of classes students will never forget

By Eddie Hughes ('05)
Photos by Cary Edmondson ('03)
Videos by Jeff Phillips ('11)



Quick, think back to your college days and your most memorable classes. There's always that one – or, if you're lucky, two or three – that you'll never forget.

In a new, ongoing series in Fresno State Magazine called "Course Spotlight," we'll share some of the classes on campus that are hidden treasures, providing unforgettable experiences for students along with real-world applications for career readiness. Each Course Spotlight will include a QR code linking to a video taking you inside the classroom to see, feel and hear what it's like to be a student in one of these classes.

The common theme is that most of these courses are hands-on – not the type of courses you'll be sitting at a desk with a pencil and paper taking notes for.

These courses are led by dynamic faculty who are passionate about the subject matter. Some of them are tied to valuable industry partnerships, and may even include a service-learning component allowing students to give back to the community. Many of the courses featured require students to step outside their comfort zone and achieve things they may not have thought possible.

Do you miss being a college student or being on campus? Here's your chance to feel what it's like to go back.

To kick off the Course Spotlight series, Fresno State Magazine takes an inside look at five courses, each with a video component you won't want to miss. So go ahead and turn the page – class is now in session!

Plant Science 170T



Bee Biology and Apiculture

Department of Plant Science

Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology

Professor: **Dr. Jacob Wenger**



Course description:

In Fresno State's unique position as the flagship university in the most productive agricultural area of the world, opportunity abounds for students interested in hands-on learning about most any ag-related subject. The complex role of honeybees in agriculture has been in the spotlight in recent years, as the public becomes more educated on the role bees play in nature and their importance to growing the food we eat. This course gives students the opportunity to learn about the biology of bees and how to care for hives in both a commercial and residential setting. "Many of the crops we produce here either require honeybees to set fruit, such as our almonds, our squash, our pumpkins, our stonefruits, or they have higher yields or they only produce seed when you pollinate them," says plant science professor Dr. Jacob Wenger. As a plant scientist, most of the insects Wenger deals with are pests that can damage crops, but his work with bees allows him to focus on a beneficial insect. Wenger emphasizes that bees are referred to as a super-organism – there are tens of thousands of bees in a hive, all with a role toward a single goal, but the hive doesn't function without the queen, who is the only one laying eggs. Honeybees are a struggling species right now, he says, facing pressure from migratory beekeeping practices and diseases. Because of this, it's important to keep studying bees to find solutions, Wenger says.



To see what it's like to be part of the Plant Science 170T "Bee Bio Apiculture" course, scan the QR code or visit magazine.fresnostate.edu



"It's really the hands-on aspect of the class that is the spark that gets the students interested. It's one thing to sit in a lecture and hear 'it takes 21 days to progress through this particular lifecycle' and 'this is what a queen looks like,' but it's a whole other thing to see the queen crawling on the frame and to see all of her attendants gathered around her and touching her with their antennas and trying to figure out what she wants. That gets the students excited."

– **Dr. Jacob Wenger**
Professor, plant science

“I’m just really proud and happy that we have this here at Fresno State, and I hope we get to continue on and build it to be even better and bigger – and the next big dairy innovation comes out of Fresno State.”

– Kelli Williamson

Adjunct professor,
food science
and nutrition



► Fresno State business major Suriya Siriphoosit (right) and food science major Marcos Zargoza (left) prepare their team's dairy innovation, ProPops, a nutritious popsicle designed to provide hydration.

Food Science 142



Dairy Processing

Department of Food Science and Nutrition

Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology
in collaboration with the Craig School of Business



Adjunct professor: **Kelli Williamson**

Course description:

Students in the course work at the Fresno State campus creamery, producing things like ice cream, cheese and yogurt. The other aspect of the course focuses on product development as the food science and nutrition students team with business students to come up with innovative new dairy products that are pitched at a business competition judged by the California Milk Advisory Board. “Being in California, and being the No. 1 dairy state, it is important to move the industry forward,” says Jarett Margolis of the California Milk Advisory Board. “And, of course, being in the Central Valley, Fresno State is one of those places where innovation, entrepreneurship is ripe.” Now in its second year, the Dairy Product Innovation Showcase is a semester-long student competition to create original, dairy-based products. Each competing team included entrepreneurship students, who develop the brand and marketing strategy, and food science students, who develop edible sample products in the Fresno State test kitchen. Product development through the fall 2024 semester culminated in a competition on Dec. 4, when a panel of dairy industry professionals heard brand pitches, taste-tested sample products and evaluated each team’s work for flavor, nutritional content and business strategy. The food was real, and so was the chance to create a profitable business – the top prize in the competition was \$5,000 seed money for further product development, and the second-place winner received \$3,000.



To see what it’s like to be part of the Food Science 142 “Dairy Innovation” course, scan the QR code or visit magazine.fresnostate.edu



Recreation Administration 154



Sport and Entertainment Facility Operations

Department of Recreation Administration
College of Health and Human Services

Professor: **Dr. Michael Mahoney**



Course description:

The "Sport and Entertainment Facility Operations" course is the only one of its kind in the 23-campus California State University system. The course focuses on operations of sport and entertainment facilities, including interacting with artists and promoters, set-up configurations, event staffing, security, risk management, event production and more. In the spring semester, the class traveled to Southern California to tour multiple sports and entertainment venues, such as the Kia Forum, the Inuit Dome and the Rose Bowl, where they got a behind-the-scenes look at industry operations. Jenessa Castillo, an alumna of the program, worked her way up to chief operations officer at the Rose Bowl venue and is now paying it forward by mentoring other aspirational Bulldogs. Castillo, who gave a Rose Bowl tour to current students in April, credits the class and Mahoney's guidance for helping her get where she is today. "Going away from the classroom to the venue is the exciting part, because now the students have the opportunity to ask questions about venue professionals at all types of different facilities," says Dr. Michael Mahoney, the professor who teaches the course.



To see what it's like to be part of the Recreation Administration 154 "Sport and Entertainment Facility Operations" course, scan the QR code or visit magazine.fresnostate.edu



▶ Joshua Salvador and his Recreation Administration 154 classmates toured the Intuit Dome, the Los Angeles Clippers' new, high-tech arena, as part of the unique class that teaches students about facility operations.

Left: Jenessa Castillo, chief operations officer for the Rose Bowl stadium, is a Fresno State alumna who took this course and recently gave current students a tour.



"I didn't realize I could be a leader until I took this class. I finally found something that I am passionate about. It wasn't until I actually found this major that I can find happiness in a career that I want to do. There's something appealing to me in putting on an event, setting up, seeing it go and then tearing it back down and then having a blank canvas. It just calls to me."

– Joshua Salvador
Recreation Administration student

Enology 105



Sensory Evaluation

Department of Viticulture and Enology
Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology

Assistant professor: **Dr. Yiliang Cheng**



Course description:

Inside the Department of Viticulture and Enology at Fresno State, a holistic approach to winemaking emphasizes applied concepts, including sensory science and evaluation techniques that empower students with the skills necessary for a successful career. "In this lab students are measuring attributes including the basic tastes like sweetness, sourness, bitterness and the most important, mouthfeel, including astringency, which is a dry feeling during wine evaluation," says Dr. Yiliang Cheng, the assistant professor who teaches the course. With a focus on hands-on learning, the department equips students to become leaders in the grape, raisin and wine industries. The course helps students recognize and evaluate the quality of wines. Fresno State houses the nation's first commercially bonded winery on a college campus in the United States.



To see what it's like to be part of the Enology 105 "Sensory Evaluation" course, scan the QR code or visit magazine.fresnostate.edu



"Making and transforming that grape into that wine, it's a beautiful thing. It's an art to make that. We are expected to have that ability to distinguish those aromas and tastes, but it is an acquired skill."



– **David Farr**
Enology student

Drama 136S



Puppetry

Department of Theatre and Dance
College of Arts and Humanities

Professor: **Dr. Nicola Olsen**



Course description:

Specifically designed for liberal studies majors who want to be elementary school teachers, this course engages students in a hands-on learning environment. Using items like sticks, paper bags and socks, students are equipped with ways to use puppets to enhance the educational curriculum in their classrooms as future teachers. Additionally, the department's theatre education degree option emphasizes theatre principles as tools to encourage creativity and embodied learning in education settings. This course also gives students an opportunity to create greater access to theatre in their communities through its service-learning component. "On a scale of 1 to 10, this class was 100 in terms of fun," says liberal studies major Ciera Smith. "There was never a dull moment in this class. It was filled with laughter, it was filled with joy, it was filled with happiness."



To see what it's like to be part of the Drama 136S "Puppetry" course, scan the QR code or visit magazine.fresnostate.edu



"I kid with the students in my class that I'm a 'doctor of puppets.' I'm a doctor of playing. I'm a doctor of goofing around a little bit. ... I do take it seriously and it matters. It matters how we teach puppets, it matters how we encourage creativity. It matters how we use theatre and puppetry skills to enhance education and to enhance life."

– **Dr. Nicola Olsen**
Professor, puppetry



TAKING MEDICINE TO THE STREETS

Street medicine clinic brings health care to local residents

By Melissa Tav ('07)

Every Wednesday, regardless of soaring or frigid temperatures, Dr. Bryan Tune and his street medicine team can be found on the streets of Madera and Fresno, providing no-cost primary health care services to residents in the area, including those who are unhoused or lack basic medical care.

