

ARF NOTES

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ARF President's Message, By Steve Stepanak

Happy Summer, ARFers:

It's the end of another academic year, which means summer has arrived! For many of us, even though we have retired we still think in terms of academic year cycles. With the arrival of July, it also signals the start of a new group of **ARF** volunteers assuming their responsibilities as officers, including myself as **ARF** President.

Before talking about our activities for 2026-2027, I wish to thank the efforts of the 2025-2026 **ARF** Board members, and in particular Cynthia Rawitch who just completed her second term as President, for the **ARF** activities and actions achieved during 2025-2026! A special call out goes to Barbara Gross who doggedly pursued and persuaded the CSUN Office of the President that retired faculty are still faculty of the campus and deserve being included in the notification of major campus announcements and being invited to participate in campus events. The Faculty Club Task Force, consisting of Bob Gohstand, Parti-

cia Miller and Dan Blake, were also hard at work persuading campus administrators that some type of facility for faculty and others to meet on campus for lunch is desirable. I am pleased to announce that starting in the fall we will have a campus location where, during select weekdays, sit down food services will be available; details will be announced towards the end of summer.

We are in the process of finalizing our 2026-2027 monthly activities. There will be speakers during our September, October, November and March campus meetings. In January we are looking forward to the "Glad the Holidays are Over Banquet," the likely attendance of a Soraya event in February, a field trip in April, our **ARF** Memorial graduate Awards Brunch in May, and the Annual Picnic, Meeting & Election event in June.

I am pleased to say that **ARF** is financially sound but, like many other organizations, our membership count is declining. If you have ideas on how we can recruit new members, please let me know. Towards the end of July, Cynthia Rawitch and I will be co-chairing a summer committee to review **ARF**'s bylaws and constitution, plus to consider the issue of membership recruitment.

Until next time, have a great summer!

Steven S



NEWS FROM CSUN

THE REVIVAL OF A FACULTY AND STAFF CLUB ON CAMPUS

The Retired Faculty Association's Task Force for the restoration of a faculty and staff club on campus, represented by Dan Blake and Bob Gohstand (the third member is Pat Miller, who was traveling) made a progress report to the membership at the general meeting on June 6th.

We are happy to report that, in the aftermath of the motion passed unanimously last year, we have reached an understanding with the administration to launch a pilot program to provide a lunch for faculty and staff at the Orchard Conference Center on Wednesdays and Thursdays beginning in the fall. The attractive space used will look out on the Orange Grove and the small patio attached to the Orchard. The setting will provide a renewed opportunity for patrons to meet, converse, exchange ideas, and entertain guests.

The launch of the program will take place on Wednesday, October 7th, and will continue through October and November. Advance reservations will be required.

Please mark your calendars, watch for further news, and patronize the club with your friends.

More information will follow in various media. *Bob Gohstand*

End of Year ARF Reports

The annual May Brunch honoring our deceased members, the winners of the Hansen/ARF scholarships (administered jointly by **ARF** and the school of education), and the four winners of the **ARF** graduate student scholarship awards, was held on May 2nd at the Orchard Conference Center (OCC). The four graduate students gave brief presentations on their work, and a summary of their research also appears on pages four and five of this Newsletter issue. We would like to thank the **ARF** members who served on the scholarship committee, and had the difficult task of selecting among many fine applications: Beth Lasky (Special Ed.), Carrie Saetermoe (Psychology), Martin Saiz (Political Science), and Tim Fox (Mechanical Engineering), Chair. On page 6 of the newsletter are pictures of the ARF/Hansen scholarship winners with their fields of study.

Another annual event is the Picnic and Membership meeting, held this year on June 6th at the Arbor Grill. A feature of this meeting is the presentation and approval of the slate of **ARF** officers for the coming year. The officers for 2026/27 are listed on page 8 of the newsletter.

Reported by Ann Perkins

President's Message

In celebration of the new academic year, CSUN President Erika Beck will give a Welcome Address on Friday, August 21, 2026 at 9 am, in the Great Hall of the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the performing arts.

A reception with light refreshments will follow at 10:00 in the Soraya Courtyard. Please RSVP by Thursday, August 13.

ARF Program Schedule

The September issue of the Newsletter will include a complete schedule, with dates and details, of our meetings and programs for the 2026/27 year.

