Business Alum Charles Noski to Receive Honorary Degree
Actor Marin, Beverly Hills Mayor Delshad, California Community Foundation’s Hernandez to Speak at CSUN

Retired AT&T Vice Chairman Charles Noski, who earned both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Cal State Northridge, will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters during the university’s College of Business and Economics commencement ceremony for 2007.

Other luminaries participating in May 29-June 1 Northridge commencement festivities include actor/art collector Richard “Cheech” Marin, a CSUN alumnus, Jimmy Delshad, newly elected mayor of Beverly Hills and also an alumnus, and this year’s Honors Convocation speaker, Antonia Hernandez, president and CEO of the California Community Foundation, one of the region’s largest philanthropic organizations.

An estimated 9,825 candidates for degrees—about 7,900 bachelor’s and 1,925 master’s—are eligible to take part in the 2007 ceremonies, starting with the May 29 convocation, to which 1,800 students are invited.

Noski (Business Administration, ’73, Accounting, ’95) serves on the executive committee of the university’s “Imagine the Arts” campaign. He is a member of the California State University, Northridge Foundation board and is a longtime supporter of the institution.

The university’s highest alumni honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award, went to Noski in 2002. In 1973, he joined the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche, where he became a partner in 1985. Later, he became the firm’s national industry director for services to the aerospace and defense industry. In 1990, he joined Hughes Electronics Corporation, where he eventually became the company’s president and chief operating officer.

Noski joined the AT&T Corporation in 1999 as its senior executive vice president and chief financial officer. In early 2002, he was named chairman of the board. He retired from AT&T later that year. In 2006, Noski was inducted as an inaugural member of the Financial Executives International Hall of Fame.

He currently serves on the boards of Microsoft Corporation, Morgan Stanley and Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.

Convocation Accolades in Store for Top Graduates
Wolfson Scholar’s Personal Best is Dizzying Combo of Biological Research and Hammer Throws

Biology major Jessica Beach claims to be a morning person. Up by 6:30 a.m., she is in class from 8 a.m. to noon. But she also is an afternoon person, out on the track field perfecting her hammer and discus throws until 3 p.m.

Evenings, Beach tutors fellow athletes for four hours, heads home to study, then drops into bed, exhausted.

Still, when informed that her high-octane combination of superb academics and athletics had earned her the nod as Cal State Northridge’s 2007 Wolfson Scholar, the modest high achiever with the sterling 4.0 grade point average said she wondered how she had made the grade.

“When they told me I was nominated, I thought ‘wow,’” said Beach, who will accept the honor—the university’s highest for a graduating senior—at the 6 p.m. May 29 Honors Convocation on the Oviatt Library lawn. “I looked up the history of the award, to see who had won in the past. Some of the other students who had won were so amazing, some had overcame language barriers and other difficulties.

I didn’t know how I could compete.” This from a scholar/athlete who, since entering CSUN as a freshman in 2005, has made the Northridge Dean’s List every single semester.

Her record includes Mountain Pacific Sports Federation All-Academic Honors and a shelf full of Big West Conference honors, both All-Academic and athletic.

Wolfson Scholar continued on page 2
Constitution on five Cal State projects will begin within the next two years. All aspects of campus life and scholarship stand to benefit from the projects, listed here in order of construction.

Science 5 Building
Construction starts in June 2007 on a nearly 90,000 square foot, four-story science building featuring “smart” lecture rooms, a genetic counseling unit, state-of-the-art laboratories and numerous other features.

Funded by a 2004 state capital construction measure, the $46 million-plus building will be located south of the Botanic Garden. When finished in spring 2009, it will stand on the current Botanic Garden’s small southern edge, which will be replanted as a California native garden. Aged trees and plants will be removed from the garden—an outdoor laboratory vital to CSUN’s biology program—to permit planting of new specimens more useful to the program.

Several trees and plants in the garden and around the pond area will be relocated to a new rain forest environment near construction adjacent to CSUN’s new fuel cell plant. Using the carbon dioxide generated by the plant, rain forest conditions will be created for student study.

To make room for the new structure, the current pond will be relocated to a lighted, path-accessible space—chosen by a faculty/staff group—at the eastern edge of the historic orange grove, better integrating the grove into campus life. Pond relocation construction work starts this summer, with completion by spring 2008.

G3 Parking Structure
Construction of a 1,500-stall, five-level parking structure on the site of existing surface lot G3 is expected to begin by the end of summer 2007 and conclude by fall 2008, funded through campus parking fees. Associate Vice President for Facilities Development and Operations Colin Donahue said the $30 million structure—off Zelzah Avenue between Pratte and Dearborn Streets, near the planned regional performing arts center—will add a net 1,000 parking spaces for campus use, factoring in the 500 surface spaces lost in the process.

