

FALL 2017

# insights

THE MAGAZINE OF SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



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Champion**

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## Commencement Changes

The theme for the Class of 2017 could have been “making history.” For starters, the 2,651 graduates set the record for the largest graduating class in the University’s 56-year history. In addition, the venue and the format changed. Commencement took place over two days, instead of one, and was held for the first time in Weill Hall at the Green Music Center, instead of on the Commencement Lawn. Ceremonies were held for each academic school, like the one here for half the majors in the School of Social Sciences.

Had to send a quick message to you all to say THANK YOU for creating such a lovely, easy to read magazine. I am thrilled to get mine especially these last few. From color to font, it's all perfect and fun to look at. The stories are great, but the format and design are really top notch! Thanks for caring about the readers enough to think about this aspect of the magazine. I so enjoy looking at this now and read it over and over! Much appreciation!

**Jo Anne Weinstein Bressick, '85 Psychology; '01, Counseling**

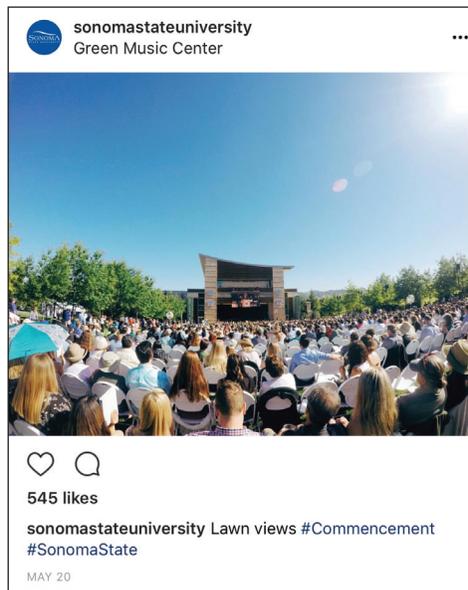
In the Fall 2016 issue, Nicolas Grizzle mentions that "there has been a student tended garden at Sonoma State for more than 20 years." Yes! And a lot longer than 20 years. I had a plot in the student garden at then Sonoma State College all the way back in 1975. Among other veggies, I recall growing lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes and artichokes. All these years later, at our home in Santa Rosa, my wife, Susie, and I are still growing vegetables organically.

**Jeff Baker, '77, Hutchins**

I noticed in the article referring to the Amache internees (Spring 2017), the writer locates them in Amache, Utah. The camp was actually in Colorado, near the town of Granada, on the Great Plains.

**Tom McFarling, '82, ENSP**

*Editor's Note: Thank you Tom. We stand corrected. The Amache internment camp was located in Granada, Colo., from 1942 to 1945.*



# insights

Fall 2017

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*Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium.*

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## Greetings Sonoma State Alumni and Friends,

As President of Sonoma State for more than a year now, I have a deep appreciation of my obligation for helping to lead this excellent University to an even brighter and more impactful future. I also know very well that every advancement that's made during my tenure is tied directly to the phenomenal faculty, staff and students who teach, work and study here. We also benefit tremendously from the generous alumni, board members, community leaders and sponsors who support and sustain us.

During my 15 months as President, I have seen countless members of our campus community step up to pitch in, help me bring about necessary changes and give their all and then some to improve the University. Thanks to all of them, we are better serving our students, our mission and the greater Sonoma State community.

In this issue of *Insights*, you can get the flavor of what I mean by reading about our excellent new Provost and Executive Vice President, Lisa Vollendorf. She is among the outstanding new cabinet members we have been able to attract because our University is clearly on an upward trajectory. We have an excellent leadership team in place to help advance the University to even greater heights.

You will be taken inside the ground-breaking work of alumnus Bill McNamara, who some call the "Indiana Jones of rare plants," and gain insight into how much Sonoma State has meant to his success. The feature article on Sonoma State's social justice legacy offers a deeper understanding of the role social justice has played in shaping the University and why it's more important today than ever before. The article on Women in Tech showcases some of the amazing work done by Science and Technology Dean, Lynn Stauffer, in championing women in STEM. And the piece on our Educational Opportunity Program acquaints you with some of our inspirational student leaders and the generous philanthropists committed to helping them and other young Seawolves be successful.

If you are an alum of Sonoma State, I hope you'll find a way to become engaged with the University not just because doing so brings back fond memories of your days as a student, but because it's gratifying to be part of something that contributes so much to so many. And if you are a friend or interested observer, I hope you recognize the University's many contributions and will choose to help us do even more for students and the region.

Collectively, we've accomplished a great deal over the past 15 months but there is always more important work to be done. With your continued help, I know we can improve and accomplish even more.

With warm regards,



Judy K. Sakaki, Ph.D.  
President



**During my 15 months as President, I have seen countless members of our campus community step up to pitch in, help me bring about necessary changes and give their all and then some to improve the University.**





## Invested April 20, 2017

Nine months after beginning her tenure as Sonoma State University's seventh president, Judy K. Sakaki received the presidential medallion from California State University Chancellor Timothy White at her formal Investiture ceremony on April 20 in Weill Hall at the Green Music Center.

"It's been quite a dance and a time of change for the campus and for me," said Sakaki, giving a nod to the event's "Dance with Change" theme. "I am thankful for all that everyone has done to embrace the dance and to work together — to stretch, to question, to engage, to contribute, to trust and to re-imagine a student-centered university."

Chancellor White said, "I'm confident students will look to Judy, to her journey, to her vision, her passion, her presence and her example, to help them see they too, belong, and Sonoma State is right for them."

The Ohio State University President Michael Drake, a mentor of Dr. Sakaki's, praised her as "one of the bright stars of the education galaxy."

**"I am thankful for all that everyone has done to embrace the dance and to work together — to stretch, to question, to engage, to contribute, to trust and to re-imagine a student-centered university."**

~ Judy K. Sakaki, Sonoma State University's Seventh President

### A Special Program

Coast Miwok blessing

Buddhist offering of gratitude

Taiko drumming performance

Welcome speeches: Faculty, staff, student, alumni community

English Professor Kim Hester Williams poetry reading

Keynote address by The Ohio State University President Michael Drake

Theatre Arts & Dance students dance performance

Premier of new SSU alma mater

### A Day to Celebrate SSU

Campuswide Mini-conference

Special exhibit about the President's life

Investiture ceremony

Campus reception

Free concert at Green Music Center by jazz fusion band Hiroshima

Photos by Ed Aiona and Brennan Chin

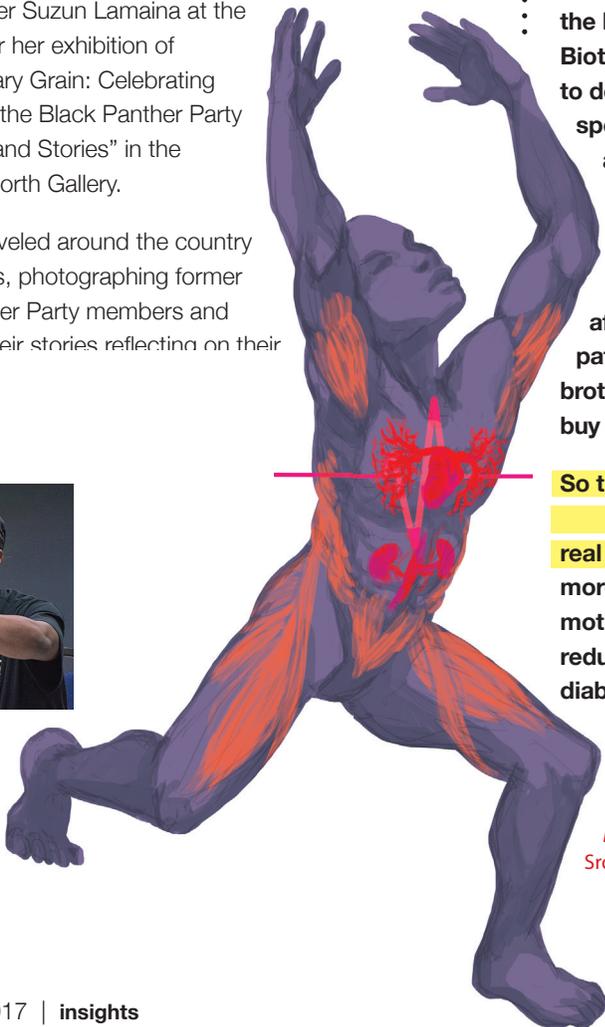


Hundreds attended the gallery opening and viewed the powerful black and white photographs.

Sonoma State students got a taste of serious political action when four members of the Black Panther Party spoke at a panel discussion in the University Library last spring. Hundreds of students, faculty and members of the public attended the standing-room-only event.

Party members Barbara Easley Cox, Elbert Howard (Big Man), Billy X Jennings and Emory Douglas spoke along with photographer Suzun Lamaina at the reception for her exhibition of "Revolutionary Grain: Celebrating the Spirit of the Black Panther Party in Portraits and Stories" in the Library's 2North Gallery.

Lamaina traveled around the country for five years, photographing former Black Panther Party members and collecting their stories reflecting on their time in the portraits to accompan



## Poetic Praise

English Professor and SSU Poet-in-Residence Gillian Conoley received the prestigious Shelley Memorial Award for her body of work as an American poet. The award has been given to one poet annually since 1929 by a jury of three poets selected by the Poetry Society of America.

Past winners include e.e. cummings, U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky and Sonoma State University alum D.A. Powell.

Conoley's award citation, written by poets Kazim Ali and Katie Peterson, praises her "shockingly varied body of work comprising narrative, lyric and fragmented forms." It also poetically observes, "In the work, sound deepens our acquaintance with landscape, and enriches our encounter with human life."

## Combating Kidney Disease

A group of engineering students won a major innovation award for creating a pair of devices to combat kidney disease, which affects an estimated 26 million Americans.

Jose Avila, Nader Srouji and Michael Vargas were awarded the I-Corps Special Recognition award at the 29th annual CSU Biotechnology Symposium in Santa Clara for creating two devices to detect and reduce the risk of kidney disease. One uses spectroscopy to test urine for an excess amount of the protein albumin, and the other is an infrared camera that shows active muscles and heart rate in real time during a workout. Both were given the name SpecDetect.

Starting with the at-home kidney disease test, the team found after numerous interviews that, while doctors loved the product, patients were not likely to use it on their own. Even Vargas' own brother, who recovered from kidney disease, said that he wouldn't buy it.

So the team came up with an idea for an infrared camera to a client's heart rate and which muscles are being used in real time during a workout. This allows trainers to communicate more clearly the proper form and technique for a given exercise, motivating their clients and creating a more efficient workout. This reduces the risk for diabetes which, in turn, reduces the risk for kidney disease.

Front row from left: Nader Srouji, Michael Vargas, Jose Avila, with judges at the CSU I-Corps Challenge.



# Giving for Good

The joy of learning doesn't stop after a certain age, as students in SSU's **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)** can attest. And neither does the joy of giving.

In April, the program received a **\$2 million bequest** from an anonymous donor. This donation will effectively double the program's existing endowment. It also represents one of the largest gifts made to any of the 120 Osher Institutes across the nation.

Now in its **16th year**, Sonoma State's OLLI was the second lifelong learning institute to receive support from the Bernard Osher Foundation, and is one of the largest and most academically rigorous.

OLLI courses are **open to anyone age 50 and above** and are held at Sonoma State and a location in Santa Rosa, Calif. Ninety-five percent of OLLI students have a college degree and 50 percent have an advanced degree. OLLI classes do not have tests, grades or homework, focusing instead on learning for the joy of learning.



## Hispanic Serving

SSU has been federally recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution, making the University eligible for millions of dollars in federal grants aimed at improving success for all students.

Specifically, the HSI designation allows Sonoma State to apply for grants under Title III and Title V. Title III grants are designed to increase the number of Hispanic students in the STEM fields, while Title V grants are typically used for improved advising, student internships, mentoring and tutoring, equipment and facilities, professional development, research, and other programs aimed at helping all students succeed. The HSI designation also waives the matching requirement for Federal Work-Study, which provides an opportunity for Sonoma State to expand student employment opportunities to low-income students from all backgrounds.



*“The Wine Business Institute launched a scholarship program to help children and families of vineyard and winery workers attend and succeed in college.”*

The Wine Business Institute launched a scholarship program to help children and families of vineyard and winery workers attend and succeed in college.

The Wine Industry Scholars Program is a pioneering initiative with a starting gift of \$100,000 over four years, including ten \$10,000 individual grants to offset tuition and other educational expenses associated with attending Sonoma State. In addition to financial support, the new program includes a summer transition program, academic and career advising, cohort-based classes, co-curricular programming as part of the Rodney Strong Pathways Program, and student work experiences.

Founding program contributors include George Hamel III of Hamel Family Wines; Gary Heck of Korbel; Walt and Sylvia Klenz of VinCraft; Mel and Craig Mannion; Carol O'Hara of Burr Pilger Mayer; Ron Rubin of The Rubin Family of Wines; Barbara Talbott and John Riley; Gould Evans; Douglas Thornley and Susan Lundquist; and an anonymous member of the WBI Board of Directors.

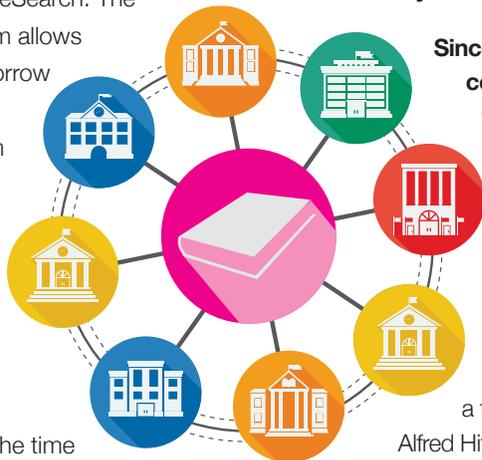
During the first year, students will take prerequisite courses as part of a learning community and peer support group called the Wine Industry Scholars Academy. Students will be paired with mentors from the business community beginning the second year as part of the leadership development and career pathway component of the program. In the third year, students will be placed in an internship.



