Northridge to Launch Central American Studies Degree

First in Nation, Bachelor of Arts Degree Program is Slated for Fall 2007

Cal State Northridge in fall 2007 will launch the nation’s first bachelor of arts degree program in Central American studies.

The California State University Chancellor’s Office in late February gave CSUN the go-ahead to cement the program’s curriculum and begin admitting students who want to major in Central American studies, as part of a five-year pilot effort. At the end of five years, university officials expect the major to become permanent, pending a full review.

“I think Cal State Northridge is absolutely the appropriate place to have the first Central American studies major in the country,” said Elizabeth Say, dean of the College of Humanities, where the program is housed. “We believe this is a great example of our responsiveness to the interests and concerns of the community.”

More than one million Central Americans live in California, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, out of more than 3 million residing in the United States.

Central American Studies interim program coordinator Douglas Carranza said the program will explore a vision of Central America as a transnational region with many ethnic and cultural identities, the majority of which are non-Hispanic.

The major will inaugurate 10 new courses, among them “Contemporary Indigenous People in Central America,” “Afro-Caribbean Cultures and Identities,” “Survey of Central American Visual, Performance and Installation Arts” and “Environment, Development and Social Exclusion in Central America.”

The Central American studies program was created seven years ago as an outgrowth of the university’s Department of Chicana/o Studies. With an enrollment of about 550 students, it currently offers a minor in Central American studies.

“California State University, Northridge has been at the heart of the institutionalization of the discipline of Central American studies,” said associate professor of Central American studies Beatriz Cortez, the past program coordinator who played a key role in developing the major.

For more information, contact the Central American studies program at (818) 677-2736 or visit its Web site at www.csum.edu/~bc60904/CAS.html.

McCarron Named Interim VP for University Advancement

Nationwide Search Continues for Permanent Vice President of Division

In a March 22 communication to the campus community, President Jolene Koester announced that Tom McCarron, executive director and president of The University Corporation and the North Campus-University Park Development Corporation, has been appointed interim vice president for university advancement.

The president said the appointment was made now due to time limitations spelled out in the rules governing the appointment of retired annuitants to campus positions. Due to those rules, former University Advancement Vice President Judy C. Knudson can no longer continue in that role.

Knudson had formally retired in spring 2006, but had provided leadership to the division while a search for a permanent replacement was conducted.

President Koester expressed the need to have in place a senior officer who can provide administrative and executive oversight for the division. In naming McCarron, the president expressed confidence that an experienced, able executive will be leading the unit.

“As a member of the president’s cabinet since 1999,” she said, “Mr. McCarron has the knowledge and expertise to ensure that University Advancement continues operating at its current level of excellence during this time of transition.”

McCarron’s appointment is anticipated to last from six to nine months, President Koester said, pending the appointment of a permanent vice president for university advancement. During the interim assignment, McCarron will retain his positions with The University Corporation and the North Campus-University Park Development Corporation, delegating many of his day-to-day responsibilities to his staff.

Rick Evans, associate executive director of The University Corporation, has been designated administrator-in-charge of both organizations during this time.

President Koester said with the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007, Knudson will be able to return to serve the university as a consultant as needed.

“Identifying a suitable candidate for the permanent vice president for university advancement position has proved to be very challenging,” said the president, “so I am grateful for everyone’s patience and understanding during this time.”

A Northridge accounting graduate, McCarron received his MBA from Pepperdine University.
R. eal estate investor and philanthropist Robert Barbera has established a $150,000 endowed chair at Cal State Northridge to foster in students an appreciation of their liberties and responsibilities as Americans—with a special focus on the value of public debate.

The Robert Barbera Endowment in Forensics will support the university’s annual Collegiate Forensics Invitational Tournament as well as other debate programs in CSUN’s Department of Communication Studies. The endowment is in addition to the $7,500 gift Barbera gave the department earlier this year to underwrite the costs of the first Robert Barbera Intramural Debate Tournament in spring 2007.