Performing Arts Center
Construction on the center, planned for the northwest corner of Nordhoff Street and Lindley Avenue, is set to begin in fall 2007, with completion expected by winter 2009. Funded through a combination of state bond funds and private fundraising, the project will include a 1,770-seat hall, a 200-seat studio box theater, a 200-seat lecture hall, academic lab spaces for the College of Arts, Media, and Communication, and many other features.

Student Housing
A 400-bed student housing complex, to be built on the southern end of Parking Lot P9 south of Lassen Street between Lindley and Zelzah Avenues, is “ideally suited for the needs of first-year students,” said Timothy Trevan, director of student housing and conference services. CSUN houses up to 1,500 first-year students annually.

“First year students need to be part of a community where they can make friends, meet faculty and get to know their surroundings,” said Trevan about the $51 million project, funded by student housing rents. It is due to break ground in December 2007 and open in spring 2009.

Accordingly, Trevan said a “cluster” concept was developed in which students will share large living room spaces surrounded by double occupancy bedrooms and will enjoy utilizing the G9 parking structure just west of Zelzah, south of Lassen.

Student Recreation Center
A summer 2009 groundbreaking is planned for a 120,000 square foot student recreation center. Scheduled for completion in summer 2011, it will include a rock climbing wall, racquetball courts, gymnasium courts, multipurpose rooms for sport clubs and group fitness, an indoor jogging track, and weight and fitness space, said project supervisor Benjamin Knight.

The center—which costs $70 million cost was authorized by a recent CSUN student referendum. Funded by student fees, the center also is planned, with a 24-hour security desk, a fitness center, a studio, a space for drop-in babysitting services, an outdoor swimming pool complex and an outdoor artificial field complex for intramural sports.

Northridge's Newest Fulbright Fellow to Direct in Sri Lanka
Heinrich Falk Looks Forward to Exchange of Western, Asian Theatrical Cultures

The student who walked into theatre professor Heinrich Falk’s office in the mid-1990s was a lawyer looking for a new life in the theatre. Falk, at that time the director of graduate studies for the Theatre Department, helped Namel Weeramuni enter its master’s degree program. Several years later, degree in hand, Weeramuni went on to realize his dream: to build and run a theatre in his native Sri Lanka.

Now, as Falk prepares to realize a dream of his own, his former student and friend Weeramuni will have a role to play. CSUN’s newest recipient of a Fulbright Scholar grant, Falk soon will be directing a play and conducting a workshop in theatre Weeramuni built.

As a Fulbright Fellow, the professor emeritus will depart in October 2007 for Colombo, in southwest Sri Lanka, to lecture on American drama for the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, contribute to the postgraduate program of its Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, and direct a play for its English literary festival.

His work with Weeramuni’s Punchi Theatre (Little Theatre), a welcome addition to his scholarly activities in Colombo, will represent a kind of homecoming for Falk. In 2004, he directed Colomboan playwright Enrique Buenaventura’s “In the Right Hand of God the Father” as the inaugural production of the newly built theatre. Falk and Weeramuni adapted the work to the Sri Lankan culture, employing a range of actors, from professionals to young people who had never been on a stage.

The return to the flourishing Sri Lankan theatre world will enable Falk to enrich the offerings of CSUN’s Theatre Department, where as an adjunct professor he serves as the international theatre programs coordinator, among other duties.

“Sri Lanka has a theatrical and artistic style that we have not yet been incorporated in any significant way into our theatre program here at CSUN,” he said. “Our department over the years has had a considerable interest in promoting international programs, so I see this as one more activity in a much longer, ongoing process. It will have a beneficial impact on our CSUN students.”

Wolfson Scholar . . .

continued from page 1.

She twice made the CSUN Varsity “N” Honor Roll, twice was named Northridge Female Scholar Student-Athlete of the Year, and earned the 2005–06 Head Outstanding Junior Award for the College of Science and Mathematics.

“Super organization and time management, those are key,” said Beach, also a member of the Western Athletic Conference Women’s Indoor Track and Field Championship Team. During summer 2006, Beach found time to work a laboratory technician who coordinated molecular genetics internship with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, identifying salmon stock and determining their parentage.

“I just fell in love with genetics,” said Beach, who will pursue a master’s degree at CSUN, with an emphasis on biomedical genetics. Other convocation presentations will include The Nathan O. Freedman Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Student for 2007, to Emily Hand, a special education major with an overall 3.92 grade point average; fland-co-authored “Autism A–Z,” winner of the Exceptional Parent Award.

Her thesis project—research on Latina mothers with autistic children—will be used to formulate recommendations for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Fland serves on the transition committee that reports to the governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism.