The street medicine team includes Tune as the primary clinician, along with two medical assistants, a housing case manager, a community health worker, a harm reduction specialist and one or two nurse practitioner students in the Master of Science in Nursing program at Fresno State.

The team typically begins its day at 8 a.m. in Madera on the corner of Fourth Avenue and C Street. Across the street is Saint Joachim's Church and just down the way is the Holy Family Table soup kitchen. The location makes it an ideal spot for the team to set up its popup tent, complete with a table and a few chairs.

"Usually, people go to the soup kitchen to get their meal in the morning and then they come see us for any health care needs they have," says Tune, a certified

family nurse practitioner and associate professor in the School of Nursing at Fresno State. "Typically, these are people that are unhoused and sleeping in the mission, and because of the large population at need, the sleeping quarters are very tight and communicable diseases and infections, like COVID, flu and skin infections tend to spread like wildfire. So we end up being their primary health care providers and resource team for that."

Before they can even finish setting up, people are already waiting in line – many of them repeat patients who come week after week.

After about an hour, a mother walks by with her two children. She tells Tune she can't afford the copay to have her children seen at a clinic. Both children have runny noses and a lingering cough.

Tune takes a look at them and asks a few questions before opening his backpack filled with various medical supplies – from stethoscopes to otoscopes to medical kits that screen for the flu, COVID and other ailments. He assesses each child thoroughly and even takes out a throat swab for rapid testing, quickly identifying that the children are only suffering from a viral respiratory infection. He gives them some medication and makes a plan to see the children again next week – same place, same time.

Tune says providing services in Madera helps create a temporary

solution to the health care needs in that area, particularly with the two-year closure of the Madera hospital in 2023.

After spending the morning in Madera, the team heads south down Highway 99 toward Fresno, where it stops at Roeding Park. At this location, which borders Belmont Avenue and Parkway Drive, the typical clientele includes many in the unhoused and sex worker communities.

Here, the street team physically walks the streets, near the homeless shelters and encampments that line the area, providing not just health services, but outreach and resources to those living and/or working on the streets.

"We deal with a very, very sensitive patient population," Tune says. "Our team offers primary care services on the spot, but also provides individuals with referrals to get into housing or to specialty clinics and LGBT centers, as well as mental health services. We can also refer them to social services, addiction treatment centers and even get them enrolled in Medi-cal right then and there."

As in Madera, it is typical for Tune and his team to see the same patients each week. Sometimes, the patient requires a follow-up and others just simply want to say hi to a familiar face and someone they trust.

"Many of them know who we are, and they'll wave and say 'hey, my sinus infection is all better. Thanks so much for helping me,'" says Tune, adding that many patients also have new ailments that need to be treated.

Tune and his team see up to 20 to 30 patients each Wednesday.

When Tune first started this experience in November 2023, he was partnered with the Whole Person Care Clinic, but now works exclusively with Clinica Sierra Vista, which has allowed for more immediate resources to his patient population and also provides more student clinical training opportunities for nurse practitioner students in the Master of Science in Nursing program at Fresno State.

The nurse practitioner students have the opportunity to rotate with Tune during their clinical training, giving each student a chance to experience street medicine and primary care, while working hand-in-hand with one of their primary faculty members. Digiiovanni Gutierrez, who graduated in May 2024 with his master's in nursing, was among those participating.



About
20-30
patients are seen
every Wednesday

"I was drawn to the opportunity to directly impact the lives of those who are often overlooked in our health care system," says Gutierrez, who also works as a registered nurse in the post anesthesia care unit at Community Regional Medical Center in downtown Fresno. "This experience has instilled in me a profound belief that health is a fundamental human right and it is something that has enriched my perspective. The opportunity to help the underserved and advocate for their health rights is not just a professional duty, but a personal commitment to fostering a healthier, more equitable community and health care system."

Tune says this experience is more than just a teaching moment, but also a chance to mentor the next generation of advanced practice providers.

This venture into street medicine is nothing new for Tune, who has spent a majority of his 20-plus year nursing career helping disadvantaged

communities and people through missionary work in South America, Central America, Africa and Haiti.

Tune earned his bachelor's degree in nursing from Fresno State, which propelled him to expand his nursing education, later earning both master's and doctoral degrees in the field. Now a faculty member, he is committed to service and lifelong learning.

"I foresee doing street medicine for a long time," Tune says. "It's a really cool service that we're doing and it fills my tank so to speak, giving back to the community and caring for these very vulnerable populations. It really makes you think on your feet and use every ounce of training and education you've had along the way."

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

▶ Dr. Bryan Tune, a Fresno State alumnus of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, takes his street medicine team to areas of Madera and Fresno where they provide care to those who are unhoused or lack basic care.

Cary Edmondson



From Surviving to Thriving



Cary Edmondson

Fresno State students, alumni reflect on 50 years since the Southeast Asian migration after the Vietnam War

By BoNhia Lee

Nineteen-year-old Mymee Her wanted to be a medical doctor to honor her father, a Hmong refugee who worked as a nurse practitioner during the Vietnam War for the United States Agency for International Development, also known as USAID.

He was respected and the person everyone came to for medical care, says Her, now 58. But their lives were turned upside down when the family fled Laos after the Vietnam War and resettled in Utah in 1976. There, her parents worked in a mushroom factory owned by their sponsor. They later moved to Arkansas and worked in the poultry industry. Then, a work injury forced her father to stop working altogether. He always tried to get back to nursing.

The family moved to Fresno in 1984 where Her graduated from Roosevelt High

School and was among the early wave of Hmong students to attend Fresno State. She laughs as she recalls their first few weeks on campus.

"We did not know what the heck we were doing. We were plucked from the village and 'here you go,'" Her says.

But she knew that a college education would help transform her family's life. Her, who was known as Mee back then, considered becoming a doctor to restore her family's pride and legacy, but says "I could not survive the chemistry class. I was terrible at it. I had to sit down and say 'what am I good at?' I'm really good at problem solving, talking to people and giving advice. Maybe I'll go into counseling, but which counseling would allow me to have a doctor behind my name? The only one you can get as a doctor was psychology, so that's the area I went into."

"Fresno State was the beginning of my life. I really knew nothing about life. It was a wonderful experience. It taught me how to advocate for myself, how to advocate for my community. It taught me leadership skills. It taught me communication skills."

– Mymee Her

Alumna, mental health advocate

Her earned an undergraduate degree in psychology at Fresno State in 1990 and went on to get her master's and Ph.D. from the California School of Professional Psychology. Then, she went to work in a variety of roles that allowed her to help the Central Valley's growing Hmong community: mental health advocate, academic adviser, suicide prevention consultant and psychologist. She has spent the past 17 and a half years with the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation.

"Fresno State was the beginning of my life. I really knew nothing about life. It was a wonderful experience," Her says. "It taught me how to advocate for myself, how to advocate for my community. It taught me leadership skills. It taught me communication skills. I was a sad kid who knew that my community has needs so it forced me to step up to the plate and say, 'OK, if I don't do it, who will do it?'"

50 Years Since Southeast Asian Migration

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the southeast Asian migration to the United States following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Fresno State saw an influx of Southeast Asian students in the years that followed, starting with the Vietnamese and followed by Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Mien.

When Her arrived on campus, she sought out other Hmong students to connect. The Hmong Student Association, established in 1984, was inactive when she arrived. She found the adviser and restarted the organization, serving as its second president. HmSA, as it is known today, is the oldest Hmong student-led organization on the West Coast and continually attracts new students every year for friendship and mentorship while performing community service and promoting academic success.

Those goals aligned with the Southeast Asian Student Services Program led by Dr. Katsuyo Howard, counselor emeritus at Fresno State. Howard, who came to the university as an international student from Japan, focused on serving this group and their families after their arrival in the Central Valley because no one knew how to help them, she says. She created a Southeast Asian peer advising program where she hired Her as one of the first peer advisers. Howard's students would publish the Southeast Asian Student Newsletter to share student stories and accomplishments.

Together Howard and Her organized meetings and worked together to garner support from school districts and community organizations to help Southeast Asian students and their parents adjust to life in America, gain access to college and successfully graduate, while teaching and training schools how to provide services to meet the unique needs of the refugee population.

Howard would go on to organize the first Asian American and Pacific Islander Commencement Celebration to recognize their successes. The names of all graduating southeast Asian seniors published in the newsletter each year.

"I was bridging the gap between the American way of living and, at the same time, the parents and grandparents so these students could integrate," Howard shared in a *fresnostatenews.com* story in 2024. "That, to me, is our educators' responsibility. Allow them to see it and that they have the power to work on that."

Alumni Successes

Many Fresno State alumni of Southeast Asian descent have found success over the years and gone on to serve the community locally and beyond. The university's notable alumni include Misty Her, a liberal studies major, who was announced in April as the new superintendent of Fresno Unified School District. She is the first woman and first Hmong to lead California's third largest school district.

While at Fresno State, Misty Her met her husband, Phong Yang, who studied linguistics. He is the interim associate vice president of the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Fresno State.

Theatre arts alumnus Khetphet Phagnasay, also known as KP, is a Lao American actor most recently recognized for roles in "The Brothers Sun" and "Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story." As a student, KP appeared in the stage production of "Passages," an adaptation of a book Howard published on the experiences of Southeast Asian students who left their homelands for the United States.