“Mr. Barbera’s gift is designed to encourage young people to become more engaged on issues of civic and national importance and to create an opportunity and a platform for such engagement,” said Peter Nwosu, chair of the Communication Studies Department. “His gift will make such a difference in the lives of our students, and potentially society as a whole.”

Collegiate forensics, the study of public discussion and debate, is one of the university’s most rigorous academic extracurricular activities. Forensics students spend hundreds of hours preparing and competing against students from universities across the country and around the world.

At the CSUN invitational, students from all across the country compete in such areas as debate, parliametary debate, extemporaneous speaking, impromptu and after-dinner speaking, dramatic interpretation, prose, and persuasive and informative speaking.

“Today, people don’t so much talk to each other as they do shout and yell at each other,” said Barbera. “What CSUN does with its forensics program is remind people how to talk and listen to one another. It’s such a valuable tool to have, whether you’re engaged in world affairs or in simple person-to-person relationships.”

First Construction Management Grad Sets Bar High

W illiam Vrbanic is Making His Mark with One of Nation’s Leading Builders

W illiam Vrbanic III, the first graduate of Cal State Northridge’s Construction Management Technology (CMT) program, has set the bar high for future grads. The ink is not yet dry on his new diploma, but Vrbanic already is working as project engineer for one of the nation’s leading builders, Turner Construction Company.

Vrbanic, 25, praised the hands-on approach of the program, designed to bridge the art of engineering and the practice of construction and to meet an acute need for construction managers in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

“The beautiful part about CSUN was that it stressed to all of us the importance of an internship,” said Vrbanic about the program, now in its third year. “Everything that was taught in a book was then experienced hands-on. CSUN definitely gets you more involved in the construction field.”

His involvement began with a personal invitation from Turner Senior Vice President for Southern California Rory DeJohn to join the Los Angeles branch of the company for a summer internship.

Vrbanic was recommended by S.T. Mau, then dean of Northridge’s College of Engineering and Computer Science, after a CMT board meeting.

DeJohn called Vrbanic the following morning to offer him an internship. The student accepted and was on his way.

“Will is a great young man,” said DeJohn. “If there were ten more guys like him we’d most likely hire them all. In fact, I’ll probably be working for him someday.”

Final Whitsett Foundation Gift Caps Years of Support

Foundation is Praised for Role in Shaping Course of Northridge’s History Department

S ince 1986, the philanthropic Whitsett Foundation has generously supported a unique program that focuses on the rich history of the state of California—from its people to its politics, through lectures, special programs and research by students and faculty.

“Today, we have one of the most active programs in California,” said Thomas Maddux, History Department chair. “We owe a lot of that to the Whitsett Foundation.”

After more than 50 years of contributing to Cal State Northridge and non-profit organizations in Southern California, the Whitsett Foundation’s trustees have decided to cease the organization’s operations and have made a final gift of $180,000 to the university.

“The foundation has played a significant role in shaping the course of the History Department, and the college as a whole, over the last 20 years,” said Stella Theodoulou, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. “We’ve viewed it as a partnership in which the Whitsett Foundation’s ongoing support has helped ensure the college is what it hopes to be in its vision—relevant.”

The Whitsett program at CSUN began with an initial gift of $500,000 to establish the W.P. Whitsett Endowment, intended to honor the memory of Van Nuy’s founder W. P. Whitsett and his pioneering role in San Fernando Valley history. Since then, the endowment has grown to more than $1 million.

Among the first projects supported by the foundation—which was led by Whitsett’s three granddaughters Myrtle Harris, Eleonore Robinson and Sarah Ann Siegel, and family friends Mary Jane Petit and Sara Bauer—was the publishing of an essay by late history professor John Baur on W.P. Whitsett. In his essay, Baur noted that Whitsett, a mining, irrigation and real estate entrepreneur, found land in the San Fernando Valley “among the richest and best in California.”