Outstanding Graduating Senior Awards—funded by Alumni Association and CSUN Foundation donors—will be presented to:

- Cinema and television arts major Venetora Chavira, who coordinated the CSUN AIDS Walk for two years, produced “The Vagina Monologues” as a fundraiser for the Haven Hills domestic violence shelter in the Valley, and received several awards for volunteer service.
- Chemistry major Jennifer Nool, a top student researcher under biologist Steven Oppenheimer and a summer 2006 honors research assistant at Harvard University’s Department of Microbiology.
- Physics and statistics major Nadia Sour, who served on President Jolene Koester’s Enrollment Management Committee and as a supplemental instructor for a CSUN algebra course.
- Music major Jonathan Timpe, founder and president of the CSUN Media Composition Club Timpe has written original music for student films and performance groups such as the CSUN Chamber String Ensemble and the CSUN Wind Symphony.

In other news about honored students, the Association of Retired Faculty this year selected four graduate students who will receive its award. Shawn McClelland in chemistry and biochemistry, Michele Martinez in art, Patrick Ryan in theater and Arlyn Sabado in Family and Consumer Sciences.
The AIDS hospice sits on the outskirts of a Tijuana colonia called La Morita, near a cluster of industrial plants. By the time one reaches it, paved roads have turned to dirt. Beyond Casa Hogar las Memorias (“Home of Memories”), signs of human activity dwindle away to nothing.

In spring 2007, it was—for five life-changing days—the headquarters of nine Cal State Northridge students enrolled in the university’s new interdisciplinary minor in Spanish-language journalism. The students went there on March 31 to research and report on AIDS in the Latino community, and came back with a deep sense of journalistic responsibility and personal growth.


By the time they complete the project, conceived and overseen by Kirkton and Spanish-language media minor program director José Luis Benavides, they will have compiled a multimedia package of radio, print, video, Web and PowerPoint reporting—leaving them at once exhausted and exhilarated.

Kirkton learned about Casa Hogar at a conference organized by Promotoras, a nonprofit network of health advocates. Soon afterward, he and Benavides developed the idea for the media project. The topic of HIV/AIDS in the Latino community, Kirkton said, presented a challenging reporting experience and the chance to provide a service to the community.

The Spanish-language minor was a natural springboard for an original multimedia project, said Benavides. “With traditional media dying and new forms emerging, it was a way to break some rules of what is going on in journalism.” The CSUN students, he said, have created a hybrid news product with information and opinion delivered on a variety of platforms.

Benavides and Kirkton accompanied student journalists Ana Cubíás, Alondra Hernández, Natalie Zelaya, Alonso Yáñez, Adolfo Flores, Esmeralda Orozco, Mosés Reyes, José Luis Méndez and Nancy Molina to Casa Hogar.

Their preparation had included lectures from AIDS experts, assigned readings and required immunizations, but life at Casa Hogar las Memorias was “eye-opening” for most. The hospice’s 29 current patients and seven volunteers taught the CSUN students the meaning of courage, honesty and optimism.

Yáñez, a junior who is radio coordinator on the project, covered a spirited individual who had helped obtain food for the hospice before the man’s own health deteriorated and he became a patient himself. Sensing a “bigger story,” Yáñez and his radio crew went to the patient’s barrio and learned that he had fought hard to bring in basic amenities such as electricity and water.

The day after returning from Tijuana, Yáñez and the other students were greeted with the news that the HIV-infected barrio hero had died.

Cubías, a senior involved with the project’s print portion, acknowledged the “heartbreak” of the assignment. “As a journalist, you had to be understanding but at the same time professional, maintain your composure and be there for the interviewee, drawing the fine line between the subject and yourself as a reporter.”

When Molina and her colleagues returned, they went to work on the extraordinary multimedia effort. The hospice will put to use their video piece, radio station KPFK-FM 90.7 will air the radio portion on May 31, the documentary may find its way to television, the Web piece can be viewed at any time and El Nuevo Sol is in circulation.

The Valley’s economy continues to look bright as it transitions from a bedroom community into an attractive job center, supplying workers for jobs outside the area and drawing businesses and workers to the region.

At the recent Economic Summit in Universal City, sponsored by the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley and Cal State Northridge, the highly anticipated findings of the San Fernando Valley Economic Forecast were presented by economist Daniel Blake, director of CSUN’s San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center. The forecast’s top moderate growth rates for population and employment may provide local planners and policy makers with some breathing room and an opportunity to update the Valley’s infrastructure to deal with the levels of activity we now have,” Blake said.

Among the projections for the Valley economy:

Job growth

The Valley’s economy continues to expand but has switched from the post-2001 recession “recovery mode,” in which the Valley gained more than 25,000 new jobs from 2000-2005, to a period of more “sustainable growth.”

Forecasters predict that the Valley’s private sector will add 10,800 jobs, up 1.5 percent, in 2007. It should add somewhat fewer in 2008, up 1.4 percent with 9,700 jobs.