Early Fresno State enrollment numbers did not break down Asian ethnicities but Howard's program records, which she donated to the Special Collections

Continued on page 24





As of fall 2025

1,533
students

of Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese descent were enrolled at the university

Research Center at Fresno State, show that in 1987 there were about 300 Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese students enrolled at the university. About half were engineering students and 16% majored in business.

As of fall 2025, 1,533 students of Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese descent were enrolled at the university, according to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Pawn Sayphengsy, who is Lao, was 5 years old when she escaped communist Laos with her mother and two younger siblings. They lived in a Thai refugee camp for a year and a half before joining her older siblings in the United States. Sayphengsy graduated from Duncan Polytechnical High School and moved on to Fresno State where she majored in business administration with a concentration in information systems. She would later earn a master's in education administration and supervision in 2001.

▶ Pao Yang, president and CEO of The Fresno Center, inspires the crowd with a message of unity and cultural pride during his address at the Hmong American Day celebration.

"It just seems unimaginable that we were literally kids trying to escape from something," says Sayphengsy, who is now the information consultant/project manager in Tech Services at Fresno State. "We could have been killed. I feel incredibly blessed that we made it here safely and that we've been given the chance to continue our education, keep moving forward in our careers, and that I can keep building a life filled with love and purpose alongside my family."

50-year Commemoration

Fresno State hosted several events in May in honor of the 50-year commemoration and to keep the Central Valley's Southeast Asian history alive. The events included:

The Southeast Asian 1975 Legacy Exhibition presented by a number of campus departments and organizations in collaboration with Hmongstory Legacy and the Laotian American Community of Fresno showcased historical artifacts, cultural exhibits, personal narratives and oral histories of the Hmong and Lao communities. The exhibit is on display in the Ellipse Gallery and balcony in the Fresno State Library now through Sept. 30.

A Symposium on Hmong Americans was held May 2 to explore the origin of

the Hmong people and contemporary issues through keynote speakers, panel discussions, and research poster presentations. Keynote speakers included Zhang Xiao, a Miao Chinese scholar and retired professor of ethnology at Guizhou University and Dr. Liang Yao, associate professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen Technology University and guest associate professor at the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

The event was a collaboration between the Hmong Bilingual Authorization Program in the Kremen School of Education and Human Development, the Asian American Studies Program in the College of Social Sciences and the Southeast Asian Student Success Center.



▶ Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval receives a traditional Hmong qeej, a musical instrument made of bamboo pipes, during the Hmong American Day celebration.

Fresno State also collaborated with The Fresno Center to present a two-day Hmong American Day celebration on May 3 and 4. The Fresno Center is a community nonprofit that helps people become self-sufficient while fostering cultural preservation and promoting cross cultural understanding. The event honored the past and looked to the future.

"Fifty years, for me, means resilience, given that we have been here this long and accomplished so much for our communities," says Dr. Shimel Her Saychou, director of the Southeast Asian Student Success Initiative. "Those who came before us laid the groundwork for us, and we're building on top of that. The 50 years — that mark — we came this far and we did it. And now, how are we going to continue building for the next 50 plus years?"

— BoNhia Lee is a communications specialist at Fresno State.



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Living the Family Legacy

Cary Edmondson

Child and family science student follows parents' footsteps to pursue counseling career

By Marisa Mata ('19)

At the end of her time as an undergraduate student at Fresno State, Patricia Yang looks back and feels like she's made it. Her story, like many other students at the university, begins with the sacrifices, hopes and aspirations of her parents — who both came to the U.S. as Hmong refugees, earned their master's degrees from Fresno State and went on to become school counselors.

Yang recalls growing up and helping her father with projects at his school site — a counselor in Fresno Unified School District, his job encompassed managing programs to support at-risk Southeast Asian students.

"Wb qhov keeb kwm tso tseg thiab kev npau suav rau koj yog rau siab kawm ntawv mus kom siab," he would often say to his daughter. "Our legacy is for you to continue to higher education."

Yang grew up close to the Fresno State campus and attended Hoover High School, where she was involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. She graduated as a valedictorian in spring 2020, with the world largely in lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was at this time Yang and her family also learned her father had pancreatic cancer.



"I found out in May 2020, and he passed away on my first day of college, so it was very fast," Yang says. "Because of this devastating loss, I debated whether or not to stay in school. I ultimately decided I would, because of my father's value in education."

Going into college, Yang knew she wanted to pursue a career that would allow her to help people. She initially majored in political science thinking she would go into family law, but ultimately decided to study child and family science instead, after discovering she connected better with the course materials.

Getting Plugged In

Much like her time in high school, Yang became very involved on campus — finding a mentor through the College of Social Sciences Linked Peer Mentor Program and, later, guiding her peers through the Learning Center's Academic Success Coaching Program.

Dedicated to serving students on academic probation, Academic Success Coaching offers personalized support and helps students develop motivation, time management and other skills. As an academic success coach, Yang facilitates workshops throughout the semester for students and also meets with them one-on-one to connect them with resources and help them improve their college experience.

"We talk about their academic struggles and their root personal challenges," Yang says. "I had a student that I met with, and seeing the physical weight lifted from her body as we connected her to resources and made a plan — being able to build that rapport and those connections with students — it really solidified my choice to go into counseling."

In the later half of her time as an undergraduate, Yang also served on the Student Health Advisory Committee, through which she was able to host events like speed friending, offering students an opportunity to form new friendships and learn about fostering healthy relationships, and contribute to her peers' wellbeing.

Yang also became increasingly involved with research led by Dr. Jessica McKenzie, a professor in the Department of Child and Family Science, focused on perspectives and practices of Thai youth coming of age during a time of rapid globalization.

She says, "In my culture class with Dr. McKenzie, there were discussions about how mental illness manifests differently depending on a person's cultural background. It reaffirmed my family's experience when my brother was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, helping me realize he was a product of a system that wasn't made for him. It also opened my eyes more to research."

Research and Mentorship Opportunities

Yang became one of a handful of students working in the lab under McKenzie. Yang and the others worked with longitudinal data gathered in Thailand, focusing on definitions of morality and the development of moral reasoning among Thai adolescents.

Through this work, Yang contributed to an article published in Sage Journals, a renowned publisher that oversees more than 1,000 peer-reviewed academic journals.

Yang also contributed more recently to a book that was published by the United Nations. The chapter she contributed to is focused on research in Southeast Asian countries related to gender identity and development of sexuality during modern globalization and the influence of social media.

"I've been lucky with finding good mentors on campus like Dr. McKenzie and also Mazie Moua and Ruby Sangha-Rico in the Learning Center," Yang says. "I think it's my dad watching over me and sending them my way."

Having crossed the stage and receiving her degree at commencement, Yang says, "It feels full-circle. I've put everything I could into everything I've done, for myself and for my parents."

"I think of the sacrifices they both went through to get me here, and how I'll be able to give back to my mom now, in honor of my dad's legacy."

Looking ahead, Yang is excited to travel to Brisbane, Australia later this summer with her labmates. They will attend this year's International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology Regional Conference and present 10 years of research related to moral reasoning and change in morality. This will be Yang's first time traveling outside of the U.S.

In the fall, Yang will return to Fresno State to pursue her master's degree in marriage, family and child counseling. She plans to dedicate her career to serving children and families in the Central Valley.

— Marisa Mata is a communications specialist at Fresno State, specializing in the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.

Degrees of Change

Education transforms lives behind bars

By Lauren Nickerson ('10)

In many ways, it looked like any other graduation ceremony. Graduates donning caps and gowns waited with excited anticipation, shaking hands with faculty and embracing family members who had come to celebrate this milestone. Bulldog red and blue decorations, emblazoned with "Congratulations Grad," brightened the gymnasium walls. The mood was festive, with staff and faculty in regalia, graduates and loved ones mingling as they awaited the ceremony's start.

But this wasn't just any graduation. What unfolded in October in rural Madera County, just southeast of Chowchilla, was nothing short of extraordinary – the first-ever commencement for incarcerated individuals earning bachelor's degrees through Fresno State's Degrees of Change program.

Upon approaching Valley State Prison, the beige buildings blend into the dry, rural landscape, surrounded by fields. For some, it's hard to imagine anything extraordinary happening within those walls. Built in 1995, Valley State Prison serves as a re-entry hub for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), providing vocational and educational training. Yet on this day, the prison hosted a graduation ceremony for 23 men who earned their bachelor's degrees in social science while incarcerated.

Oscar Martinez, one of the two commencement speakers, captured the collective emotion. "Well, I never thought I would be here," he says, his voice filled with awe and excitement. The graduates, seated proudly in the front row, rose to their feet, applauding and cheering each other throughout the event.

Many of the shared sentiments were similar to traditional college graduation ceremonies, however – it was clear, through the graduates' own voices – this was not a traditional experience.



Cary Edmondson

In his address, Martinez shared a poem:

"Carrying my own backpack filled with those lies that were told to me,
Self-fulfilling prophecies,
Education meant nothing to me!
I am too stupid to read,
Especially when I couldn't read,
And the consistent, I'll never succeed."

At the heart of this transformative program is Dr. Emma Hughes, a Fresno State professor and program coordinator for the Degrees of Change initiative. Colleagues and students alike credit her vision and dedication for making this moment possible.

"Today, in my opinion, would not have happened if it was not for the hard work from one of the kindest people I have ever met in my life – Dr. Emma Hughes," says graduate Jose Ornelas. "I am convinced that she is an angel sent to help all of my fellow classmates, as well as myself. One of the main reasons we are all here today is because of her."