## Say Goodbye to Library Late Fees

Say goodbye to late fees and hello to extended borrowing times at the University Library.

This past summer, the University Library joined with the other 22 CSU campuses in migrating to the unified library management system OneSearch. The new system allows users to borrow books and media from any CSU campus, eliminates overdue fines for books and DVDs, and increases the time faculty and students can borrow books to up to one year and one semester, respectively.



The loan period for interlibrary DVDs has been extended to 30 days. The new system also eliminates overdue fines for books and DVDs. Library laptops, materials on reserve and other high-use items will continue to have overdue fines.

A central feature of OneSearch is CSU+, which is an integrated, CSU-managed request system that replaces and improves upon the popular Link+ rapid-delivery service. In 2016, all 23 CSU libraries voted to participate in CSU+, making OneSearch the largest public university resource sharing system in the United States.

## TV of Tomorrow

Millions of Americans are already turning off the TV in favor of streaming media like Netflix and Hulu, and SSU's Communications Studies Department is prepping students for the inevitable shift: broadcasting straight to YouTube.



for Studio Blue, previously known as SSU-TV. The program began with content produced exclusively for broadcast in student housing. But now Studio Blue's content is posted exclusively to YouTube and social media sites like Twitter and Instagram.

Since its rebrand last year, Studio Blue has been producing more youthful content including short, quirky instructional "Clickreels" and "Chill Chats," where students have a chance to sit down with local persons of interest. One recent Chill Chat featured San Francisco Giants broadcaster and North Bay resident Amy G.

## Don't Go Psycho

Why would Hollywood make a 90-minute documentary about a three-minute scene? When it's the famous shower scene from Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho," Communications Studies Professor Marco Calavita says there's plenty to talk about — and he does, as one of the interview subjects alongside stars like Elijah Wood, Guillermo del Toro and Danny Elfman in "78/52," a documentary that premiered this year at the Sundance Film Festival.

The documentary film, directed by Alexandre O. Philippe, takes its name from the 78 camera setups and 52 cuts used in the filming of the infamous and technical scene. It was shown at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year to much acclaim and soon thereafter sold to distributor IFC Midnight.

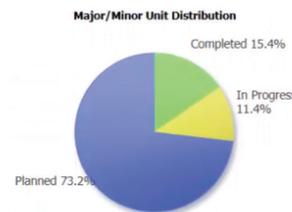
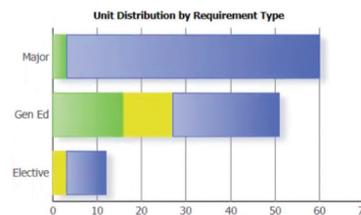
The movie was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in May and will be in theatres this Fall before going into the streaming and on-demand market.

## Making Registration Easier

Taking a step toward raising its four-year graduation rate, SSU recently launched an online degree planner, which integrates with the Seawolf Scheduler and aims to make registration an easier process.

The tool allows students to see, course by course, the courses they will take from day one until the day they graduate. Using information about typical course offerings from the Sonoma State catalog, as well as prerequisites for all courses, it gives students a practical road map toward their academic degree.

Data from the planner will also help academic departments plan for and adjust classes based on demand. It gives a glimpse into the number of students planning to take a specific course in future semesters, allowing faculty to plan course offerings. Faculty will also have the ability to reach out to students who are planning on taking a class before making changes to it.

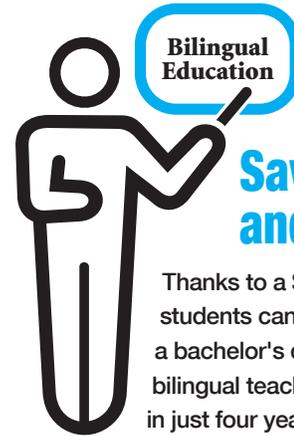
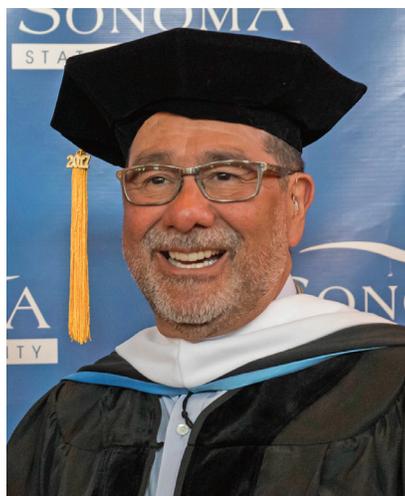


## Honorary Degrees

At Commencement this year, SSU awarded honorary doctorates to Sonoma County philanthropists and community leaders William “Willie” Tamayo and Constance “Connie” Codding.

Codding received her honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at the School of Education ceremony. Codding was recognized for her efforts supporting the prevention of substance abuse, physical abuse and teenage pregnancy for youth in the region, and for her support of other programs encouraging young people to live healthy, physically active lives.

Tamayo received his honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at the School of Business and Economics ceremony. Tamayo, whose family founded Santa Rosa’s La Tortilla Factory, was recognized for his long history of helping first-generation college students realize their dreams for an education by funding scholarships and other programs to help them succeed.



## Saving time and money

Thanks to a \$200,000 grant, students can now earn a bachelor’s degree and bilingual teaching credential in just four years total, saving students at least one year and an estimated \$20,000.

“These new teachers are currently doing their student teaching locally for their teaching credential, but what is often challenging for bilingual teaching students is that they are usually first generation college students and are generally low income,” says Rhianna Casesa, an assistant professor of education at Sonoma State who spearheaded the grant process. “They often can’t afford to do a fifth-year teaching credential program because they have to start working after four years with their new bachelor’s degree. This grant not only solves this problem, it cuts it down by a whole year.”

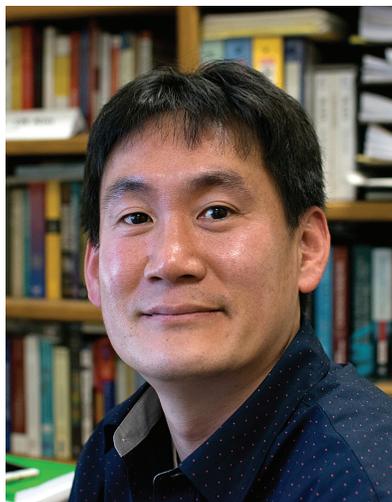
Starting in fall 2018, Sonoma State students will be able to obtain a bachelor’s degree in either Chicano and Latino Studies or Spanish, as well as a multiple subject teaching credential with Spanish/English bilingual authorization at the same time, in a total of four years.

Sonoma State is one of 17 CSU campuses to receive an Integrated Program Grant from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to develop four-year teacher preparation programs.

**“They often can’t afford to do a fifth-year teaching credential program because they have to start working after four years with their new bachelor’s degree. This grant not only solves this problem, it cuts it down by a whole year.”**

## No Threat to Jobs

A new study by Economics Professor Chong-Uk Kim shows no evidence for immigrants displacing American citizens in the workforce.



Economics Professor Chong-Uk Kim

Kim’s study, “Immigration and domestic wage: An empirical study on competition among immigrants,” was published in November 2016 in the *Journal of Applied Economics*. It is based on data from the Current Population Survey, a monthly review of 60,000 U.S. households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

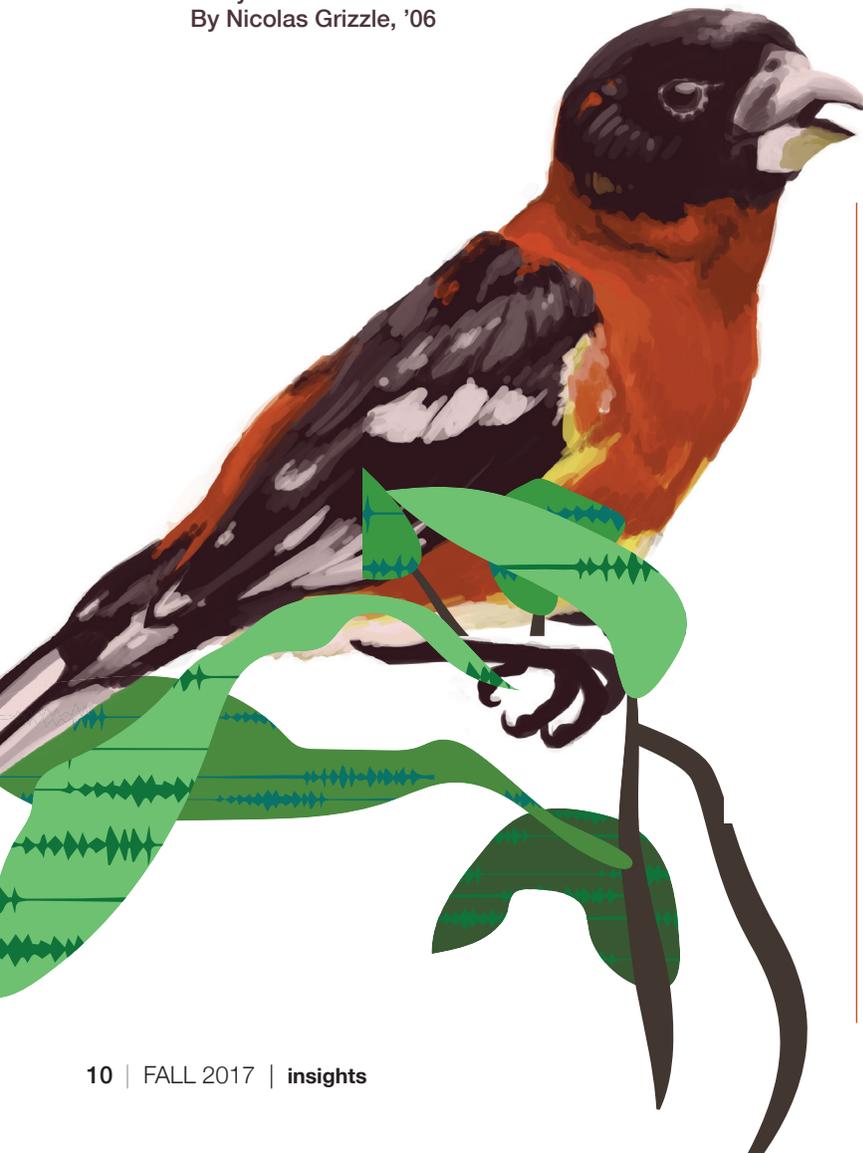
His research shows not only is there no evidence for immigrant labor hurting the economy, but that more immigrant labor actually results in a modest increase (of less than \$35 on average) in annual income for both citizens and non-citizens. The U.S. unemployment rate in November 2016 was 4.6 percent, the lowest it’s been since July 2007.

# See the Sound of Cli

Geography Professor Matt Clark's Soundscapes to Landscapes  
and Visual Data

**The rhythmic pulse of crickets chirping. The distinct pitch and intensity of each individual insect buzzing through the air. The scurry of lizards peeking out from a bush to check for predators and prey. And, most prominently, the singing, squawking and calling of birds. Despite these indicators of life's abundance, it's easy to forget that there is a world of sound beyond the continuous cacophony of manufactured noise from humans. Now, Sonoma State University has received a \$156,000 NASA grant to help study what the biophony of an environment – the sound made by animal life – can mean for the health of the planet.**

Story and Photos  
By Nicolas Grizzle, '06

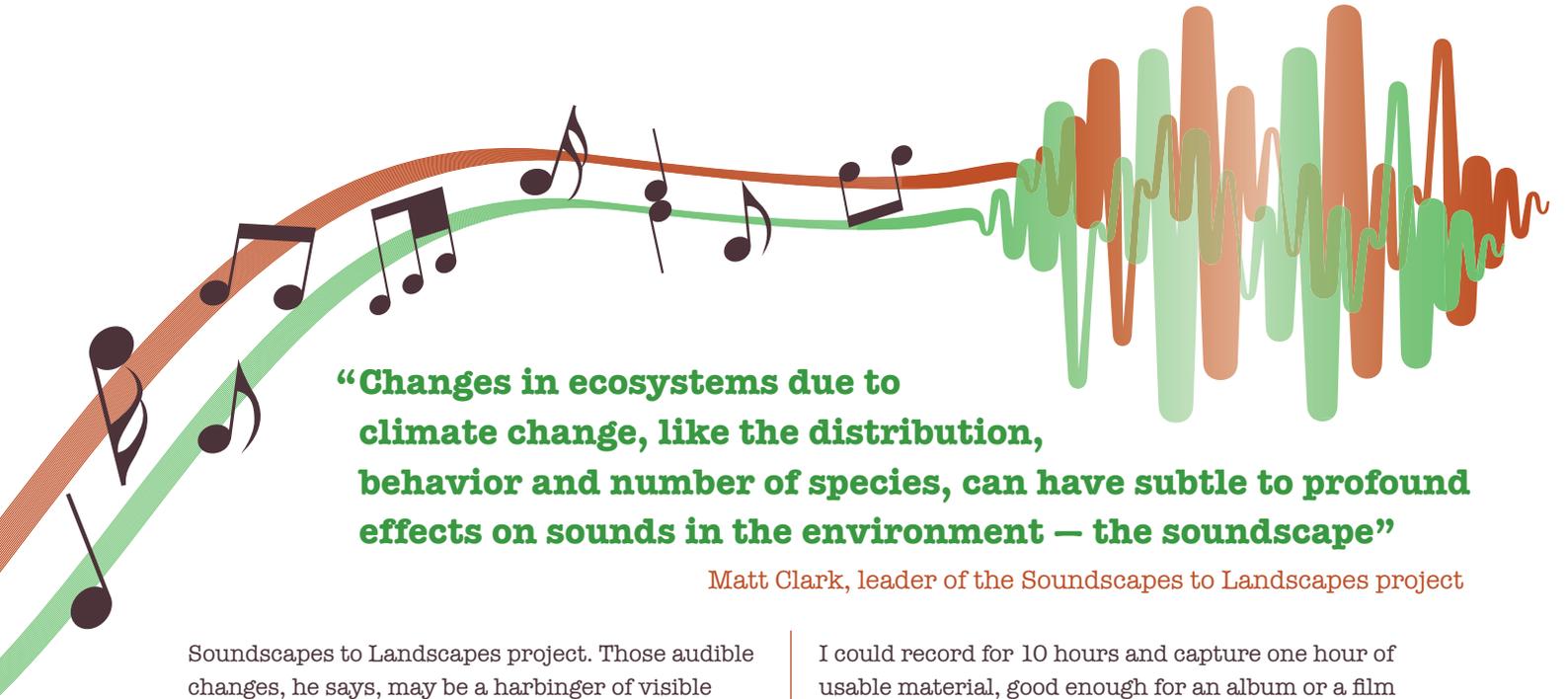


## Hiking along maintenance roads on Saddleback Mountain east of Santa Rosa—

land that is protected from development thanks to the Sonoma County Open Space District — Sonoma State University geography major Elisabeth Kahrer and recent-grad-turned-staff-member Phillip Carlos spot an orange tag hanging from a conifer tree and make an abrupt 90-degree turn off the road, trudging up a steep hillside through poison oak and loose soil.