Average salaries and total earnings

Workers’ fortunes are expected to improve early in the forecast period as average wages and salaries for private sector employees grow at a rate of 6.5 percent in 2007. After accounting for inflation, however, the 6.5 percent increase translates into a 2.9 percent growth in average paycheck purchasing power, which will continue to grow over the period but at a subdued 1.5 percent rate.

“Still, these projected growth rates reflect a respectable accumulation of real paycheck purchasing power during a period of normal and sustained growth,” Blake said.

“The higher wages, combined with expanding employment rolls, will create a rising real income pool for the Valley and an attractive environment in which to develop and expand local businesses.”

Real estate

Median home prices are expected to go flat after years of double-digit appreciation, as home building catches up and population growth slows. Housing prices will remain fairly steady throughout the forecast period.

A housing bubble is not in the picture at the time, but dramatic increases in the Notice of Defaults and Foreclosure rates are sounding some alarm bells,” Blake said. “The sub-prime mortgage market meltdown is still playing out.”

The high price of housing encourages continued residential building at a measured pace. Limited space for development and rising construction costs push the mix of new residential units strongly in favor of condominiums and apartments, though single-family units continue to make a strong showing.

For copies of the forecast, visit www.csun.edu/sfverc or call the San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at (818) 677-7021. •

May 29, 2007 • ROBIN • California State University, Northridge
Honored Faculty’s Close Connections with Students, Seniors Stand Out

Northridge Professors Raise the Bar in the Art of Civil Argumentation, Music as Therapy

I was the campus community’s chance to applaud its faculty for hours of hard work, creativity, volunteered time and daily dedication to a shared goal—the education of Cal State Northridge’s students.

The applause at the 2007 Honored Faculty Reception and General Faculty meeting was loud and long, led by hosts President Jolene Koester and Faculty President Jennifer Matos. At the May 18 campus event, sponsored by the Office of the President and the Northridge Chapter of the California Faculty Association, nine faculty received special tribute from peers and well-wishers. Seven more were awarded emeritus status, and 25 were recognized by their peers for service ranging from 25 to 35 years.

Reception guests also witnessed the installation of two new faculty officers for 2007–08: Edward Alfano (Art), as vice president of the faculty, and Cheryl Spector (English), as secretary of the faculty.

For a listing of faculty service recognitions, see page five.

Outstanding Faculty Awards

Teresa Williams-Leon

Asian American Studies

Williams-Leon believes in the right to air and defend one’s position on an issue. She also believes in a culture of civil argumentation. In her classroom, argument and civility co-exist. Her ability to make it so has brought her the respect of both students and colleagues.

Widely recognized as a pioneer and leading scholar in the field of Asian American Studies, Williams-Leon was the first in her family to attend college. Her personal history, in her view, has created a special connection with the many students whose backgrounds are similar to hers.

The educator has served as the first women’s chair of the Asian American Studies Department, one of only a few in the nation. For her impact on Asian American multiracial identity studies, Williams-Leon received the Prism Award from the Hapa Issues Forum, an Asian-based educational/civil rights organization.

In its list of “35 Notable Accomplishments and Milestones for AAS at UCLA,” UCLA’s Asian-American Studies Research Center described Williams-Leon as one of the most “remarkable individuals in its graduate program has trained.”

Included in the 2006 Who’s Who Among Teachers, the academic’s record of publications is impressive, including her latest—“Bilingualism, Code-Switching and Transnational Identity Formations of Japanese-descent Multiracial Individuals”—on track for publication in 2008.

Ronald Borczon

Music

A man whose passion for music is matched by a passion to help human-kind, Borczon has built a remarkable career in which the two create a powerful bond.

With his new approaches to music therapy treatment for victims of post traumatic stress disorder, Borczon provided interventions after the Columbine and Sandy Hook school shootings, assisted music therapists in New York after 9/11, and worked with caregivers after the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

At CSUN, Borczon in 1996 established the Music Therapy Wellness Clinic, internationally recognized for its innovations in music therapy and serving more than 50 community clients weekly. Graduates of his music therapy program—95 percent of whom are employed within six weeks of graduation—currently score above six percentage points higher than the national average on the National Board Certification Exam for Music Therapists.

Borczon, whose “Music Therapy: A Fieldwork Primer” is a required text at several universities, views his clients as “musical compositions in need of a musical intervention.” Through art, he believes, “people with any disability, illness or disorder can improve on their condition.”

Distinguished Teaching, Counseling or Librarianship Awards

Patricia Juarez-Dappe

History

Juarez-Dappe’s experimental course—“Argentina: Past, Present and Future”—has become a regular course offering at Cal State Northridge, an indication of the professor’s leadership in the education of the university’s undergraduates.

