

# insights

## A DEEPER SHADE OF GREEN

### SSU Ups Its Climate Commitment











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# Sheltered in Place - Sonoma State and the COVID-19 pandemic

## From the Editor:

As we go to press with this issue of Insights, Sonoma State University and the entire nation has been thrust into one of the most profound and crippling health emergencies in modern times: The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Where it will end is anybody's guess. All we can relay at this point is where the crisis finds us as we shift seasons from winter to spring.

Our communication with the Seawolf community began in late February as the spread of this virus began to become more of a reality in Sonoma County. By mid-March, we had canceled all in-person classes for three days to allow faculty to begin transitioning to all-remote instruction. Ultimately, on March 19, President Judy K. Sakaki announced that, in consultation with campus leaders and the Chancellor's Office, Sonoma State would go to all remote instruction for the remainder of spring semester. Furthermore, she confirmed that Spring Commencement would be postponed until a date to be determined.

The uncertainty about what is ahead is considerable, but the campus remains open, and optimism remains high.

In some ways, the coronavirus situation makes this edition's focus on resilience all the more relevant. As the cover story, "A Deeper Shade of Green," explains, building a campus culture of sustainability and resilience has become a top priority for the university since President Sakaki signed the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment last year. As many alumni, faculty and staff know, the campus has long been environmentally conscious. This commitment honors

those roots, while setting specific goals for more fully integrating sustainability into academics, engaging with the North Bay community and becoming a carbon-neutral campus.

For our cover image, our graphic designer, Robbie Geiss, chose a familiar photo of Earth - one of the most high-resolutions photos available. Surrounding it are the words of the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment itself. Combined, they represent the actions that are being taken locally - and that are needed globally - to confront the very real changes that are happening to our planet. As Robbie put it, it's also a reminder that "we are all in this together." Certainly what is transpiring now with COVID-19 is even more evidence of this.

The Insights staff also is trying to do its part to promote sustainability. We've reduced our press run for this edition and are offering readers an opportunity to request digital-only versions of the magazine going forward. If you're interested, email us at advancement@sonoma.edu

Wherever you are, we hope you are safe and healthy - and that you find this edition of Insights interesting and useful. If you have suggestions for future stories or any other ideas or feedback, please email me at paul.gullixson@sonoma.edu or call me at 707-664-2122. I would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Paul C. Gullixson  
Associate Vice President of Strategic Communications



Nate Galvan

## Message from the president

As emphasized in the Editor's Message on the opposite page, we suddenly find ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented crisis surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. As of March 24, the university has transitioned to all-remote instruction for the remainder of the semester, athletic events and concerts have been canceled and Spring Commencement has been postponed.

These steps were not taken as a result of a direct health threat to the university. Rather, they were made out of our steadfast commitment to keeping the campus - and all who study and work here - healthy and safe. Federal, state and local public health officials tell us that practicing such social distancing is the best way to limit the spread of COVID-19. We hope and trust that this will be the case.

In particular, my thoughts are with the Class of 2020. This class has a particular place in my heart because of all that we have been through together, including fires, power outages and now the coronavirus pandemic. It's hard to believe, but this summer will mark my fourth year at Sonoma State. The time has passed quickly. I continue to appreciate the opportunity to lead our campus and to work with students, staff, faculty, alumni and members of our community.

During this time, I've been especially proud of all that we have accomplished together to focus the campus on our students and their success. From earning a federal Hispanic-Serving Institution designation, to expanding our Educational Opportunity Program for our low-income and first-generation students, to opening a new Military and Veteran Resource Center and to adding advising and courses to enable students to graduate in a timely manner, we've been committed to supporting student success wherever possible.

The results of this commitment are inspirational. Sonoma State graduated our largest class ever in 2019, and our campus ranks first in the California State University system for our transfer graduation rates. While we still have more to do to improve our student enrollment, retention and graduation rates,

I'm confident that with your support we'll make significant progress toward achieving our student success goals. As we've expanded support for our students, we've worked hard to make Sonoma State an even more dynamic university. We're determined to help find solutions to our growing climate emergencies. The details of all that has transpired on campus since I signed the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment last year is the subject of the cover story for this edition of Insights. I hope you will give it a read. It shows all that we are doing to help build a more resilient North Bay.

Certainly, our resilience has been put to the test. From the 2017 fires that destroyed the homes of more than 100 Sonoma State community members - including my own - to the recent Kincade Fire, we've been adjusting to the "new normal" that now exists in the North Bay. And now, as I write this, Sonoma State faces its greatest test from a less-visible menace known as COVID-19.

As before, I'm confident that we will get through this time. And when we do, I know we will look back and be proud of how we supported one another through it all.

Until then I encourage you all to stay focused, stay healthy and stay in touch with your Seawolf community. Through these times, Sonoma State needs your input, your involvement and your ongoing support more than ever.



With Gratitude,

Judy K. Sakaki

Judy K. Sakaki  
Sonoma State University President



# SSU Student Affairs named as “Most Promising Place to Work” - again

For the second consecutive year, the Division of Student Affairs at Sonoma State has been honored as one of “The Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” by the publication *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. **SSU is one of 27 colleges** or universities to receive the honor, with the honorees published in the magazine’s March edition.

Sonoma State University also was be recognized during the American College Personnel Association’s annual meeting held March 2-5 in Nashville, Tennessee.

“We are incredibly proud to once again be recognized by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* for being a promising

place to work in Student Affairs,” said Dr. Wm. Gregory Sawyer, SSU’s Vice President for Student Affairs. “At SSU, we continually focus on ways to improve the environment for our staff and to create a community that is welcoming and supportive for all our talented team, who represent diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Sonoma State University community is a special place, and we are thrilled to be recognized once again, on a national level, for creating a space that successfully focuses on workplace diversity, staffing practices and an inclusive working environment.”

The honor is given in recognition of the division’s emphasis on organizational structure, workplace

diversity, staffing practices and workplace climate and environment. Additional categories included salary and benefits, staff training and educational and professional development opportunities.

The Division of Student Affairs at Sonoma State encompasses a full range of student development, including social and educational activities, advising, health services, housing/residential education, counseling, veteran affairs, orientation, career development, disability services, diversity and multicultural affairs, assessment, training and campus and community engagement.

# SSU accolades: top rankings by Forbes, Princeton Review and U.S. News and World Report

*“These rankings validate all the hard work of our faculty, staff and students.”*

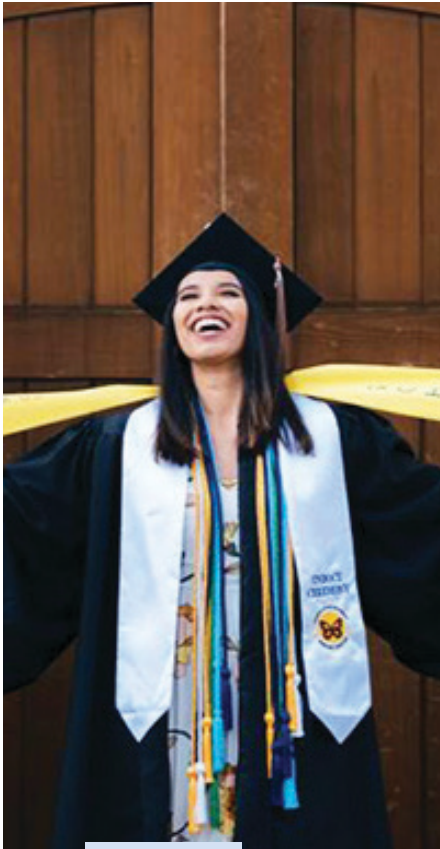
– Judy K. Sakaki  
SSU President

Sonoma State University has been included in several academic rankings for 2019, including those by Forbes and Princeton Review. Forbes listed Sonoma State as one of **“America’s Top Colleges” for 2019**. Meanwhile, for the fifth year in a row, the Princeton Review has placed Sonoma State in its **“Best 385 Colleges” list for 2020** and named the university as one of the **“Best Western” colleges for the second time**. SSU moved up five spots to **No. 14 on U.S. News and World**

**Report’s list of “Top Public Schools” in the Western Region for 2019-20**. The university was ranked No. 19 in the same listing for 2018. In August, Money magazine included SSU on its list of **“Best Colleges for Your Money.”**

“These rankings validate all the hard work of our faculty, staff and students in putting academic excellence, innovation and student success at the forefront of all that we do and all that we are,” said Sonoma State President Judy K. Sakaki.

## First recipient of TheDream.US Scholarship graduates



Yatziry Galvan

When **Yatziry Galvan**, a first-generation student born in Mexico, walked across the stage of Green Music Center’s Weill Hall during Commencement 2019, she made Seawolf history by becoming Sonoma State’s first TheDream.US Scholarship graduate. The 24-year-old DACA recipient **transferred to Sonoma State in the fall of 2017 after three years at Napa Valley College where she supported her family by working multiple jobs on the side**. After two years at Sonoma State, she was able to graduate with honors from the School of Business. TheDream.US National Scholarship is a full scholarship for DREAMers graduating from high school or community college who have significant, unmet financial need.

This year, TheDream.US awarded approximately 1,200 applicants. Sonoma State is one of more than 75 colleges that have partnered with the TheDream.US. Other partner colleges include the University of Washington, Arizona State University

and Rutgers University. “Getting to SSU and achieving my dream of getting to college was difficult because, like so many, I didn’t have resources as an undocumented student,” said Galvan. “But walking across the stage, I got to see the pride in my parents’ faces, and it was the most incredible thing because they got to see their sacrifices weren’t in vain.”

*“...Walking across the stage, I got to see the pride in my parents’ faces, and it was the most incredible thing...”*

– Yatziry Galvan  
B.S., Business Administration, 2019

## SSU opens housing complex just for faculty and staff

With more than 60 community leaders, SSU employees and others looking on, Sonoma State President Judy K. Sakaki and Joyce Lopes, vice president for administration and finance, used a pair of oversized scissors to cut a long dark blue ribbon spanning the entrance of the **university’s new Marina Crossing Apartments in Petaluma** on June 6.

“Welcome home,” Sakaki declared, ushering those in attendance to come inside and tour the 90-unit facility, the largest workforce housing complex yet in Sonoma County. The project is a multifamily, five-story complex located on a 2.17-acre parcel adjacent to the Petaluma Marina. The complex, located roughly 10 miles south of campus, is within walking distance of a SMART commuter train station.

With the approval of the California State University Board of Trustees,



President Judy K. Sakaki, center, is joined by SSU faculty and administrators, as well as community leaders, at the ribbon cutting of Marina Crossing.

Sonoma State purchased the Petaluma complex, designating it for faculty and staff housing. The purpose of the complex is to provide SSU faculty and staff with a stable and economical place to live, especially those who are moving to the region for the first time.

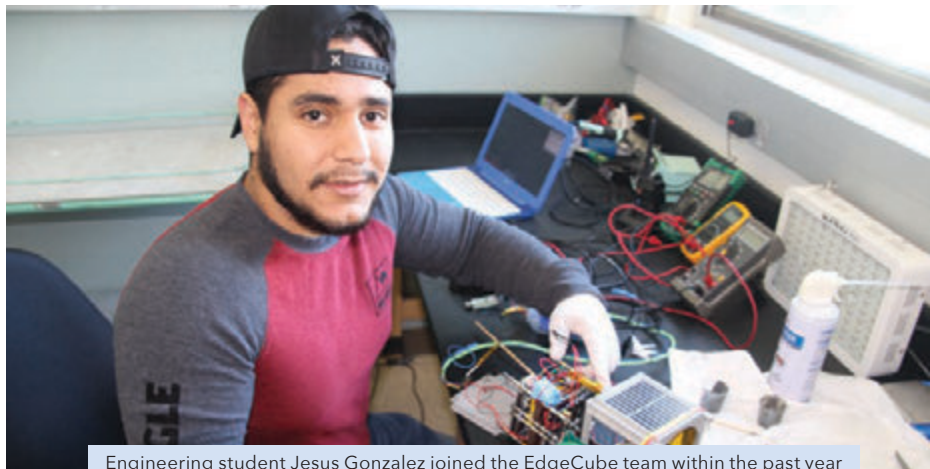
“It’s no secret that the fires of October 2017 exacerbated an already tight housing market in Sonoma County,” said Lopes during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “Dr. Sakaki and I spoke before the fires were even extinguished about what SSU could do to help support the community, our faculty and staff, and our students through a commitment to workforce and student housing. And as the year progressed, we began to see how important that commitment was.”