“This looks like a good spot,” says Carlos, letting down his backpack and removing a small black case and a smartphone to place inside of it. The equipment will collect audio recordings that will be used to align data from sound recordings in nature to visual vegetation data from aerial sources like planes and satellites to map and monitor biodiversity across a landscape.

“Changes in ecosystems due to climate change, like the distribution, behavior and number of species, can have subtle to profound effects on sounds in the environment — the soundscape,” says Geography Professor Matt Clark, leader of the



**“Changes in ecosystems due to climate change, like the distribution, behavior and number of species, can have subtle to profound effects on sounds in the environment – the soundscape”**

Matt Clark, leader of the Soundscapes to Landscapes project

Soundscapes to Landscapes project. Those audible changes, he says, may be a harbinger of visible landscape changes to come.

The project includes citizen scientist volunteers and machine learning as integral parts of the data collection and analysis. Birders from the Audubon Society and other enthusiasts visually identify birds in the field and compare their notes with audio recordings to teach a computer to identify distinct calls in the audio recordings.

“It’s a biodiversity project,” says Carlos, affixing the recorder to a tree after recording its GPS location and taking photos of the north, south, east, west and vertical views of the landscape. “We want to be able to get information on indicator species to educate the public on the health of the environment.”

## Seeing Is Believing

“This field is very new, not a lot of work has been done on what he’s trying to do,” says renowned soundscape ecologist Bernie Krause, who is familiar with the Soundscapes to Landscapes project and has spoken with Clark about it. “Matt’s approach to things seems to be really imaginative and interesting.”

Krause, who lives in Glen Ellen when he’s not traveling the world giving lectures, doing research or overseeing art installations, has been recording soundscapes for nearly 50 years. The author of bestselling *The Great Animal Orchestra*, in addition to several other books, music albums and countless research papers, is a pioneer and leading authority in the field of soundscape ecology.

“When I began recording over four decades ago,

I could record for 10 hours and capture one hour of usable material, good enough for an album or a film soundtrack or a museum installation,” he says in a 2013 TED talk, which has over 1 million views. “Now because of global warming, resource extraction and human noise, among many other factors, it can take up to 1,000 hours or more to capture the same thing. Fully 50 percent of my archive comes from habitats so radically altered that they’re either altogether silent or can no longer be heard in any of their original forms.”

Clark’s existing vegetation data is great, says Krause, but it doesn’t tell the whole story. “You



Geography major Elisabeth Kahrer sets GPS coordinates for a field recorder in Santa Rosa.



actually have to get down there in the forest with monitoring equipment over a long period of time over many seasons to get a sense of the bioacoustic expression over time, so you can actually compare, track what's happening visually comparing it with the audio expression.”

The Soundscapes to Landscapes project creates a visual spectrogram of the soundscape to compare with Clark's vegetation data. It looks like a heat map of sound frequencies and intensity, which helps humans understand the data.

“We're a graphic, visual culture and we understand the world around us mostly from what we see,” says Krause. “You hear the expression, ‘I see what you're saying.’ We're very visually oriented. Now with spectrogram analysis, we can actually see a visual representation of sound.”

**“During the drought in 2015, there was absolutely no bird song at all — the first time I've heard of that happening in my 80 years on the planet. There were lots of birds, they just weren't singing. In 2016 there was a little bit of rain, but not many birds vocalizing.”**

Though he collects data from around the world, including placing microphones everywhere from inside ant colonies in scorching deserts to frigid Northern waters to hear icebergs in motion, Krause also spends much of his time collecting field recordings in the Bay Area. “I have collected data for 23 years from Sugarloaf (State Park in Kenwood), and I can show directly the effects of climate change by monitoring the soundscape,” he says.

Recently, the changes in the soundscape have been baffling.

“During the drought in 2015, there was absolutely no bird song at all — the first time I've heard of that happening in my 80 years on the planet. There were lots of birds, they just weren't singing. In 2016 there was a little bit of rain, but not many birds vocalizing.

“This year, we've been out there a lot and the biophony has not returned like normal, which is really strange. What's creepy is that, from a satellite perspective and LIDAR monitoring perspective, you're going to get really dense vegetation data which would indicate, logically, that there would be lots of bird song, particularly in the spring — but that was not the case this year.” This type of anomaly suggests that more studies like Clark's, especially over long periods of time, are needed to fully analyze the correlation between soundscape and landscape data.

## Creating Digital Soundscapes

LIDAR is a laser-based sensor that allows 3D mapping, while hyperspectral sensors are sensitive to the chemical composition of forest canopies.

“Those are things we can relate to data (on birds) to predict what birds will be where in other parts of a landscape,” says Dr. Leo Salas, quantitative ecologist in the climate change and informatics group with Point Blue Conservation Science, a nonprofit research institution based in Petaluma that is partnering with Sonoma State on the Soundscapes to Landscapes project.

Point Blue's research is used by agencies around the world like the Audubon Society, California Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Environmental Protection

### Bernie Krause, Renowned Soundscape Ecologist

Agency and many others. “Our main focus is on climate change, we want to help agencies to understand climate change to prepare for the future,” says Salas.

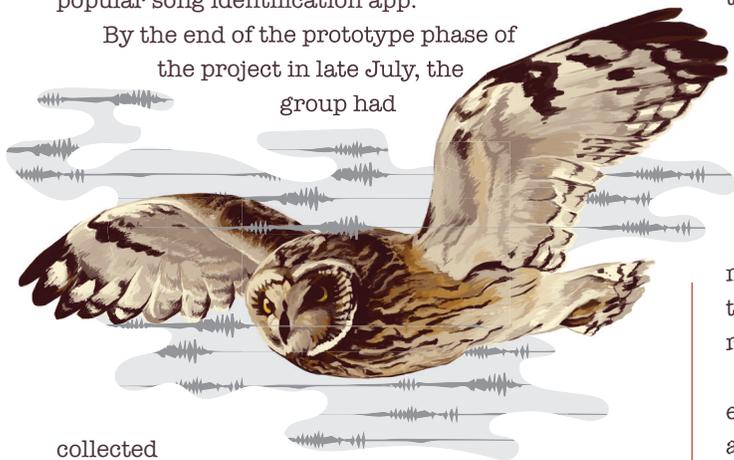
The recorders — low-cost Android smartphones in special weatherproof casing equipped with an external microphone — are programmed to turn on and record one minute of sound once every 10 minutes.

The recordings are later fed into a computer program that identifies the sounds in the recording as distinct bird calls. This is done through a process called machine learning, where a human identifies and labels the species associated with distinct bird

**“Imagine we have a network of these sound monitoring stations throughout California. We can process the sound, attribute them with geospatial data and provide a view of the status of soundscape biodiversity in the landscape every month, every year.”**

calls in the recording and the computer then learns to recognize and label the species on its own. “It’s like Shazam for bird calls,” says Clark, comparing it to the popular song identification app.

By the end of the prototype phase of the project in late July, the group had



collected 66,000 minutes worth of recordings from more than 100 different locations in Santa Rosa’s Mark West-Porter Creek watershed. Part of Point Blue’s part in the project is linking data in the recordings to Clark’s geospatial data.

“You feel the effects locally, but climate change operates at global scales. You need a vast set of data over a long period of time,” says Salas. “Imagine we have a network of these sound monitoring stations throughout California. We can process the sound, attribute them with geospatial data and provide a view of the status of soundscape biodiversity in the landscape every month, every year. We then would have a good idea of how the landscape is changing over time.”

Point Blue spends upwards of \$1 million annually for researchers to survey locations in the Sierra Nevadas for three months. The possibility of lowering the cost of data collection is just one reason Salas is excited about this project. “The juicy part here is using those automatic recorders is much more cost effective than paying someone to drive for hours to perform regular field research,” he says.

For this project, the devices are more than just recorders. Since smartphones were introduced just 10 years ago, they have evolved into powerful pocket computers whose primary function is no longer making phone calls. The team uses an app called

Dr. Leo Salas, Quantitative Ecologist,  
Point Blue Conservation Science

Arbimon, specifically developed for research like this, to upload and help parse the data.

The team uses another app to record GPS points with different attributes in the field, and the data is sent to the cloud when connected to Wi-Fi. “Mobile has totally changed the game,” says Carlos, while programming the app to record the appropriate data before affixing the phone to the tree.

In the field, the whole process takes about 10 minutes for each device. The team is able to set up three recorders in less than an hour, which will be retrieved 3-4 days later.

The prototype phase of this project is slated to end in February 2018, but it will be expanded for another three years to collect data from 500 locations throughout Sonoma County should NASA decide to fund the grant further.

“We are super excited about this, and we are hoping to be able to scale up,” says Salas. “This is just the beginning.” **S**

*The Soundscapes to Landscapes project is a partnership among the Center for Interdisciplinary Geospatial Analysis at Sonoma State University, Point Blue Conservation Science, Audubon California, Pepperwood Preserve, Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation and Open Space District, and Northern Arizona University. This project is funded by NASA’s Citizen Science for Earth Systems Program in the*





By Nicolas Grizzle, '06  
 Photos by Charles Gesell  
 Illustrations by Arielle Lehmer, '17

# Seed Champion

Alumnus Bill McNamara's  
 Quest to Protect Asia's Rare  
 Plants from Extinction

If standing in the middle of Glen Ellen's Quarryhill Botanical Gardens feels **otherworldly**, that's because in large part, it is. Instead of California live oak, a 40-foot-tall Paulownia fortunei, or dragon tree, gives shade to passersby. An English walnut, the curiously named native of the Himalayas, provides the perfect trunk for woodpeckers to peck to their hearts' content. A magnolia hints at the familiar, but its large red flowers and enormous, prehistoric looking leaves immediately indicate that this is Magnolia grandis, an extremely endangered plant from China. Many visitors will not realize how rare it is to see the flowers, which only bloom outside of China on the two trees at Quarryhill.

Though it's nestled in the Wine Country between Santa Rosa and Sonoma, the 25-acre preserve is full of nearly 2,000 varieties of rare and endangered Asian plants, most of which are unrecognizable to native Californians. What's more, all of the 25,000 trees, shrubs, flowers and bushes were planted from seeds collected by hand in remote areas of China and Southeast Asia by the nonprofit's executive director and Sonoma State University alumnus Bill McNamara.

This year, McNamara became one of only seven people in the world to receive the “triple crown” of horticulture awards. He had already received the Scott Medal in 2010 from the Scott Arboretum at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, given to those who have made “an outstanding national contribution to the science and the art of gardening.” In February, he was honored with the Veitch Memorial Medal from the Royal Horticultural Society after being nominated by “The Queen’s Botanist,” Steve Blackmore. And in June, McNamara capped off the extraordinary achievement by receiving the American Horticultural Society’s highest honor, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award, for his significant lifetime contributions to horticulture at a ceremony in Alexandria, Virginia.

Not bad for a guy who started his career just looking to make a living to support his family.

### Humble Beginnings

McNamara’s work includes annual expeditions to jungles, forests and

McNamara’s work includes annual expeditions to jungles, forests and mountains in search of plants that may no longer exist on this planet. He has been called the “Indiana Jones of rare plants.”

mountains in search of plants that may no longer exist on this planet. He has been called the “Indiana Jones of rare plants,” a moniker he shrugs off, but that delights his children. Although McNamara is truly incomparable, it’s tempting to describe his work conserving plants and documenting them in the scientific record as a combination of the naturalist David Attenborough and a taller, quieter version of Dr. Seuss’ tree-

saving character the Lorax.

But he never set out to save the world’s endangered plants. The job just sort of grew on him.

