The spring semester has been a whirlwind here at CSUN. In early March, Jonathan Mason, vice-president of BayRail Alliance, offered an insightful talk on “California High Speed Rail” and then in later in the month, Mitch Englander, Los Angeles City Councilmember from Council District 12, spoke on local planning priorities and issues. In April, with the assistance of nearly 20 dedicated alumni, the department offered an evening of “speed mentoring” to graduating seniors which focused on reviewing resumes, anticipating interview questions, and job search strategy. Finally, the department is proud to report that this May at the Spring Graduation Ceremonies, nearly 40 students will graduate with a BA in Urban Studies and Planning. Congratulations and best wishes to them!
Albert Muñoz

Last month, the Department of Police Services added Albert Muñoz as a “hero” to the list of monikers as the recipient of the Chief’s Award, the highest award given by the department. “He is a shining example of and reflection of CSUN and its students,” said Anne P. Glavin, CSUN’s chief of police. “What he did was heroic and selfless.” Muñoz, the 23-year-old urban studies and planning major received the award as a result of his actions during his regular evening shift as a Matador Patrol Community Service Assistant on April 25, 2013. Near the end of his shift at about 10 p.m., Muñoz was walking a fellow CSUN student across the street at Zelzah Avenue and Prairie Street. He was gravelly injured when a vehicle struck him in the crosswalk after he attempted to push the student he was escorting out of the way of the oncoming car. Muñoz received the brunt of the impact, leaving him unconscious with two broken legs and head injuries. Muñoz who returned to school in fall 2013 has made great strides in recovery. “It looks promising that I’ll make a full recovery,” said Muñoz, who has only two classes remaining to graduate. “Everyone has been really supportive and helpful.”

CSUN Learning Commons

The Oviatt Library’s Learning Commons was officially opened Thursday Oct. 3 as students and faculty enjoyed opening ceremonies and toured the new library upgrades.

“I’ve been asked many times what is the Learning Commons?” Mark Stover, dean of the Oviatt Library said. “Well it’s a place for students to study, learn and explore. And they can drink coffee now.”

The library’s first floor was completely renovated with new, ergonomic furniture to replace the older furniture. The walls have also been painted over in a white and red. The old lobby was transformed into a coffeehouse environment, with various new tables and a new Freudian Sip.

The grand opening also celebrated a new Learning Resource Center (LRC) on the third floor and the new Information Technology (IT) Center on the first floor computer labs, where students can get tech help and rent electronic equipment. According to Stover, the library now comes with more outlets for electronics to meet student demands. According to Stover, funding for the new library came from various sources, one of them being the campus quality fee.

Kenya Covington was selected for a fourth year to review applications for The National Research Council of the National Academies Ford Fellowship awards at the predctoral, dissertation, and postdoctoral levels. On March 13th and 14th at UC Irvine she participated on a social sciences expert panel that reviewed over 80 applicant files.

In February, Rob Kent served as an external reviewer for an on-site review of the urban studies and planning bachelor’s program in the Department of Geography and Planning at UAlbany in Albany, NY. Rob’s review of “Planning Los Angeles” appeared in the Spring 2014 issue of “Journal of Planning Education and Research”.

Henrik Minassians’ opinion piece, “Elusive Forces of Accountability in Higher Education” was published on Tuesday, March 04, 2014 on http://www.evollution.com/opinions/elusive-forces-accountability-higher-education/


Zeynep Toker’s paper “Fostering Walking Behavior in Neighborhoods: Enumerated Street Characteristics and Safety Indicators in Two Cities with Opposite Socioeconomic Conditions” was presented at the 42nd Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) Conference, Providence, RI, 2013.

Mintesnot Woldeamanuel’s paper “Public Transit Spatial Mismatch in Los Angeles Suburbs”, co-authored with Kenya Covington was presented in the 93rd annual conference of Transportation Research Board in January 2014, Washington DC.

The City of La Cañada Flintridge is a long term internship partner with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Although the city is only twenty minutes from downtown Los Angeles, it maintains a small-town atmosphere with a sense of shared family values. The city’s public school system consistently ranks in the top five percent of California schools. Volunteers contribute more than 250,000 hours to civic causes each year. Robert Stanley, the director of the city’s department of Community Development is a graduate of our department. Over the last five years several CSUN students have been interns under his supervision. These have included Tom Chaffee, Andy Rodriguez, Gurgen Yesayan and Christopher Kim. The Department of Urban Studies and Planning extends a heartfelt thanks to the city for offering our students a hands on experience in planning.

Thanks to Our Donors

Charles Albanese Jose Rangel
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Internship Partner—La Cañada Flintridge

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Alumni

Vartan Adamian (BA, 2012) is a computer resource specialist in the Office of Instructional Enhancement with UCLA Extension in Los Angeles, CA. He is married and is now the proud father of a young son.

Charles Albanese (BA, 1982) is a detective with the Intelligence – Led Policing Program with the Police Department in Boise, ID. He is also an adjunct professor in criminal justice at Boise State University.

Christopher Alonzi (BA, 1989) is a ten-year member of the North Hills West Neighborhood Council in Los Angeles, CA.

Yvette Lopez (BA, 2011, MPA, 2014) was a project manager, Quantum Sustainability, focused on the creation of a sustainable community in Eastsound, WA.