In 1994, the endowment established the first endowed chair at Northridge and one of the first in the California State University system. The first Whitsett Chair in California History was Gloria Ricci Lohrop, who at CSUN taught California history, promoted California studies and published in the field. Lohrop retired in 2002. Historian Josh Sides was named the Whitsett Professor in 2005.

The endowment in 1987 supported the launch of CSUN’s W.P. Whitsett California Lecture Series on topics related to the history, development and future prospects of California. Endowment support in 1991 helped the History Department begin the Valley Pioneer Lecture Series, on topics of current interest to the community, and last year it established the Whitsett Graduate Seminar in California History.
For Your Information publishes announcements of events, public meetings, notices, classes and deadlines. Submission deadline is noon on Monday, one week before the next issue. The deadline for the April 16 issue is Monday, April 9. We strive to include all events and deadlines, but some events may be excluded due to space constraints. Deadline for letters to the editor is noon on Monday, one week before the next issue. Submit future items by e-mailing them to pubinfo@csun.edu, sending them to mail drop 8242 or faxing them to (818) 677-4909. E-mail is the preferred method of submission.

Graduating Seniors Award
Applications for the 2007 Outstanding Graduating Seniors Award are due Thu., March 29. Four students will receive awards of $1,000 each for academic excellence, community and campus service and exceptional achievements or overcoming personal challenges. Winners will be saluted at the May 29 Honors Convocation. Obtain applications in the Vice President for Student Affairs’ office, University Hall 310, or at www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/graduates/fmi-x2391.

Drug-Free Campus Brochure
The updated Drug-Free Campus and Workplace Policy Brochure is available at http://www-adms.csun.edu/bfrforms/bfrforms.html. It contains information about work-related problems and health risks associated with alcohol and other drug abuse problems, and campus and community resources for faculty, staff and students. fmi-x8566.

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Public Safety Makes Its Move
The Public Safety Department on April 2 will begin its planned move from Zelzah Avenue to its new facility on the corner of Prairie Street and Darby Avenue. Police administration—including the office of Chief Anne Glavin and police communications—will move the first week of April, followed by service-providing units such as parking, transportation and LiveScan fingerprinting from April 5–9. Move-in completion for all units is expected by April 27.

A police substation in parking lot G7, on Zelzah between Superior and Halsted Streets, will be operational by mid-April. Serving as a base for the university’s community policing program and the policing partnership with Northridge Academy High School, it will have “office hours” for the convenience of housing community residents and the north campus area. However, officers most often will be out on patrol.

Other than limited administrative and “office and service unit interruptions during the actual move, there will be no break in police and public safety services during the three-week move period.

During and after the move, Public Safety’s phone numbers will remain the same: X2111 for 24-hour university police dispatch, and X2266 for general inquiries.

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*Women in Music* at Oviatt

In celebration of Women’s History Month, the Oviatt Library’s exhibition on “Women in Music” is on view through June 1 in the library’s main lobby.

Curated by music student Serena Vaquilar, the exhibit highlights the compositions and individual experiences of women performers, conductors and composers.

“I hope to showcase the women behind the music and demonstrate the cooperation between composition, conductor and performer,” said Vaquilar, who is assisting in the preservation of collections in the library’s Special Collections and Archives.

The exhibit reveals the artists’ reflections on their music, along with photographs, manuscripts, album covers, music scores, correspondence and reviews, all culled from the Oviatt’s Special Collections and Archives, including collections such as the Alfred Shlomoff Music Scores, the Los Angeles Women’s Symphony, the Library of the International Institute for the Study of Women in Music, and the Cohen Collection on Women Composers.

Working with head archivist Robert Marshall and music librarian Lindsay Hansen, Vaquilar has assembled materials on violinists Hilary Hahn and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, conductor Marin Alsop, Los Angeles Philharmonic assistant conductor Joanna Carneiro, percussionist Evelyn Glennie and cellist Eleonore Schoenfeld.

For more information about the exhibit, call (818) 677-2295.