Sensitive to the need for challenge and variety in lectures, the professor effectively incorporates technology in her instructional program, adeptly mixing media such as video clips, music and PowerPoint in her presentations.

Her dynamic teaching style, characterized by a scholarly approach to everyday problem-solving, has earned her excellent student evaluations.

Gary Pratt

Music

“I may be good at what I do,” wrote one of Pratt’s former students, “but professor Gary Pratt is best at what he does.” The student, who works daily with what he called the greatest musicians in the world, added that “without fail, if Gary Pratt’s name comes up, he’s always spoken of with respect and admiration.”

Pratt’s legacy lives in the words of that student and others:

“I am a producer, songwriter and musician,” wrote Mike Elizondo, who includes Dr. Dre, Eminem, 50 cents, Maroon 5, Fiona Apple and Sheryl Crow among the artists with whom he has worked. “Gary Pratt gave me private lessons on the upright bass. It was at this time that I began to make my biggest improvements as a musician, largely due to Gary. I attended CSUN from 1990–1994, so that I could continue my studies with him. I turned to him for guidance and he would provide me with wisdom and encouragement.”

Bradley McAuliffe

Psychology

McAuliffe’s penchant for making connections between academic and “real world” situations has drawn many appreciative students to his classes. A strong cultivator of critical thinking skills, he draws the disciplines of law and psychology into the mock trials organized for his students.

The educator serves on the editorial boards of Law and Human Behavior as well as the Child Maltreatment Newsletter, among others. McAuliffe also is a reviewer for the Journal of Applied Social Psychology and Basic and Applied Social Psychology.

His dynamic teaching style, characterized by a scholarly approach to everyday problem-solving, has earned him excellent student evaluations.

Exceptional Creative Accomplishments Award

Alexis Krasilovsky

Cinema and Television Arts

Krasilovsky’s groundbreaking documentary, “Women Behind the Camera,” is the first to examine the lives, work and challenges of camerawomen around the globe.

The award-winning film represents years of intense production that took the filmmaker across the country and abroad in her effort to tell the story of women who “were the first to film in war zones, from helicopters, underwater and on Hollywood sets.”

Krasilovsky marshaled campus resources as well as collegial and off-campus collaborators in her successful attempt to capture on film some 50 interviews with pioneering camerawomen. Based on her book of the same title, her film recently won an Insight Award of Excellence for documentaries, as well as an Accolade Competition Award of...
Excellence: Contemporary Issues/Awareness Raising.

“Alexis has not only paid tribute to female cinematographers and their struggle to make it in a male-dominated field,” wrote one colleague, “she has made a terrific film.”

Preeminent Scholarly Publications Award

Anthony Arthur
Emeritus professor of English
“Radical Innocent: Upton Sinclair,” Arthur’s scholarly review of the muckraker/social critic/novelist who exposed the meatpacking industry of his day, was one of “the most highly reviewed books of the year” upon publication in 2006. To produce what Los Angeles Magazine called “a model of good biography, uncommonly well wrought,” Arthur sifted through the University of Indiana’s eight-ton Sinclair Archive and scoured the pages of nearly 80 books by the famous dissenter.

The result, according to USC’s Ronald Gottesman, is a “sensational” piece of scholarship. The emeritus English professor declared he knows “of few scholarly books of any year that have received greater acclaim, and none that have deserved it more.” Brought out by Random House to coincide with the 100th publication anniversary of Sinclair’s 1906 classic in social protest literature, “The Jungle,” Arthur’s book also debuted near the time of his seminar on Sinclair at social protest literature, "The Jungle," Arthur’s book also debuted near the time of his seminar on Sinclair at social protest literature.

Visionary Community Service-Learning Award

Kathleen Young
Health Sciences
Young has wasted no time in making an impact since her arrival at CSUN in 2003. Immediately integrating community-based research and service-learning pedagogy into her classes, she guided students to work with San Fernando Valley agencies, assessing community needs.

In collaboration with the Valley Care Community Consortium, for example, Young’s students helped conduct the Triennial Community Needs Assessment on HIV, hepatitis and substance abuse.

Young’s impact—described as “far-reaching”—has been seen in the grants her students wrote for the San Fernando Valley Trauma Rape Crisis Center, in their survey of convenience stores for the Tarzana Treatment Center’s Tobacco Grant Project, and in their development of focus groups and public service announcements for CSUN’s Klotsz Student Health Center.