Hughes says, "Our faculty travel out to Valley State Prison once a week to teach classes under extraordinary circumstances. The faculty cannot use cell phones or connect to the internet while in the prison, and the students only have access to a closed intranet system via CDCR's version of the Canvas learning platform. The students can't connect to external websites like YouTube. This makes for a learning environment that is uniquely challenging and different from a traditional classroom."

Despite the challenges, the program thrived. "Teaching at the prisons has been one of the most meaningful and

transformative things I've ever been a part of," says Dr. Jesse Scaccia, an assistant professor in media, communication and journalism at Fresno State.

Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval emphasized the importance of the program in his address. "The Degrees of Change program embodies the ethos of Fresno State," he says. "Higher education is more than a privilege for the few – it is a journey of self discovery and reflection about one's self, one's responsibility to others and one's ability to contribute, when given a second chance, to society's betterment; it is a powerful force for all, regardless of circumstance."

Statistics support the program's importance. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 95% of state prisoners will eventually be released, and nearly 80% will return to their communities under parole supervision. In California alone, about 35,000 individuals are released each year, highlighting the critical need for educational programs that support re-entry and reduce recidivism.

As the ceremony drew to a close, Martinez left the audience with a powerful final stanza:

"As we graduate now and see the smiles,
Do not forget the things we thought we could not endure.
And when we step outside,
Look up and look around,
Everyone's potential is sky bound."

– Lauren Nickerson is the associate vice president for University Marketing and Communications.

"As we graduate now and see the smiles,
Do not forget the things we thought we could not endure.
And when we step outside,
Look up and look around,
Everyone's potential is sky bound."

– Oscar Martinez



Geoff Thurner



Unlocking Potential

When Renecha Gulley (pictured) walked to the podium to give her commencement speech, it marked a special moment for the Degrees of Change program. Supporters came together on March 11 at the Central California Women's Facility near Chowchilla to celebrate the first class to receive undergraduate college degrees from any women's correctional facility in California.

They were joined by Fresno State faculty and administrators dressed in full regalia, and excited to honor 20 new Fresno State alumni. Dr. Emma Hughes, a criminology professor at Fresno State, helped oversee the creation of the program that put a mix of her teaching, research and community outreach experience with corrections and rehabilitation programs into practice.

"Being a part of Fresno State has not only been a great experience, but it has allowed us an opportunity to achieve an amazing accomplishment," Gulley says. "It was not an easy journey. Prison is not an ideal place to be, nor is it full of opportunities. Therefore when they do arise, we have to seize those moments. Today we became Fresno State alumni. It has also allowed us to become a part of something outside of the prison community, something connected to society."

Beginning in spring 2021, the students took on-site classes from a broad mix of fields; including anthropology; criminology; sociology; and women's, gender and sexuality studies. Students also took classes from faculty who traveled to the facility from the Africana studies; Chicano and Latin American studies; earth and environmental sciences; English; geography; media, communications and journalism; and political science departments.

The Bachelor's of Social Sciences program is a degree completion program that allows students with an associate's degree to take 60 upper division units focused on how social environment, culture, inequalities and policies shape society.

– Geoff Thurner



SPINNING IN A NEW DIRECTION

NCAA Woman of the Year finalist goes from Fresno State track and field standout to Minnesota veterinary school

By Geoff Thurner

Like most new students who arrive on campus, Amelia DiPaola Robinson had no inkling of the unexpected journey ahead of her, especially in becoming one of Fresno State's top track and field student-athletes.

As students prepared for the first day of classes in fall 2019, the would-be freshman was nowhere near campus or even enrolled. She was likely walking dogs, which was her part-time job, or coaching youth baton twirlers near her home near San Francisco.

The Fremont native had already taken a gap year after graduating from American High School in 2018 with dreams of becoming an international class baton twirler – a sport she started competing in at age 5.

The demands of the sport meant practicing with a small Bay Area club and personal coach for over a decade and competing nine months per year.

In summer 2019, that dedication paid off with national and international titles in the artistic twirl category at the "A" level.

However, she began looking into the possibility of competing collegiately in track and field. Two days before fall classes officially started, she received good news during a call from new Fresno State track and field coach Jason Drake.



NCAA
WOMAN
OF THE
YEAR
FINALIST

Responding to an email from her, he saw she had qualified for the high school state championships in the discus as a sophomore, junior and senior, and also in the shot put as a senior. Her personal bests of 42 feet in shot put and 149 feet in discus offered promise at the college level, so he offered her a chance to walk on.

"I had been looking at community colleges, but I hadn't been training for throwing for over a year," DiPaola Robinson says. "A lot of coaches weren't interested anymore in recruiting me, so I was a little lost at that point. That offer was super exciting, and I was ready to immediately jump in."

Four days later, she had enrolled at Fresno State, moved into the dorms and started taking classes. Academically, she was setting her sights on a pre-veterinary medicine degree path. The course load is one of its most difficult on campus,

especially for a suburban-raised student who had no familiarity raising pets, animals or livestock.

On the track, she embraced the challenge of learning two new events – the indoor weight throw and outdoor hammer throw, while adjusting to a new weightlifting and training schedule with her new coach.

With a dedicated work ethic, and a great combination of kinesthetic body awareness from playing hockey, soccer, volleyball and wrestling, and spinning her body in baton twirling, she made rapid progress in practice. That winter, she placed ninth in the weight throw and 14th in the shot put at the Mountain West Conference Indoor Championships.

"I loved being a part of the track and field team," she says. "I had missed the community part of it, and seeing the

pay off of being an athlete and trying to improve a little each day. I also enjoyed seeing the diverse mix of events, and supporting and cheering each other on at practice and meets."

However, less than a month later, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down practice and competition from March until the end of 2020.

To help combat the challenge of staying connected to her teammates, she volunteered to help the campus Student-Athlete Advisory Committee through Zoom meetings, and took a higher course load to keep her on track academically.

Before the pandemic, the student-led organization was already a key resource for student-athletes. Its community outreach events encouraged professional and personal growth to develop leadership, career and life skills. Now, its impact was even stronger as a bridge of support to student-athletes who had extra stress and less emotional support.

As a sophomore she served as one of the organization's two representatives for the Mountain West Conference Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and then was named the Fresno State president of the committee as a junior.

She coordinated a campus cleanup event in November 2023 in partnership with Associated Students, Inc., campus groundskeepers and the Beautify Fresno organization. Over 200 student-athletes helped clean up campus areas where trees and rose bushes would be planted.

When classes resumed in-person after the quarantine, she found equal inspiration in her pre-veterinary and animal science labs classes that emphasized hands-on teaching.

"I owe a lot to faculty like Dr. Gayle O'Bannon and Dr. Fabio Iared, who are working veterinarians, and give us such amazing instruction and insight into the profession," she says. "Other classes on the farm, like the beef cattle management class, were equally important. [Faculty member] Ryan Person had us give shots, do pregnancy checks and even castrate bulls – things that veterinarians might have to do any day – while encouraging and supporting us."

Those connections put her on course to gain acceptance into the University of Minnesota veterinary medicine program, which she started last fall.



One of only 32 accredited veterinary medicine colleges across the nation, the competition for spots in the program is intense, even for a student like DiPaola Robinson, who graduated magna cum laude with a 3.84 GPA. She says her leadership and time management skills, and hands-on animal science classes on the campus farm helped her chances greatly.

DiPaola Robinson says over 3,000 students applied to the University of Minnesota program, and only 50 out-of-state students were accepted.

That same willingness to tackle new challenges helped her excel on the track as a four-time NCAA hammer throw competitor and one of 30 finalists for the NCAA's Woman of the Year honor in January 2025. That honor drew from a pool of tens of thousands of women's collegiate student-athletes across the nation based on their academic, athletic, professional and community-based accomplishments.

1 of 30
finalists for the
NCAA's Woman
of the Year honor

Her athletic resume featured top-four conference finishes in the outdoor hammer throw three different years, and twice in the indoor and outdoor shot put, and once in the indoor weight throw.

She ranked fifth in school history in the hammer throw, and seventh in the shot put indoors and 10th outdoors, respectively.

At the NCAA awards banquet in Nashville, she was able to meet student-athletes from other sports with remarkable stories, and reunite with Drake and a former teammate from Iceland, a friend from Oklahoma, and her mother – her guests at the special awards dinner.

As she now wraps up her first year as a Minnesota veterinary student, she balances a busy schedule of 27 units of classes, labs and work with local veterinarians. With hopes of focusing on large animals after she receives her degree, she revels in visiting farms within a two-hour radius of the St. Paul campus and meeting new people and animals.

The Midwest is not only known for its emphasis on agriculture and livestock production, but also its often-harsh winters. While some transplant Californians might complain about the ice, snow and cold winds, she has taken advantage of it to join an adult hockey league.

Luckily for her, she had already played hockey starting at the age 4 under the urging of her mother, a former gymnast who had taken up the sport recreationally.

"Hockey is a nice diversion, since I play with a lot of dads who keep it fun, and help me feel welcomed in a new community," she says. "I've always enjoyed playing new sports to challenge myself to grow in new directions and connect with others. The journey from training and working with coaches and professionals has taught me to trust myself, and is helping prepare me to be successful in life."

– Geoff Thurner is a communications specialist at Fresno State, specializing in the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology and the College of Social Sciences.