President Sakaki, who lost her Santa Rosa home in the Tubbs fire in 2017, said

she “knows a little of what it’s like to go in search of a place to live in today’s challenging rental market.” She and her husband had to move six times before they settled in a new residence, she said. “It’s particularly difficult for those who come to Sonoma County from outside the area and have to search for a home while simultaneously trying to settle into a new work environment,” she said. “(This) project will go a long way to help us maintain a strong Sonoma State workforce.”

Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane, whose 3rd District includes Sonoma State, praised the housing project, noting that during the fires of 2017 “more housing was lost in that one night than had been built in the county in the prior seven years.”





Engineering student Jesus Gonzalez joined the EdgeCube team within the past year and was responsible for making sure the hardware of the cube was working properly.

## EdgeCube satellite orbiting Earth, transmitting data to Student Center

The work of Sonoma State students has landed among the stars once again. A student-built satellite about twice the size of a Rubik's Cube was released into orbit in February as part of a NASA-funded project involving three universities. Built by about 30 SSU students and 10 more from Santa Clara University and Morehead State University, the **"EdgeCube" satellite flew aboard a Space X Falcon 9 rocket to the International Space**

**Station** in December. From there the satellite was boosted into orbit 500 kilometers above the Earth to collect data on **vegetation health in ecosystems around the globe.**

Information from the satellite is being sent back to Earth via ground station antennas atop the Student Center at Sonoma State. "We are greatly thrilled and relieved," said SSU physics and astronomy professor Lynn Cominsky

*"It's incredible to think that something that I put my hands and heart on is now in space."*

— Jesus Gonzalez  
Electrical Engineering, 2021

who wrote the proposal for the project in 2016. "It has been a huge amount of work for the students who have been involved and the many others who have worked tirelessly to make this happen."

EdgeCube was Cominsky's second satellite, following the 2013 launch of T-LogoQube, which measured the Earth's magnetic field. Plans for a third SSU satellite are already in the works.



Students walk a trail at SSU's Fairfield Osborn Preserve

## Major upgrade for Osborn Preserve

The **Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria have agreed to make a \$2.85 million gift** to Sonoma State University to **improve and expand environmental education** at the 450-acre Fairfield Osborn Preserve located on the northwest slope of Sonoma Mountain. The upgrades include creation of an outdoor talking circle at the preserve's education and research center and a remodeling of the center to allow greater use by students, faculty, staff, local K-12 students and community members. Work on the facility, which will be renamed the **"Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Learning Center at the Fairfield Osborn Preserve,"** is targeted for completion

in December 2020. More than 20,000 students, community members and K-12 students have visited the preserve as part of educational programs or guided tours over the past 10 years. Historians say the area was once used as a seasonal hunting and gathering ground by Pomo, Miwok and Wappo tribes. "We're very proud of this opportunity to support the preserve's many environmentally focused educational programs for years to come," said Graton Rancheria Tribal Chairman Greg Sarris. "One of our main goals is to maximize outdoor learning spaces and strengthen the sense of the surrounding environment, which includes the tribal history and connection with the land."

## Model U.N. named Outstanding Delegation at national conference



Sonoma State's Model United Nations students in front of the United Nations building.

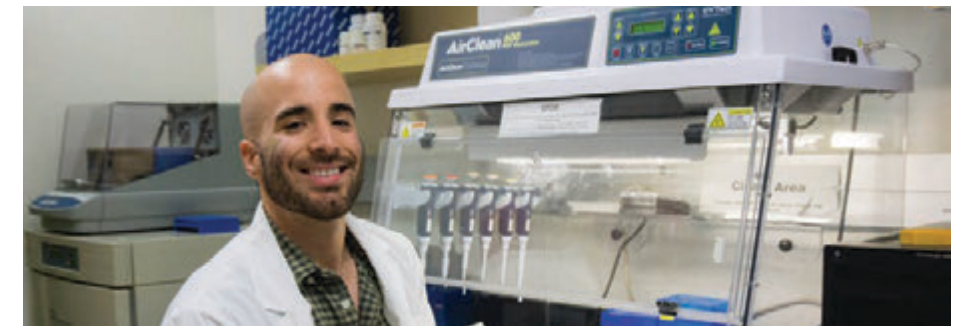
After eight straight years of winning multiple awards at the annual National Model United Nations Conference, Sonoma State University's **Model U.N. students recently took home top honors for the first time.** The 35-member team received the "Outstanding Delegation" award at the Model U.N. conference in New York City in April. Sonoma

State's team this year was its largest ever, winning as a delegation representing the United States.

Many Sonoma State students were competing at the conference for the first time. Several hundred schools and thousands of students participated from dozens of countries all over the world. SSU senior McKenna Jenkins

won a separate "Outstanding Delegate in Committee" award for her work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization committee. "Taking first place among so many excellent schools is an incredible honor," said Professor of Political Science Cynthia Boaz, faculty advisor of Sonoma State's Model U.N. program. "I am so proud of our students."

## CSU honors master's student outstanding achievements



A former San Bruno resident, who lost all of his possessions in the PG&E gas explosion of 2010 and later enrolled at Sonoma State after serving eight years in the military, was among those selected by the California State University system to receive a 2019 Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement. **Anthony Tercero**, who is working on his master's degree in biology, was among 23 students recognized at a Fall 2019 CSU Board of Trustees meeting for having **overcome significant adversity in pursuit of achieving their academic goals.** Tercero was awarded the Wells Fargo Veteran Scholarship, a \$6,000 grant that is given to help veterans with their transition into civilian careers.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army at the age of 17, Tercero said he

experienced near-daily barrages of mortar and rocket attacks on his Middle East compound. Tercero enrolled at Sonoma State University to study molecular cellular biology after completing his second tour of duty, which he enlisted for after his home and all of his possessions were destroyed in the San Bruno gas pipeline explosion in 2010. With a cumulative graduate GPA of 4.0, Tercero is now working on his M.S. in biology.

After graduating in May 2020, he plans to pursue his Ph.D. at UC Davis with the long-term goal of becoming a tenure-track professor and working at a university. "It took me years and a lot of failure to get to where I am now," said Tercero. "I am very grateful for the connections and people I have met while striving to obtain this award, and

I believe these experiences, along with the failures and successes I have made throughout my academic career, have placed me in the best position to thrive."

*"I am very grateful for the connections and people I have met while striving to obtain this award."*

— Anthony Tercero  
Biology master's candidate



# Study finds California could triple southern sea otter population

by Paul Gullixson

*Southern sea otters were once abundant in California estuaries, including San Francisco Bay, and with some help could thrive there again.*



The picture of sea otters frolicking among kelp beds and rocky shoals has become an iconic image of the California coastline. But it may be drawing attention away from the value of other habitat that could truly help the endangered species in its recovery – estuaries.

In fact, a new study concludes that California could more than triple its population of southern sea otters, from an estimated 3,000 to nearly 10,000, by repopulating the largest estuary on the coast – the San Francisco Bay.

"It would essentially end up lifting the sea otter out of its endangered species status," said Brent Hughes, assistant professor of biology at

Sonoma State and lead researcher in the study published in *PeerJ: the Journal of Life and Environmental Sciences*. "For the conservation of the sea otter, this would be huge."

According to Hughes and fellow researchers, current southern sea otter recovery plans have not included estuaries as target habitats. This "may be an artifact of where the surviving population persisted," they concluded in their paper titled "Species recovery and recolonization of past habitats: Lessons for science and conservation from sea otters in estuaries."

"The dogma, widely reinforced in both the scientific and popular media, is that sea otters do best in

saltwater kelp forests," said Brian Silliman, Rachel Carson associate professor of marine conservation biology at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and a partner in the study. "But this is based on studies and observations made while these populations were in sharp decline. Now that they are rebounding, they're surprising us by demonstrating how adaptable and cosmopolitan they really are."

"This really changes our view of the ecological role of sea otters," said Tim Tinker, former research wildlife biologist with the Western Ecological Research Center of the U.S. Geological Survey and an adjunct professor in the Department of Ecology and

Evolutionary Biology at UC Santa Cruz. "They are not only keystone marine mammals of the outer coast, they are also important apex predators in estuarine habitats."

The southern sea otter was widely believed to be extinct due to the expansive fur trade of the 18th and 19th centuries, which reduced the global

***The researchers concluded that the San Francisco Bay could support about 6,600 sea otters, more than twice the current estimated population of 3,000.***

population from between 150,000 and 300,000 to roughly 2,000. Then in 1914 a remnant population of about 50 southern sea otters was found along the rugged Big Sur shoreline. Thanks to conservation efforts, the population has since grown to more than 3,000, but their numbers are still far below their historic numbers and range.

While conservation efforts have focused on protecting otters in these rocky coastal habitats, evidence shows that southern sea otters were once abundant in California estuaries, including in San Francisco Bay. Early accounts by Spanish explorers noted otter populations as far south as San Jose and as far north as Richardson Bay. "Sea otters probably numbered in the thousands in this estuary prior to being driven to local extinction by over-hunting," the researchers noted.

The only estuary in California that is currently home to a distinct and self-sustaining population of sea otters is Elkhorn Slough at Moss Landing in Monterey Bay. Overall, southern

sea otters have only recolonized about 13 percent of their historic range, according to the study.

Hughes says one of the reasons otter habitat has remained fragmented and why sea otters have not been able to migrate north and reestablish residency in San Francisco Bay is the presence of great white sharks near the Golden Gate. "We call it 'the gauntlet,'" said Hughes. "Otters really can't get past the gauntlet."

But if otter populations were established inside San Francisco Bay and out of the range of great whites they would become the top predator and would likely thrive.

Using existing studies and modeling of sea otter growth, the researchers concluded that the San Francisco Bay could support about 6,600 sea otters, more than twice the current estimated population of 3,000. "It would change the game in terms of how we look at sea otter conservation," he said.

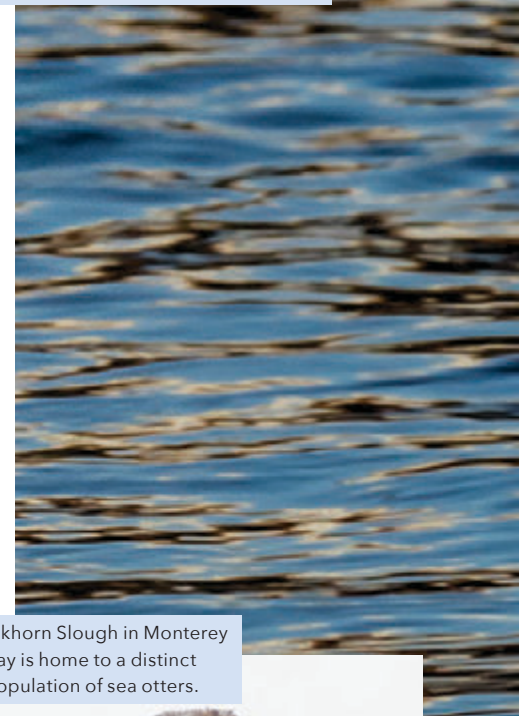
Along with Sonoma State University, this study was a result of extensive collaboration between researchers and managers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Western Ecological Research Center of the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Hakai Institute, San Francisco State University, San Diego State University, California Polytechnic State University, University of California at Davis, University of California at Santa Cruz and Duke University.

To read the study, go to *PeerJ – the Journal of Life and Environmental Sciences*, a peer-reviewed and open access journal that publishes primary research and reviews in biology, life sciences, environmental sciences and medicine.

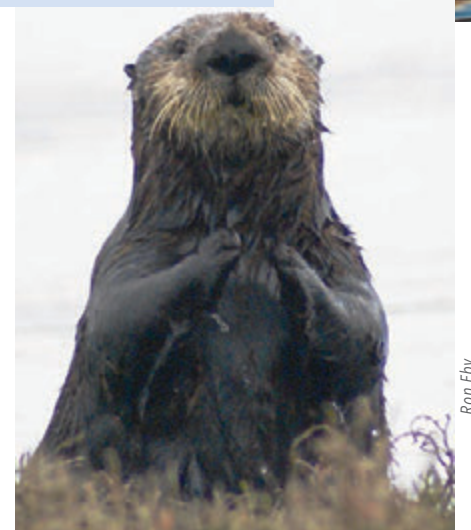
*Paul Gullixson is Associate Vice President of Strategic Communications at SSU. He can be reached at paul.gullixson@sonoma.edu*



Brent Hughes, assistant professor of biology at Sonoma State, was the lead researcher in a new study concluding that California could more than triple its population of southern sea otters.



Elkhorn Slough in Monterey Bay is home to a distinct population of sea otters.