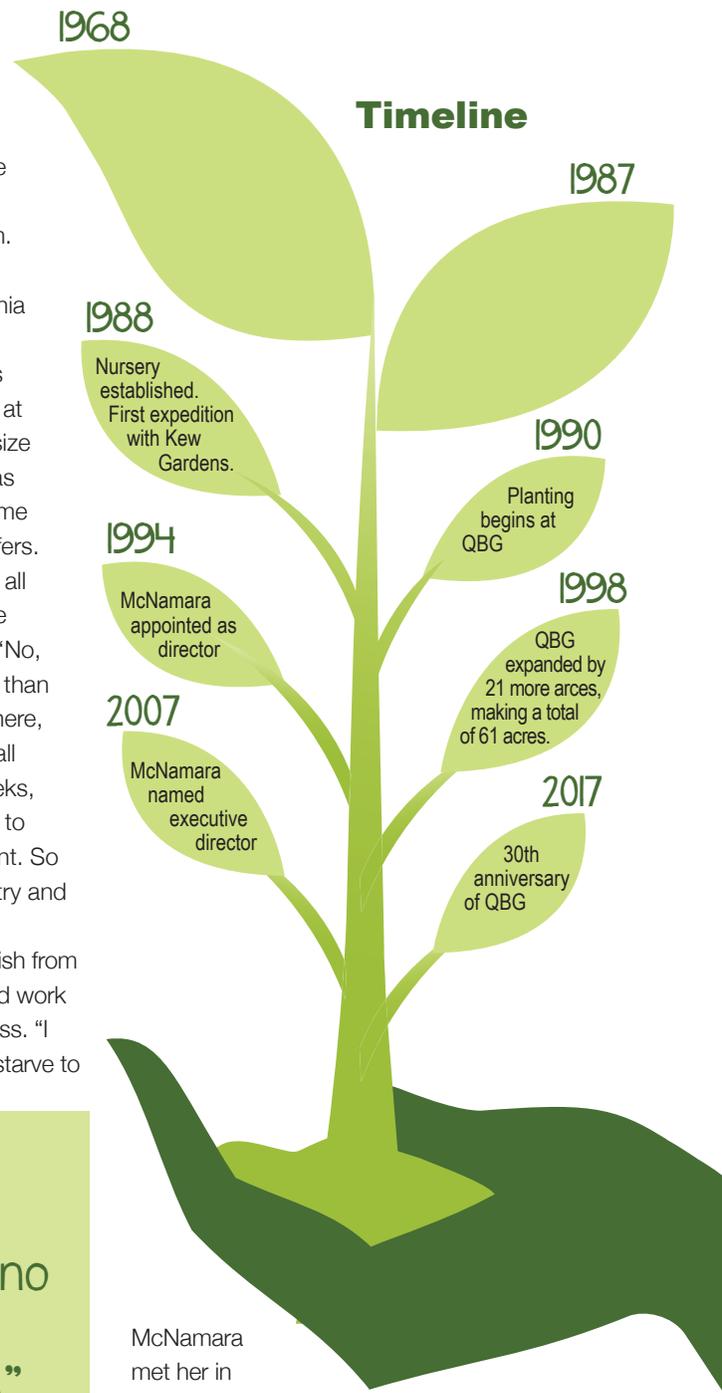
“At my first job out of high school I worked for the California Division of Forestry in the Santa Cruz Mountains,” recalls McNamara, sitting in his office at an antique desk under a wall-size map of China. “When there was time, my foreman would walk me around and show me the conifers. I remember saying to him they all look the same, they all look like Christmas trees. And he said, ‘No, look at this one — it’s different than this one. Look at the needles here, look at the cone here, they’re all different.’ It took me a few weeks, but I got hooked and I wanted to know how they were all different. So it became a hobby of mine to try and learn as much as I could.”

He earned a degree in English from UC Berkeley in 1975, and found work after college in the plant business. “I quickly realized I was going to starve to

death working at a nursery so I started a landscape contracting business because I wanted to work with plants and I wanted to be outside,” he says. “I did that for about 16 years. While I was doing that I met the woman starting this project. One thing led to another and that’s how I was able to do it.”

That woman was Jane Davenport Jansen, who had purchased 20 acres of land in Glen Ellen for vineyards in 1968.

McNamara met her in 1987, the same year she started a garden on 20 acres of hillside above the vineyard. It was also about the same time that McNamara made his first expedition to collect seeds in Asia. The following year the nursery was established at Quarryhill, and McNamara took the first of what would be many expeditions with experts from the renowned Kew Gardens in London. Planting began at Quarryhill in 1990, and in May this year the nonprofit celebrated its 30th anniversary.



### Timeline

1968

1987

1988

1990

1994

1998

2007

2017

Nursery established. First expedition with Kew Gardens.

Planting begins at QBG

McNamara appointed as director

QBG expanded by 21 more acres, making a total of 61 acres.

McNamara named executive director

30th anniversary of QBG

## Never Stop Learning

Though he is widely recognized as an expert in horticulture, McNamara had little formal education on the subject until attending Sonoma State University in the early 2000s. “I always thought I’d go back and get graduate degrees but didn’t have the time or money,” he says. The desire to further his education never left, however, and in 2005 he graduated from Sonoma State with a master’s in conservation biology. Though the University does



Bill McNamara studies the flower of *Magnolia sapaensis*, one of the 25,000 trees, shrubs, flowers and bushes planted from seeds he collected by hand from remote areas of China and Southeast Asia.



The flower of the *Magnolia sapaensis*.

not have a formal conservation biology program, McNamara was able to work with advisors to create his own field of study through the Hutchins School’s unique Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

When he enrolled at Sonoma State, McNamara was already working as director at Quarryhill and had taken several expeditions to Asia. “It was unusual being older than most of the professors,” says McNamara, who graduated at age 55.

“I felt the need to have more education,” he says. “I do the work of a botanist at Quarryhill but until then I had never taken a course in horticulture or botany or anything like that.”

His thesis on conservation bias confirmed that what was true in the

animal kingdom extended to plants as well — humans focus conservation efforts on how cute, cuddly, beautiful or otherwise pleasing to our sensibilities a species may be. McNamara refers to it as the “panda phenomenon.”

“You can raise money for pandas because they’re cute, but for an endangered lizard? It’s harder to raise money for them because they’re not cute,” he says. “I had been thinking about it with plants because that’s what we had been working with at Quarryhill. The main group being focused on were highly ornamental because that’s what people know.”

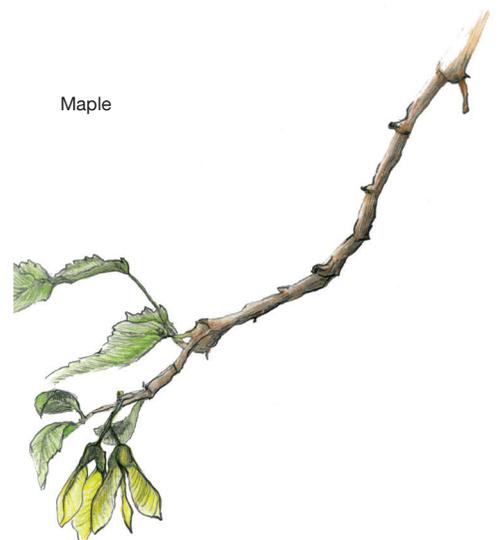
There are many endangered species that deserve conservation just as much as anything else. Take for example *Acer*

*pentaphyllum*, a rare maple whose five-lobed leaves resemble cannabis more than they do a traditional maple leaf. The plant, native to Southwestern Szechuan province in the middle of China, is so critically endangered in the wild that botanists think it may go extinct within the next decade. Quarryhill has taken on the task of being the only institution in the world dedicated to saving this rare maple tree and its leaf is now emblazoned in the non-profit’s logo.

As the story goes, since its 1929 initial introduction, the only place botanists had been able to collect its seeds was from a few plants growing at the Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco. McNamara made it his



*Nymphaea* hybrid



Maple

mission to find them in the wild, and after several expeditions he finally found a group of seven trees growing in China. He received funding from National Geographic to go back and do more field research on the trees, and has returned several times since in his quest to save the species.

Since first rediscovering *Acer pentaphyllum*, Quarryhill has planted over 200 of the trees on its property in hopes of repatriating them back to their native habitat. McNamara estimates there are more now at Quarryhill than exist in the

was thought to be extinct for hundreds of millions of years. The same goes for *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, the dawn redwood tree, discovered in China in the 1940s. Though several redwoods aside from California's two known species had been cataloged in the fossil record, all others were thought to have gone extinct.

But make no mistake, species are dying off far faster than they are being rediscovered. "Most biologists who study this are certain that if current trends continue we will lose half of all plants

"Most biologists who study this are certain that if current trends continue we will lose half of all plants and animals in the next 100 years"

wild, due in part to the construction of dams in its native habitat.

### Saving from Extinction

"It's very difficult to state emphatically that a plant or animal is extinct because even though humans have gone almost everywhere in the world they occasionally find a plant or animal that has not been seen in 30 or 40 years," says McNamara.

For example, the coelacanth, a fish discovered in the wild in the 1930s,

and animals in the next 100 years," McNamara says, matter-of-factly.

### Hidden Gem

On a beautiful Friday morning in late May the garden is quiet, with only a few people strolling its paths. Some of the only people we see on our tour are two German tourists who wave and say hello with thick accents. "Sometimes we say it's better known internationally than it is locally," says McNamara. "Most people,

## Fun Plant Facts

All tea comes from one species of *Camellia* native to China

Chili peppers only came to China and India 300-400 years ago when the Portuguese introduced them

The genetic makeup of most roses can be traced back to two species in China

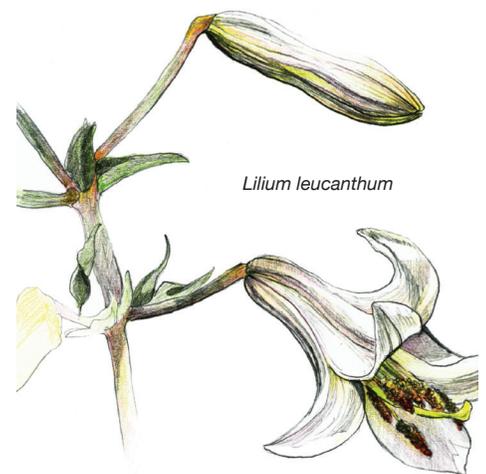
There are 129 maple species in the world; 13 are native to North America and 99 are in China

The Easter lily has nothing to do with Easter — it's native to Japan and blooms in early July in its native habitat

The first paper was made in China from the paper mulberry tree

when they come here for the first time, they say 'I'm stunned, I had no idea a place like this even existed, let alone in the Sonoma Valley.'"

"It's a hidden gem for sure," says Kathleen Aspenns. She has an annual





There are some spots in Quarryhill so pristine and beautiful, even Vincent Van Gogh would have had trouble recreating their beauty.

membership to Quarryhill and collects essences from the garden's flowers to make therapeutic oils. "It's just such a magical place," she says. "I've been going each week for almost 10 years now, and every time I go I see something I've never seen before. The depth and richness of the collection is just mind-blowing. Quarryhill is a little bit of a Noah's Ark of plant diversity."

### Wise Guy

McNamara can name each of the 2,000 plants living at Quarryhill by sight, and does so with the point of a finger. When astonished guests point out how incredible that is, he demurs modestly with a dry sense of humor. "I could be faking it," he suggests. The plants at Quarryhill all have ID tags, though, so it's doubtful he would get away with the charade for long.

"We have documentation on where these came from, so we get requests weekly from researchers around the world asking for leaf samples, petal

samples and the collection data," says McNamara. In general, he doesn't collect seeds from the plants on the property because they could have become hybridized. "First generation is still wild, second generation could be a hybrid, and researchers are not interested in that."

The imported plants grow very well at Quarryhill, and the nonprofit is conscientious about keeping its non-native species from escaping the garden. "We try to monitor the collection and if we see something that's too aggressive, we'll eradicate it," says McNamara. "It's very hard for most of these plants to survive in California without the irrigation here because of the summer drought we have."

McNamara takes personal pride in the garden, telling stories about where the seeds for a particular tree were collected.

He stops under a 25-foot, broad-leaved *Idesia polycarpa* tree with clusters of black and orange berries. "I was in a

big tree, filling a plastic bag full of seeds on the island of Yakushima in Japan," McNamara begins. Looking up at the dense, leafy canopy over our heads, it was easy to visualize the scene. "I opened my day pack and ate lunch while sitting in the tree. When I got out of the tree, all these monkeys leaped into it and started pulling off the fruit and smelling it and throwing it to the ground. They'd been watching me wondering what the hell I was doing. So I really experienced monkey see, monkey do."

Here's hoping his dedication to plant conservation will also inspire a little human see, human do. **S**

*Visitors are welcome to picnic in designated areas at Quarryhill Botanical Garden and self-guided and docent-led tours are available. The Garden is open seven days a week, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$8-\$12 (kids under 12 admitted free). More information is available at [Quarryhillbg.org](http://Quarryhillbg.org).*



## SOCIAL JUSTICE AT SONOMA STATE: THE ROOTS RUN DEEP

By Gary Delsohn  
 Photos by Charles Gesell  
 Illustration by Arielle Lehmer, '17

**S**arahi Robledo is a serious-minded young woman who grew up in the Napa County town of Calistoga and has one more academic year to complete before graduation. In addition to her studies, Robledo works full time for a Santa Rosa insurance broker and is an intern in the office of a local city councilwoman. But her true passion is social justice, and it's one of the main reasons Robledo, who is 22, transferred to Sonoma State following two years at Santa Rosa Junior College.

"Being close to home was part of it," she explained, "but I really came here for the Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies program. I either want to be a lawyer and work on issues like immigration or go to graduate school and do more criminal justice research."

Working with SSU Criminology Professor Barbara Bloom, a nationally recognized expert on mass incarceration and its impact on women and girls, Robledo has already presented one of her research papers at last year's American

Society of Criminology conference in New Orleans. As her research abstract explains, she used historical data to "examine the U.S. War on Drugs and explore why African-American women have been disproportionately affected by this anti-drug campaign."

Soft-spoken but determined, Robledo conceded she was more than a little nervous before her presentation on a conference panel. "But it was a great experience," she said. "I learned a lot. I don't think there is enough attention paid to this issue. There is a great deal of data about men and their path to incarceration, but that's not true for women. There's hardly any data and it's something that needs to be addressed."



1968



1979

Ruben Salazar Library is opened and is named after Ruben Salazar, reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and the first Mexican-American journalist from mainstream media to cover the Chicano community.

Women's History Month was begun by SSU alumna Molly MacGregor, co-founder of the National Women's History Project.

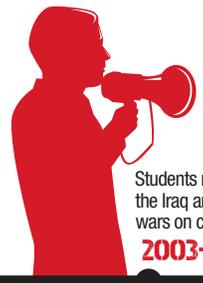


1987

SSU Changes Mascot from Cossacks to Seawolves



2002



Students rally and protest the Iraq and Afghanistan wars on campus.

2003-06

1976



The News That Didn't Make The News

Project Censored was created by Carl Jensen at Sonoma State University as a media research program that focused on student development of media literacy and critical thinking skills as applied to news media censorship in the U.S.

1983



Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series begins as a way to educate about the origins, nature and consequences of the Holocaust.



conservationist whose book *Silent Spring* and other writings are credited with advancing the global environmental movement.

Cluster School Building renamed Rachel Carson Hall to commemorate the life of Rachel Carson, a marine biologist, author and

1990



Mario Savio, credited with helping start the Free Speech Movement, joined Sonoma State University as a full-time faculty member, teaching math and philosophy.