BULLDOG FOOTBALL ENTERS THE

ENTZ ERA



"I'm less concerned with what's on the helmet than what's in the helmet."

– Matt Entz



New Fresno State coach sits down with Fresno State Magazine for exclusive Q&A

By Eddie Hughes ('05)

New Fresno State football coach Matt Entz sits on the Bulldog Red leather sofa in his office overlooking Valley Children's Stadium. A shiny red helmet is perched on the coffee table in front of him with the classic white "Bulldogs" script outlined in navy arching across each side.

The helmet was popularized in the early 1980s under then coach Jim Sweeney before the four-paw Bulldog helmet was born during the Pat Hill era. When Jeff Tedford took over as coach in 2017, the Bulldogs script made a return. So, naturally, curious minds wanted to know which look Entz would prefer for the university's flagship program?

"I'm less concerned with what's on the helmet than what's in the helmet," Entz says. "That's where my concern is right now."

While Entz didn't reveal which of the legendary former coaches his helmet preference will align with, it's clear whose playing style his will look most familiar to. Entz hasn't uttered the phrase "shutup and hit somebody" yet – a staple of Hill's teams – but he's made it abundantly clear he intends to build a team that begins with a strong, physical offensive line and leads with a relentless running game.

Entz was the head coach at North Dakota State from 2019-23, leading the Bison to a 60-11 record (.857 winning percentage) and two NCAA Division I FCS national championships, including in his first season. Entz was named the FCS National Coach of the Year in 2019 and 2021 by the American Football Coaches Association.

Entz coached eight NFL draft picks at North Dakota State, including the 2021 No. 3 overall pick, quarterback Trey Lance.

Last season, he served as the assistant head coach for defense and linebackers coach at USC, as he prepared to become a head coach at the FBS level.

Entz takes over at Fresno State for interim coach Tim Skipper, a Fresno State alumnus who stepped up amid Tedford's health challenges to lead the program for this past season.

Fresno State Magazine sat down with Entz to discuss his vision for the program and the opportunities and challenges ahead as the Bulldogs prepare for their final season in the Mountain West before joining the Pac-12 in 2026.

Fresno State Magazine: When did you first learn about Fresno State?

Matt Entz: Dennis Wagner used to be the offensive line coach here for Pat Hill. I was a graduate assistant for Dennis Wagner at Wayne State in Nebraska. When he left and came out to Fresno State I immediately became a fan. Being in the Midwest, typically the Fresno State games were the late night games so that was about the only game I'd get to watch. I saw the energy, the fan base, the checkerboard end zones. Those memories just stuck with me. I remember the great players that have come through this program and draft picks, very successful collegiate players. It's located right in the middle of the state, it is the epicenter of the Valley here and people are super excited about us.

Continued on page 34

FSMag: What makes you and your experience a good fit at Fresno State?

Entz: I think there's a lot of similarities between Fresno State and North Dakota State. Both have huge applied ag programs. Both of them sit in very agriculturally rich areas. Both have tremendously passionate fan bases. I wanted to be somewhere where football was important and having conversations with athletics director Garrett Klassy and Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, they want football to be the front porch of the university. They want it to kick off every academic year. When you have a good football year it seems like the academic year moves in a better rhythm, it has a better vibe to it. I want a place that can tie in academics and athletics together and football can be seen as a bell cow of the university. Athletics becomes a huge marketing resource, and I don't know if you can ever quantify how impactful it can be.

FSMag: How'd you get to know the team when you got the job?

Entz: I bet I had 60 or 70 individual meetings, and I felt like the best way to break ice is to do it in person. There were a lot of different topics covered. I tried to ask them as many questions as they asked me. "Where do we need to go? Why are we 6-6? What are the things we need to do that can help us move in the right direction?" I was formulating my own ideas from the outside, but we also want to ask the players. We need to be a player-driven football team. We want them to feel like they have a voice, so I wanted to do that from Day 1.

FSMag: Tim Skipper was the interim coach when you were hired and is a beloved alum here who poured a lot of passion into this place. What can you say about your interactions with him?

Entz: Everyone in town knows him. He's been a huge resource for me just as far as navigating Fresno and the Valley and getting to meet former players and getting a great gauge of what makes this place unique. On top of that he's a tremendous football coach who's had tons of success and has impacted players the right way.

FSMag: What's your recruiting strategy?

Entz: Roster management, roster development is one of the most critical things you have to do. It doesn't matter if it's now or 10 years ago, putting together a talented roster is important. That's what made this job appealing was the access to skilled

kids, the access to the state of California. If you go four hours south, four hours north, you engulf the whole state of California. The Fresno airport has direct flights to Denver, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, some outlying areas we want to get into, Chicago. Using more of those remote areas to increase the volume of big kids we can recruit. The number of big kids, offensive linemen and defensive linemen in the state of California, everyone wants them. So you better have other avenues of finding people. If we want to be a line of scrimmage based football team, we've got to find the right kids who can help us win there. From a skill athlete standpoint, you can find them all over California. The caliber of football in the Clovis and Fresno area has been eye opening in the first few months here.

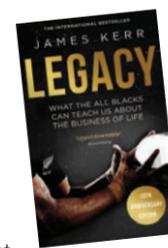
We hit over 400 schools in a three-week period as a staff. We want to make sure we prioritize the Valley. That

doesn't mean we're going to take every kid from the Valley, but I don't want there to ever be a kid who leaves the Valley that we're not aware of. If we want them here, they need to feel our recruiting.

It's not an exact science. I talked about some of the measurables, but the intangible things you're looking for are character, toughness, football IQ, athleticism. I'm not going to recruit a kid just because he has measurables. He has to have some of these things that can't be measured. I want to know that he loves football. I want to know that he loves to practice. Football is a unique sport. You play it for a three-month window, and then you train for 350 days a year. It's not like basketball or baseball where there's doubleheaders, you might play five games of basketball in a weekend tournament. Football is one game a week, it's a very violent, physical sport. I want kids who love the process.

FSMag: Have you identified leaders?

Entz: There are three or four on each side of the football we're encouraging right now to get out of their comfort zone. One of the things we're doing this offseason we're reading a book as a team, trying to be a leadership multiplier. We're reading "Legacy," the story about the All Blacks rugby team from New Zealand, and trying to create a great daily environment within our own program. It seems like kids are responding. Not only are they reading it, but they're getting up and talking in front of their peers and coaches. It's been good.



FSMag: At Fresno State, football always had that sense of pride and tradition. Are you connecting with alumni and former players?

Entz: We're trying to get an alumni group going here. They're the foundation of the program. That's why the program is where it is right now, and why we have the things that we have, is because of the success that previous teams, previous classes, previous coaches have had here. So we need to make sure our kids are fully aware of what the history and tradition and the success looks like.

FSMag: How big is it to be able to leverage successful alumni, guys like Davante Adams and Derek Carr?

Entz: I think it helps. It helps when you have the ability to communicate with those people or maybe they drop a note to a young man and talk about their experience

at Fresno State. The volume of players who have come through these doors and gone on to have success in the NFL is something that gets people's attention right away. There's over 120 players who have played in the NFL from Fresno State. We sell it as you can do anything you want from here. If you want to be the largest almond producer in the world, you can do it from here. If you want to be an NFL player, you can do it from here. If you want to be president of the United States, you can do it from here. It's what you make of the Fresno State experience.

FSMag: What are the strengths of the team that you've identified so far?

Entz: There's a really good blue collar mentality to it. There's a level of grit to this football team, and I appreciate that. Everyone talks about being a family. We'll see once we get into some tougher moments. Can we still continue to be that family we want to be or that close knit group? We talk a lot about toughness right now. We need to be a tougher football team, we need to be better on the line of scrimmage, we need to be better from a discipline standpoint, we need to make better decisions. A lot of those things fall on myself and our staff to convey those things. I'm encouraged by how we approach the game.

FSMag: What are your goals for the immediate future?

Entz: Win. Win. That's it. But do it the right way. Win and then make sure we're handling our business off the field.

FSMag: Big picture, what's your vision for what Fresno State football can be?

Entz: I anticipate as we move forward and we navigate into this Pac-12, so does our brand, so does everything

associated with this university and this football program. How does going into a Power 4, Power 5 league impact our facilities, our budget, all the things that are associated with Bulldog football?

FSMag: In attracting you to this job, how big was the Pac-12?

Entz: It didn't hurt to know we're going to have some access. But we can't just be part of the league, we have to be invested in being in the league. There's a big difference.

FSMag: What's that investment look like, and how can the community help?

Entz: There's really three budgets that we have right now. We have an operational budget which is our day to day. We need to feed our players. If we're going to be a line of scrimmage based football team, then we have to build those kids. If we're going to be a developmental program, we have to build these kids. That takes calories, that takes having a tremendous strength program, a nutritionist and all the resources that they need, a training table that is second to none – and all of that takes revenue.

There's the scholarship piece to it, being able to provide scholarships to our players, summer scholarships, cost of attendance.

The new one is NIL. How can we make it fit Fresno State?

All three of those buckets we need to be able to fill to help us win games. The big concern of mine as head football coach is the buckets never really get filled up – we just keep flipping one revenue source to another. There's a million people in Fresno County. There are oodles upon oodles of alumni here who want to see this program do well. We need to make sure

we're touching the right people and, on my end, we need to make sure we're doing it the right way. We're developing a great college football program that is built on appreciation for the university and the game, and the other pieces will fall into place.