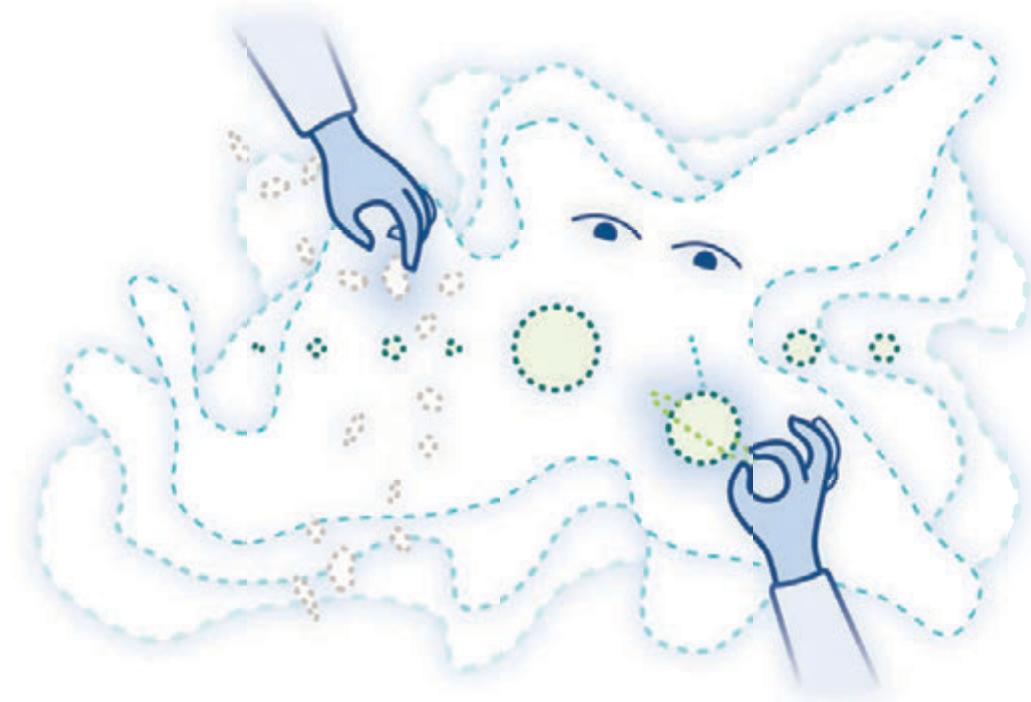
Ron Eby

WELCOME BACK, OTTERS

Jessica Saavedra

WELCOME BACK, OTTERS





# Understanding New Realities

*Beyond books: Using virtual reality in the classroom to explore conceptual ideas*

By Nicolas Grizzle, '06 Illustration by Robbie Geiss, '15

If a picture is worth a thousand words, and a movie is worth a million pictures, what then is the value of an interactive movie you can control? To understand such an exponentially complex concept might require an assist from virtual reality.

"A picture can show the Earth and the sun at the same time," says Sonoma State Professor of Astronomy Scott Severson. "What it can't show is the Earth and sun at the same time with their sizes, but also their distances."

Severson uses a VR app called Universe Sandbox in his Introduction to Astronomy GE class, which attracts about 125 students per semester. Students schedule time in the Virtual Immersive Teaching and Learning Laboratory in the University's Makerspace to use a VR headset and explore the concept of phases of the moon, something that's not quite possible to put on film.

"One way it can be dynamic is a movie, or an interactive experience. With VR, we even get one level beyond that," Severson adds. "So that's multiplying it by another 1,000

fold. And in VR, it's truly three-dimensional and immersive, and you have control over those objects."

***"Students get really excited [about Virtual Reality] because it's a world they would have never otherwise gone to."***

— Sara Kassis  
*Professor of Engineering Science*

The ViTaL Lab opened in 2018, spearheaded by Engineering Science professor Sara Kassis, who got the idea from a similar lab opened a year prior at San Diego State University. After being inspired by the possibilities to explain some of the more conceptual scientific concepts with increased efficiency and effectiveness, Kassis started working

on getting the technology to SSU. The planning began in November 2017, and three months later there were six classes at SSU signed up to use virtual reality in their curricula, including large General Education classes in biology and astronomy. Nearly 200 students used the technology, and the following semester the technology's use was expanded into geology, computer science and Spanish courses.

"Students get really excited about using this," says Kassis. "I think they get really excited because it's a world they would have never otherwise gone to."

Severson agrees, adding that the use of VR can help combat the glazed eyes that can crop up in a large lecture class discussing heavily conceptual topics.

"If they're being passive in the class, then it's a set of knowledge they're trying to build up. But if it's something that they control their learning with, then they have a stake in it," he says. "Either they're building a mental model of it, or they're listing to it as facts to learn... But if you have a predictive model of it, you can answer all these questions, and it's powerful."

## An Inside Look at the Hardware

When the SSU Makerspace opened in 2016, a virtual reality station was front and center. That setup included an HTC Vive headset with headphones and handheld controllers, and a large television screen for others to view what the user was experiencing. Since then, the space has added another Vive setup and an Oculus Rift headset, all open for use to students and faculty.

This type of virtual reality technology completely immerses the user in the program. Since they can't see or hear anything outside of the program, boundaries are programmed into the workstation that keep users from wandering too far away.

Another subset of this technology is called augmented reality, which allows users to see and interact with layers of a virtual program juxtaposed upon their actual surroundings. The popular app Pokemon Go is an example of this, where users try to capture virtual characters placed in real surroundings as seen through a smartphone camera.

The Microsoft HoloLens employs this type of technology and adds user interaction in what is known as mixed reality. In contrast to the total immersion of the Vive, it uses a clear visor and external speakers to keep the user grounded in the "real world." The HoloLens tracks where a user is looking and is controlled by familiar hand gestures – such as clicking a mouse or pinch-zoom motions.

## New Home-Spun Apps

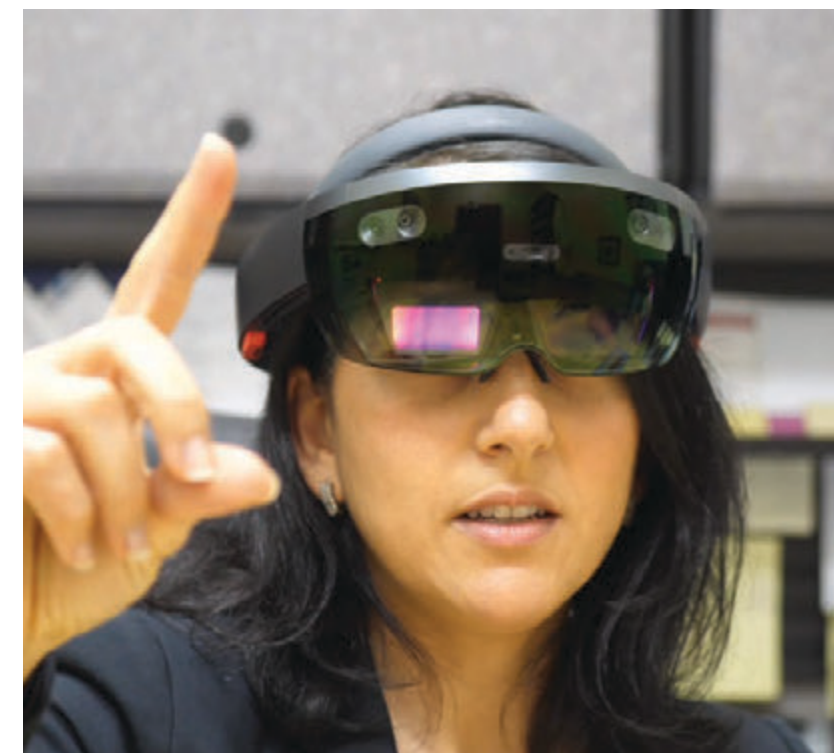
HoloLens is still relatively new – it was only released to developers in 2016, and SSU got its first headset in early 2017. Because of this, there aren't a lot of educational apps available for the hardware. So Kassis put together a group of students to make one.

"Since I teach lower-division engineering courses, I wanted to have something these students can use to better help

them visualize electron current flow, electric fields and magnetic fields – all of which are invisible to the naked eye, and all of which can be difficult fundamental concepts for engineering students to fully grasp," she says.

The interdisciplinary team included two computer science majors working on 3D modeling and coding, one electrical engineering major working on the educational content, and one anthropology student focused on user experience and accessibility. The group presented its app at the International Symposium on Academic Makerspaces 2018 at Stanford University, where it received a positive reception and garnered significant interest.

VR software is projected to be a \$35 billion market by 2025, according to a Goldman Sachs study published in 2016. "What if we are able to train our students to hit the ground running [in this industry] once they graduate?" says Kassis.



Sara Kassis demonstrates the HoloLens. Her students developed an educational app for the hardware.



Astronomy professor Scott Severson uses a VR app in his introduction to astronomy class.



# New faculty strengthen SSU

Sonoma State welcomed 16 new tenure-track faculty to its ranks to begin the 2019-2020 academic year. Spanning a variety of departments on campus, these new faculty members come with diverse backgrounds and unique skill sets.

“Sonoma State has hired a cohort of talented faculty who bring a true commitment to our students and our mission,” said Dr. Lisa Vollendorf, provost of Sonoma State University. “I am proud to work with this group of professors who work hard every day to serve our students through high-quality teaching and innovative research.”

Here are our new Sonoma State faculty members and a little insight into them.

**“Sonoma State  
has hired  
a cohort of  
talented faculty  
who bring a true  
commitment to  
our students and  
our mission.”**

– Dr. Lisa Vollendorf  
SSU Provost



**ALEXANDRA MILLER**  
*Ph.D., Physics – UC Santa Barbara*  
**Department:** Physics  
**Fun:** Playing soccer and strategy board games, rock climbing, running, cycling and tasting wine



**BRYAN BURTON**  
*Ph.D., Criminology, Law & Society – University of California, Irvine*  
**Department:** Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies  
**Fun:** Hiking and exploring national parks, playing and watching basketball and working out and traveling



**DAWN CANADY**  
*Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction – University of Nevada Las Vegas*  
**Department:** Curriculum Studies and Secondary Education  
**Expertise or Creative Activities:** Adolescent literacies, secondary English education, narrative nonfiction  
**Fun:** Family-related activities, such as cooking (eating is the real objective), hiking, boating; and for myself, reading or binge-watching television series



**GINA BALERIA**  
*Ed.D., Educational Leadership & Digital Communication – San Francisco State University*  
**Department:** Communications and Media Studies  
**Expertise or Creative Activities:** Digital media and news literacy, digital design and content delivery, media writing, podcasting and radio  
**Fun:** Hiking, reading, swing dancing, traveling and hanging out with family



**JAMES LEE**  
*Ph.D., Physics – University of Illinois*  
**Department:** Physics/Astronomy  
**Expertise or creative activities:** Physics and materials science, specialties in magnetic materials, superconductivity and X-ray interactions with matter  
**Fun:** Reading, playing with my cats and walking



**JENNIFER JOHNSON**  
*Ph.D., English Education – Columbia University*  
**Department:** English  
**Expertise or Creative Activities:** Teaching and learning with young scholars and leaders and supporting the development of those who courageously speak truth to power  
**Fun:** Running, swimming, reading, listening to hip-hop music, hiking, bowling, dancing, practicing yoga and spending time with family



**KEVIN NGUYEN**  
*Ph.D., STEM Education – University of Texas at Austin*  
**Department:** Hutchins  
**Fun:** Playing and watching soccer, paddling canoes or kayaks and playing video or board games.



**KYLA WALTERS**  
*Ph.D., Sociology – University of Massachusetts-Amherst*  
**Department:** Sociology  
**Expertise or creative activities:** Education politics, race, gender, labor and work; social movements  
**Fun:** Reading historical fiction, venturing out for day hikes and weekend camping trips



**LISA HUA**  
*Ph.D., Cell and Molecular Biology – Tulane University*  
**Department:** Biology  
**Expertise or Creative Activities:** Molecular cell biology and developmental biology  
**Fun:** Spending time with family including my wonderful husband and two lively daughters, Josephine and Olivia



**LISEL MURDOCK-PERRIERA**  
*Ph.D. – Stanford Graduate School of Education*  
**Department:** Early Childhood Studies  
**Expertise or Creative Activities:** Early childhood literature for social justice; language and belonging in early childhood and elementary school  
**Fun:** Rocking out with my 3-year-old son and my husband. We are the Unstoppable MPs (Murdock-Perrieras) and are generally together outside.