2026 ARF Memorial Graduate Awards

ARF's Memorial Awards recognize excellent scholarship and provide financial support for graduate student creative activities that are required as part of a master's degree program. This year, applications were received from 9 departments across campus, and Four awards of \$2500 each were awarded. Awardees presented their work at the ARF Memorial Brunch in May. Here are brief biographical sketches for each student, and their project abstracts.

Tanya Pelayo (Biology). Advisors, Eduardo Amorim and Casey terHorst.

Tanya was born and raised in Pacoima, California, and is a master's student in the Department of Biology at CSUN, working on her M.S. thesis, "Genetic architecture and adaptive evolution in traits facilitating invasive success in *Medicago polymorpha*." She has presented her research at international conferences, including the Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution meeting in Beijing, and was recently admitted to the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology PhD program at UC Irvine, where she plans to continue her training in population and conservation genomics. Her long-term goal is to run her own research lab, with a particular focus on making scientific careers more accessible to students from backgrounds underrepresented in the sciences. She already puts this into practice by volunteering with K–12 STEM outreach events at CSUN, including Pi Day and Tomorrow's Scientists STEM Day. Outside the lab, Tanya is drawn to anything creative. She drums in three 1960s-inspired bands spanning garage punk and R&B, runs an online vinyl record store and label, and collects vintage novelty toys.

Abstract: "*Genetic architecture and adaptive evolution in traits facilitating invasive success in *Medicago polymorpha*.*" Invasive species are among the leading drivers of biodiversity loss worldwide, threatening native ecosystems and the communities that depend on them, yet the genetic traits that enable successful invasion remain poorly understood. My thesis investigates the genetic basis of invasion success in *Medicago polymorpha* (burr clover), an annual legume native to the Mediterranean that has established itself on six continents. Using 237 globally distributed accessions representing native and introduced populations, I established a greenhouse experiment and phenotyped over 1,300 individuals for traits related to growth, reproduction, and ecological function. I conducted whole-genome sequencing across all accessions and am using genome-wide association mapping to identify genomic regions associated with trait differences between groups. This work assumes that repeated introductions have exposed standing genetic variation to novel selective pressures detectable through joint phenotypic and genomic analysis. Preliminary results reveal significant differences in pod morphology and nodule formation between native and introduced populations, and native accessions show a latitudinal pattern in flowering time that introduced populations have not re-established, suggesting invasion disrupts locally adapted variation. Admixture and phylogenetic analyses further indicate that invasive populations carry signatures of bottleneck driven by selfing and multiple independent introduction events. I expect association mapping to identify the loci underlying these shifts, informing conservation strategies that connect evolutionary genetics to the management of invasive plants.

Christina Hornbaker (Anthropology): Advisor – Kaitlin Brown

She was born and raised in Ventura, California, and moved to San Luis Obispo (SLO) in 2018 to complete her BS at Cal Poly - SLO, in Anthropology and Geography. She has always been passionate about the environment and protecting its resources. Before settling on a career in archaeology, she originally pursued a degree in environmental science, later switching her major at the end of her junior year of college. She moved back to Ventura in 2024 after being admitted to the Public Archaeology Master's program at CSUN. Obtaining a master's degree from Northridge will assist her career goal of applying to the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA), an organization that certifies the qualifications of archaeologists in North America. Having an RPA title will help her secure higher positions within the cultural resource management industry. In her off time, she volunteers at elementary schools by reading to children and teaching them about archaeology. She has also presented at local high schools in Ventura, discussing careers in anthropology/archaeology with students nearing graduation. For fun, she enjoys reading non-fiction books, playing pickleball, and traveling. She especially likes attending the seasonal Channel Islands trips with the local Chumash and Nature Conservancy group.

Abstract: "*Testing the Validity of Class H Olivella Shell Beads: Integrating New Assemblages to Redefine Mission Period Chronologies.*" This project reevaluates the validity of Class H *Olivella* shell beads as chronological markers in California archaeology. These beads were produced by Native Americans during the Spanish mission and post-mission periods (1769-1900) and are widely used. These early researchers failed to present data sheets or mention the size of their sample, creating an opportunity for data transparency in future research. This study compiles and analyzes a dataset of approximately 1000 beads from mission sites exclusively, using previously published reports and archival resources. Key attributes, including bead diameter, perforation hole size,

and degree of edge-finishing, will be compared with associated temporal contexts. Metric variables will be statistically analyzed against time with chi-squared testing and correlation analysis. The results will determine whether H-bead subtypes accurately reflect their presumed chronological ranges or constitute different phases of the bead manufacturing process. Conclusions will recommend either refining current typologies or reinterpreting Class H beads within broader cultural frameworks.