2009



Dedication of the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove, which honors survivors and victims of the genocides committed throughout the world, including the Native American Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, the Jewish Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide and the current-day genocide in Darfur.

Nervous or not, Robledo is preparing for another presentation at the Society's next conference in Philadelphia in November. She plans to take a broader view of the issue this time, exploring "the collateral consequences of the War on Drugs on justice-involved women, (placing) women's identities as mothers at the forefront of the process," as her abstract explains.

Professor Bloom, who has been mentoring her, will be at the Philadelphia conference with Robledo, as she was in New Orleans.

"It's important to help our students gain an understanding about the intersection of race, gender and economic status and how that impacts the study of crime and criminal justice," Bloom explained. "When they go into this field with four-year degrees, they'll become part of a new generation that can really have a positive impact on the justice system and also be agents for social change."

Robledo seems well on her way. Her confidence and ability to present research have been bolstered, she said, because she's found

Sonoma State and her criminology classes a safe place to talk—and argue—about complex social issues. "We have these two-hour discussions that we never finish. Then I have the same discussions in my spare time with friends and the girls in Sigma Pi Alpha sorority, which is the sorority I belong to," she said. "It's really helped me learn how to communicate and understand other people's perspectives. There are so many different backgrounds and points of view expressed. We have a great platform to speak our minds and learn."

When Monica Robledo Cornejo, a McNair Scholar and who received her degree in psychology last spring, was selected to speak at her Commencement ceremony for the School of Social Sciences, she was conflicted. Honored and proud to be asked to deliver a speech, Cornejo, the first member of her family to attend college, felt compelled to talk about what it's like living in America without legal documentation at a time when anti-immigrant fervor helped send Donald Trump to the White House.

"I felt very strongly that if we don't talk about these issues and tell our stories, no one is really going to know what it's like," she said.

Cornejo, who was born in the Mexican state of Jalisco, was active in a number of progressive causes during her time at Sonoma State and wanted to stay true to her values and experiences when she spoke at Commencement—including her belief that the University needs to do more to help "marginalized" students like herself. "But I went back and forth on what to do," she explained. "Everyone I knew was advising me not to say that I am undocumented. My friends, my family—I couldn't decide. Not because I didn't want to do it, but because I was afraid for other students on campus who are undocumented. I didn't want to do anything that would make things more difficult for them."

In the end, she went with her instincts, delivering an inspirational talk that highlighted, as she put it, "people who



**"I DON'T THINK THERE IS ENOUGH ATTENTION PAID TO THIS ISSUE. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF DATA ABOUT MEN AND THEIR PATH TO INCARCERATION, BUT THAT'S NOT TRUE FOR WOMEN."**

– Sarahi Robledo



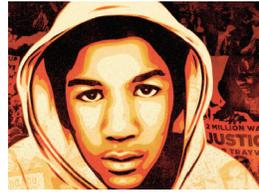
2010

Sonoma State is awarded one of 11 saplings derived from the nearly 200-year-old horse chestnut tree that towered behind the Secret Annex, where Anne Frank and her family hid from the Nazis from 1942-44. In 2013, the sapling was replanted in its permanent home next to the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove.



Dolores Huerta comes to SSU as part of the H. Andréa Neves and Barton Evans Social Justice Lecture Series.

2014



Tracy Martin, father of Trayvon Martin, speaks at Sonoma State



Hundreds of students protest the election of Donald Trump president, burning sage and chanting "not my president"

2016

2012



Mario Savio Speakers' Corner opens in front of Stevenson Hall, as a memorial in honor of Savio and the free speech movement.

2013



Cornel West comes to SSU as part of the H. Andréa Neves and Barton Evans Social Justice Lecture Series.



2015

Social Justice Week debuts. Begun by the Sociology Social Justice and Activism Club with the School of Social Sciences, the week features 30 hours of panels, lectures, films and discussions about local and national social justice topics.

Don Romesburg, associate professor of women's and gender studies, had his LGBTQ history framework incorporated into California public schools. The framework includes history of LGBTQ people and the LGBTQ Civil Rights Movement.



work countless hours to progress in the hope that we will achieve not only respect but also acceptance as well as a better life." She ended her short talk with a rousing statement of self-confidence that brought much of the audience to its feet with an affirming ovation. "I can do whatever I want and bring positive change into this country and into the lives of others because I am a Seawolf," she proclaimed, "and I have earned a degree that has given me the tools and the perseverance to create new tools to change." She called the positive audience reaction a surprise, but said it reaffirmed her decision to tell her story, undocumented status and all.

Students like Robledo and Cornejo notwithstanding, social justice may not be the first topic that springs to mind when someone is initially exposed to Sonoma State. The University arguably receives more accolades for its beautiful campus, its strong liberal arts foundation, and—among other academic pursuits—its highly regarded business, wine and science programs.

### RICH SOCIAL JUSTICE HERITAGE

But Sonoma State has an undeniably rich social justice heritage and ethos that date back to the University's opening in 1961. At the time, America was starting to be transfixed by hippies, civil rights marches and protests against the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. The fledgling University had just 250 students when it opened, and a number of left-leaning faculty who had come from San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Names attached to some of the campus' signature buildings tell part of the story. Adlai E. Stevenson Hall, which includes classrooms and offices for the University president, SSU's provost and several deans, is named for the Illinois Democrat who in the 1950s and '60s was a darling of the liberal political class. Stevenson, who suffered two landslide presidential election losses

**"I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT AND BRING POSITIVE CHANGE INTO THIS COUNTRY AND INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS BECAUSE I AM A SEAWOLF... AND I HAVE EARNED A DEGREE THAT HAS GIVEN ME THE TOOLS AND THE PERSEVERANCE TO CREATE NEW TOOLS TO CHANGE."**

— Monica Robledo Cornejo



to Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, was eventually appointed United Nations Ambassador by

President John F. Kennedy. Rachel Carson Hall, named after the ground-breaking environmental crusader, is home to the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies and Women's and Gender Studies Department, among other programs. Ruben Salazar Hall, where many of the University's business services are located, is named for one of the nation's most prominent Latino journalists. Salazar, an *Anger Times* columnist killed during a 1970 anti-war protest in Los Angeles that drew more than 100,000 Mexican protesters. Salazar, who was 42 at the time, was killed by a tear-gas canister fired by a local sheriff. His death was ruled an accident, but doubts about the cause of death led to Salazar a martyr to Latino and other activists.

And inside the main building, the University library is a colorful mural honoring Cesar Chavez, the labor leader and civil

rights activist who co-founded the United Farm Workers union. A plaque near the mural says it was put there “with respect, love and gratitude for his sacrifice and tireless efforts to attain a life of dignity and humanity for the farmworker.”

The University’s social justice roots reach deeper and wider than the names and murals on some of its best-known buildings.

“The social justice piece has always been strong here,” said John Wingard, dean of SSU’s School of Social Sciences. “But by virtue of everything that’s going on in the country, fighting for social justice is becoming more important. It’s an opportune time for us to raise awareness and talk about it even more.”

Asked how the University sees social justice and how it translates that into the academic mission, Wingard said: “Put simply, social justice is a concern for the fair and just distribution of and access to wealth and resources in society. . . . As an orienting principle in a curriculum, it encourages—even demands—that teaching and research be directed toward the achievement of social justice goals. It manifests itself in different disciplines as a reflection of the theoretical and methodological constitution of the discipline.”

Wingard said that, in the School of Social Sciences, and in other schools, many (or) most faculty strive to imbue their students with both an ethical perspective that recognizes the importance of social justice and the tools to address social justice issues. “We emphasize social justice as an ethical issue while providing them with the tools to address these issues. As such, rather than a theoretical perspective, per se, it serves as an orienting principle in both our research and teaching.”

## PROJECT CENSORED

Project Censored recently published its 40th anniversary edition, *Top Censored Stories and Media Analysis*—the “newspaper that didn’t make the news,” as its website proclaims—was founded in Sonoma State in 1976. Carl Jensen, a sociology professor at SSU, began the project as a media research project, encouraging students to study and write about news that is ignored by broadcast and print giants such as CNN, Fox, the New York Times, and other well-established news organizations.

Project Censored’s website, which has more than 2,500 students as members, says its website is “a definitive online *Real Time* *Realist* Review called Project Censored.” The website’s mission statement reads: “to provide a system for society’s problems.” Stories in the latest edition carry headlines such as “U.S. Military Forces Deployed in 99 Percent of World’s Nations.” Over 1.5 Million American Children Live on Two Dollars per Person per

Day,” “Deadly Medical Neglect for Immigrants in Privatized U.S. Jails” and “Syria’s War Spurred by Contest for Gas Delivery to Europe, not Muslim Sectarianism.”

Peter Phillips, an SSU sociology professor who took over Project Censored in 1996, ran it for 14 years and still co-hosts a weekly radio show on the topic that airs on 40 stations from Maui to New York. He said class work done by students for the annual book can change how they view the world.

“They often start out with the attitude of ‘What’s this all about? We have to report on independent news stories weekly?’ And it doesn’t take long for them to start saying, ‘Oh my God, I had no idea this was happening.’”

## SOCIAL JUSTICE WEEK

Phillips is also faculty adviser to SSU’s Sociology Social Justice and Activism Club, which for the past three years—along with Project Censored—has been one of the primary sponsors of Social Justice Week on campus. Held in the spring, the week is packed with more than two dozen free-admission lectures and

## TOPICS THIS PAST YEAR INCLUDED “FAKE NEWS,” THE “RENTAL HOUSING CRISIS IN SONOMA COUNTY,” IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, “JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE” AND OTHER ISSUES ON THE PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL AGENDA.

presentations from social activists. Topics this past year included “fake news,” the “rental housing crisis in Sonoma County,” immigrant rights, “justice for Palestine” and other issues on the progressive political agenda.

To give the week more prominence on campus and in the region, plans are underway to fold next year’s installment of the H. Andréa Neves and Barton Evans Social Justice

Lecture Series into Social Justice Week.

The lecture series began in 2007 with a \$250,000 endowment gift to the University from Neves, a retired professor of education at SSU, and her late husband, who earned his fortune in the Silicon Valley tech boom. A joint venture by the Schools of Education and Social Sciences, the lecture series has brought to campus speakers such as Marxist economist Richard Wolff; African-American social activist Julian Bond; Cornel West, the Harvard scholar and activist who regularly jousts with comedian Bill Maher on the HBO series “Real Time with Bill Maher;” and Morris Dees, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

“The people can be very expensive to bring in,” Neves said. “I plan to give more of our endowment—and I plan to give more of my own money to Sonoma State for social justice—was to provide the

resources needed to bring some of these kinds of speakers to a public campus who might otherwise not come.”

## **HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE LECTURES AND GROVE**

Another social justice fixture at Sonoma State is the Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series, which will observe its 35th year on campus in 2018. Each year during the spring semester, sponsors of the lecture series, which includes Sonoma State’s Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide and the community-based Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, bring leading scholars to campus to shed light on some of the world’s worst and most systematic atrocities.

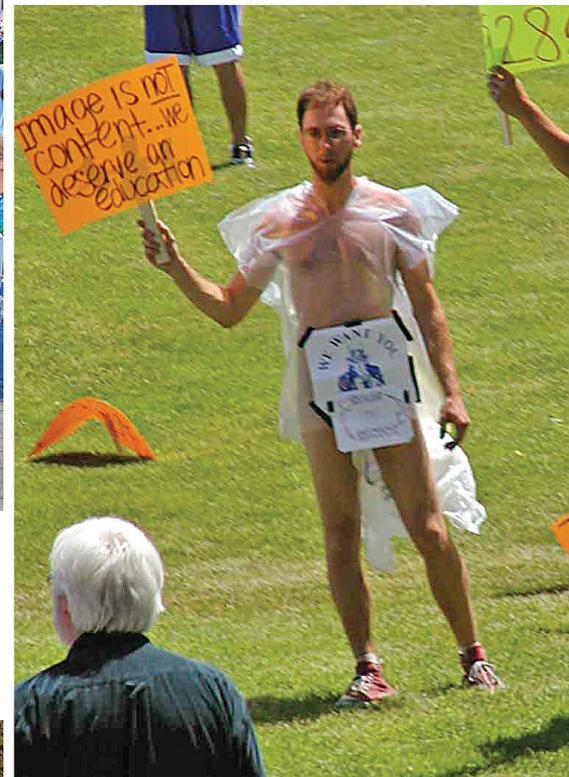
The lecture series is presented as a General Education class; it is consistently popular, with registration filled quickly with more than 100 students.

“This is the one class that has nothing to do for most of them with what they are going to be or what they are going to do after they graduate,” said Myrna Goodman, emerita professor of sociology and director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide since 1997. “It is a challenge for them to become citizens of the world.”

The existence and strong reputation of the Holocaust Center were instrumental in attracting two other prominent social justice pieces to campus. The Erna and Arthur Salm Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove northeast of Salazar Hall includes a sculpture that has two 40-foot long railroad tracks embedded into the lawn and a tower comprised of 5,000 pieces of glass, honoring survivors and victims of genocides committed around the world, including the

Holocaust, Native American Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide and the Genocide in Darfur. The memorial also includes 460 bricks inscribed with the names and communities of those who have endured genocide.

Four years ago a planting ceremony was held in the Grove for one of 11 saplings from the old chestnut tree that towered behind the Secret Annex in Amsterdam where Anne Frank and her family hid from the Nazis from 1942 to 1944. The panel of officials that chose where to send the saplings said Sonoma State was selected for its “demonstrated commitment to upholding Anne’s vision for a peaceful, more tolerant world.”



In recent years, issues such as gay marriage, student fee increases, abortion and the 2016 presidential election have spurred student activism on campus.





# New gifts provide support for Educational Opportunity Program

By Gary Delsohn  
Photo by Sara Wildman

For anyone spending even a short time around some of the student leaders at this year's Summer Bridge program, it was difficult not to come away impressed. Their strength and confidence—and leadership skills—rang out loud and clear.