**NADIYA PAREKH**

Ph.D., Management – National Institute of Technology, Calicut, India

**Department:** Business Administration

**Expertise or Creative Activities:**

Social entrepreneurship and social impact investment

**Fun:** Writing



**NANSONG WU**

Ph.D., Electrical Engineering – Florida International University, Miami, Fla

**Department:** Engineering Science

**Expertise or Creative Activities:**

Wireless sensor networks



**PATRICK JOHNSON**

Ph.D., Education – University of California, Berkeley

**Department:** American Multicultural Studies

**Expertise or Creative Activities:**

Black Media Cultures

**Fun:** Listening to podcasts



**TERESA NGUYEN**

Ph.D., Clinical Psychology – UCLA

**Department:** Psychology

**Expertise or creative activities:**

Clinical psychology, couple therapy, sociodemographic stress and risk factors

**Fun:** Reading and swing dancing



**THERESA BURRUEL-STONE**

Ph.D., Language, Literacy, and Culture – UC Berkeley

**Department:** English

**Expertise or Creative Activities:**

Race and whiteness, classroom discourse, language socialization and settler colonialism

**Fun:** Spending time with family, dancing and being in nature



**YAJUAN "VIVIAN" XIANG**

Ph.D., Early Childhood Education – The State University of New York at Buffalo

**Department:** Early Childhood Studies

**Expertise or Creative Activities:**

Early childhood education; multicultural parenting; early bilingual education; early childhood teacher education

**Fun:** Spending time with families, hiking, cooking and reading

SSU Professor José J. Hernández Ayala, Climate Research Center director, co-authored a paper that found a warming climate has made devastating hurricanes nearly five times more likely than in the 1950s.



Kent Porter



Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico in 2017.

The Naval Research Laboratory/NOAA

# SSU scientist ties strong hurricanes to climate change

By Guy Kovner

José J. Hernández Ayala, born 30 years ago in Puerto Rico, grew up amid hurricanes.

In 1989, the storm named Hugo spoiled his first birthday party, an event he doesn't remember.

But he recalls Hurricane Hortense flooding his hometown of Arecibo in 1996, when the family home was safely upslope on the mountainous island, crowned by the world's second-largest radio telescope.

Then came Hurricane Georges in 1998, when Hernández Ayala, then 10, and his family huddled inside as winds shook their home and electricity sparked from broken power lines outside. A neighborhood church was smashed against the mountains by the Category 3 tempest that was Puerto Rico's worst – until Hurricane Maria struck with unsurpassed fury in September 2017.

Hernández Ayala, a geographer/climatologist whose specialty is extreme weather events, had just settled in as an assistant professor

and Climate Research Center director at Sonoma State University. It had been 19 years since the last major hurricane, Georges, impacted Puerto Rico, and Hernández Ayala wanted to know how climate change might have impacted their frequency.

What he and a colleague learned was unsurprising, but a bit unsettling.

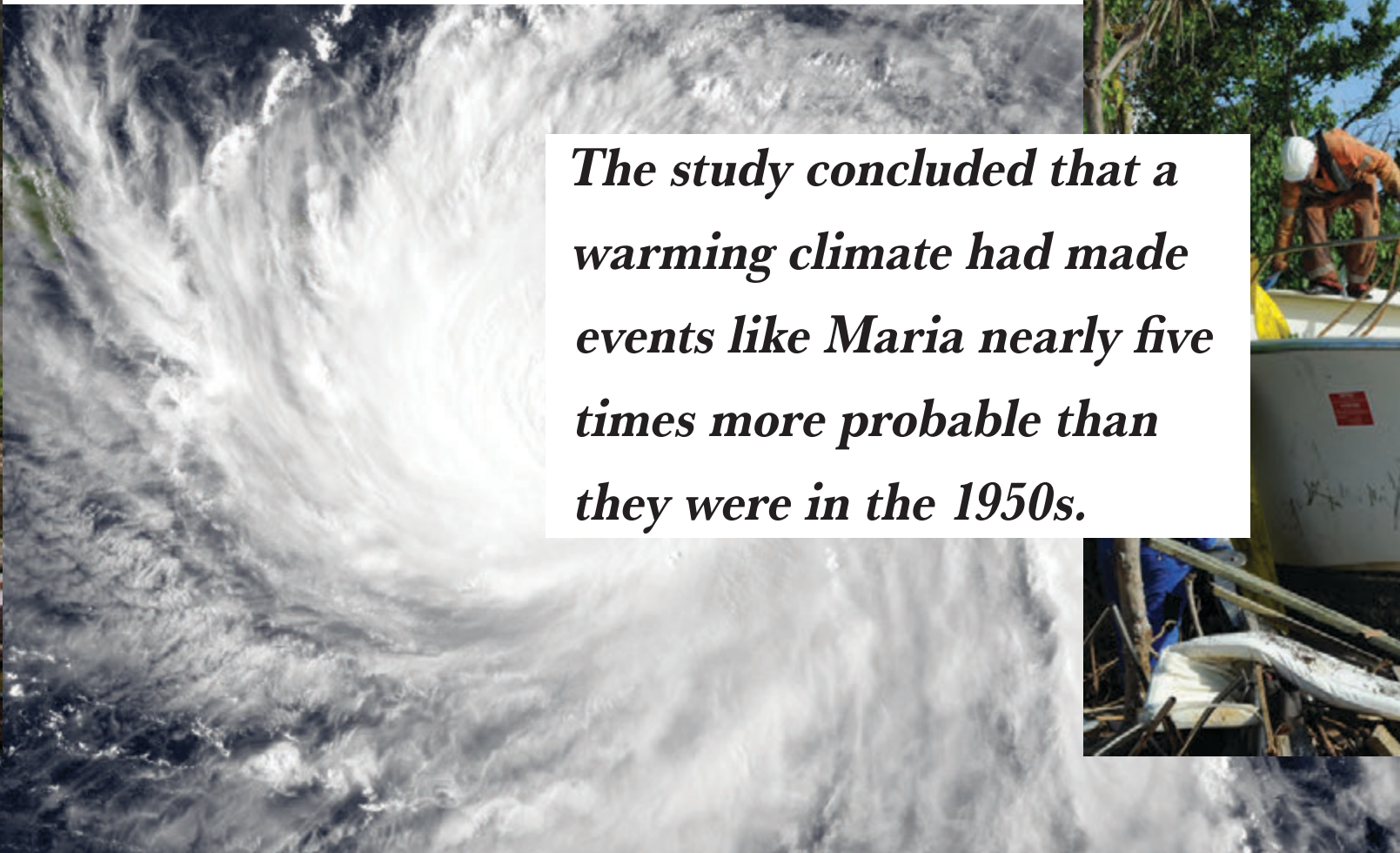
Their study, published in March in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, concluded that a warming climate had made events like Maria





Puerto Rico suffered more than \$90 million in damages from Hurricane Maria in 2017

Tech. Sgt. Larry E. Reid Jr., U.S. Air Force



*The study concluded that a warming climate had made events like Maria nearly five times more probable than they were in the 1950s.*



Petty Officer 2nd Class Lisa Ferdinando, U.S. Coast Guard

nearly five times more probable than they were in the 1950s.

The link between climate change and hurricane activity had been established by other studies, but bringing it literally home made an impact, said Hernández Ayala, a Santa Rosa resident who sometimes commutes to the Rohnert Park campus by bicycle.

He and his wife have some 250 relatives in Puerto Rico, an island about 1,000 miles southeast of Miami squarely in the path of hurricanes spawned in the Atlantic basin.

“We’re worried,” Hernández Ayala said, sitting in his sparsely furnished, white-walled office on the third floor of Stevenson Hall. “We are going to see more of these events in the future.”

Hurricane Maria was a monster, the worst by far of the 129 storms that have impacted Puerto Rico since 1956, based on data from 35 weather stations cited in the study.

“Maria was off the charts in everything,” he said, bringing up multicolored precipitation maps on his computer monitor, with a diagonal line tracing the storm’s track across the 3,500-square-mile island, about the size of Mendocino County.

Officially designated a Category 4 hurricane, Maria packed wind gusts at a Category 5 level of 157 mph or more. Hovering near and over the island for three days, the storm dropped up to 40 inches of rain, triggering thousands of landslides in the mountains.

The hurricane’s eye lingered for 12 hours over Puerto Rico, surrounded

by a thick ring – called the eye wall – packing the strongest winds and rain. It ran right over Arecibo, and Hernández Ayala, monitoring its path, had repeatedly warned friends and relatives there of the peril.

“My wife was just going crazy,” he said, because her family was reluctant to evacuate. They left in time after his final warning: “Get out now.”

Maria unleashed unprecedented flooding that swamped their home in 15 feet of water. The concrete structure was built for wild weather and survived, but everything inside was ruined.

The megastorm virtually destroyed the electrical grid and municipal water supplies for 3.4 million residents in a nation with a 45 percent poverty rate and a median income of less than \$20,000 a year, making the

U.S. territory poorer than Mississippi, the least well-off of the 50 states.

High winds stripped vegetation from the ground, making the aftermath “look like a nuclear bomb (had hit),” Hernández Ayala said.

The death toll from Maria, initially listed at 64, has since been officially estimated at 2,975 lives, making it the deadliest natural disaster in the United States in a century. Damage from Maria in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands is listed at \$90 billion, dwarfing the estimated \$8 billion cost of Hurricane Georges.

Recent studies – cited by Hernández Ayala and co-author David Keellings at the University of Alabama – had established a likely connection between the intensity of Atlantic hurricanes and human-induced climate change. A study by researchers at University

of California, Berkeley said climate change had likely increased rainfall from Hurricane Harvey, which hammered the Texas coast in 2017, by at last 19%.

The connection is natural, since rising sea surface temperatures are a key component of climate change. Warm water fuels hurricanes and promotes evaporation, adding moisture to the air that comes down as rainfall.

Sea surface temperatures during the hurricane season in the area where Atlantic storms form rose just over 2% between 1956 and 2017, a difference Hernández Ayala said doesn’t seem like much but it “promotes a more favorable environment for tropical cyclones to develop.”

His study found Maria was Puerto Rico’s wettest storm in 60 years, but he wanted to know what the future

would be in a warming climate.

Plugging in variables, such as air and ocean surface temperature, cloud cover and atmospheric carbon dioxide, enabled him and Keellings to calculate that long-term climate trends had increased the probability of storms like Maria by a factor they estimated at 4.85.

“These results place Maria prominently in the context of extreme storms that have impacted Puerto Rico and indicate that such events are becoming increasingly likely,” their report said.

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As music director for this year's production of *Candide*, Lynne Morrow spent many hours coaching student vocalists.

Natalie Dolan '20

# Grammy-nominated voice director retiring after two decades

By Katie Beermann, '15 & Nate Galvan, '18

When Lynne Morrow looks back on her 18 years as the director of the Voice and Opera/Music Theatre Programs at Sonoma State, it's hard for her to name just one highlight. However, one she holds especially close is her annual opera music theater production, which has shown performances such as "The Magic Flute" and the "Fiddler on the Roof."

"It's my favorite thing in the world to do," said Morrow. "I have had the great fortune of working with colleagues

that I love. They have been great teachers for my students, and that is always the highlight of my year to do the collaborative work that I love."

After almost two decades of teaching in SSU's Music Department, Morrow is retiring from the university where she will leave behind a long list of accomplishments and countless students whom she has impacted. "I'm really going to miss my students, just talking to them and being around them," said Morrow.

"Lynne Morrow has inspired a generation of students to reach for the highest standards of musicianship," said Hollis Robbins, dean of the School of Arts and Humanities. "She has done extraordinary work in engaging with the broader Bay Area community to invite diverse and talented young musicians to study at Sonoma State."

Morrow has always considered herself a musician. From the time she began to play the piano in her hometown of Berkeley at the age of 4, to growing

up in a church that had endless amounts of a capella singing, music has played a major role in her life. Morrow credits her upbringing for developing her passion in music.

"I was at my grandmother's house almost every day with my family, and I told my grandmother I wanted to play the piano," said Morrow. "That's when I became a musician. I can still remember the first song I played at my first recital: 'My New Hat.' "

Despite her passion for music, when Morrow was accepted at Stanford University she enrolled as a pre-med student after high school because she was interested in analytical thinking, something she said music and science have in common. However, she also chose science because she understood the challenges of being an African American pursuing a career in classical music. While Morrow eventually became a music major during her last year and a half at Stanford, this contributed to her mostly working in computer programming until her oldest daughter was a senior in high school.

"My sister has two degrees from Julliard and couldn't do the work that she wanted to do because of racism in America in the '70s and '80s," said Morrow. "I spent my years as a computer programmer when I was young because being a black woman conducting just wasn't a thing."

But with her children getting older, she decided to immerse herself in music full time. So Morrow received her master's degree from CSU East Bay where she also taught at the Performing Arts High School in Oakland. Afterward, she attended Indiana University Bloomington to get her Ph.D. through a CSU fellowship for women in nontraditional careers before coming to Sonoma State full time in 2001. "I felt very fortunate to end up landing here," she said.