FSMag: What are the facilities needs you hope to see addressed during your time here?

Entz: That's an area we need to continue to keep up. We have what we need to be successful, but at the same time we need to evolve, too. Sometimes it comes down to space, you just don't have enough space. When you have 120 players on the team, you have to make sure your locker room, meeting rooms, dining area can handle that number. Otherwise those facilities get tired really fast. You'll get to know Matt Entz, I'm not about sizzle. I'm all about substance. Let's just get what we need. It doesn't need to be the fanciest, it just needs to be the most practical for who we are. We're in a blue collar community that is rich in ag, and you've got a head coach who doesn't have a whole lot of sizzle to him. Substance is my thing.

FSMag: What can fans expect headed into this final year in the Mountain West?

Entz: What I challenge our football team with is it's a new process right now, new coaches, new way of doing things, just trust it. We're not just coming up with a random idea, this is a process to get us where we want to be. If we're about the process and the people, the players, the coaches, the support staff, if we just keep our head down and keep working, it won't guarantee victories, but it will guarantee us to be competitive in every game. On the other side of it



we could be result oriented, we could look for stats, we could count yards, we could count reps, those things don't matter. We need to make sure we understand what it looks like to play good football and how all three phases can be complementary, how we need to make sure we eliminate negative plays, we win the explosive play battle, tackle efficiency and ball security. The ball is the program. I said a lot right there, but those are the things that are going to get us where we want to be.

FSMag: How will the passing game come into your playing style?

Entz: We're going to take advantage of it. I want to be able to run the football. I want to make sure our passing game is based on being accurate, taking what the defense gives us and allowing our playmakers to make plays in space. If we can throw a hitch for 5 yards to a guy like Josiah Freeman, he breaks a tackle and it turns into a gain of 20, is anybody really going to complain because the ball didn't travel 20 yards through

the air? Probably not. When you see good football, you see both the run game and pass game can complement each other.

FSMag: What do you tell fans when they ask how they can best support the program?

Entz: Being a season ticket holder, getting into the stadium before kickoff, joining the Bulldog Foundation, being part of the Quarterback Club, coming to the Kickoff Dinner, being part of the Bulldog Bread NIL collective. All of those things help. Keep pushing the needle. We need to become uncomfortable a little bit as a fan base, and I think we'll see where this thing can go. Winning solves a lot of problems, but we don't want to get so far behind that we feel like we can never catch up. We're looking at a couple other schools that feel like they've separated themselves from the pack and that doesn't include Fresno State right now. We need to make sure we get there.

— Eddie Hughes is senior editor for Fresno State Magazine.

Off-field Xs and Os with Coach Matt Entz:

Tell us about your family.

I've been married 25 years in July. I met my wife, Brenda, when I was a graduate assistant. She played college volleyball. We have two sons – Kellen plays football at North Dakota State and Konner plays junior college baseball at Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa. We are empty nesters here in Fresno.

Mountains or beach?

A little bit of both, so I like where we're situated. I probably became more of a beach guy living in Southern California last year, but we got out and drove around through the mountains recently. We got up to Yosemite.

Best day trip?

Yosemite

Social media?

I'm on X (@Coach_Entz), and I'm on Instagram.



Best day on the job so far?

Tomorrow. Today will have its challenges and tomorrow will be better.

A year from now, what do you want your answer to be?

When we win the conference championship.



Vehicle?

A little SUV right now, but I'm more of a truck guy.

Wine or beer?

Beer. My wife is a wine person.



Local restaurant?

I've eaten at Five restaurant 20 times already because of recruiting and haven't had a bad meal. Yosemite Ranch, unbelievable. The restaurant at Copper River golf course. I haven't had a bad meal out here.

Favorite pro team?

Pittsburgh Steelers



2025 Fresno State Football Schedule

- Aug. 23 (Sat.)**  **at Kansas – 3:30 p.m.**
- Aug. 30 (Sat.)**  **Georgia Southern – 6:30 p.m.**
- Sept. 6 (Sat.)**  **at Oregon State – 12:30 p.m.**
- Sept. 13 (Sat.)**  **Southern – TBA**
- Sept. 20 (Sat.)**  **at Hawaii – TBA**
- Oct. 4 (Sat.)**  **Nevada – 7:30 p.m.**
- Oct. 11 (Fri.)**  **at Colorado State – 6 p.m.**
- Oct. 25 (Sat.)**  **San Diego State – TBA**
- Nov. 1 (Sat.)**  **at Boise State – TBA**
- Nov. 15 (Sat.)**  **Wyoming – TBA**
- Nov. 22 (Sat.)**  **Utah State – 7:30 p.m.**
- Nov. 29 (Sat.)**  **at San Jose State – TBA**

**Dates and times are subject to change based on TV selections.*

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LEISURE CARE



Playing His Part

Honor Flight trip gives veteran new perspective on his service

By Lisa Bell ('95)

Navy veteran Joseph "Jay" Ventress now looks back on his Vietnam War service — including two tours on the aircraft carrier USS Constellation as a baker and cook — differently than he has in the past.

His change of perspective came from his recent participation as one of 70 honored veterans on the 30th Central Valley Honor Flight, a three-day trip to Washington, D.C., to visit war memorials and military sites with other veterans.

Many veterans come home from wartime with survivor's guilt. Ventress talked about how bad he felt that some soldiers didn't make it home from Vietnam while his own wartime duties consisted of "flipping donuts," in his words. But with this trip, Ventress gained a broader appreciation of everyone's part in the military mission.

"They told us we all signed a piece of paper that said that we were willing to go and do whatever they asked us to do. 'We're sending you over here and we're sending you over there. You flip donuts, and you run for your life.' They could have swapped us around, and I could have been over there, and he could have been in the donut shop. But we both signed a piece of paper that said we were willing to do whatever they asked us to do, and that's what it was."

Ventress and his wife, Joy, learned about Central Valley Honor Flight four years ago. Joy looked into the application process and got Ventress on the waiting list. He found out in August he was approved for the October trip.

Each veteran on an Honor Flight trip is paired with a guardian. Ventress and his guardian, Dr. Scott Moore, were paired because they share a connection to Fresno State.

Moore is the dean of the Division of Continuing and Global Education, which operates the Fresno State Veterans Education Program, helping prepare veterans to become Fresno State students. Ventress attended Fresno State in the 1970s, competing as a bull rider with the Fresno rodeo team. He also met Joy, his wife of 46 years and the mother of their two sons and two daughters, while he was a Fresno State student.

When the group landed at the Baltimore airport on Oct. 14, the veterans were treated with respect and appreciation. Moore describes the scene after they landed:

*"They told us we all signed a piece of paper that said that we were willing to go and do whatever they asked us to do. 'We're sending you over here and we're sending you over there. **You flip donuts, and you run for your life.**' They could have swapped us around, and I could have been over there, and he could have been in the donut shop."*

— Joseph Ventress

Alumnus, U.S. Navy veteran



"There were three busloads of us, [70 veterans, 70 guardians and about 20 or 30 support staff], so getting everybody, including many people in wheelchairs, moving is a logistical feat. But as we walked through the airport and the terminal, people who saw us stood up and applauded. And you could see the healing start to happen as early as that."

Continued on page 40

It was different from what many Vietnam veterans experienced when they returned to the United States after completing their tours of duty.

"A lot of these Vietnam veterans came home to an unwelcoming community and unwelcoming family in some cases," Moore says. "So, in many instances, these veterans haven't shared that story [of their time in Vietnam] with anybody. And so to have the veterans around each other, supporting each other and sometimes not saying things and other times saying very deeply personal, difficult things, things they saw, things they experienced, there was a sense of healing through the whole trip."

When Moore learned he had been paired with Ventress, he got an email saying, "You're really going to like Joseph. He's a Fresno State alum, and I hope you can keep up with him."

Ventress and Moore attended a luncheon a week before the Honor Flight trip, and then Moore had an orientation for guardians. Ventress says, "I told him to find out what happens if the vet goes rogue."

And guardian and veteran did just that one night while on the trip. After dinner, they had some unscheduled time, so they took an Uber to see the Lincoln Memorial at night, something Ventress had wanted to do that wasn't on the official trip itinerary.

"Joseph really wanted to see the Lincoln Memorial," Moore says. "If you look at the itinerary for the trip, they're all war memorials or in some way associated with the military. The Lincoln Memorial didn't make the cut, and it was something Joseph had said would mean a lot to him."

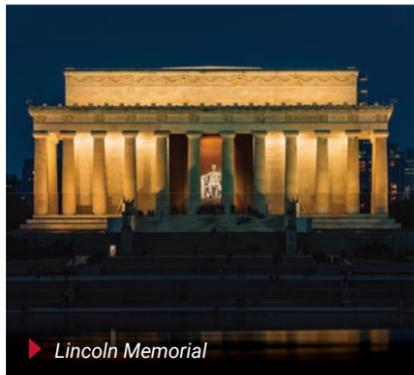
But it wasn't that special moment or the visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that had the most significant impact on Ventress.

"I'm not saying this in a braggadocious way, but I've done a lot of things in my life that were dangerous, that I got away with, and I'm still here. So nothing much excites me," Ventress says. However, a couple of memorable moments during the third day of the Honor Flight impacted him deeply, even as he described them a week after returning home.



▶ Dr. Scott Moore (left), dean of the Division of Continuing and Global Education at Fresno State, volunteered to accompany veteran Joseph "Jay" Ventress, a Fresno State alumnus, on the Central Valley Honor Flight.