But if one probed a little deeper into the personal stories of Brenda Recinos, Evelyn Ortega, Claudia Delgado and Fernando Mendoza, something else emerged. Self-assurance, they all readily conceded, did not come easy.

As first in their families to attend college, they've all had to overcome obstacles and setbacks in life—and for them—just getting into Sonoma State was a challenge as well. They credit the University's Educational Opportunity Program, or EOP, for helping them progress from insecure, uncertain freshmen into experienced student leaders.

Now, with generous recent donations from the Mill Valley-based Kalmanovitz Charitable Foundation; Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, owners of the

Graton Resort and Casino in Rohnert Park; Rodney Strong Vineyards in Healdsburg; and Napa-based Cooperages 1912, even more EOP students may get the chance for a similar transformation.

"I know well the challenges that these students and their families face as they pursue higher education," said SSU President Judy K. Sakaki, who was an EOP director early in her academic career at CSU, East Bay. "It is a priority for my administration to recruit and support first-generation college students, particularly those from our local region. These generous gifts will allow us to make remarkable strides in this direction."

"It is amazing to see how some of these students have grown," Khou Yang-Vigil, who was once an EOP student and now is the program coordinator, said just before the last Summer Bridge. "I see them come in nervous, scared, anxious, not knowing what to expect. Then they start to learn how to balance their time here, and they become involved with the campus."

EOP is a CSU systemwide program established by state law in 1969 to provide academic support and retention services to first-generation, historically low-income and educationally underserved students. Summer Bridge is the mandatory, week-long orientation program designed to smooth the way from high school to the University setting for all EOP freshmen. **S**

EOP leaders, from left, Brenda Recinos, Fernando Mendoza, Claudia Delgado and Evelyn Ortega

**"Anytime I would feel lost, I would come to EOP. It's family, a big, extended support group that really makes a difference for you."**

—Evelyn Ortega, criminology and psychology major

**Kalmanovitz Charitable Foundation** – \$1.7 million over five years, with much of the money funding \$10,000, four-year scholarships for new EOP students. Grants will be administered through SSU's existing Wine Industry Scholars Program, which was established in February by the University's Wine Business Institute in the School of Business and Economics. The program extends EOP services to reach more widely into the local agricultural communities, providing college funds for the children of vineyard and other winery workers. It also brings expanded support in order to serve more of SSU's first-generation and economically disadvantaged students, including programs for juniors and seniors in addition to freshmen and sophomores, as well as help with both academic and career readiness.

The money will also fund hiring an additional full-time EOP advisor to support students and one part-time "entrepreneur-in-residence" to develop new curricula focused on real-world skill development and hands-on, project-based learning.

**Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria** – \$270,000 gift to support the University's Summer Bridge orientation program for incoming EOP freshmen. Held in June, the mandatory, week-long session helps students prepare for academic and other challenges that can come with being away from home and living on a college campus.

**Rodney Strong Vineyards** – \$250,000 donated last December to create the Rodney Strong Pathways Program, supporting existing EOP services to students.

**Cooperages 1912** – \$50,000 over five years for scholarships through the University's Wine Industry Scholars Program.



# Programmed with Determination

Campus Women in Tech group perseveres in the face of adversity in the Solar Regatta, and in life



By Nicolas Grizzle, '06  
Photos by Charles Gesell  
and Nicolas Grizzle

Forget solar—we run on girl power.

That message came through loud and clear when Sonoma State University's Women in Tech group took home several awards at the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's annual Solar Regatta in May, proving that even though they're outnumbered and underrepresented in the industry, women are just as strong — if not even stronger — than their male counterparts in the tech world.

"There's this bias around engineering and physics that says it's a man's field," says Women in Tech director and Engineering Science professor Sara Kassis. "We have to step away from that mindset."

The odds were stacked against them from the start. The night before the competition at their campsite on the bank of Rancho Seco Lake, team SSU Sol found out its voltage regulator — a crucial part that converts energy from the solar panels into the correct voltage level for the motor — didn't work. It was too late to get a replacement, and it was not likely that another team had a spare the Sonoma team could borrow.

Nevertheless, they persisted.

Early in the brisk and uncharacteristically cloudy spring morning, the team walked from campsite to campsite, asking if anyone had a spare. It turned out that West Valley College, who was out of the competition due to a structural failure, was able to lend the part. Now SSU Sol had 30 minutes to hook it up and get its boat running to make it in time for the first race.

Hands feverishly flew about the back of the converted canoe, connecting wires and securing pieces to keep the driver's seat clear.

*Hands feverishly flew about the back of the converted canoe, connecting wires and securing pieces to keep the driver's seat clear.*

Fingers were crossed and the switches were flipped. The propeller of the small trolling motor spun happily, signaling that the team's perseverance had paid off.

The sun peeked out from its bed of clouds as electrical engineering major Alyssa Wright christened the vessel with its maiden voyage: a timed sprint race. Nevermind that the team had just installed a different voltage regulator, or that this was Wright's first time ever piloting a boat, or that the motor's forward and reverse functions had been mislabeled, or that the transformed canoe had not been tested in the water with solar panels attached — the boat had been launched in time, and that in itself was a victory.

Wright finished the race with a respectable time and the ecstatic team high fived on shore upon her return. It would be the first of many high fives, fist bumps and shouts of celebration for the team that day.

S



### Overcoming Adversity

The Women in Tech group was formed last year by the School of Science and Technology and its dean, Lynn Stauffer, to address the gender gap in engineering, physics and computer science. Nationally, women make up just 18 percent of these fields, and Sonoma State comes close to that with women representing

**Nationally, women make up just 18 percent of these fields, and Sonoma State comes close to that with women representing about 20 percent of physics majors, 15 percent of computer science majors and 11 percent of electrical engineering majors.**

about 20 percent of physics majors, 15 percent of computer science majors and 11 percent of electrical engineering majors.

The informal group includes many students from Sonoma State's Women

in Computer Science Club and the Society of Women Engineers. Out of the 18 students in the group, five are males.

Throughout the year, focus is placed on building a supportive and empowering environment for students in the group. Events include student-led app building workshops, panel discussions with guest speakers highlighting underrepresented women and their experiences, and much more.

"The whole point of Women in Tech is to provide a support system for these women, who might be the only female in their classroom," says Kassis, who holds a Ph.D. in condensed matter physics from Kent State University and is the only female engineering faculty member at SSU. "That can be intimidating. We are here to build a community and encourage them to continue with their degree."

After the first race at the regatta, the team carried the boat back to camp to prepare for the next race. They removed the solar panels and switched the power source to run from





The SSU Women in Tech group took home several awards from the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's Solar Regatta last spring, where they attached solar panels to power a boat through a series of races.

a marine battery for the endurance race, which would take place in a few hours.

In the shadow of the decommissioned Rancho Seco nuclear power plant just a mile away, Wright again took the helm, piloting the boat now without solar panels under the midday sun. The goal of this race was to complete as many laps as possible within a 25-minute time limit. Two teams competed simultaneously and had a "pit stop" halfway through to change captains, where computer science major Elizabeth Stelzer buckled up her life vest to resume the last half of the race.

It had been neck-and-neck for most of the race, and the second half was no exception, drawing excited cheers from the shore. On the final lap, Stelzer started removing weight from the vessel to increase speed. A large rock acting as a counterbalance in the front of the boat was tossed overboard, and she started to pick up speed but couldn't overtake her opponent on the final stretch. Stelzer grabbed a paddle to give a few final strokes to bring the boat ashore but inadvertently caused the canoe to capsize, tossing her into the water and sinking the boat.

She had worked incredibly hard with considerable extra effort to push ahead, yet it resulted in a near catastrophe. For many women in tech, that kind of effort and frustration is a painfully familiar metaphor.

Stauffer, who was the first female computer science

professor at Sonoma State when she started teaching in 1994, was installed as the permanent dean of the School of Science and Technology in 2012. She knows how it feels to be outnumbered in her field, and goes out of her way to encourage female students to keep at it through the challenges.

"They have a lot more self doubt because there are fewer examples of women in the field," she says. Getting a C grade on an early assignment might make female students more likely to change majors, for example. "It's easier to feel like they're on the margin, like they're only in the game because of

***"It's easier to feel like they're on the margin, like they're only in the game because of some fluke. Their confidence is much less solid."***

some fluke. Their confidence is much less solid."

She started the Women in Computer Science Club in her first year at Sonoma State, and is working to recruit more female tech majors to join the Women in Tech group. This year, she was recognized by *Insight into Diversity* magazine as a recipient of its Inspiring Leaders in STEM award.

"I feel like we have this great potential with the Women in Tech group to leverage our small campus and low student-to-faculty ratio at Sonoma State," says

Stauffer. “If your faculty are able to work more closely with you, they will go the extra mile to try to keep you here.”

After beginning her unexpected dip in the lake, Stelzer literally laughed at this adversity and swam to shore. The canoe was towed back to shore where the team discovered, miraculously, that everything was still intact. The parts were all still there. The motor was still running. And the next race was in 30 minutes. The eight members of the team looked at each other and team captain Cristin Faria encouraged what everyone was already thinking — we can do this, let’s get moving.

“Everyone just jumped on board right away,” said the electrical engineering major, pun not intended.

## The Titanic Has Risen

The team went to work right away, disconnecting the parts, drying them off, and reconnecting the solar panels for the next race: the sprint slalom. Thirty minutes after sinking, the SSU Sol was ready for another voyage.

“Who is that? Is that Sonoma?” asked emcee Brent Sloan, who was announcing the day’s events with a wireless microphone. “The Titanic has risen! Way to go Team Titanic!” he exclaimed, to uproarious cheering from hundreds of other competitors. Sonoma State proudly adopted the moniker for the remainder of the competition.

It was a feat simply to come back from the depths just to compete in

the next race, and the team understood this. David Smith, a computer science major wearing a pair of one-eyed pirate glasses complete with theatrical moustache and skull-and-crossbones headpiece, buckled his life vest and set sail for the

*The eight members of the team looked at each other and team captain Cristin Faria encouraged what everyone was already thinking — we can do this, let’s get moving.*

slalom course on the other end of the lake.

The mood onshore was a mixture of relief, trepidation and celebration. The boat worked and the captain had pilot experience, but this timed trajectory of twists and turns was the most difficult race of the day. Team Titanic would be happy just to finish the race and stay relatively dry.

Smith looked like a natural on the water, and finished with what seemed like a decent time. It had been an accomplishment to complete all three races on a day where seemingly every obstacle had been thrown at them, but the awards ceremony proved to be the cherry on top.

## Rewarding Perseverance

There were 14 awards to give out between the 15 teams competing. Sonoma State stood together in the back of the seating area near





Top to bottom; Taylor Arellano, computer science major, Cristin Faria, electrical engineering major, Deahja "DeeDee" Powell, computer science major, Sara Kassis, adjunct professor of engineering science, Lynn Stauffer, dean, School of Science and Technology

the stage, ready to cheer on their competitors from UC Davis, City College of San Francisco, Chico State and other universities and community colleges. As first-timers in the competition, the SSU team didn't expect any awards. But when their name was called for the "Leading by Example" award, Team Titanic rose once again, this time from the ground to the air jumping with excitement.

Their amazement grew when they were called for the Judges' Choice award, and again for the Student Choice award. By the time they were called to the stage for a fourth time to receive the Slalom Course prize, they were speechless. Not only had they received awards for their perseverance, but the team had finished with the fastest time in the race that took place after their sunken boat had to be fished out of the lake.

**Not only had they received awards for their perseverance, but the team had finished with the fastest time in the race that took place after their sunken ship had to be fished out of the lake.**

After taking some photos with their trophies, the Sonoma State team walked over to say goodbye to their new friends from West Valley College of Saratoga. They huddled just before reaching the

campsite, deciding on the spot that it was West Valley that should take home the Leading by Example award.

Faria handed the award to a West Valley team member and said, "If it wasn't for you, we literally wouldn't have been able to compete, so you guys deserve this." The speechless West Valley team collected itself before reaching out for hugs and handshakes.

Now relieved of his emcee duties, Sloan came up at that moment to congratulate everyone from both teams. "Good work everyone," he said, noting again his astonishment with Sonoma State's titanic feat. When he was informed that Sonoma State had given West Valley one of their awards, he was pleasantly surprised. "That's what this competition is all about!" he exclaimed, high-fiving both teams.

### More Women in Tech

"I was so excited for the students, I really wanted them to be able to enjoy and learn from this experience," says Kassis. "They came in on weekends and holidays to finish. They had to be so creative with so many things," she adds, including using scrap wood, Velcro, door hinges and other outside-of-the-box pieces.

The Solar Regatta group did include two male students, but everyone worked together as equals. "I didn't know what to expect, but I knew I had a good team so I knew it would be fun," said Smith, the solar pirate.

Wright says the experience was all pretty new to her, even though she sounds like a seasoned pro when talking about it. "There's a big difference between writing it down on paper and actually doing it," she says. "I learned so much from doing this."

She also had to apply a lot of mechanical engineering skills, including her first time using power

**When he was informed that Sonoma State had given West Valley one of their awards, he was pleasantly surprised. "That's what this competition is all about!"**

tools. "It was pretty cool and empowering to do that," she says. "Now I know how to use these tools, and I can put that on a resume."

Wright, who has had lab classes in which she is the only female, can't say for sure why such a gender gap exists in the field. "I really enjoy it," she says. "I don't know honestly why there aren't more women in tech."

She does have an idea about how to start righting the ship, however. "It has to start with getting girls involved in tech before college," she says. "Before high school, even."

Young girls looking for role models in the tech world need look no further than Sonoma State's Women in Tech group, who are showing it doesn't take a trophy to lead by example. **S**



## Fearless Learner

### New Provost Lisa Vollendorf Hits the Ground Running

By Gary Delsohn  
Photo by Charles Gesell

**If not for a fortuitous decision made years ago as a young college student in Colorado,** Lisa Vollendorf would probably not be at Sonoma State right now as the University's new provost and executive vice president for academic affairs.

"That completely changed my life," she said. "It is a pretty big awakening when you go from your small mountain community to San Jose, Costa Rica. It inspired me to pursue a path of teaching, learning and relating to cultures other than my own."