**First 'Fit Fest' is Planned**

Fest, Cal State Northridge’s first annual health and wellness celebration for students, faculty and staff, is set for 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 11, at the University Student Union. Targeting the entire university population, the event will be free and interactive.

The goal of Fit Fest is to promote different avenues for fitness and wellness, so students, faculty and staff know what health and fitness sources are on and off campus. Chris McClain, a Fit Fest coordinator, “Being fit doesn’t necessarily mean you have to lift weights. I hope those who are participants realize there are a multitude of opportunities for fitness via rock climbing or swimming.”

A swim party at the Fitness Center pool, rock climbing, a high-ropes challenge course, games, music, off-campus exhibits and product sampling are planned for the event.

*Hands-on experience is the focal point,* McClain added, noting that though each participant will receive a gift bag with a raffle ticket, raffle tickets also will be handed out for each activity. The more activities, the more raffle tickets participants will receive, he said.

Event sponsors are ASREC Sports, Associated Students and the University Student Union. For more information, call (818) 677-7008.

**Earth Day at CSUN in April**

More than 200 junior high school students and community volunteers are expected at Cal State Northridge on Saturday, April 21, as the university’s Chemistry, Geology, Biology, and Physics Clubs join the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers in hosting their first annual Earth Day event to promote the theme “Recycling—Chemistry Can.”

Scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. the event will convene in front of CSUN’s Oviatt Library.

Event organizer Dorothy Nguyen-Graff, professor of chemistry and biochemistry, is seeking volunteers as well as donations to support transportation, t-shirts, lunch and supplies for the event.

“The attending junior high school students...have a high interest in science and mathematics at this age,” said Nguyen-Graff. However, they are usually neglected in science outreach programs. We want to tap into the students’ enthusiasm and help build on and sustain it through high school.

“Negative student attitudes about science and mathematics in high school and college correlate with the decreasing number of science majors in the universities,” Nguyen-Graff added. “With a positive attitude toward science and mathematics, students will not be afraid of the knowledge and will major in mathematics or one of the sciences.”

Workshops will start at 10:30 a.m., following an opening speaker, and will include disciplines such as chemistry, geology, physics, math, biology and engineering.

Booths will feature hands-on activities in recycling, the environment and other math and science subjects, and tours of the campus and its science facilities will be offered. Activities related to “green” chemistry, global warming, plastics, hybrid cars, and materials chemistry are planned.

For more information, or to make donations or volunteer, call Nguyen-Graff at (818) 677-2473 or e-mail dng@csun.edu.

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**Calendar**

The A.S. Ticket Office in the University Student Union sells tickets to many events on campus, except for some held by outside groups. The Ticket Office is open from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Mon.–Fri. For prices not given, call (818) 677-2488.

**Art and Exhibits**

* For gallery info, call (818) 677-2356.
  - Main gallery hours: Mon. through Sat., 12-4 p.m. and Thursdays noon–8 p.m. Admission is free unless specified. For library exhibits, call (818) 677-2285.

**Women in Music**

* Featuring women composers and performers, showcasing sheet music, biographies and more.
  - In celebration of Women’s History Month.
  - Curated by music graduate student Serena Vaquilar.
  - Exhibit runs through June 1.
  - Oviatt Library, main lobby

**Subvertisements**

* Exhibition explores use of ads and logos through the years.
  - Runs through April 21.
  - Main Art Gallery

**Celebrating Comics**

* Development of comic books from 1930s to 20th Century.
  - Exhibit runs August 2 through Aug. 3.
  - Oviatt Library, Tseng Gallery

**Bianchi Planetarium**

* For ticket info, (818) 677-2488 or visit www.csun.edu/physics/planetarium.
  - Telescope viewing follows second show.

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**In Brief**

*Spring Sky Show* is on view through April 11, at the University Student Union.

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*“Spring Sky Show” and “Water in the Saturn System”*
Fri., April 13, 7:30 p.m.

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