Thomas Chaffee (BA, 2010, MPA, 2012) is an assistant planner with Ventura County, CA.

Stephen Kline (BA, 1979) is an attorney and a senior counsel for Kaiser Foundation Health Plan in Oakland, CA.

Kasra Davar (BA, 2008) is a firefighter with the City of Los Angeles, CA.

Kim (Hurd) Dittbern (BA, 1980) is now a teacher with the Saugus Union School District in Santa Clarita, CA. She worked previously as a police officer in Los Angeles and as a planning technician in San Luis Obispo.

Cory Hanh (BA, 2012) is an assistant planner with the City of Lompoc, CA.

David Hyman (BA, 1980) is an architect. He is deputy director of Pacoima Beautiful in Los Angeles, CA.

Linda (Barnes) Vadnais (BA, 1990) is a high school teacher in San Diego, CA.

Yvette Lopez (BA, 2011, MPA, 2014) is deputy director of Pacoima Beautiful in Los Angeles, CA. She is currently a member of the city’s Recode LA Zoning Advisory Board.

Natalie Madriz (BA, 2005) is a psychiatric social worker with the Department of Mental Health for the County of Los Angeles, CA. She recently passed the state licensing exam to become a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW).

Paul McClaren (BA, 2010) is a civil engineering technician for the Public Works Department, Santa Monica, CA. He and his wife are the happy parents of a young son.

Caitlin Phole (BA, 2012) is pursuing a MSc. in nature conservation at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, Czech Republic.

Andy Rodriguez (BA 2010, MPA, 2012) is a planning assistant with the Los Angeles Department of City Planning.

James Russell (BA, 2006) served as an officer in the U.S. Army for 24 years. At present he is project manager, Q-53 Radar Training Development in Oxnard, CA.

Caroline (Roldan) Segalla (BA, 2002) is a community development coordinator for the Town of Kennebunk, ME where she has participated in a range of community development initiatives (Healthy Maine Streets) and received nearly $1 million in state and federal grants.

Larry Shoemaker (BA, 2012) is pursuing a MSc. in land and water management at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, Czech Republic.

Todd Soronen (BA, 2009) is a mortgage banker for J.P. Morgan Chase in Malibu, CA.

Patricia Steur (BA, 2003) is the manager and webmaster of Steur Salon – Salon Sheets and Boutique in Montrose, CA.

Linda (Barnes) Vadnais (BA, 1990) is a high school teacher in San Diego, CA.

Yvette (Farmer) Williams (BA, 1990) is a fiscal analyst for the Ohio State Department of Job and Family Services in Columbus, OH.

Student News

AnaLisa Campos was selected to be the Student Hagman Scholar of the year department and Professor Scott Howard was chosen to be a Faculty Scholar to attend UCLA’s 28th Annual Land Use Law and Planning Conference on January 31, 2014. Also in attendance as department representatives; Hatim Fatehi and Andrew Kent.

Andrew Kent, under the supervision of Professor Woldeamanuel, attended and made a poster presentation at the 53rd annual Conference of Transportation Research Forum held in San Jose CA, March 13-15, 2014.

In URBS 440 Community Based Urban Design course under the supervision of Professor Toker and in collaboration with Councilmember Englander’s office, students analyzed Reseda Boulevard between Lassen and Parthenia and prepared proposals for improvement of walking and biking conditions on the Boulevard.

APA LA Symposium...

Additional contributions were made by Howard Balentine of AECOM. Mr. Balentine discussed his analysis of GHG emissions and climate change adaptation, featured in Natural Gas and Electricity Magazine. Mr. Sam Gennawey’s presentation on Walt Disney was an interesting twist in planning theory. He believes Disney not only redeemed the amusement park, but also explored the creation of a sustainable community of tomorrow. Learn more about this in his book, “Walt Disney and the Promise of Progress City.” Sophia Cheng represented social justice on behalf of the Restaurant Opportunities of Los Angeles ROC LA.

The event was sponsored by the Urban Planning Students of Northridge, Council District 14; Hakeem R. Davis, Property Profile USA; Yvette Lopez, Pacoima Beautiful and, in collaboration with USC, Nina Idemudia.

Written by Melodi McGee
The goal of our newsletter, The URBS Post is to maintain communication between our alumni, faculty, and current students.

We love correspondence from our alumni! Please keep in touch with us– we would like to know what you are doing now, along with learning about exciting events in your life. We welcome new information to be included in our upcoming newsletters. Please also keep us updated on home and e-mail address changes.

Internships
We are trying to expand our internship program. Let us know if your company offers internships and we will share this information with our majors.

Donations
Please consider giving: no donation is too small. Donating provides both financial support and encouragement to students. Information on ways to give can be found at: https://givenow.csun.edu/

Let us know if you have suggestions on how we can improve our newsletter. We hope to hear from you soon!!

If you would like to send us information for the upcoming issues, or if you have any questions, contact the Newsletter Editor, Dr. Mintesnot Woldeamanuel at mintesnot.woldeamanuel@csun.edu; phone: 818-677-7246 or the Chair of the Department Dr. Rob Kent at rkent@csun.edu; phone: 818-677-4372.