2007 Emeritus Faculty

John Adams
Electrical & Computer Engineering
William Dagdag
Urban Studies and Planning
Antonio Gilman
Anthropology
Antonia Hussey
Geography
Richard Miller
Counseling Services
Kyoko Suto (Handler)
Secondary Education
James Schaefer
Chemistry & Biochemistry

Faculty Completing 35 Years of Service

Alyce Aker
Family and Consumer Sciences
Michael Barrett
Reference and Instructional Services
Marshall Bloom
Counseling Services
William Dagdag
Urban Studies and Planning
Mary Finley
Reference and Instructional Services
Lawrence Flesscher
Deaf Studies
Jerald Schutte
Sociology
Nathan Weinberg
Sociology

Faculty Completing 30 Years of Service

Jean Daniels
Sociology
Timothy Fox
Mechanical Engineering
Catherine Jeppson
Accounting and Information Systems
Bruce Lammers
Marketing
Jerome Seger
Health Sciences

Faculty Completing 25 Years of Service

Larry Allen
Biology
Don Brownlee
Communication Studies
Vera Flesscher
Deaf Studies
Nazimudin Khawaja
Mathematics
Sharon Kollmeyer Gerfen
English
Temma Kraner
Cinema and Television Arts
Jeffrey Lenham
Deaf Studies
Garlan Miller
Management
Rex Mitchell
Chicana/o Studies
Marta Sanchez
Environmental & Occupational Health

* Belated Recognition

Distinguished Teaching, Counseling or Librarianship Award winners: (from left) Gary Pratt, Patricia Juarez-Dappe and Bradley McAuliff

Acting Art Department chair Edward Afiano and English professor Cheryl Specter, newly installed faculty vice president and secretary, respectively.
For These Determined Graduates, ‘No’ is No Answer

'They Are Truly What Cal State Northridge Is All About,' Says President Koester

University officials will recognize the academic achievement of Cal State Northridge's thousands of graduates this year, but they also will salute the students' tenacity in earning their prize: a college education. “Our students have worked hard to get to this day,” said President Jolene Koester. “Regardless of what they encountered, these students were determined to complete their education. They are truly what Cal State Northridge is all about—providing an opportunity for individuals to achieve their dreams.”

The stories of six such graduates are below:

Rene Fleischbein, M.A., English
Fleischbein is on the verge of receiving her master’s degree in English, with a spot waiting for her this fall in a University of Southern Mississippi doctoral program. She gives the credit to her 15-year-old daughter, Savannah.

“She’s been my rock, and a reminder of why I need to work hard to achieve my dreams,” said Fleischbein.

The 38-year-old Oxnard resident was in community college when she met Savana’s father, a German national, in the ’80s. They married and moved to Germany. When the marriage didn’t work out, Fleischbein returned to Oxnard in 1994, small child in tow. She returned to school and, after meeting her second husband—a native Palestinian from Jordan—transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in English. In the meantime, she found her second husband supportive at times, but sometimes emotionally abusive.

After 9/11, when her husband was deported and the family moved to Jordan, the abuse escalated into physical assaults. Fleischbein said she was lucky her in-laws realized her husband was dangerous, they supported her decision to leave him and return to the United States. “He could have easily killed me, claimed it was an honor killing, and gotten away with it,” she said.

Fleischbein wanted to set a better example for her daughter. With the support of her parents, Robert and Mary Fleischbein, she applied to Northridge in 2004. “I hope to someday return to CSUN as a professor,” she said.

Fleischbein will take part in the College of Humanities’ commencement ceremony at 8 a.m. Thursday, May 31, on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Osvaldo Larios, B.A., French
“I was not about to let my disadvantaged background and my family’s income status prevent me from achieving my dreams,” said Larios, whose desire to share the benefits enjoyed by natural born American citizens drew him to enroll at Northridge in 2002.

Enduring hardships along the way, Larios’ family moved to the U.S. from Mexico in 1991, where he was 17 years old. His father repaired appliances and his mother cleaned houses, relying on public transportation to get to their jobs and send their children to school. “Growing up in the U.S., being from another country, has been really difficult,” he said.

Complicating matters was the cost of a college education. With difficulty, his parents paid for the first two years of Larios’ education, with his brother at a two-year college and his sister soon to graduate from high school.

Larios took a job, easing the financial burden during his last two years of school. “Thanks to the installment plan, we were just barely able to make it work,” said the 24-year-old, who plans to become a cardiovascular surgeon.

Larios will take part in the College of Humanities’ commencement ceremony.

Patricia Lawrence, B.A., Liberal Studies
A bachelor’s degree seemed out of the question for Lawrence. Growing up, she regularly encountered obstacles as she tried to navigate the world and deal with her cerebral palsy. She faced a barrage of negative comments about her dream of going to college, but Lawrence was determined to prove people wrong.

“A friend of mine, who also has cerebral palsy, earned her master’s degree in education when there were no ‘special accommodations’ like there are nowadays,” said Lawrence, convinced that she, too, could surmount the limits others imposed on her.

She enrolled at Cal State Northridge in 1995, determined to help people transcend mental, physical or social barriers. Some of her strength, she said, has come from CSUN faculty.