Cary Edmondson



▶ Lincoln Memorial



▶ Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

"We went to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We watched the changing of the guard, and they put two wreaths up in a ceremony," Ventress says. "When we walked out, there had to be more than 200 kids lining the walkway, as far as you could see, all wanting to high-five and fist-bump us, saying, 'Thank you for your service.' These were high school and junior high school kids, and it was emotional. Right now, I can still feel the emotion from that experience."

Another memorable moment came when the Honor Flight group stopped at Fort McHenry National Monument, where Francis Scott Key was inspired during the War of 1812 to write the poem that later became "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Ventress describes how the veterans gathered around an enormous flag in the fort courtyard.

"You've seen on football games where they have a big flag out there, and everybody's got a hold of it. That's what we did. And then they had us sing 'The

Star Spangled Banner.' It was hard to get through that song, even right now. It was hard to get through that song without becoming emotional. Because if you read the words and think about what was happening and the significance of the time and what they were fighting for."

Ventress prayed with other Christian veterans at the different memorials, including praying for the United States while at the ramparts at Fort McHenry.

Since it was founded in October 2013, Central Valley Honor Flight (an affiliate of the national Honor Flight Network) has raised more than \$6 million to fund 30 flights, transporting more than 2,010 veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War to the nation's capital.

Bull riding and rodeo life wasn't something Ventress discovered after his military time. It's a thread that's run through his whole life, from the first time his mom took him to the Sheriff's Championship Rodeo in the Los Angeles

Coliseum when he was 6 years old. Later, as a teenager, he worked at a stable and moved up to bull riding. Before his Vietnam tours, Ventress continued to compete in all-service rodeos around the state.

After he left the Navy, Ventress used his G.I. Bill benefits to attend classes at Piece Junior College in Los Angeles. He had planned to finish his education at Cal Poly Pomona, but another rodeo colleague told him that Fresno State's rodeo team needed a bull rider, so he changed course. And if he hadn't, he likely wouldn't have found Joy and become a family man.

Coming home from their whirlwind cross-country trip, Ventress and Moore were met by several hundred excited family, friends and community members at Fresno Yosemite International Airport, including Joy, their children and grandchildren.

"That was way more than any of us expected," Ventress says. "I have seen it many times on TV, but this was off the chart. It was all very emotional."

"A lot of these Vietnam veterans came home to an unwelcoming community and unwelcoming family in some cases. So, in many instances, these veterans haven't shared that story [of their time in Vietnam] with anybody. And so to have the veterans around each other ... there was a sense of healing through the whole trip."

– Dr. Scott Moore

Dean, Division of Continuing and Global Education



Ultimately, the hard-to-impress Ventress confirms the transformational nature of the Honor Flight experience.

"It's life-changing. People said that to me, and I said, 'Pft. What's life-changing about it?' After experiencing it, I'm telling you that it's different. And it's something that a lot of vets need to check out."

– Lisa Bell is the public information officer for Fresno State.



To learn more about Fresno State's Veterans Education Program, or the Central Valley Honor Flight, visit:

» cge.fresnostate.edu/veterans

» cvhonorflight.org



'Thy Sons and Daughters Hail Thee Great, Our Alma Mater, Fresno State'

1970s

Don Cameron (1975), president of the California State Board of Food and general manager of Terranova Ranch, Inc., wrote an opinion piece on Proposition 4 for The Fresno Bee.

Jim Costa (1974) is now the U.S. Representative for California's 21st Congressional District.

Carolyn Loder (1975) has been appointed as Board of Directors for K2 Gold Corporation, a North American mineral exploration company in British Columbia, Canada.

Paul Munter (1975), chief accountant of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, has announced his retirement from federal service.

Jan Setnor (1976), retired U.S. Air Force colonel, is now president of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology.

Dianne Solis (1979), a freelance journalist, wrote an article on the roots of deportation for Palabra, a multimedia platform that delivers informative journalism about Latino and other communities.

1980s

Gena Behrens (1988), a former All-American softball player at Fresno State, is now chief operating officer of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce.

Aaron Busch (1988), Vacaville city manager, announced his retirement after 37 years in municipal government.

Sean Canfield (1983), University High School teacher and academic decathlon coach, retired after 40 years.

Craig Castro (1982), president and CEO of Community Health System, retired after 23 years with the health system.

Alan Kandel (1987), an independent publisher of The Daily Kos, wrote an opinion piece on uniform curricula within the CSU system.

Corey Liggans Miller (1980) is the artistic director of the nonprofit Silicon Valley Gay Men's Chorus in San Jose.

Lorna Roush (1988) is chief financial officer for Schultz Ranch in Burrell of Southwestern Fresno County.

Daniel Silva (1983), journalist and author, released a new book, "A Death in Cornwall," the 24th installment in his mystery series.

Jeff Smutny (1986) is now executive director of the American Sweet Potato Marketing Institute in Benson, NC.

David You (1980), a living history practitioner with the American Civil War Association, was interviewed on historical battle reenactments and the living history experience.

1990s

Louis Baca (1997) is a member of the Vanguard Carceral Journalism Guild writing corps.

Lance Bessey (1991) has released a faith-based children's book titled "Easter Bunny and Chick (The Play)."

Lori Chavez-DeRemer (1990) was nominated by President Donald Trump to serve as the head of the Labor Department.

Cathleen Figura (1991), chief operating officer at Jeffrey Scott Agency, was featured in The Business Journal as an executive profile.

Tara Gomez (1998) is owner and winemaker of Camins 2 Dream, which was named one of the world's most influential indigenous-owned wineries by Wine Enthusiast.

Sonja Irawaty (1999), an abstract painter, had her artwork, "Life, Love and Cherry Blossom," featured in an Indonesian exhibition.

Maria Magana (1999), an elementary teacher at Stone Corral Elementary School in Visalia, was named Educator of the Week by Your Central Valley.

Felipe Magos (1991), a teacher at Lincoln Elementary in Madera, was named Educator of the Week by Your Central Valley.

Elisa Silva (1991), kindergarten teacher at Steinbeck Elementary in Fresno, was named Educator of the Week by Your Central Valley.

Douglas Verissimo (1995) is now commander of the Naval Air Force Atlantic in Norfolk, VA.

Matt Webster (1998) is now CTO of Epoch Concepts LLC in Littleton, CO.

Derek Winning (1999) has been appointed as the interim director of the Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA).

2000s

Paul Armendariz III (2006), is interim assistant city manager in Clovis.

Anthony Ayerza (2000) is now executive director for the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools CTE/ROP department.

Mario Capote (2001), director of instrumental music at Tulare Union High School, was named Educator of the Week by Your Central Valley.

Jon Cartwright (2000) and others have helped to provide scholarships for Porterville Military Academy graduates in recent years.

Nayamin Martinez Cossio (2009) was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the James Irvine Foundation.

Analiene Domingos (2009) was featured as an executive profile in The Business Journal for her work as a trauma therapist in private practice.

Lesia Eidman (2002) is now president and CEO of California Agricultural Leadership Foundation.

Shanda Fulbright (2003) is running a new online course titled "Expedition to Reality: Exploring Worldviews and Major World Religions."

Nathan Gilbert (2003) is now the regional director at Better Business Bureau, serving the Pacific Southwest, Central and Inland California.

Steve Goff (2001), winemaker and vineyard manager for Colene Clemens in Newberg, OR, was featured for his new wines in Owen Bargreen.

Sherrie Holzer (2006) was featured in The Paso Robles Press for her work as a winemaker at Rava Wines in Paso Robles.

Nigel Kirk (2001) is now small business lending manager for Access Plus Capital, a U.S. Treasury-certified Community Development Financial Institution serving Central California.

Derek Lapsley (2008) is now vice president of operations at Yamabe & Horn Engineering in Fresno, a professional service civil engineering firm.

Bulldog Born, Bulldog Wed



Kristen (Andreasen) Battles (2012) and **Eric Battles** (2012) welcomed their third child, Rome, on Oct. 17.



Head Over Heels in Love

Michael Melkonian (2015) and **Danielle Goulart** (2016) were married on Feb. 22 at The Grand 1401 in Fresno. An ardent Red Waver, Melkonian and his groomsmen sported Fresno State socks to add the perfect touch of Bulldog spirit to an already festive wedding day.



Amanda Holder (1995) married Claude Swain in November 2023 and had their wedding featured in California Wedding Day.



Chelsea Robles married Andy Meek on March 8 in Brooklyn, New York.



David Ruby (1984) and **Patricia Ruby** (1985) celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on Feb. 16 with a trip to New York City.

Ben Letizia (2005), the founder and president of Heritage Crop Sciences in Fresno, is partnering with a Chilean company to introduce new antibacterial products for plants.

Nicole Marin (2009) is now vice president of administrative services at Mendocino College in Ukiah.

Martin Ortiz (2008) is now president and general manager of ABC30 in Fresno.

Edward Reese (2008) is now a primary care physician at Mercy Southeast Primary Care in Dexter, MO.

Vincent Ricchiuti (2005) is now chief operating officer of P-R Farms and Enzo Olive Oil Company in Madera, CA.

Rohi Zacharia (2006) is now Madera's District 1 city councilmember.

2010s

Tamara Berry (2013), a first-grade teacher at Clovis Elementary School, was named Educator of the Week by Your Central Valley.