Morrow's ability to teach music has gone beyond Sonoma State as she is a familiar figure in the Bay Area. She has been chorus director of the Oakland

Symphony Chorus since 2005 and has been the music director of the musical ensemble Pacific Edge Voices for just as long. Now in its 40th year, Morrow plans to retire from her role with Pacific Edge Voices at the end of the year. She leaves having helped bring the chorus to new heights and not to mention a Grammy nomination.

In 2004, Morrow was approached to do a rendition of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass," a musical production she knew very well due to the fact she had to conduct the piece during her time at IU Bloomington. "My teacher was gone in the second week for an audition

***"I spent my years as a computer programmer when I was young because being a black woman conducting just wasn't a thing."***

Lynne Morrow  
Professor of Music

for another job, so I conducted the piece," she said. "I literally did not sleep for four months. I laid down, I closed my eyes, but I didn't sleep. I knew that piece cold," she said.

After a year of preparing, Morrow and Pacific Edge Voices traveled to Berlin for two concerts performing "Mass" and a few recording sessions in the days following. Morrow said she did not know the record company had submitted their piece for a Grammy until a month before the award ceremony in February 2006. Morrow said the whole experience was something she will remember forever.

"Here we are, sitting in the ceremony room, and they get to the "Best Choral Performance" category and start

announcing the names for Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" and they say 'and in the orchestra, Lynne Morrow.' I said, 'I'm done now, my name has been called at the Grammys.' It was super exciting," she said.

At SSU, Morrow has worked closely with students in both the Music and Theatre Arts and Dance departments. Although she is retiring, she will still be around. Morrow will be part of the Faculty Early Retirement Program for five years, which allows tenured faculty to continue teaching after retirement. Meanwhile, her music and theater collaboration was shown once again this spring as she continued her direction in the Music department's theater production of *Candide*. "My students are doing beautifully," said Morrow. "I'm the access point of students wanting to do multiple things because I do music theater."

When Morrow is done making an impact at Sonoma State, she said she hopes to create her own choral orchestra mass using African spirituals and bring the mass to different countries and workshop African spiritual music. "It's important work," she said. "Lecturing on American Music and taking that mass for freedom around the world."

You can reach Katie Beermann at [beermann@sonoma.edu](mailto:beermann@sonoma.edu) & Nate Galvan at [galvanna@sonoma.edu](mailto:galvanna@sonoma.edu)



SWAN SONG

SWAN SONG



# A Deeper Shade of Green



## SSU Ups Its Climate Commitment

By Paul Gullixson

On a rainy day in early April 2019, with nearly 300 people bundled inside the Student Center ballrooms observing, Sonoma State President Judy K. Sakaki took a simple but transformative step for the university. She committed SSU to stepping up its game in significant ways to reduce the university's carbon footprint, incorporate sustainability in its curriculum and engage with regional partners to heal the planet.

"As we all can recognize, the need to address climate change through greater and more comprehensive sustainable practices is urgent," said Sakaki. "And it is dire."

Moments later she put her signature to the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment, a document originally developed by 12 university presidents and chancellors and now administered through Second Nature, a nonprofit that for more than a quarter-century has worked with university faculty and administrators to integrate the principles of sustainability in all aspects of higher education. The document offers a comprehensive roadmap for higher education to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate – a map that sets high goals of sustainability for the university, including a pledge to achieve carbon neutrality within 25

years. As Claudia Luke, Sustainability Programs director at SSU, put it, "It's the most rigorous commitment a university can make to address the causes and impacts of climate change."

On that April morning, as university vice presidents, student body leaders and community officials pressed in behind her, Sakaki added her signature and then raised her hand in celebration. "Let's get started," she said as the room erupted in applause.

And start it has – in myriad conspicuous and not-so-conspicuous ways.

By May, Sonoma State had, for the first time, banned the sale and distribution of plastic bottles during commencement ceremonies.

By summer, the university was making plans to replace the few remaining gas-powered golf carts on campus with electrical ones, taking inventory on places to install more solar panels and targeting roughly 20 acres of ornamental lawn to be replaced with drought-resistant landscaping.

By early fall, SSU officials had banned the use of glyphosate (RoundUp) on campus, replacing it with organic orange peel herbicide; hosted a massive Town Hall meeting on climate change in partnership with U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson, and ascertained that the university was on track to earn its first silver STARS rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education for its overall sustainability efforts. In 2016, SSU had earned a bronze rating.

*"The need to address climate change through greater and more comprehensive sustainable practices is urgent."*

– Judy K. Sakaki  
SSU President





Claudia Luke, director of SSU's Center for Environmental Inquiry was recently selected to serve as SSU's director of Sustainability Programs.

Then in late October, Sonoma State took its most significant organizational step to date, holding the inaugural meeting of the newly formed President's Sustainability Advisory Council.

The council, co-chaired by Claudia Luke and Craig Dawson, Sonoma State's director of Operational Sustainability, is composed of representatives from across campus, including students, faculty and staff. Committee recommendations will be made directly to Provost Lisa Vollendorf and Joyce Lopes, vice president of Administration and Finance, the President's Cabinet sponsors and advisors to the council.

"It's a very specific framework that we agreed to sign onto, and it's real," Vollendorf told the Academic Senate early in the fall semester. "It's exciting, but it also means that there's going to be work for all of us to be thinking differently and together about how we express our commitment to sustainability in everything we do."

During the inaugural meeting of the Sustainability Advisory Council on Oct. 25, Provost Vollendorf and Vice President Lopes welcomed the members, gave them their charge and made clear that they had the support of the president and the Cabinet to not just make small moderations to the university's sustainability efforts but to make "transformational change" in how Sonoma State operates at all levels.

## Leading the charge for change

President Sakaki had announced the formation of the Sustainability Advisory Council in August 2019, noting that the panel would oversee the university's work on the three key areas – or "pillars" – of the Climate Commitment:



**Achieving carbon neutrality** for electricity-powered campus operations before 2045.



**Integrating sustainability** and resilience into SSU curriculum and research and student experience.



**Collaborating** with surrounding communities and partners to build resilience to climate change throughout the region.

As if to underscore the need, the meeting occurred one day before the campus closed for a week due to planned power outages and impacts from the Kincadee fire in northern Sonoma County. It was the second time that month that the university had been forced to close due to the PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs.

The fires, evacuations and power shutoffs "are just another signal as to why we need to be working so diligently on these areas of resilience," said Judith Ford, a postdoctoral fellow with SSU's Center for Environmental Inquiry and member of the council's leadership team.

The council's first task will be to draft goals, indicators and tactical plans to achieve each of pillars of the Climate Commitment (see sidebar at left). This work will culminate in a Climate Action Plan for SSU within the next three years. The council also will be overseeing the completion of an inventory of Sonoma State's greenhouse gas emissions and a system to track the university's progress in seeing those emissions reduced.

Campus leaders are quick to note that none of this is to suggest that the university is starting from scratch in these endeavors. Far from it. As President Sakaki stated from the outset, Sonoma State has been "a long-standing leader in sustainability" in programs and academics. "Our students themselves – often in

*"The fires, evacuations and power shutoffs are just another signal as to why we need to be working so diligently on these areas of resilience."*

– Judith Ford

Center for Environmental Inquiry, postdoctoral fellow

partnership with our faculty and staff – have harnessed their tremendous energy and vision to make our campus greener and to make our university a national model for sustainable practices."

From a policy perspective, the university's efforts date back to before 2008 when Sonoma State adopted a strategic plan that included among its core values "sustainability, diversity and community engagement."

In terms of projects and communications, signs of the university's commitment to sustainability have been visible for years, from the installation of rooftop solar panels to recycling bins to courses across disciplines, research and long-standing events focused on sustainability and environmental awareness.

"We're building on the work of others," said Luke. While acknowledging that Sonoma State was not among the first CSU campuses to join the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment, she clarifies, "the truth is we've done a lot towards achieving those same goals, and I think we have a momentum and an energy that is going to surpass the efforts that are on many of the campuses."

Since the 1970s, SSU students have maintained a food-producing organic garden on campus. Today, the garden produces fresh, healthy, organic produce and makes it available to those in need through the local food bank, Neighbors Organized Against Hunger.





# I Sustainability on Campus



President Judy K. Sakaki signs the Presidents' Climate Commitment in April 2019 as Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Administration and Finance, looks on. The commitment sets high goals of sustainability for the university.

The first goal is a challenging one – calculating the university's overall carbon emissions. This effort is made difficult by the fact that Sonoma State has not always kept good records or tracked energy consumption. But that is changing with the help of new software – and some faculty and students.

Professor Daniel Soto and his Energy Technology and Society class, for example, have assisted by making some rudimentary estimates of the university energy usage and combining it with publicly available formulas and data to get a rough estimate of SSU's overall greenhouse gas emissions. Dawson says the information has been helpful in compiling data for the inventory, which, under the commitment, needs to be completed by April 5, 2020.

Soto said students have responded positively to the experience. "It's interesting for them to apply things that are somewhat esoteric on a global level and see how it applies on campus," he said. "So students enjoy it."

Soto said his class is also hoping to help with the third phase of the inventory, which is particularly difficult to calculate. These so-called Scope 3 emissions calculate the carbon emissions generated by those people, who travel for university business and commute to and from campus each day, and those products, which travel here for consumption.

Yet even as it seeks to calculate its carbon footprint, Sonoma State is working hard to reduce it.

## Steps to reducing SSU's carbon footprint

### Increased energy efficiencies

Facilities Management crews are making mechanical and lighting improvements within buildings to improve energy efficiencies. This includes reprogramming controls within the Student Center, which is expected to provide substantial savings. The changes to air controls, temperature sensors and other systems will allow the university to pre-condition spaces prior to big events. "We're working towards automating the controls to link with the scheduling of classrooms," said Dawson.

### Keeping food local

SSU Culinary Services recently installed new "Know Your Farmer" food tracking software that allows the university to better understand and track where the food that is served originates. The goal is to reduce that carbon footprint by buying more locally – and communicating that to students and others on campus.

### Stevenson Hall remodel

Stevenson Hall, the university's oldest and largest academic building, is about to undergo a major facelift to modernize as well as enhance the sustainability of the structure. The goal of that remodeling project, which is set to begin during the summer of 2020, will include enough improvements to earn a LEED Gold rating from U.S. Green Building Council. (Look for more information about the Stevenson Hall project in the next edition of *Insights*.)

### New Solar Panels

SSU has solar panels on the roofs of Salazar and the Student Recreation Center, which were installed beginning in 2000. Facilities Management is now evaluating proposals to bring another two megawatts of power – enough to power roughly 328 average American homes a day – to campus through additional panel installations. Most of them are targeted to cover spaces in Parking Lots J and F near the main entrance to campus. The goal is to have them installed by the summer of 2020.



SSU Director of Operational Sustainability Craig Dawson with new EV chargers at the Student Center.

### Food waste reduction

The university is targeting a solid waste disposal rate of 80 percent by 2020. Sonoma State is currently diverting 71.4 percent of food waste, which translates to roughly 156 tons of food waste and compostable materials that is kept out of the landfill each year. After that, the goal will be to reduce the amount of waste sent to the landfill to zero. In Culinary Services, personnel spent the day at Shone Farm harvesting to help staff better appreciate the hard work that goes into growing produce with the hope that they would in turn be more careful about waste during food prep.

### Removal of lawn

The university also will be removing roughly 20 acres of ornamental lawn around campus. One such stretch fronts the East Cotati Avenue side of campus where the lawn serves no real purpose. "We have huge initiatives for replacing all of this with native drought-tolerant plants," said Dawson as he pointed out how far the strip of lawn extended. "We use reclaimed water for the irrigation on all of this, but regardless of that, it is still a lot of water. And it's totally unnecessary. It's also not the message that we want to send."

### Recycling and composting

Sonoma State employees and students will soon see three new exterior waste receptacles in different locations around campus. To underscore SSU's priorities and messaging to those on campus, the largest bins will be for recyclable materials and for compost. The smallest will be for items destined for the landfill. Meanwhile, the university is continuing to look for ways to step up its recycling of many other items on campus – from computers to office furniture.



# Sustainability in academics and student life

On a Tuesday morning in October, Professor Caiti Hachmyer took class time to answer a student's question about a group project. What made the classroom encounter a little unusual was that it occurred under a cloudless sky as the two stood between a role of kale and the edge of a parking lot, deciding where to put in a hedgerow. The class was agroecology and the setting was the Garden Classroom, a one-acre spread in the northeast corner of Sonoma State.