“Person who has a disability has two choices: either they [can] lay in bed all day and let someone take care of them, or the person, meaning me, can get up each and every day and do the best I can to show the people around me that I am trying to live a life with a disability,” Lawrence said. “My disability does not belong to me, I control my disability. I am still a person with dreams, goals and desires of the heart, just like an able bodied person.”

Lawrence’s work as a tutor for young children gave her goals focus. “Students are being passed on to the next grade without mastering the subjects...” said the 47-year-old, who wants to work one-on-one with students lacking in basic skills.

“I have come to believe that until they are in my shoes, people should never tell someone else what they can’t do,” said Lawrence, who will participate in the College of Humanities’ ceremony.

Cynthia Lieberman, B.A., Cinema and Television Arts
Lieberman’s graduation announcement reads “Degree at Last! Degree at Last!” It is never too late, she believes, “to become what you might have been.”

Her pursuit of education began in 1977, shortly after experiencing a tragic car accident that claimed the life of her best friend. After months of physical therapy, she earned her G.E. degree at Los Angeles Valley College, then entered CSUN with an interest in radio, television and film. Lieberman’s entertainment industry career already was off to a good start. At age 19, she had begun at Warner Bros. as an assistant to the payroll department chief. By 1989, she had moved up to head of corporate communications for Fox, Inc., reporting directly to the studio chairman. Years later, Lieberman went on to top tier positions in marketing and publicity for every studio except Disney.

Now the vice president of media relations for Sony Pictures Television, Lieberman decided to tend to unfinished business. She returned to CSUN in fall 2005 to complete what she had started nearly three decades earlier, earning two-thirds of her education in nightclasses despite a busy career and raising a family.

As she stood in line for her cap and gown, Lieberman’s emotions overcame her. “When I reached the head of the line, I looked at the girl with the roser, thinking ‘my name’s not going to be on it.’ Then I saw it, and burst into tears. I had to go outside and collect myself,” she said.

Lieberman, who plans to pursue a second degree in sociology, will take part in the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication commencement ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 30, on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Alejandro Molina, B.A., Theatre
For much of his life, Molina has dreamed of establishing a theatre company featuring local talent in its own productions, and an after-school cultural center for young people, inspiring them to break out of the poverty that marks much of the northeast San Fernando Valley. But without an education, the 41-year-old native of Mexico said his future “looked chaotic.”

Molina came to the United States in 1989 from Artega, Michoacán, with an invitation to study and perform with the Los Angeles-based bilingual Latin-American theater collective, Tátatejos. He began teaching after-school drama classes to children in Pacoima and San Fernando and co-founded a community-based theater group, Tres Cutureas. To make ends meet, he worked in a Mexican restaurant and as a swap meet vendor.

“I knew I wasn’t going to really succeed if I didn’t get a proper education,” Molina said. The first step was to learn proper English, “the most difficult thing I ever had to do.”

He enrolled in English classes at the North East Valley Occupational Center, and then Mission College. “Many times,” he said, “I found myself studying and repeating the lessons like a weird character speaking to itself on the bus to and from school.”

With the support of his wife, Maria Santa Cruz, whom he calls his “angel,” Molina quit his jobs and devoted himself full time to his studies while his wife worked as a housekeeper to pay their bills.

When he transferred to Northridge two years ago, Molina was terrified “because I knew the challenges would be even greater, particularly since English is my second language.”

The support of Molina’s wife, the motivation of his teachers, financial aid and “the desire to influence children positively through theater” gave Molina strength to cross the finish line.

He will walk in the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication ceremony.

Elaine Paletz Nashick, B.A., English Literature
Nashick said her mother has been her inspiration throughout her life. Now, poised to receive her bachelor’s degree at age 66, she hopes she can become an inspiration to her own children and grandchildren.

Beating the Odds

Enduring hardships along the way, these students were determined to complete their education. They are truly what Cal State Northridge is all about—providing an opportunity for individuals to achieve their dreams.
The academic year has been an interesting one for Karm Stanford, assistant professor in the Pan African Studies Department. Stanford is wrapping up her third year of teaching a timely course aimed at addressing the impact of the hip hop phenomenon on African American culture.


"Students come into the course expecting a cursory look at the music, but after the course is completed, find they have acquired more knowledge than anticipated," said Stanford.

"The Politics of Hip Hop" approaches the music from a scholarly perspective, providing a plethora of literature which validates it as a culture and as a source for political expression," she added.

Since the mid-1970s, hip hop has developed into a genre of music whose performers provide illustrations of their life struggles and triumphs. Recent media accounts have explored a spirited controversy over the music, ranging from the argument that it advocates justice through political expression to the argument that its lyrics are misogynistic, materialistic and violent.