Michael Cook (2015), viticulture regional specialist at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in College Station, TX, was a speaker at the annual East Texas Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Conference.

Thomas W. Gaffery IV (2009) is now assistant city manager for Tulare.

Aaron Judge (2014), the reigning American League MVP, presented a \$2,500 grant to the Fresno Chaffee Zoo through the All Rise Foundation.

Sandeep Malhi (2012), the first Punjabi police officer in the Bakersfield Police Department, was interviewed on his role in building a bridge between the Indian American community by *behindthebadge.com*.

Seth G. Mehrten (2010) is now a shareholder in the Fresno office of Littler, the world's largest employment and labor law practice representing management.

Sarah Fawn Montgomery (2010), nonfiction writer and essayist, held an in-person reading and Q&A session for students at Ithaca College in New York.

Matthew Morse (2010) is now vice president and general manager Nexstar Media Group operations in Fresno.

CLASS NOTES

Jackie Nakashian (2019) is now director of community service and health programs for the California Table Grape Commission in Fresno.

James Olson (2010), director of Olson Trading Company, will participate in the 2025 National Walnut Growers Conference.

Andrew Rich (2015), the head softball coach at Idaho State, was the unanimous selection for Big Sky Coach of the Year after he led the Bengals to a co-conference championship.

Carlos Sanchez (2011) was named an ArteVism fellow by the Pan Valley Institute.

David Tangipa (2018), a former tight end for the Fresno State football team, was elected to the California State Assembly for District 8.

Dominic Tyburski (2011) is now public works director for the County of Madera.

2020s

Chase Benedetti (2024) is owner of Noc Box Coffee Studio in Fresno.

Brian Childs (2022) is now senior director of international student and scholar services at Haenicke Institute in Kalamazoo, MI.

Omar Hernandez (2020) is now a board member for West Hills Community College District in Coalinga.

Noah Martinez (2022) was named FLYPer of the Year by Fresno's Leading Young Professionals, a nonprofit dedicated to the professional and civic development of young leaders in Fresno.

Ricky McCoy (2020), a former defensive lineman on the Fresno State football team, was interviewed by ABC 30 about his first year coaching the Roosevelt High football team in Fresno.

Megan Medina (2024) was featured by Your Central Valley story for her ceramic work and success during Fresno's Arthop in 2024.

Justine Osilla (2022), founder and winemaker for Kabayan Wines, was interviewed by Forbes on her journey as a Filipino winemaker.

Brenna Pratt (2021) is now head winemaker at Midnight Cellars in Paso Robles.

Nikko Remigio represented the Bulldogs at Super Bowl LIX as a wide receiver and kick returner for the Kansas City Chiefs.



Fresno State Women's Association Celebrates 100 Years

The Fresno State Women's Association, formerly the Faculty Wives' Club, celebrated its 100-year anniversary with an April 26 luncheon in the Resnick Student Union on campus. Citing changing times, the club announced it will sunset this year. The club established a scholarship endowment and has long provided scholarship support to Fresno State students. Current Women's Association board members included MaryAnn Dews (president), Liz Shields (ex-officio), Lenore Yousef (scholarship coordinator), Martha Rodriguez (treasurer), Jeanie Whaley (newsletter, courtesy and historian coordinator), Ceroasetta Simba (secretary and new member coordinator) and Betty Haak (dining out coordinator).

The Faculty Wives' Club of Fresno State College was organized in 1925 with 22 charter members. Lota Thomas, the wife of Fresno State's second president Frank W. Thomas (who served from 1927-48), was the club's first president. According to the 1952 Faculty Handbook, "The purpose of the Faculty Wives' Club is to promote friendliness and acquaintanceship among wives of faculty men and to be of service to Fresno State College."

— Eddie Hughes



In Memoriam

'For thee, our hopes and memories'



Marian Allison (1945),
Dec. 20, Fresno.

Conrad Peter Andresen III (1969)
July 24, 2024, Pacific Grove.

Marianne Cameron Angelillo (1990),
Jan. 29, Fresno.

Richard "Dick" Arnold (1957),
Jan. 21, Fresno.

Dickran M. Boyajian (1959),
Nov. 6, Fresno.

Ronald Joel Brase (1966),
Nov. 8, Fresno.

Mary Ann Brigham (1952),
Dec. 24, Paso Robles.

Bonnie Jean White Burns (1994),
Jan. 7, Sun City, AZ.

Nancy E. Clarke (1954),
March 16, Fresno.

Joyce Coolley (1959),
Oct. 13, Brocton, IL.

Mark Thomas Crawford (1994),
Oct. 16, Madera Ranchos.

Cathleen Craycroft-Glenn (1972),
Nov. 13, Fresno.

Kris Curran (1996),
Dec. 11, Santa Barbara.

Erik John Emde (2011),
Oct. 9, Fresno.

Nancy Ruth Clotfelter Enloe (1956),
Nov. 25, Exeter.

James Anthony Allen Gomes (1974),
Jan. 18, Lemoore.

Janice Cecilia Hansen (1983),
Nov. 4, Fresno.

Elizabeth A. Harris,
Nov. 20, Cherokee Village, AR.

Constance Harrison (1979),
Sept. 24, Fresno.

Toby Harrison (1965),
Jan. 4, Stephenville, TX.

Kenneth Takumi Hashimoto,
Nov. 19, Fowler.

Charles Morris Houston (1923),
Oct. 22, Fresno.

Edgar Arnold Kaiser (1966),
Jan. 7, Fresno.

Karmen Kalashian (1968),
Jan. 25, Fresno.

Berhe Kassaye (1969),
Nov. 5, Fresno.

Ron Kavern (1955),
Jan. 26, Porterville.

Gly Keiser (1970),
Nov. 11, Sanger.

Todd Kimball (1991),
Feb. 19, Portland, OR.

Karen Sue Kindig (1982),
Oct. 11, Madera.

Patricia Tenney Larsen (1994),
Jan. 24, Lindon, UT.

Marianne Mae Elliot Maul (1959),
Dec. 10, Fresno.

Kenneth Lawrence Mayo (1996),
Nov. 12, Fresno.

Carole Meyers,
Oct. 16, Berkeley.

Doug Munday (1963),
Jan. 13, Gig Harbor, WA.

Khanh Kim Nguyen (1992),
Dec. 8, Santa Cruz.

Therese Marie Poe (2002),
Oct. 31, Arroyo Grande.

Mark Wynne Popovich (1993),
Dec. 26, Fresno.

Richard Lawrence Porter (1959),
Dec. 26, Bakersfield.

James Raymond Provost (1962),
Dec. 14, Fresno.

Richard Quinlan (1959),
Oct. 25, Winslow, ME.

Pete D. Radish,
Nov. 23, Fresno.

Walter Richard Reinhardt,
Feb. 9, Clovis.

Robby Dean Robertson (2000),
Nov. 15, Fresno.

Conrad "Connie" Sanborn (1961),
Jan. 3, Fresno.

Vanessa Marie Savoy (2010),
Nov. 21, Fresno.

Karen Elizabeth Schultz (1967),
Oct. 13, Clovis.

June Stevens (1961),
Jan. 21, El Dorado Hills.

Lois Tarkanian (1955),
Nov. 18, Las Vegas, NV.

Lila June Tufts (2002),
Dec. 24, Canaan, IN.

Doug Vagim (1965),
Oct. 20, Fresno.

Mary Vaux (1977),
Nov. 22, Fresno.

Nelda Hilligoss Whiteside (1961),
Dec. 7, Manteca.

Donnie Darrell Wilkins (1976),
Nov. 14, Modesto.

Romney Walker Woodbury (1993),
Oct. 9, Brentwood.

Arthur Iwao Yamaguchi (1959),
Jan. 22, Fresno.

Douglas A. Yavanian (1967),
Feb. 7, Fresno.

Faculty/Staff

Marian Lanore Bankston,
Jan. 3, Fresno.

Frederick Woodrow Childers,
Sept. 22, Clovis.

Carolyn Berry Jackson,
Nov. 2, Clovis.

Richard Ray Marshall,
Sept. 20, Fresno.

Dawna Ericksen McLelland,
Jan. 25, Fresno.

Blas Michael Olivarez,
Jan. 12, Sanger.

Sallie Overpeck-Hunt,
July 16, 2024, Fresno.

Friends

Thomas R. Butler,
Jan. 13, Fresno.

Hollis Campbell,
Oct. 3, Fresno.

Jerry Lee Emerzian,
Dec. 22, Fresno.

Daisy T. Kang,
Nov. 6, Sanger.

Raymond Jacob Maul,
Nov. 21, Fresno.

Dawna Ericksen McLelland,
Jan. 25, Fresno.

Allison Nicole Murphy,
Oct. 21, Clovis.

Margaret Lynn Riddle,
Oct. 10, Clovis.

Sally Ann Seago,
Oct. 30, Fresno.

Al Smith,
Feb. 15, Fresno.

FRESNO STATE.

California State University, Fresno
5200 N. Barton Ave. M/S UL49
Fresno, CA 93740-8023

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Fresno State identifies, enhances and affirms the talent that exists in the people of the region we call home. Embodying pride and creating impact, this Bulldog spirit is rooted in the Valley and resonates globally.

Fresno State is the Pride of the Valley. From excelling in the classroom and growing research, to competing and winning at the highest level of college athletics, Fresno State gives everyone in the greater Central Valley a reason to be proud.