"OK, so we have a Ceanothus here, which is a California native," responded Hachmyer, sporting a wide-brimmed braided sun hat, as she talked to the students. "This gets all these little blue flowers on it which is really great for pollinators, so we don't want to cover that guy up. So we can start here," she says, pointing to an area just inside the California lilac bush. "And then let's roll all the way down this white sage plant." Nearby, other students were busy tearing up cardboard to lay down as a weed barrier before the mulch was applied for the planting strip.

Hachmyer recognizes that many people on campus don't know that the Garden Classroom, situated outside the Environmental Technology Center on the northwestern part of campus, even exists. But she notes that it has been on campus since the 1970s producing more than 1,000 pounds of lettuce, beets, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries,

onions and other organic produce every year. Its primary role has been to supply food for people in need through the local NOAH (Neighbors Organized Against Hunger) food bank program. More recently, however, the program also has been taking the fruits of its Wednesday harvests to a food pantry on campus that is set up for students with food insecurities. "When we take food there, it goes in the blink of an eye," Hachmyer says, snapping her fingers.

But the ultimate goal of the Garden Classroom is to serve as a space where students not only learn about sustainable landscape practices but witness how these contribute to biodiversity and environmental health. Educators, students and volunteers also engage about broader discussions concerning climate change, food justice and other issues, said Hachmyer.

"Like today we talked about livestock and

regenerative, grassland management practices," said Hachmyer, a lecturer and commercial farmer who owns Red H Farm in Sebastopol. Their work in planting a hedgerow came as part of a broader discussion about biodiversity and the importance of creating pollinator habitat. "So the whole class is about building not just sustainability but regenerative and cultural systems that function more in harmony with nature," she said.

The Garden Classroom is one of the most conspicuous examples of how sustainability is already integrated into the SSU curriculum. But there are many other examples, such as:

The Center for Environmental Inquiry supports more than 120 different faculty projects each year across disciplines. These projects involve students as well as the public in studying and confronting environmental challenges through the lens of Sonoma State's three preserves, including Fairfield Osborn Preserve, a 450-acre nature reserve just east of campus.

The Copeland Creek Restoration Project has engaged classes in the School of Social Sciences as well as the School of Science and Technology in helping to restore and monitor changes in the creek, which runs through the north side of campus.

Students from the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance have created performances addressing environmental changes in soundscapes and watersheds. This included a collaborative effort by students from Hutchins School of Liberal Studies and Theater Arts who created "Hope Ablaze" in 2018, an outdoor performance at Fairfield Osborn Preserve that explored climate change and its impact on daily life.

*"[Higher education must] be increasingly sensitive to the needs of the students, and the skill sets that they require to face the challenges they're going to go out into."*

**Eric Thomas**  
*Critically acclaimed author, speaker*

Faculty and students in the Wine Business Institute have been investigating the strategic preparedness of wineries for natural disasters and the long-term impacts of climate change on the wine industry and the best practices for addressing both these short and long-term impacts.

The School of Education has looked at how the state of our natural world affects stress levels and academic achievement in children and has compiled a Fire Trauma Resources List for families who have been impacted by fires.

These are just a few of the examples. But the university is committed to expanding this even further in academics as well as student life.

As an example of the latter, meters installed in the Tuscany Village housing community now allow student residents to see and compare usage of electricity, natural gas and water. The natural outcome? A contest. In the fall an SSU student launched the first Energy and Water Conservation Competition where residents competed to see who could save the most in power and water by unplugging electronics while not in use, turning off lights when possible, shortening showers and taking other steps. In the end, residents of Mosel in Tuscany Village won the competition with an overall 60 percent reduction in electricity and water. They choose a pizza party as their prize.

"It's an exciting time on campus," said Soto. He noted that some programs related to sustainability have been going on for years. "But to see this level of commitment and cooperation throughout the campus at this point makes it very exciting for those of us who have been sort of doing our own thing for a while."



Next to the university's Environmental Technology Center, the Garden Classroom serves as a living lab where SSU students and community members learn about sustainable landscape practices and how these contribute to biodiversity and environmental health.





Elif Myers, who represents Associated Students on the President's Sustainability Advisory Council, helps out in the Garden Classroom on campus.



## Resilience in the community

During the fall, Sonoma State served as host of a town hall meeting on climate change by U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson, who presented a panel of speakers including a local physician, a high school student and Assistant Professor José J. Hernández Ayala, a geographer/climatologist whose specialty is extreme weather events. (See story on page 15). The meeting drew a standing-room-only crowd, but little of the conversation was about Sonoma State itself – as intended. The focus was more global.

One of the biggest concerns of audience members was the fires that were, at the time, burning out of control in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, which critics largely blamed on the increases in deforestation that have occurred under Brazil's new president, Jair Bolsonaro. Scientists have warned that the destruction of the world's largest rainforest, which absorbs more than 20 percent of the Earth's carbon dioxide, holds dire consequences for the planet.

"That's something we should all be focused on and outraged about," Congressman Thompson told the crowd. "We need to let our policymakers here know how important this issue is. They all need to know that this is something that we care about and that we understand the relationship between what happens in the Amazon and our lives today."

These kinds of interactions and community gatherings are an example of the third "pillar" of the Climate Commitment – using Sonoma State as a living lab for conversation and change to build awareness and resilience within the community.

"The thing I really liked about the (town hall) panel, and that really resonated with what Sonoma State should be doing, is bringing in experts and representing our own faculty expertise," said Luke.

As part of this "convening" aspect of its commitment, Sonoma State hosts North Bay Forward, a campus-community collaborative that seeks to harness the collective expertise and vision of business, public sector, non-profit and academic leaders to create a sustainable, resilient North Bay. With the Center for Environmental Inquiry, Judith Ford and student intern, Elif Myers, organize a Lunch Speaker Series held at the Environmental Technology Center on the second Wednesday of every month. Topics of discussion include local food and food insecurities, building partnerships between large organizations and small communities, regenerative economic development and calculating and reporting carbon emissions.

The university also is working with the Healthy Climate and Environment Working Group of MAP One Sonoma, a county-wide collaborative organized by the Community Foundation to build cooperation and focus on issues such as housing, health, equity and climate change. The working group is aligning its initiatives with the county's efforts following the Climate Emergency Declaration of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in September.

The university is fostering other close partnerships as well, including with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, which this year gave Sonoma State \$2.85 million to improve and expand environmental education at Fairfield Osborn Preserve. The work will include the creation of an outdoor talking circle at the preserve's education and research center and a remodeling of the center to allow greater use by students, faculty, staff as well as local K-12 students and others from the community.

Graton Rancheria Tribal Chairman Greg Sarris said one of the main goals of the gift is "to maximize outdoor learning spaces and strengthen the sense of the surrounding environment" all while encouraging environmental stewardship.

"These improvements will enable the growth of programs that enhance connections to nature and encourage the discovery of new solutions for challenges facing the planet," said President Sakaki at the time of the gift.

All of these efforts are part of the pivotal questions that the university is asking – at a pivotal time in history.

"Currently, all of the reports coming out of the United Nations and elsewhere are indicating that we have to make transformational change across all sectors of society in the next 10 years or we're going to be facing some really severe and drastic consequences," Luke told the council during its first meeting.

"So the question for us, on a global level, is to ask, what is the role of higher education in creating transformational change? If we're going to look back over the next 10 years and say we really did as much as we could, we have to answer this question: What is it that education can do to bring about those changes?"

As Sonoma State continues to discuss and debate the answers to these questions, it's evident the university is not waiting around for clear answers. Change is already happening – in visible and transformative ways. SSU is committed.

*"We have to make transformational change across all sectors of society in the next 10 years or we're going to be facing some really severe and drastic consequences."*

**Claudia Luke**  
Director,  
SSU Sustainability Programs



This past fall Rep. Mike Thompson held a town hall on climate change at Sonoma State. It featured a panel of speakers that included SSU assistant professor José J. Hernández Ayala.

### Dig this story?

To find out more about Sonoma State's sustainability efforts and track the university's progress, visit the newly expanded Sustainable SSU website.

[sustainablenesss.sonoma.edu](https://sustainablenesss.sonoma.edu)





Q&A with

## Dr. Jerlena Griffin-Desta

Chief of Staff and  
Associate Vice President  
for Strategic Initiatives  
and Diversity



Nathanael Galvan, '18

### Question: What is the role of the chief of staff?

Chiefs of staff are primarily responsible for supporting the principal, in this case President Sakaki, in her vision and her efforts toward moving Sonoma State University to the next level of excellence. The chief of staff pays attention to a lot of the details: the process, the procedures, the communication, all while working closely with the president but not needing a lot of direction and day-to-day management. I aim to understand the bigger picture and develop relationships with those on and off campus who contribute to and help implement the president's vision and campus priorities.

### Q: Could you tell us about your background and how you knew the president previously?

We come from the University of California, having both worked on campuses—she at Davis and I at Berkeley—at the time of our first introduction. Later, she recruited me to join her at the UC Office of the President as a member of her leadership team, and then as her deputy. We share the values of access, inclusion and success as fundamental to the work of higher education. I grew up in the segregated South, thus in my

DNA is the importance of equity and justice, access and education. It was drilled into the minds of my siblings and I that education is a freedom to which we should all aspire. You may recognize the print behind me – it is Norman Rockwell's "The Problem We All Live With", depicting Ruby Bridges needing protection while integrating her elementary school in New Orleans, and it is a constant reminder that our work for greater educational equity is far from over, even though important gains have been made. The president has a very similar story, especially in terms of her immigrant roots and the ways her parents and grandparents successfully navigated this country. And she has the same commitment to serving the greater good and fostering our highest democratic values.

### Q: What stands out to you about Sonoma State?

Many things. But when I speak about Sonoma State I mention two things in particular. One is that the intellectual heft within our faculty, who are trained in myriad areas, can help problem-solve issues of our region, our state and our nation. We also have enviable facilities. I view Sonoma State as this magnet of intellectual and social activity that attracts the broader Sonoma County

community, whether it be to the events at the Green Music Center, sports, academic and professional conferences, or outreach programs in support of students considering college.

### Q: Tell us about your role involving diversity on campus

President Sakaki wanted to make sure that there be someone whose job it is to think about campus climate and inclusion in an intentional way. I bring to this role extensive experience creating and facilitating difficult dialogues across differences toward the goal of establishing equitable practices within higher education. When I think about diversity or equity or inclusion, I know that my experiences and perceptions will likely be different from the next person. So, the first step is to make sure we have a common understanding of the terms we use, what we really mean, what are our goals, and what it will take to get us where we want to be. More than just "getting along" or having friends that look different than you, or being satisfied with good intentions, real change requires the courage to look at historical inequities that benefit some at the expense of others, and to figure out which of our structures and policies need to be adjusted, dismantled, rebuilt, or

even strengthened. It is a project that gets to the heart of who we are as a community, and who we want to be.

### Q: President Sakaki this year created the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, Campus Climate and Inclusion. Would you tell us what you see that becoming?

There has been a lot of work over the last few years at Sonoma State related to diversity and looking at ways we can be strategic and thoughtful about how we engage in this space. When I arrived at SSU, the president asked me to help ensure that we had the right campus model in place. I immediately talked to then-chair of the diversity committee, and dean of the University Library, Dr. Karen Schneider, and I attended a couple of those meetings to get a sense of what had been happening and their thoughts about moving forward. That committee has been reimagined as the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, Campus Climate and Inclusion. I have received great support from Dean Schneider as well as from the entire committee, and did not want to go it alone as chair, so she graciously agreed to co-chair. Indeed, the leadership at SSU are all champions of ensuring that our campus welcomes diversity, creates greater equity, and embraces inclusive practices.

The goal, then, is to organize these functions and initiatives under one umbrella for greater collaboration and communication. In addition, we will be conducting a campus climate study to learn how members of the campus community experience SSU now, in 2020, since we have an entirely new student body and senior leadership, and many new staff and faculty since the last study was conducted. We will also create an inventory of all diversity and equity-related programs and activities currently occurring on campus so that we can promote what is already happening and determine the feasibility of doing even more. The commitment and leadership of our Academic Senate, student government, staff representative groups and the President's Cabinet, which includes the divisions of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, Advancement, and the Green Music Center, has been outstanding. It is an exciting time to be here, working on these issues.

### Q: What has your experience at SSU been like so far?

I celebrated my one-year anniversary this past January, and the one thing that is paramount is the healthy appreciation I have for how the entire

institution has rallied around and has prioritized student success. Yet, we know that success is not only defined by high retention and graduation rates—while important—we also strive for students to have a good experience. We want to provide opportunities for them to explore and to create and to do well in every aspect of their university experience.