Stanford said the positive and negative complexities spark lively and serious discussion during the course, which during the past semester featured speakers such as activist Aqeela Sherrills. After losing many friends to gang violence, Sherrills and his brother in 1999 established the Community Self Determination Institute, aimed at fostering positive growth and social change in the Watts community.

When senior Michelle Hartzog took the course, she prepared her research paper on Hurricane Katrina. Hartzog studied the involvement of race, class and status in the aftermath of Katrina, discovering in the process how the hip hop community got involved in helping hurricane victims.

"I didn't realize that hip hop was a culture until I took the class," Hartzog said. It has a history, she added, of "making people conscious of sociopolitical issues."

An annual journal, the Hip-Hop Think Tank, is published by the Pan African Studies Department and includes articles by students from Stanford's course. Student writers for the journal's second volume, "Hip Hop Think Tank Battling the Dichotomy of the Hip-Hop Generation," were recognized at the 30th Annual National Conference of Black Studies.

Stanford said her hope is that hip hop will continue to provide a voice for disadvantaged communities. However, she noted, it is a force that should be reclaimed from those who seek to profit from it through exploitation.

—Sheema Gray
New Degrees Offered in Nursing, Languages and Cultures

Two important new degree programs will be available in fall 2007 to undergraduates interested in nursing or languages and cultures. The College of Health and Human Development has been given initial approval by the California Board of Registered Nursing to begin offering an accelerated bachelor's degree program in nursing in June. A bachelor of arts degree in languages and cultures is another new choice for CSUN students.

The 15-month nursing program targets people who already have a non-nursing bachelor's degree. Such individuals often go to a community college for an associate's degree in nursing.

CSUN's degree provides "a new and needed professional alternative," said nursing program director Martha Highfield. It will help meet a critical shortage of nurses in the San Fernando Valley region.

Each summer and fall, a cohort of 18 students will be admitted to the program. Starting in 2008, two 18-student cohorts will be admitted per year, in summer and in fall.

Upon completion, students will be eligible to receive bachelor of science degrees in nursing (BSN), take the RN licensing exam and apply for Public Health Nurse certificates.

Students will get hands-on nursing experience at CSUN's local hospital partners—Northridge Hospital Medical Center, Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank and Kaiser Permanente Valley Presbyterian Hospital also has lent its support to the program.

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures' new major in languages and cultures began in fall 2006. Its two components include language—including Armenian, French, German, Italian and Japanese—and cross cultural studies.

"The reality is that this is a multi-cultural world, and knowledge of another language and culture will give one a competitive edge in the workplace, whether it's banking or the creative arts," said department chair Brian Castronovo.

Castronovo said his department worked closely with business professor Rafi Elrat to develop electives within the major that reflect the interests of business students. They include three courses that examine the business cultures in Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Language professors Akiko Hirota, Luis Bonilla and Anthony Costantini prepared the business course proposals. The courses train students to develop cross-cultural sensitivity and communication skills.

Students, Entertainment Pros Interact at CSUN Conference

The creative and high technology programs will be well represented at Cal State Northridge's May 5 Entertainment Arts Conference, featuring one-on-one interaction between students and key industry professionals.

Video game director Cory Barlog of Sony Computer Entertainment America kicked off the day's events with screenings of the "God of War II" game. Barlog was animation director on the first "God of War" game—winner of Best Game of the Year—and was lead 3D computer animator on "X-Men" fighter games and feature films such as "Mighty Joe Young."

Discussions also were led by cinematic animator and CSUN animation student Artak Avakyan ("God of War II"), video game world creator/level designer Tyler Chiochio ("Saboteur," "Pandemic") and lead 3D CG animator Mark Farquhar (Sony Pictures Imageworks' "Surf's Up" and "Open Season," and Pixar's "Toy Story 2").

Panels on Key Art movie poster design, moderated by art professor Paula DiMarco, included The Refinery Creative art director Joshua Eaton—a CSUN graphics alumn—and Michael Valle, as well as Photoshop World Guru Award winner Tomasz Opasinski, senior art director of Crew Creative Advertising, and multiple award winner Allan Taylor, CEO of AT DESIGN.

Students learned about animation story writing and pitching from CSUN animation alumn Hadley Hudson of Radar Cartoons, developer for Cartoon Network Europe; and television cartoon writer Craig Miller ("Curious George," "Smurfs," "GI Joe"). Composer Dan Schatzberg, a CSUN music student who has composed for the television libraries of the "Dr. Phil," "Entertainment Tonight" and "Rachel Ray" programs, previewed his re-scoring of the "Spiderman 3" trailer.

Organized by Entertainment Industry Institute director Mary Ann Trujillo, the event was sponsored by the institute and the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication. For more information, contact Trujillo at (818) 677-2221.