**"That completely changed my life... It is a pretty big awakening when you go from your small mountain community to San Jose, Costa Rica. It inspired me to pursue a path of teaching, learning and relating to cultures other than my own."**

Vollendorf was an undergraduate in 1989 when she decided to study abroad, spending a year at the University of Costa Rica, much of it living in the home of a local family.

After graduating from Colorado State, her new-found passion led her to the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned a Ph.D. in romance languages in 1995. Her love of

new experiences and challenges eventually took her to San José State University as dean of Humanities and the Arts and a professor of Spanish. Last March, after a comprehensive national search, Vollendorf was named Sonoma State's provost by President Judy K. Sakaki.

Vollendorf talked with *Insights* the day before leaving with her husband on a two-week backpacking trip to Alaska and National Arctic Wildlife Refuge. She was excited to see the Arctic coastal plain and the great porcupine caribou migration.

Typical for this self-described explorer and adventurer, Vollendorf ventured into unknown territory while at San José State. In doing so, she was credited with having a profound

impact on the city, its cultural life, the university and students.

When downtown San José's iconic Hammer Theatre went dark for a year following the demise of the city's repertory theatre company, Vollendorf led the university's move to step in and assume management of the theatre in an unusual partnership with City Hall.

In addition to her responsibilities as dean of the university's largest college, Vollendorf, who has long loved attending plays and concerts but didn't have a theatre or business background, found herself overseeing the theatre's operations. The buck stopped at her desk on everything from booking artists and shows to putting together a budget and business plan.

"She didn't know a darn thing about running a theatre," said Lisa Laymon, client services director at the Hammer. "But she saw an opportunity to connect students and performing arts professionals in this amazing environment and said, 'I will make that happen.' She is absolutely fearless in that way."

Since March 2016, just months after the city and university signed a three-year agreement for San José State to run the theatre, 27,000 people had come through the Hammer as of June 2017 as performers and patrons. Perhaps more significant for her students is the fact that they regularly perform on the Hammer stage and hold jobs throughout the building from stage management, marketing, the box office, catering and more.

"There are people who are enthusiastic but don't have whatever they need to back it up," said Laymon. "She has that very rare blend of passion, intelligence, enthusiasm and a real gift of being able to work with all kinds of people, and through it all, she was 100 percent motivated by what this would mean for students."

The university's success in resurrecting the theatre as a San José

cultural icon strengthened ties between the community and its university. The chance to help President Judy Sakaki do the same for Sonoma State was a big part of Vollendorf's attraction to the new job.

"I was completely hooked when I came to the campus for my interview and met so many people who shared my enthusiasm for President Sakaki's style of leadership and the values she has for the campus and for higher education," Vollendorf said. "The community engagement piece is incredibly important to me because it provides an opportunity to include all the diverse elements of the community and I know President Sakaki shares that same value."

Vollendorf has the kind of resume that can make even high achievers feel like slackers. During the seven years she spent at Long Beach State, she was chair of the Department of Romance, German, Russian Languages and Literatures for four years. She was also elected to three terms as chair of the Academic Senate.

**"She has that very rare blend of passion, intelligence, enthusiasm and a real gift of being able to work with all kinds of people and through it all, she was 100 percent motivated by what this would mean for students."**

She has "near-native proficiency" in Spanish and can read and understand Italian and French. In 2005, her book *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain*, was published by Vanderbilt University Press, prompting the American Historical Review to give her a stellar grade. "Making use of Inquisition records, spiritual autobiographies, legal documents and private correspondence, Vollendorf does an admirable job of initiating her readers into this unexpectedly rich world of female literary expression," the review said.

When asked what she's most proud of during her five years as dean at SJSU, Vollendorf said it was helping raise the college's visibility. Another point of pride

was making the school a campus leader for student success by focusing on interdisciplinary initiatives. And she also cited the school having "invested heavily" to improve writing proficiency on campus, in partnership with faculty and students.

The writing investment created "an immense amount of change in a short period of time," said Shannon Miller, chair of the SJSU English Department and interim dean of Humanities and the Arts.

"Her decisions are based on making the process work but she is consistently guided by the goals of student success. Her commitment to public higher education and the promise it provides for students to achieve a college degree and economic independence is palpable. She is one of the best spokespeople I have ever known who can communicate and advocate for the mission of the public comprehensive university and for the CSU generally."

So what are Provost Vollendorf's goals for Sonoma State, where, as provost she is the University's chief academic officer?

"In the short term," she said, "my goals are to listen and learn. To get to know people and hear what they have to say about the University and its future from their vantage point. It is incredibly important to listen to and involve all the stakeholders and get their perspectives."

Beyond that, Vollendorf said she's excited about the many opportunities for increased excellence she's seen at Sonoma State and for the chance to forge new and productive partnerships throughout the community.

With the next day's backpacking trip to Alaska on her mind, she identified one more goal for her time at SSU. "I love being outdoors," she said, "I want to find the best hiking trails near my house." **S**

## Alumni Association Board of Directors 2017

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Alumni Association Director

**Laurie Ogg**

BS Kinesiology, 1994 & MA Kinesiology, 1999

# From the Alumni Association President

Greetings Alumni Family!

The Alumni Association is continuing its efforts to align with the University and provide engagement opportunities for alumni like you. We continue to focus on three pillars endorsed by President Judy K. Sakaki — alumni engagement, student scholarship and alumni recognition — to provide further support to the University, our students and you, our alumni.

The Heart of SSU Alumni Scholarship endowment grew by 15 percent during the last fiscal year and will award its first scholarship in fall 2018. That growth is a result of the generosity of alumni like you. Additionally, we stand behind the Seawolf commitment, our students' pledge to uphold and carry with them as alumni: integrity, respect, excellence and responsibility.

**Are you rocking your Seawolf pin yet? If not, update your email and mailing addresses at [www.ssualumni.org/alumniupdate](http://www.ssualumni.org/alumniupdate) and we'll mail one out to you.**

Mark your calendar for Nov. 20 and the annual Lagunitas event in Petaluma. Last year we raised a record amount for the Heart of SSU Scholarship Endowment. Come on out and help us break that record this year. Register at [www.ssualumni.org/Lagunitas2017](http://www.ssualumni.org/Lagunitas2017).

I am very excited and proud when I run into alumni during my daily interactions in Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. I know our network extends far and wide. Please reach out to me if you have interest in reconnecting with the University, mentoring a student or providing students with internships. The Association is always happy to hear from you.

Cheers!

**Joseph Huang**

[Josephhuang8@gmail.com](mailto:Josephhuang8@gmail.com)



SSU Alumni  
Association  
Board President  
Joe Huang  
with 1999  
Distinguished  
Alumni recipient  
Vincent Harper.



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Alumni Association Board President Joe Huang and Board Directors Vanessa Johns, Libby Dippel, Travis Saracco and Amanda Mueller with Vice President for Advancement Vince Sales.

## 2017 Student Athlete Alumni Scholarship Awards

### Mitch North, Men's Soccer

A junior from Ashland, Ore., Mitch North started all 20 games for the Seawolves last season, helping

direct a defense that was ranked 18th in the nation in goals allowed. His excellent play and leadership helped the team qualify for the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2010. A two-time Honorable Mention All-CCAA selection, North has earned Academic All-CCAA honors in each of his three years at Sonoma State University.



### Sarah Langley, Softball

A junior from Oak Park, Calif., Sarah Langley has been behind the plate for all 50 games for the Sonoma State

softball team. Among the team leaders in nearly every offensive category, Langley's guidance pushed the team to the brink of a 9th consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance. Her excellence extends to the classroom where she earned Academic All-CCAA honors in each of her seasons.



## Distinguished Alumni Awards

Judge David V. Brewer, right, B.A. Economics, 1974, and Geof Syphers, left, B.S. Physics, 1993, were officially recognized as SSU Distinguished Alumni in May at a dinner event at Prelude Restaurant at the Green Music Center. They are shown here with President Judy K. Sakaki.



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. Since 1988, these awards have been presented to the most prestigious graduates for their professional achievements, contributions to society and support of the University.

## Rosa Martinez: 2017 Ambrose R. Nichols, Jr. Scholarship Recipient

While some say, "attitude is everything," it was Dr. Wayne Dyer who wrote, "Change the way you look at things, and the things you look at change."

Rosa Martinez, the 2017 Nichols Scholarship recipient, faced adversity early in life, but she would not allow it to define her existence, and has already enacted positive change on herself and her community.

Martinez was raised in Stockton, Calif., in a home where only Spanish was spoken. "We lived a humble existence as my parents were both field workers," she said.

Ambition came early to Martinez who earned a scholarship to the Tech Trek Math and Science Camp in seventh grade. She was counseled by a handful of Stockton residents for the next five years in spoken English, pre-calculus and cross-country running.

**She graduated high school with a 4.32 GPA and 51 college units while volunteering at the Emergency Food Bank and the American Association of University Women's STEM Trek Mentor Program, where she provided guidance to secondary students.**

After earning a B.S. in mathematics this winter, Martinez wants to teach secondary school math and advance her community involvement. Her interests include social justice, coaching cross-country and starting a Sonoma County mentoring program like STEM Trek.

The Ambrose R. Nichols, Jr. Scholarship selection committee reviews applicants based on criteria including scholarship, leadership, campus/community contribution and the promise of future contribution.

"The selection process is a tall task every year," said member David J. Felte. "Rosa is a standout individual and represents the best of what Sonoma State is about."



# Washington DC and New York City Mixer

March 2016



President Judy K. Sakaki pinning a Seawolf Alumni pin on alumnus Alex Boyar, '12, at the CSU Alumni Reception in Washington DC.



President Judy K. Sakaki, Alyssa Frazier, '06, Alumni Association Director, Laurie Ogg '94, '99, Jenny La Monica, '99, Peter Smits, Interim Vice President, University Advancement



President Judy K. Sakaki pinning a Seawolf Alumni pin on Marc Sabin, '89, at Anne Isaak's New York City Restaurant Elio's following the CSU Alumni Reception in New York City.



Sandra Jackson-Dumont, '94, keynote speaker at the CSU Alumni Reception in New York City



Jeffrey Pitcl, '12, Carrie Snead '13, President Judy K. Sakaki, Alex Boyar '89, Laurie Ogg '94, '99

## School of Business and Economics Spring Mixer

It was a packed house at the 2017 annual School of Business and Economics Spring Mixer with more than 450 alumni, students, faculty, employers and staff in attendance.



## Upcoming Events

### November 20

Lagunitas Alumni Mixer/Heart of SSU Scholarship Fundraiser  
Lagunitas Brewery, Petaluma  
Register:  
[www.ssualumni.org/Lagunitas2017](http://www.ssualumni.org/Lagunitas2017)

### April 2018

2018 Annual School of Business and Economics Annual Spring Mixer  
Register:  
[www.sonoma.edu/sbe](http://www.sonoma.edu/sbe)

### April 10, 2018

Washington DC CSU Alumni Mixer  
Register:  
<http://calstate.edu/alumni/events/>

### April 12, 2018

New York City Mixer  
Register:  
<http://calstate.edu/alumni/events/>

## We Want to Hear All About You

Do you have a special event to share with your fellow SSU alumni? We are ramping up a new section of Classnotes dedicated to weddings, births and in memoriam. Please send photos of your recent nuptials and family additions, or if we can help remember an SSU alum who has passed on, please let us know. Visit [www.ssualumni.org/alumniupdate](http://www.ssualumni.org/alumniupdate) to submit photos and to share your milestones.

## In Memoriam



**Vicki Flaherty, '72, BA Psychology**, passed away on Nov. 28, 2016, at Mendocino Coast District Hospital after a valiant battle with cancer. Flaherty attended Galileo Academy of Science and Technology, and later transferred to Sonoma State where she earned a BA in psychology. She entered the field of clinical psychology, serving the under-served, the homeless and people living with AIDS. In

1986, Flaherty earned her PhD in psychology from the Wright Institute and became Dr. Vicki to her many friends and co-workers. Flaherty leaves behind many friends who honor her acerbic wit, dedication and service to her community, and strength in battles for the good of society. She will be remembered as a classy woman.

**Sherri Anderson, '73, BA Expressive Arts, '77, BA Management**, recently passed away. In her 31 years as an accounting professor at SSU, Anderson was dedicated to students, committed to and active with the University and in the community. Her impact on campus will always be remembered fondly. Anderson retired from teaching in 2013 though her career at SSU began as a student. She earned a BA in Management from SSU in 1977 and went on to become a CPA in 1980. She earned an MBA from San Francisco State University in 1983. In the fall of 1981, following a stint working for a public accounting firm in San Rafael, Anderson began her teaching career. She educated thousands of students during her career at SSU and helped guide them to successful careers in finance and accounting. In addition to teaching, Anderson served as a member of the board for the YWCA and the California Board of Accountancy.

## Births

**Bryan Kieffer, '06, BA Biology, and Natalie (Umber) Kieffer, '06, BA Sociology** married on July 23, 2011, welcomed daughter Alessandra Elena Kieffer on January 28, 2017. Two-and-half-year-old big brother Kai Kieffer is thrilled.



Ryan Devlin and Samantha Cline Devlin

## Weddings

**Chris Fadeff, '05, BA Economics**, married Andrea Olson on December 31, 2016.

**Alfredo Coria, '06, BA Communications**, married Lilian Zelaya, '06, BA Psychology, on April 23, 2016.

**Caitlin Yates, '10, BA Anthropology**, married **Eric Olsen, '09, BS Business Marketing**, at the Green Music Center in May 2017.

**Caroline Ammann, '10, BA French**, married Keith Neyman on June 16, 2017.

**Ryan Devlin, '15, BA Criminal Justice**, married **Samantha Cline** at Cline Cellars on July 16, 2016.



Alfredo Coria and Lilian Zelaya

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## 1960s

**David Clemens, '69, BA English**, is the founder of the Monterey Peninsula College Great Books program. He is retiring after 46 years of teaching.