Yash Pansheriya (Computer Science): Advisor - Marjan Asadinia

I was born and raised in Surat, India, and as a first-generation graduate student I am currently finishing my M.S. in Computer Science here at CSUN, graduating in May 2026 as the Outstanding Graduating Student from the M.S. Computer Science department. I came to the United States in Fall 2024 with two suitcases and a lot of courage and curiosity to continue my journey in Computer Science. Over the last two years at CSUN, I have been lucky to work on interdisciplinary projects in AI and data science that solve real-world problems and create meaningful impact. After graduation I hope to spend some time in industry working on applied AI and machine learning and then continue toward a Ph.D. in Computer Science with a focus on trustworthy AI for healthcare and clinical decision-support systems. Outside academics, I enjoy hiking, cooking, and exploring different cuisines.

Abstract: *“AEGIS: An AI-Driven Framework for Personalized Insulin Dosing and Safer Diabetes Management”* “People living with Type 1 Diabetes make insulin dosing decisions many times each day, where even small mistakes can lead to serious health risks. Existing diabetes management tools are often reactive, responding only after glucose levels have changed, and rarely provide personalized explanations for why a recommendation is made. To address this challenge, this project presents AEGIS (AI-Driven Glucose Prediction and Personalized Insulin Dosing), an explainable and safety-aware AI framework for personalized diabetes management. AEGIS combines short-term glucose forecasting, individualized insulin dose recommendation, meal logging, and recurring risk monitoring within a single decision-support system. Unlike many existing approaches, the framework incorporates patient-specific physiological factors such as active insulin, meal history, physical activity, and clinically grounded safety thresholds to provide safer and more personalized recommendations. In addition, the system includes an explanation layer designed to improve transparency and patient confidence in daily insulin dosing decisions. Evaluation using real patient datasets and standardized simulation scenarios demonstrates that AEGIS can provide accurate, consistent, and explainable support for glucose management. Overall, this work shows how AI in healthcare can move beyond prediction alone to create more transparent, trustworthy, and patient-centered support systems between clinical visits.

Max Aurelius Sprute (Biology) Advisor – Jeanne Robertson.

I was born at UCLA and grew up just down the road in Van Nuys. I attended Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks, with concurrent enrollment at Moorpark College. Subsequently attending Pepperdine for my undergraduate degree, where I dual-degreed in Biology (BS) and History (BA) while playing division 1 water polo. I was then fortunate enough to join the CSUN community with my amazing advisor, Jeanne Robertson. Jeanne and the CSUN community have been instrumental in helping me prepare to achieve my eventual goal of becoming a professor, where I will split my time between research and teaching future generations. I have spent a lot of time working on the captive breeding of endangered butterflies while mentoring community college students at Moorpark Community College. This has resulted in one of them loving biology so much that they have transferred here to CSUN, where they are currently pursuing undergraduate research, and are enjoying the CSUN experience with our outstanding biology department. I cannot wait to continue along my path to becoming a professor, and I owe much of it to Jeanne and CSUN’s support.

Abstract: *“Genomic Evidence for Local Adaptation Across a Climate Gradient in the California Endemic Island Fence Lizard (Sceloporus becki).”* My project investigates whether genetic variation is associated with environmental variation and whether these patterns reflect local adaptation in the island fence lizard (*Sceloporus becki*). This species is restricted to California’s Northern Channel Islands, which have a natural climatic gradient. To test for adaptive variation, I integrated environmental data, phenotypic traits, and whole-genome sequence associations and phenotype–environment analyses. Preliminary results reveal that ~4% of genomic variation is significantly associated with environmental variables after accounting for population differences, with signals distributed across the genome, consistent with polygenic whole-genome sequencing from five populations across three islands. Temperature loggers quantify local thermal environments, while morphological traits, including body size and scale count, capture phenotypic variation. Finally, with whole-genome data (~1 million SNPs), we performed genotype–environment/phenotype adaptation. These findings suggest that populations of *S. becki* are responding to local climatic conditions and demonstrate the power of integrative genomic approaches in non-model systems. whole-genome sequencing from five populations across three islands. Temperature loggers quantify local thermal environments, while morphological traits, including body size and scale count, capture phenotypic variation. Finally, with whole-genome data (~1 million SNPs), we performed genotype–environment/phenotype associations and phenotype–environment analyses. Preliminary results reveal that ~4% of genomic variation is significantly associated with environmental variables after accounting for population differences, with signals distributed across the genome, consistent with polygenic adaptation. These findings suggest that populations of *S. becki* are responding to local climatic conditions and demonstrate the power of integrative genomic approaches in non-model systems.