I attended a small, private, liberal arts school in Georgia where I was able to develop and sustain strong ties with my professors, and where I was taught how to think and analyze – where learning for the sake of learning was a sufficient reason to be there. I always thought that this was something only elite, private schools could offer. I now place Sonoma State in that company. Sonoma State offers a private-school feel at a public-school price, and with a public system's focus on access and serving the needs of the region and the state. It is indeed a special place.



# President's Farewell Message



As my term as the president of the Sonoma State University Alumni Association comes to an end, it gives me time to reflect back and to look ahead at what the Alumni Association has accomplished during my term and the opportunities we have in the future.

It's been a true honor leading such an amazing group of dedicated alumni who give back to our alma mater in so many ways. The individuals I connect with in my role as president, inspire and remind me why we all love SSU. Each alum has a unique story to share about why they chose to attend SSU and how their time on campus shaped them into the person they are today.

As your Alumni Association, we've accomplished so much together! We've invested in student scholarships, and in 2018 awarded the first recipient the Heart of SSU Alumni Scholarship. We also contributed financially to the Critical Needs Fund on campus to support emergency needs of students.

Countless hours have been spent volunteering for our local community too. It's been great supporting local non-profits and connecting SSU to the work they do.

I'm also excited to welcome Tiffany O'Neil, '96 to her new role as the executive director of the SSU Alumni Association. Tiffany is a very proud alumna and her aptitude for project management, multitude of community connections, and ability to build deep and meaningful relationships with SSU donors, alumni, friends and campus personnel make her an excellent candidate for this role. I'd also like to thank Laurie Ogg, '94, '99 for her dedication and commitment to the Alumni Association over the last

four years. Laurie will be a true asset to the university in her new role as director of Advancement Services and Stewardship.

As I step down from my leadership role, I look forward to mentoring and supporting our new board president, Travis Saracco '12. Travis will lead the association as it continues the great work that has been accomplished and will continue to expand our engagement with each of you.

Thank you for allowing me to serve and represent SSU through my role as president of the Alumni Association. I'm honored to be one of the more than 72,000 alumni from SSU.

Yours for Sonoma,  
**Joseph Huang**, '02, '04, '18  
*Outgoing President, Alumni Association*



# Two New Board Members Begin SSUAA Terms

The SSU Alumni Association Board of Directors has welcomed two new members, **Bianca Rose**, '16 B.S. Biology and B.A. Spanish, and

**Brad Yust**, '76 B.A. political science and media studies. Both will serve an initial two-year term.

# Alumni Association Welcomes New Executive Director

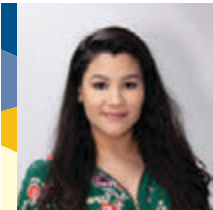


Greetings from Sonoma State! I'm thrilled to have recently joined the Alumni Association team and to be working with a dedicated and committed group of alumni, students, volunteers and community members.

As a proud alumna, I'm looking forward to expanding and identifying ways for our current and future alumni to engage and connect.

Our alumni do great things all over the world and contribute to our society in so many ways. I welcome you to stay connected with your alma mater and share with us your updates along the way. Be sure to visit us online at [www.ssualumni.org](http://www.ssualumni.org) for updated information about your Alumni Association and upcoming events.

**Tiffany O'Neil**, '96  
*Executive Director, Alumni Association*  
*Senior Director of Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving*



**Bianca Rose** is recruiting/human resources coordinator at Leap Solutions. She is passionate about social justice and community service and has her sights on graduate school and a career in nonprofit administration.



**Brad Yust** is a commercial real estate broker in Sonoma County and enjoys photography in his free time. He fondly remembers his time as a student at Sonoma State and hopes to support current and future students at SSU.

# SSU Alumni Association Board of Directors 2019-2020

|   |  |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| <b>President</b><br><b>Travis Saracco</b><br>B.A. Communications, 2012  | <b>Secretary</b><br><b>Vanessa Johns</b><br>B.A. Communications, 2013                                    | <b>David Felte</b><br>B.A. Economics and B.S. Business Administration, 2001                | <b>Logan Pitts</b><br>B.A. Political Science, 2017   | <b>Renan Young</b><br>B.A. Political Science, 2014; MPA Public Administration, 2017 | <b>Tiffany O'Neil</b><br>Executive Director<br>SSU Alumni Association,<br>Senior Director of Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving,<br>B.S. Business Administration Marketing, 1996 |
| <b>Immediate Past President</b><br><b>Joseph Huang</b><br>B.S. Business Administration, 2002; B.A. International Economics, 2004; MBA, 2018 | <b>Treasurer</b><br><b>Randy Ferino</b><br>B.S. Business Administration (HR Management), 2001; MBA, 2006 | <b>Patrick Maloney</b><br>B.A. Political Science, 2014                                     | <b>Annette Powell</b><br>B.A. Business Administration, Marketing and B.A. Psychology, 2005 | <b>Brad Yust</b><br>B.A. Political Science, Media Studies, 1976                     |   |
| <b>Directors</b><br><b>Vincent Cortese</b><br>B.A. Communications, 2000   | <b>Jim Manly</b><br>MBA, 1999  | <b>Elizabeth Payan</b><br>B.A. Environmental Studies and Planning and B.A. Economics, 2014 | <b>Bianca Rose</b><br>B.S. Biology, B.A. Spanish, 2016                                     | <b>Chelsea Spomer</b><br>Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving Analyst                |   |

## About the SSU Alumni Association

Since its inception in 1961, the Alumni Association is committed to providing service to Sonoma State University's current and future alumni and engaging our alumni in meaningful ways.

Learn more or become a member

- » [www.ssualumni.org](http://www.ssualumni.org)
- » [alumni@sonoma.edu](mailto:alumni@sonoma.edu)
- » 707.664.2426



# SSU Honors 2019 Distinguished Alumni

The Distinguished Alumni Awards Program is a time-honored tradition at Sonoma State University. The award is a symbol of achievement

and success presented to distinguished alumni from among SSU's six academic colleges. We proudly recognize our 2019 honorees.



## Barry Ben-Zion

*B.A. Economics 1965*

Barry Ben-Zion, professor emeritus of economics, entered Sonoma State University as a junior in 1963 and became the first SSU graduate to major in economics when he finished in 1965. He earned a scholarship to further his education at the University of Oregon where he earned both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in economics. In 1969, he became

the first Sonoma State graduate to be appointed a full-time professor. He taught economics at Sonoma State for 30 years before retiring in 2000 when he earned the title professor emeritus.

Ben-Zion taught courses in macroeconomic and microeconomic theory, economic development and international trade, and applied statistics. Early in his teaching career, he was recruited by the legal profession to work as a consulting forensic economist. He continued

to teach on a full-time basis while simultaneously working on legal cases as a consulting economist, providing forensic economic analyses for both the plaintiff and defense bar. After retiring from SSU, Ben-Zion has continued his forensic economic consulting work to the present time. He has served as a forensic economic expert witness for a multitude of legal cases.

Ben-Zion is married to Gail Smith, with whom he shares five children and 10 grandchildren.



## Natalie Cilurzo

*B.S. Business Administration 1998*

Natalie Cilurzo, co-owner of Russian River Brewing Company, completed her B.S. in business administration at Sonoma State University in 1998. Afterward, she continued her career in the wine industry by working at Silver Oak, Kendall-Jackson and Franciscan wineries while her husband Vinnie Cilurzo worked as brewmaster at Korbel's Russian River Brewing Company. In 2003, Korbel transferred

rights to the Russian River Brewing brand to the couple. Natalie and Vinnie wrote a prospectus for a brewpub and convinced 30 friends and family to invest in their new business venture and opened the Russian River Brewing Company brewpub in downtown Santa Rosa in April 2004. They started brewing their now legendary Pliny the Younger as a seasonal winter release a year later and never looked back. Sampling the "Younger" has since become something of a pilgrimage for beer fans from all over the world. In October, Natalie and Vinnie opened their dream brewery, an 85,000-square-foot complex in Windsor.

As co-owner, Natalie oversees all business operations including finance, human resources, brewpubs, communications, sales and marketing. She currently sits on the Board of Directors for the California Craft Brewers Association.

Over the years, Natalie has spearheaded efforts to raise more than \$600,000 for local breast cancer charities. In October 2017, she and her husband partnered with King Ridge Foundation and 60 craft breweries from around the world to raise more than \$1.1 million for Sonoma County wildfire victims.

# Alumni Events

Here's a snapshot of what your Alumni Association has been up to. We're looking forward to bringing additional engagement opportunities to our alumni this year.



## Meet and Mingle Mixer

A networking event for graduating seniors, alumni and community leaders was held in May at Bear Republic Brewing Company.



## Summer Socials

A series of summer alumni mixers at the Green Music Center, including the Andy Grammer show, above.



## Oakland A's

Alumni came together for a fun day of tailgating and an Oakland A's baseball game.

# MBA Alumni Forum Corner



From left Meredith Rennie, Marcus Benedetti, Chris Stewart and Bill Silver

The MBA Alumni Forum continues to expand its outreach to MBA alumni and prospective students. Recently, the MBA Alumni Forum partnered with the Career Center and the Alumni Association to present the first Lessons from Leaders panel. Three well-known business leaders shared their best learning moments and lessons all can relate to:

**Meredith Rennie** '97, Director of Real Estate Accounting of Mengali Accountancy

**Marcus Benedetti**, Chairman & CEO of Clover Sonoma

**Bill Silver**, President of CannaCraft

*“We’re excited to continue to build upon the success of this event and to create an informative space to learn not only for MBA students, but all students at Sonoma State.”*

*- Aaron Inman, '07, '14, Officer, MBA Alumni Forum*





## Career Fairs Re-engage SSU Alumni

Over the past year, the revitalized Career Center at SSU has been working hard to lead a new vision of career services for current students and alumni of the University. With an expanded professional and student staff, the Career Center hosted seven days of career-related events, including three industry-based career fairs focusing on Science and Tech, Wine, Hospitality and Business, and Social Impact and Government jobs. More than 170 employers joined together to

discuss opportunities for internships and jobs for graduating seniors and alumni in a career change. Local alumni attended as both career seekers and recruiters for local companies like E & J Gallo and Amy's Kitchen.

The Career Center at SSU has many services available to members of the Alumni Association, including resume and cover letter review, job search strategies, free professional development workshops and

employer networking events such as the career fairs.

Find or post a job on the new platform, Handshake, at [joinhandshake.com](https://joinhandshake.com). Alumni job seekers can request an account as an alum and get approval from the Career Center to access the job opportunities available from 3,000 employers locally and nationally.

[Learn more](#)

» [career.sonoma.edu](https://career.sonoma.edu)



President Judy K. Sakaki, third from left, second row, and her husband Patrick McCallum, second from left, meet with SSU alumni in London

## Connecting with SSU Alumni in London

In November 2019, the California State University System held an alumni reception in London to connect with more than 2,500 CSU alumni in the greater London area.



## Fall Graduation Reception

December 2019 graduates were officially recognized during Sonoma State's first Fall Graduation Celebration, held at the end of fall semester. More than 100 graduates attended the event, including the two new alums above, which was held in the Student Center and was hosted by Associated Students, the Alumni Association and the University. President Judy K. Sakaki and other campus leaders joined in a toast to the newest members of the alumni community.

# Class Notes

## 1970s

**David Dorfmeier, '73, B.A. Anthropology**, has authored "C-Lager: Stalag Luft IV & the 86-Day Hunger March" ([www.c-lager.com](http://www.c-lager.com)), a book about his father's experiences as a POW in Germany during WWII. The book is an account of the longest forced march of any group of Allied POWs trekking across northern Germany during the winter of 1945. David is a Vietnam veteran, retired Army sergeant major and clinical therapist who has a personal and professional interest in working with service members suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. In addition to a long career in the Army Reserve, David was employed for 20 years with the Department of the Army providing clinical counseling services to active duty soldiers and their family members. Following retirement, he served another four years as a clinical consultant working with the U.S. Army providing adjustment counseling to service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. His service awards and decorations include the Master Parachutist Badge, the Special Forces Qualification Tab and the Legion of Merit.

**Barbara Doherty, '76, B.A., Liberal Studies Hutchins**, is co-author of "Waging Peace in Vietnam: U.S. Soldiers and Veterans Who Opposed the War" (New Village Press). The book explores the history and impact of the GI antiwar movement.

**Leslie Diller, '78, B.A., Expressive Arts**, is assistant archivist at the Art Director's Guild and a scenic artist working in film, television and at the Los Angeles Opera. She has taught at the American Film Institute and USC. Her son is attending CSUN and studying film.