## 1970s

**Kara Jacobs, '75, BA Spanish**, has retired after 23 years as a social worker with Sonoma County. She became a licensed clinical social worker last year and is currently assisting the county as a juvenile court investigator with child abuse and neglect cases.

**Francine Falk-Allen, '77, BA Management**, started a scholarship fund in 1997 that annually helps students with the financial strain of college. She also established her own tax and bookkeeping service and most currently signed with a publisher for her memoir.

## 1980s

**Terry Oden, '84, BA English**, retired in 2004 after serving more than 25 years with the Sonoma County Superior Court. He now spends time volunteering with Cali Calmécac Language Academy in Windsor and Friends of the Santa Rosa Libraries.

**Rev. Samuel Tharpe, '85, MA Psychology**, has dedicated more than 25 years to providing Thanksgiving meals to the lonely, hungry and needy. He is attempting to provide a year-round food pantry and Christmas baskets for the residents of Rohnert Park who are unable to support themselves.

**Morten Ender, '86, BA Sociology**, is professor of sociology in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at West Point, the United States Military Academy. His latest book, which focuses on inclusion in the American military, was

published in June 2017. He and his wife Corina Morano-Ender, '87, BA Anthropology, BA German, have fond memories of their time at SSU.



Morten Ender

**Teresa Peterson, '86, BA Management**, serves as principal at Thomas Paige Academy in Cotati.

**Cindy (McClure) Hetrick, '87, BS Chemistry**, is now the business manager for Information Services at the University of Oregon. She earned the master of accounting degree in 2009 from the University of Oregon.

**Laura Pedroncelli, '89, BA Management**, was named one of Bank Investment Consultant's Top 100 Advisors for 2016, a tribute to all-around achievement. She is currently working as a financial advisor in the investment services division at First Tech Federal Credit Union.

## 1990s

**Judith (Vonheeder) Mefferd, '90, BA Psychology**, SSU Athletic Hall of fame '05, is celebrating her 25th year as a law enforcement officer at Sonoma State. She has served as sergeant for 10 years and is responsible for training new officers.

**Morris Turner, '90, BA Afro American Studies**, a former EOP student, is the author of *America's Black Towns and Settlements*. He is a member of the National Park Service Network to Freedom Project and the Votaw Colony Museum and Re-Connection Planning Committee, and serves as a consultant to the Home and Garden Television program "Historic African American Towns." He is the recipient of the Baccus Family Grant for Historical Research and a contributing columnist to the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper.

**Susan Gorin, '91, BA Political Science**, Sonoma County supervisor from the First District, was selected to serve on the Governing Board of the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. Its mission is to raise and allocate local funding for the restoration, enhancement, protection and enjoyment of wetlands and wildlife in and along the San Francisco

Bay, and for associated flood management and public infrastructure.

**Aryan Chappel, '92, BA Art**, had his artwork showcased in the SSU University Library Art Gallery. The collection of photos, spanning the years 1985-2012, tell a story in Chappell's life, with a deep connection to, as he states, "the majestic West and his home in Northern California."

**Buffy (McCrary) Dyess, '93, BA Criminal Justice**, is the senior vice president and chief compliance officer for Guaranty Bank and Trust.

**Shannon D. Sweeney, '95, BA Physical Education**, was hired as the general manager of the Santa Rosa and Petaluma branches of PsychStrategies, Inc., a privately owned mental health services company.

**Meredith Rennie, '97, BS Business Accounting**, has joined Mengali Accountancy in Healdsburg as a senior accountant. Rennie, a CPA and CGMA, previously worked for Moss Adams.

**Nereo Loresto, '98, BS Mathematics**, is the senior manager of security analytics in Security Operations for Charles Schwab.

**Jenny McClelland, '99, BA Art History**, has joined Terra Firma Global Partners and will serve real estate clients throughout Sonoma County from the firm's Sebastopol office.

## 2000s

**Eric Lofchie, '00, MA Counseling**, was hired as the director of New Directions School, a non-public school operated by the Child Parent Institute of Santa Rosa. He previously served as the executive director at SOS Community Counseling.

**Orlando Macias, '02, BA History, Chicano and Latino Studies**, has joined the board of directors of Lifeworks of Sonoma County. Macias has more than 20 years of experience mentoring and coaching youth and adolescents throughout the entire North Bay.

**Tina Sheldon, '02, BS Business Finance**, was appointed as vice president and senior relationship manager of Summit State Bank. Sheldon brings more than 19 years of lending and community banking experience to her role.

**Joseph Verderame, '02, BA Chemistry**, was selected as a 2017-18 SETI institute educator for the Airborne Astronomy Program aboard NASA's SOFIA flying observatory.

**Stephanie Garber, '03, BA Communications**, published her first novel in January, which debuted at No. 2 on the New York Times best-seller list for young adult hardcovers. It has remained on the list since then.

**Kimberly (Grisell) Lloyd, '03, BA Environmental Studies and Planning, '05, Multiple Subjects Credential**, teaches special education at Two Rock Union School District in Petaluma. She completed her education specialist credential and MS in special education at Dominican University of California, where she received the 2017 Outstanding Award for the School of Education and Counseling Psychology.

**Thomas Fonseca, '05, BA Environmental Studies and Planning**, currently works as a systems programmer analyst for Sonoma County.

**Aubrie Adams, '05, BA Psychology**, earned her PhD in communication at the University of California Santa Barbara in June 2017 and began as an assistant professor at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo this fall.

**Brad Nass, '06, MA Psychology**, is a co-founder of the startup Brain Voyagers, which makes virtual reality mobile games incorporating common core subject practice for children 6-10 years old.

**Matthew Larrabure, '07, BS Business Finance**, has been with Merrill Lynch for the past 10 years. He and his wife are currently active in the Petaluma 20/30 club; an organization that focuses on raising money for local children while actively working with them.

## 2010s

**Alexander Marrin, '12, BS Business**, has joined the Santa Rosa accounting firm Bollinger, Glenn, Guattery, Gunn and McAravy, LLP as a CPA. Marrin has 5 years experience in public accounting as well as experience with audits and reviews of financial statements and various other engagements.

**Lorez Bailey, '13, MA Education**, is the executive director of Chop's Teen Club in Santa Rosa.

**Marissa Fusco, '13 BA Human Development**, is the social services director at Windsor Care Center Skilled Nursing in Petaluma. She recently received her MA in Aging Services Management from the School of Gerontology at University of Southern California.

**Michael Paradiso, '13, BS Kinesiology**, and his band Soul Pacific were nominated for a Grammy in Best Remixed Recording for their song "Cali Coast." His band was featured alongside artists such as Kaskade, RAC, The Chemical Brothers and Paul McCartney and Wings.

**Kayleigh Watters, '14, BA Psychology**, graduated from Pepperdine University in

spring 2017 with her master's in clinical psychology and will begin work toward a PhD in clinical psychology at Palo Alto University. She is also working at a nonprofit clinic as a marriage and family therapist in training.

**Taylor Beck, '14, BS Business Management**, works as a graphics coordinator at Fox Sports in Los Angeles.

**Elizabeth "Lisa" Blow, '16, BA Art Studio, BA Art History**, returned to college after a 26 year career in the U.S. Coast Guard. She and her wife, both veterans, are now looking to give back to the SSU community through a scholarship fund for art majors with a concentration in painting.

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## Nursing Student Feeds Soul as Hurricane Volunteer

By Kathy De Bel, '17

**When I arrived in North Carolina, almost 15 days after the initial disaster, all immediate triage and placement of disaster victims into shelters** had already taken place.

Hurricane Matthew had hit the region on Oct. 8, 2016 and as a student in the RN-BSN program in Sonoma State University's Nursing Department, I felt the urge to come out and help in any way I could.

A state of emergency was declared on Oct. 10, 2016 after the category 3 hurricane with wind speeds reaching 91 mph devastated parts of the state. I responded to a national American Red Cross request for help, and thanks to the mostly online hybrid format of the

post-licensure BSN Program at Sonoma State, I was able to check and complete schoolwork online while I was in North Carolina. This allowed me to continue my education and keep on track to graduate this past May.

One day after arriving at the Raleigh airport, I drove 100 miles to the Red Cross relief headquarters and was assigned to a group with three other nurse volunteers. We entered a church auditorium that had rows of cots and

was opportunity every day to use the public health education I was learning at Sonoma State. It felt good to be able to help people locate resources, coach patients on the importance of maintaining a personal health record and empower them to fulfill their needs.

What we encountered over and over was people's need to tell their stories. It was clear that so many needed to say what happened to them, the losses they had suffered and their feelings

**Neighborhood after neighborhood and town after town, I saw a similar scene of two rows of belongings piled high on both sides of the street as far down as I could see, all ruined by water.**



Left to right, Ann Gang, Sally Bowers, a local police officer and SSU alumna Kathy De Bel help residents recover from Hurricane Matthew in North Carolina. De Bel volunteered after Hurricane Matthew in fall 2016, while finishing her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Sonoma State.

personal belongings. There were over 100 cots set up and I was instructed to grab a towel, a set of sheets and a blanket.

After unloading and setting up my sleep area, we drove back to headquarters for our assignment — to go door-to-door and inform residents about the Emergency Response Vehicle, which served 150-300 meals a day, and about shelters and other available resources. Neighborhood after neighborhood and town after town, I saw a similar scene of two rows of belongings piled high on both sides of the street as far down as I could see, all ruined by water. We stopped and handed out snacks, water, gloves and masks, and made sure people had their essential needs met. Some people had lost eyeglasses, walkers and even a set of dentures in the floods from the hurricane. If it was a disaster-related loss, the Red Cross could help to replace items, and if not a direct loss due to flooding, we would coach the resident on how to locate and utilize resources in their area. There

surrounding their loss. A majority of what I did while deployed was to offer psychological first aid by just listening.

One day we visited a shelter to deliver some supplies and the biggest difference I made there was giving a group of seven children a few minutes of my time. Playing and dancing with those children for that 10 minutes lifted their tiny spirits and they were joyful. I will never forget their faces lighting up, the next one more excited than the last, holding his hand up to get his turn to be spun around while we were all dancing.

Volunteering and helping others is an important aspect of being human. I am grateful that I was able to go and make a difference. As a nurse, the desire to help others is a driving force in my chosen profession; as a human, the desire to help others is ever present in my life, and this was soul food for me. I hope this trip was the first of many to come. **S**

## Varsity S Spotlight: Scott Pierce



Steve Pierce with his family, from left, youngest daughter Claire, Colette, Pierce, wife Allison and son Colton

### **What is your favorite memory as a student-athlete?**

Our cross country team winning the Stanford Cross Country Invite in 1990. I had a breakthrough race the week before at Davis, where I was the second college guy behind Mike Stone, but when we won Stanford, that was a huge breakthrough for us as a team.

In track, my favorite memory was standing at the starting line for my final race, the 5000 meters at the NCAA meet in San Angelo, Texas. I remember just taking a few seconds to soak it all in. Here I was, a tall, skinny kid from the Central San Joaquin Valley, who never made it past his league meet in high school, but once. Who never ran in a state championship. A junior college transfer that received zero athletic scholarship offers, standing on the start line of his third and final NCAA Championship race. It was that moment when you realize all the miles, sacrifice and dedication really can and does pay off.

### **How do you think you changed as a person, from freshman to senior year?**

From the time I stepped on campus until that final race in San Angelo, I learned that as long as you are patient, willing to put in the hard work, make no excuses for your failures and stumbles,

make the right sacrifices and keep moving forward, there is very little that can stop you from accomplishing big goals in life.

at USC. Although I am much, much, slower, I still get out and run several days per week and spin yarns about my glory days at SSU.

### **If you could give advice to a freshman student-athlete today, what would it be?**

Always remember that the reason we do this is because we love the sport we play or participate in. When you become too focused on winning, meeting goals — not that those things are not important, because they are for an athlete — but at the end of the day, win or lose, we do it because we love our sport.

### **How did Sonoma State University help prepare you for your career?**

I was fortunate to attend SSU when our English Department was filled with some incredible professors, who not only knew literature, but were this awesome group of characters that made each and every day an adventure. SSU prepared me to be a critical thinker, to be compassionate and above all else, always take into consideration the social justice issues that will arise and occur in education. **S**

**From the time I stepped on campus until that final race in San Angelo, I learned that as long as you are patient, willing to put in the hard work, make no excuses for your failures and stumbles, make the right sacrifices and keep moving forward, there is very little that can stop you from accomplishing big goals in life.**

### **What are you up to these days?**

My wife, fellow SSU alum Allison who is the best thing SSU gave me, and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary in August. We have been blessed with three witty kids, Colette, Colton and Claire, who have kept us on our toes, in a good way and we have two awesome grand-babies. I am currently working as a curriculum specialist for Tulare County Office of Education and working on my doctoral degree in education

### **About the Varsity S Club**

The Varsity S Club is an exclusive group of past and present Sonoma State University student-athletes, coaches, cheerleaders, athletic trainers and administrators formed for the purpose of building enthusiasm for SSU Athletics through philanthropic and social events.



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The atmosphere was electric in the Student Center one afternoon last spring, where attendees squeezed past one another to see ... research. Yes, more than 1,000 showed up to see poster presentations and talk to students about their research on topics like tiger salamander conservation, building and launching a tiny satellite into space, how children interact with robots versus humans and hundreds more. It was just the third annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, but in this short time it has grown to become the largest single academic event hosted by the University.

Reasons for the explosion in interest are numerous, says event coordinator Daniel Smith, but can be largely attributed to a \$1 million donation from the Koret Foundation last year to fund students and faculty to work on undergraduate research projects. Another contributing factor is that more faculty are working symposium presentations into their class requirements.

"It's a sign that the campus community is really engaged in academics at Sonoma State," says Smith.

**By the Numbers**

- 3** years symposium has been held
- 231** presentations by undergraduate students
- 249** total presentations
- 521** student participants
- 800** cookies eaten
- \$1,000,000** gift from Koret Foundation to fund undergraduate research

**Year-to-Year Growth**

	2016	2017
Total presentations	<b>180</b>	<b>277</b>
Poster presentations	<b>165</b>	<b>249</b>
Student participation	<b>341</b>	<b>521</b>