PHIL and SHIRLEY HANSEN 2025-2026 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES

The Phil and Shirley Hansen Scholarships are awarded to selected undergraduate and graduate students in a degree or credential program in the CSUN Michael D. Eisner College of Education. Their purpose is to recognize excellent scholarship and superior achievement, and to provide financial support for students' academic activities. Funding for these scholarships was gifted to CSUN through a bequest to the Association of Retired Faculty by Phil Hansen, a twenty-two-year member of CSUN's Department of Special Education, and his wife, Shirley, an educational psychologist. A committee of retired faculty chaired by Beverly Cabello evaluates applications. This year 14 awards of \$3,000 each were given to the students below:



Anaya Andrea:

Mental Health

M.S. School Counseling



Kaitlyn Bigman:

Pupil Personal Services

M.S. School Psychology



Fiona Bracho - Perez:

Educational Psychology and Counseling

M.S. School Psychology



Leslie Cervantez :

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

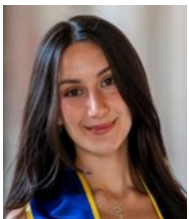
Ed.D. Educational Leadership



Finn Cordova:

Deaf Studies

B.A. Deaf Studies



Alique Kalachian:

Educational Psychology and Counseling

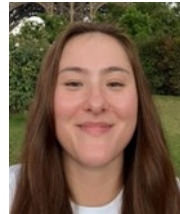
M.S. Marriage and Family Therapy



Kari McCoy:

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Ed.D. Educational Leadership



Jazmine McDonald:

Educational Psychology and Counseling

M.S. Marriage and Family Therapy



Karley Perez:

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

M.A. Higher Education Leadership



Valdrex Philippe:

Educational Psychology and Counseling

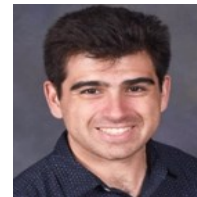
M.S. Marriage and Family Therapy



Zulema Reyes:

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

M.A. Higher Education Leadership



William Romo:

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Ed.D. Educational Leadership



Ryan Shen:

Deaf Studies

B.A. Deaf Studies



Jeslyn Torres:

Educational Psychology and Counseling

M.S., College Counseling



BOOK GROUPS

ARF has two book groups—in fact they are the longest running and most active of all of our interest groups. We encourage you to try out and hopefully join one of these groups. Since COVID the meetings have been conducted on ZOOM, which in spite of some drawbacks does allow members who live far from CSUN to join in the lively discussions, not only of the books but of the ideas they generate.

The following reports illustrate a sample of what we have been reading.

May selection from the ARF Science Reading Group. *Firestorm: The Great Los Angeles Fires and America's New Age of Disaster, 2026*, by Jacob Soboroff. This is an on-the-ground, first person account by an LA native and MS NOW senior political reporter. The book dramatically details the Palisades and the Eaton wildfires of January 2025 which burned over 40,000 acres Los Angeles and destroyed an estimated 16,000 structures and claimed 31 lives. Soboroff's weeklong coverage is personal. The week-long fires burned his childhood home in the Palisades along with 16,000 neighborhood structures. He watched as his childhood home, schools, shopping centers, memorable restaurants, hang-out spots, and the homes of his boyhood friends were reduced to ashes. In many instances he describes calling friends and family to report that their homes were scorched to the ground or miraculously left standing. The book is thus emotional, deeply personal, and exceptionally well-crafted. It describes the immense scope of the fires, providing details of getting into the burn areas along with the army of nearly 6,000 firefighters and their 550 engines, 48 bulldozers, and other large vehicles and gear. Resources from the vast metropolitan area, Canada, and Mexico were dispatched.