**Jay Potter, '79, B.A., Physical Education**, was inducted into the Marin County Tennis Hall of Fame for his more than 25 years of dedicated service to tennis in Marin County.

**Jon Lyon, '76, B.A., Political Science**, has retired from Hewlett Packard.

**Carol F. Falk-Allen, '77, B.A., Business Management**, has received awards for her book, "Not a Poster Child." The book was listed by Kirkus Reviews and PopSugar as one of the best books of 2018.

## 1980s

**Loren Davis, '81, B.A., Psychology**, recently retired as fire chief of Mountain Volunteer Fire Department where she worked on the consolidation of the Rincon Valley Fire, Windsor Fire, Bennett Valley Fire and Mountain Valley Fire districts into the new Sonoma County Fire District. Loren enjoys riding and racing motorcycles and will be going to Baja for the Mexican 1000.

## 1990s

**Tom Stark, '91, B.A., Sociology, '93, B.A., Liberal Studies Hutchins**, has joined Exchange Bank's residential mortgage team where he will help expand mortgage lending within Sonoma and Marin counties. Prior to joining the Exchange Bank's team, he spent eight years as a loan consultant and sales manager at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.



**Salvador Jorgensen, '99, B.A., Environmental Studies**, serves as a research scientist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium and has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Fellowship to study threats facing vulnerable shark and ray species in Ecuador's biologically rich Galápagos Islands. Jorgensen, who leads the aquarium's white shark research team, is the first aquarium staff member to receive a Fulbright Fellowship. His research grant took him to Ecuador, where he was accompanied by his wife Cheryl Logan, a faculty member at California State University, Monterey Bay - who is also a Fulbright Scholar - and their two young children.

**Steven Wallis, '94, B.A. Sociology; '98, M.A. Psychology**, recently authored, "Practical Mapping for Applied Research and Program Evaluation ([practicalmapping.com](http://practicalmapping.com))," in collaboration with Bernadette Wright. The SAGE Publications textbook uses plain language to teach students, professionals and researchers how to work collaboratively within and between disciplines to rigorously synthesize practical and theoretical perspectives for organizational improvement, program evaluation, policy, community development, and other fields of the social/behavioral sciences. Based on their award-winning research, which also served as Steve's Fulbright Specialist project, this book introduces an innovative and rigorous approach to mapping as a representation of useful/actionable knowledge.



**Madeleine Bajurin, '94, B.S., Business Administration**, is a project administration specialist at MUFG Union Bank.

**Jeffrey McLain, '90, B.A., Biology**, serves as a fisheries biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

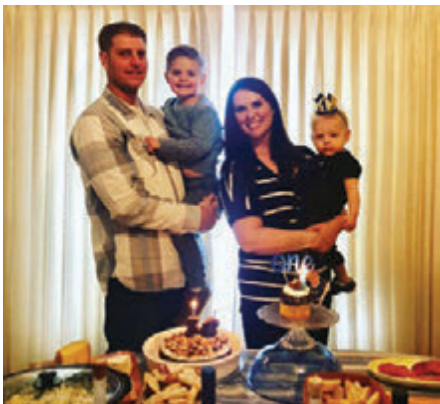
**Maximo Pickett, '92 B.A., Spanish**, is deputy chief administrative officer in Butte County, Calif.

**Deavon Badami, '93, B.A., Psychology**, has been traveling North America, consulting and editing on publishable materials.

**Johna Beem, '95, B.A., Management**, serves as an accountant II at Sonoma State University.

**Thomas Swartz, '96, B.A., Geography; '98 Multiple Subject Credential; '98 Credential Social Sciences**, teaches in the Jefferson School District, Tracy, Calif.

## 2000s



**Melissa Strauss, '09, B.A., Sociology**, works for the Sonoma County Human Services Department in the Employment and Training Division as an employment and training specialist. She lives in Sonoma County and enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons, as well as horseback riding and hiking in the regional and state parks.

**Wilson Teng-Nguyen, '09, B.S., Business Administration**, has recently been promoted to manager

of Redwood Credit Union's Mill Valley branch. Wilson has been with Redwood Credit Union for the past seven years. He previously worked as assistant branch manager at Luther Burbank Savings and was a personal banker at Provident Credit Union.

**Christine Cudmore, '01, B.A., Psychology**, is a school counselor with Poway Unified School District, San Diego, Calif.

**Lauren Pitcher (Jack), '07, B.A., Communication Studies**, serves as associate director of marketing and communications at Making Waves Foundation, Richmond, Calif.

**Anthony Acosta, '06, B.S., Computer Science**, is a systems engineer at Trinchero Family Estates, St. Helena, Calif.

**Sarah Randle, '06, B.A., Sociology**, is working in information technology for the community college West Valley College, Saratoga, Calif. She and her husband welcomed their daughter, Callie Rose, in 2019.

**Trina Ramirez, '00, B.A., Psychology**, earned a master's degree in education, specializing in college student services administration, from Oregon State University. She works as a student affairs professional in Portland, Oregon, at OHSU School of Nursing.

## 2010s



**Sharilyn (Heinkel) Smyth, '11, B.A. Hutchins Liberal Studies**, is married and enjoys raising her two children,

Everleigh and Weston. Before the arrival of her children, Sharilyn taught fifth grade and served as a part-time technology and science teacher. Currently, she is enjoying being a stay-at-home mom.

**Chelsea Smith, '12, B.A., Sociology**, works at Lagunitas Brewing Company, Petaluma, Calif.



**Meagan McPhillips, '14, B.A., Communications**, worked six years in radio before earning her master's degree in communications and public relations from Purdue University. She is currently working in television in the Sacramento area as a morning show social media producer. She was a coxswain for the Sonoma State rowing team for two years and continues to stay active in the rowing community. She is currently a licensed U.S. Rowing referee, working at regattas across the country, and even gets to see the Sonoma State team.

**Samantha Smith, '11, B.A., History; '12, Credential Social Science**, is a social science teacher and department chair at Franklin High School, Stockton Unified District. She has been working on a master's in educational leadership and recently bought her first house with her wife of five years.

**Sarah Hollinger, '14, B.A., Sociology**, serves as the conference services (corporate event) manager at The Lodge at Torrey Pines, La Jolla, Calif.

**Kevin Kinder, '14, B.A., Communication Studies**, is currently living in Los Angeles and working for the marketing agency Laundry Service.

He is a senior social media manager of the FOX team, managing daily content calendars and copywriting across all social media platforms for FOX primetime TV shows including "9-1-1," "The Masked Singer," "The Emmys, Teen Choice Awards" and "First Responders Live." He also mentors and oversees social media managers responsible for other shows, including "Beat Shazam" and "Last Man Standing."

**Christian George, '15, B.A., History and B.A., Political Science**, is associate attorney at Baydaline & Jacobsen LLP, Sacramento, Calif.

**Brandon Adamson-Rakidzich, '19, B.S. Computer Science**, is a software engineer at Visual Concepts, Novato, Calif.

**Darin Brown, '19, B.S., Computer Science**, serves as a software developer at General Motors.

**Jessica Pfahler, '08, B.A. Art History; '10, B.A. Communication Studies**, is the associate director of annual giving at Claremont College, Claremont, Calif. Jessica and Zachary Pfahler '09 are expecting their first child.

**Kendall Newman, '17, B.A. Psychology**, serves as operations manager for the Risk Management and Safety Services at Sonoma State University.

**Bevyn Cassidy, '18, B.A. Communication Studies**, received the 2019 National FCCLA Alumni Achievement Award at the organization's national leadership conference. Bevyn is a conference coordinator at California FCCLA.

**Geoffrey Verheyen, '19, B.S. Biochemistry**, is employed as a staff chemist at K Prime, Santa Rosa, Calif.

**Nicole Wells, '10 B.S., Business Administration**, with her husband, another SSU alum, opened a restaurant in Windsor, Calif.: Corks & Taps.



**Elizabeth (Dippel) '14, B.A., Environmental Studies and Planning, B.S., Economics, and Ryan Payan '16, B.S., Business Administration**, Finance, were married in Sonoma, Calif. They were set up on a blind date at Lagunitas Brewing Company by a mutual friend and the rest is history. Libby serves on the board of the Sonoma State University Alumni Association.

## In Memoriam

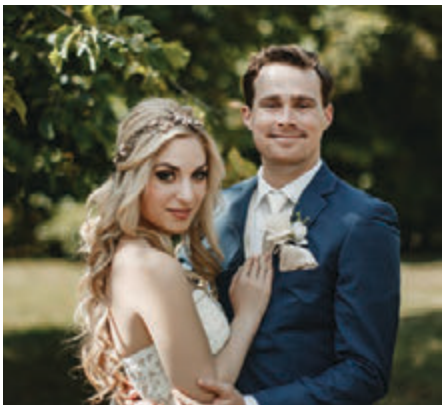
**Donald J. Farish** passed away on July 5, 2018. He worked at Sonoma State University from 1983-1998, serving as dean of the School of Natural Sciences (as previously known) and then as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. We are forever grateful for Don's contributions to Sonoma State.

## Weddings



**Nadir Visstrong (Vissanjy), '07, B.S., Business Administration**, and Courtney Visstrong (Armstrong) were married in Northern California among friends and family from around the world. Courtney and Nadir combined their respective

last names to represent a new union. They met in Boston one month before Nadir finished graduate school.



**Cameron Hatheway, '14, B.A., English, and Amanda Levine, '14, B.A., Communication Studies**, were married on Aug. 10, 2019, in Versailles, France. They met at SSU during their junior year while working together on the Sonoma State STAR newspaper.

## Births



**Kasey (Motta) Black, '13, B.A., Communications**, and her husband welcomed a daughter, Sage. Kasey was working in publications but is now working as a full-time mother and wife.



# Sonoma State casts some shade - with plum trees and cedars

By Nate Galvan, '18



Brandon Sparks, '21

The grounds around the Alumni Amphitheater and Person Theatre lawn received some welcome additions this winter. But it will take some time for these upgrades to, well, grow up.

As part of a new landscape renovation plan on campus, the university planted 13 flowering plum and eight incense cedar trees in the area near the Alumni Amphitheater, which was dedicated in 2001 by the Alumni Association. The new arbors are replacing several trees in the area that were removed in 2019 for safety reasons.

"This area will explode in spring colors in the future," said Allan J. Goff, landscape manager at SSU. "I expect this will be a picturesque part of campus during Commencement."

The restoration is part of SSU's Pro-Active Tree Care Program, which is an effort to keep the university's canopy clean and healthy. During winter

break, the university thinned trees with heavy foliage and removed others in key areas that presented a safety risk. As part of the tree-care efforts, Sonoma State has committed to a "one for one" tree program, meaning that for every tree removed, an attempt will be made to replace it with a new tree, either in the same location, or somewhere else on campus.

As part of the program, a work crew hired by the university began removing a set of cottonwoods by the campus Art Building on Dec. 16 due to the brittle limb structure of this tree species. As part of the program, dead or dying trees were removed and crews thinned and shaped tree canopies to reduce the impact of wind. The work continued until Jan. 13, with a new set of trees being worked on each week until then.

"We were being proactive more than anything with this project," said Goff, who came to Sonoma State

in 2019. "Removing these trees is not for aesthetic purposes but rather to make sure all of our trees are safe for those on campus."

As part of the program, Goff will be taking inventory of the university's more than 6,000 trees and adding them to a database where each tree will be assigned an ID number with more detailed information. This will help to track the work done on each tree as well as its condition.

Goff said he hopes to have completed the primary tree care projects no later than 2023 when the university would begin an annual preventive maintenance approach for specific tree varieties.

*Nate Galvan is a writer for Strategic Communications and can be reached at [galvanna@sonoma.edu](mailto:galvanna@sonoma.edu)*



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## *Help Sonoma State students continue their journey*

Due to regional and global concerns about the spread of COVID-19, Sonoma State has moved to remote instruction and operations through the end of spring semester to reduce the risk of illness.

Through it all, our community has remained supportive, compassionate and incredibly

generous. Many of you have asked how you can help our students. In response, we want you to know about our **Student Basic Needs and Emergency Care Fund**.

All of our students are affected by this pandemic and face new challenges to complete the spring semester. Providing

direct support to this fund will help students cover such necessities as lost wages, housing, food, transportation, relocation costs, technology, and other essential items.

We thank you for your consideration and hope you and your families stay safe and healthy during this unprecedented time.

Warm regards,

**Wm. Gregory Sawyer, Ph.D.**

*Vice President for Student Affairs*

**Daniel Yoeono**

*President, Associated Students, Class of 2020*

**Mario A. Perez, Ed.D.**

*Vice President for University Advancement*

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