Through interviews with meteorologists, firefighters, and government he details how cascading climate failures, downed power lines, and week old New Year's fireworks created the uncontrollable storm. He also reports on the high-level misinformation from figures like Donald Trump and Elon Musk poured rhetorical fuel onto a literal crisis. Ultimately, *Firestorm* serves as an essential, predictive warning for cities worldwide in an era of global warming and political polarization.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 15 at 1:30pm. Our chosen book is: *X Marks the Spot: The Story of Archeology in Eight Extraordinary Discoveries* by Michael Scott, 2023, 320 pages, Hodder & Stoughton publishers.

Wednesday Book Group

In July 2025 the **Wednesday Book Group** discussed *March* by Geraldine Brooks. This is the story of Mr. March, the largely absent father of the family in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, a popular novel in the 1870s. Brooks' novel, based partly on Louisa's real-life father, Bronson Alcott, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2006.

The first part of the book takes place in the early 1840s in Virginia, where the young single Mr. March was a peddler trying to make money for his family back in Connecticut. At one plantation he was welcomed by its owner, who delighted in their literary conversations. March's secret teaching of a slave child to read results in a violent disagreement. Twenty years later, March will find himself on that same plantation in the midst of the Civil War.

After his years as a peddler, March returned to New England, married an independent, strong gilled woman, had a family of four girls, and settled in Concord, Massachusetts. This was the thinkers. They didn't follow the religious belief popular at that time that people were basically sinful, which damned most of them to Hell.

In contrast, the Marchs believed that human nature was basically good. They were outspoken supporters of abolition and even provided their home as a stop on the secretive Underground Railroad.

In 1861, in a burst of enthusiasm March declared he would join the young men going off to fight for the Union. Because he was older, he served as a chaplain. His brand of religion led to numerous clashes between him and the soldiers. In contrast to March's sanitized portrayals of the situation in letters to his wife, the Civil War does not play out smoothly. We were unsympathetic to March's disregard for the effects of his positions.

The book has well developed characters and a complex story that draws the reader in. It puts us in a position to consider the moral and political positions of the era we agree with and how they might present more complications in the messy world of conflict. We all enjoyed the book.

Jim Allen and Joel Zeitlin

A Land Remembered

The **Wednesday Book Group's** next reading was *A Land Remembered* by Patrick Smith. This 1984 novel follows three generations of a family in Florida in the years from just before the Civil War to the late 1960s. Although Tobias MacIvey was a failed farmer in Georgia, he and his wife Emma moved into Florida with only a pair of oxen, a cow, and a wagon. Hoping to avoid the possible war between the South and the North, he headed into the undeveloped scrub country in the state's northeast, recently mostly cleared of Seminole Indians.

The story tells in detail how they survived, living off the land, raising one son, Zechariah, and dealing with drought, fires, and occasional terrible storms flooding the land. Over the next decades they moved occasionally southward in the state's interior, making a more permanent home along the Kissimmee River. Although Tobias experimented with oranges, he and his family decided to stick with raising beef cattle. If the MacIveys and their hired hands could elude cattle rustlers, they could drive the herds to sell in Punta Rassa, on the Gulf coast near present-day Fort Myers. Zech mar-

the Kissimmee River. Although Tobias experimented with oranges, he and his family decided to stick with raising beef cattle. If the MacIveys and their hired hands could elude cattle rustlers, they could drive the herds to sell in Punta Rassa, on the Gulf coast near present-day Fort Myers. Zech married and had a son, Solomon, and the family carried on. They accumulated money and almost unthinkingly bought land, which eventually became valuable. The coming of the railroad and then the development of West Palm Beach and Miami led to wealth.

The above outline cannot fully convey the book's rich personalities, connections with Indians, and huge uncertainties, despite hard work and spartan living. It's an engrossing, wild tale, somewhat analogous to early white settlement of the West; but a few of us thought it fit unimaginatively into heroic notions of pioneers and Indians. And the book nicely fills in what had been for many of us a historical blank regarding the early white settlement of Florida's interior. *Jim Allen and Joel Zeitlin*



SCCARF Report

On June 23, 15 SCCARF'ers enjoyed a pleasant evening at Gus's BBQ in Porter Ranch. Gus's offers a laid-back menu centered around classic barbecue flavors and comforting Southern staples. Hearty options include tender brisket, pulled pork, and ribs, alongside warm, buttery sides such as cast-iron cornbread and sweet potato fries. The atmosphere encouraged unwinding and conversation. With one new guest, she opened conversation with a personal introduction and so we went around the table. Turned out that everyone learned a bit more about each other. *Hosted by Phyllis Russell & Tim Fox*

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