Determination Helps Students Beat the Odds for Graduation

University Expects Record Number of More Than 6,000 Students to Earn Degrees

When Cal State Northridge officials present diplomas to more than 6,000 new graduates in late May, they will recognize more than academic achievement. The university will honor the tenacity and dedication of students determined to not let anything stop them from achieving their goals.

"Many of our students are the first in their families to go to college. Some have juggled two jobs and full course loads. Others have dealt with family obligations as single parents or extreme physical hardships," said CSUN President Jolene Koester. "These individual stories are truly what CSUN is all about. We are providing an opportunity for individuals, even under the most adverse circumstances, to accomplish their goals."

Here are brief profiles of some of CSUN's extraordinary graduates this year:

Bettina Austin, B.A., Sociology

Austin, 41, married immediately after high school. She and her husband struggled to make ends meet on minimum-wage jobs, while raising their daughter in a small town in Pennsylvania until 1992, when they were both laid off.

A free semester at a local community college reignited a love for learning in Austin. She was preparing to transfer to a university when she was in a car accident. Thrown through the windshield, she suffered severe head injuries and, as a result, had to relearn how to learn.

"I had trouble processing things. If someone said something to me, I couldn't remember what he or she said," Austin said. "People look at me now and they think I'm normal, but not normal for me. Nobody understands what it's like to have been one way, and then to have that all taken away."

Austin spent two years in therapy before returning to school, only to learn in the last week of her first semester back that she had a large tumor on her ovary.

After recovering from surgery, Austin was ready to return to school in fall 2000 when her husband surprised her with the news that he wanted a separation. Her daughter now grown, Austin decided to pursue her childhood dream of attending college in another state. She applied to CSUN.

Austin was midway through her first semester at CSUN in spring 2001 when her husband announced he wanted a divorce. She dropped out and went back to Pennsylvania to see if they could patch things up. Unsuccessful, Austin returned to CSUN.

"I was determined to get my degree," said Austin, the first in her family to attend college. "After I first got married, I realized that life wasn't quite like fantasy land. It was so important for me to get a degree that nothing was going to stop me—slow me down maybe—but not stop me."

Austin, who now lives in Reseda, would like to earn a doctorate in sociology and has started research on the lives of people who live on the fringes of society.

Chang was born and raised in Taiwan, which her parents fled in 1949 following the rise of communism in their native China. Growing up, Chang would often hear stories of war and its impact on families and human suffering.

She earned her associate’s degree in business administration at Taipei Business College, and worked for a while in the music industry, composing music on the side.

But that wasn’t fulfilling, so Chang became a social worker, helping unwed mothers and broken families, and assisting with adoptions. She also would rescue girls as young as eight-years-old from prostitution and set them up in halfway houses where they could receive counseling and education.

While working as a social worker, Chang felt a calling to become a nun. She came to the United States 15 years ago and joined the Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart. After working as a religious teacher with her order for several years, she decided to continue her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies. She chose CSUN specifically for her studies.
Three respected economists offered a cautiously positive outlook on future economic trends in the San Fernando Valley at the inaugural San Fernando Valley Economic Forecast Conference at the Sheraton Universal Hotel.

The May 14 event, presented in partnership with Chicago Title, marked the first time Cal State Northridge had turned to economic forecasting for the region. Prior to this year, the university only had produced annual and much anticipated reports on current conditions and recent trends in the Valley. Those reports will continue.

About 200 guests turned out to hear Daniel Blake, CSUN professor of economics and director of the university’s San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center, provide an in-depth overview of the San Fernando Valley economy. Blake predicted modest growth overall, but continued vibrancy in real estate.

“Economic growth in the San Fernando Valley will remain modest in 2003, as labor markets produce some new jobs, mostly in the services sector,” Blake said. “New job gains are limited by the lack of housing and infrastructure constraints. The retail climate will stay sluggish this year, picking up in 2004 as the California and national economies strengthen.”

“Real income in the Valley rises throughout the forecast period, with population growth minimal over the next two or three years,” Blake said. “Migration will be greater out of the Valley than into the Valley through 2006, and birth rates do not begin to turn up among the resident population until 2006. The rate of job creation in the Valley continues to be the dominant influence on general population growth.”

“As for employment, the San Fernando Valley economy was hard-hit by the recession of the early 1990s, shedding 46,000 jobs or 7.5 percent of its private sector employment in the first two years, with the manufacturing sector being hardest hit. From the 1995 employment trough of 567,000 jobs, the Valley added 100,000 jobs through 2001. While some of this job growth reflected the re-creation of jobs lost in the downturn, most of these jobs were new and represented substantial changes in some Valley industries.”

“The lost manufacturing jobs have not and will not return to the Valley,” the professor said. “In place of those jobs, Valley service-sector jobs rose dramatically from 228,000 in 1993 to approximately 310,000 today and will continue to expand. In total, about 3,000 new jobs will be created in the Valley this year, and 6,300 in 2004. Turning to the local real estate market, Blake said, “The recent plunge in equity prices. Despite the bull market yet. There are similarities between the 1968-1974 bear market and the recent plunge in equity prices. In addition to Cal State Northridge and Chicago Title, conference sponsors included media sponsor the Daily News and founding sponsors Arter & Hadden LP, Bank of America, CitiBank, City National Bank, Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley, First State Bank, Kirsch, Kohn, Bridge, Marvin R. Selter, Paris Industrial Parks, RAP Co., Sternberg, Horner and Associates, The Gas Co., Told Partners, Valley Economic Development Center; and Wells Fargo Bank.”

Additional information concerning the San Fernando Valley Economic Forecast is available by calling Debi Klein in the College of Business and Economics at (818) 677-3621.
President’s Message:
Retirement Announcement by Provost Kennedy

Date: May 6, 2003
To: Campus Community
From: President Jolene Koester

I am writing to inform the campus community that Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Louanne Kennedy has announced her decision to retire. Her official last day will be August 31, 2003.

Provost Kennedy is a passionate and dynamic leader whose contributions to this institution are immeasurable and extensive. In her 18 years of service here, she has provided leadership to one of the largest and foremost academic programs in the CSU, successfully bringing the Division and its Colleges and Library into the 21st century. She has increased accessibility, implemented innovative distance learning programs, and expanded the use of technology in the classroom. And through comprehensive reviews she conducted of the University’s academic programs, Provost Kennedy has worked to ensure that the University’s academic, general education, and teacher preparation programs meet the modern day needs of CSUN’s students, the community, and the state.

Of course, her leadership and hard work extend beyond Academic Affairs and the University. As Provost and our most senior vice president, she has been a key member of the President’s Cabinet. She is respected throughout the CSU system and in the Chancellor’s Office. This is evidenced by her recent success as co-chair of the systemwide Task Force on Facilitating Graduation and her work as a Commissioner with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, our regional accreditation association. Her legacy at CSUN is further enhanced by her productive and effective service as CSUN’s Interim President during the 1999–2000 academic year. During this appointment, she ensured the smooth transition of leadership at the University.

On a personal note, I want to express my personal respect, appreciation, and affection for Provost Kennedy and her work and achievements at CSUN. As a new president, I relied greatly on her wisdom and advice, and her extensive knowledge of the campus. The University’s recent successes—such as the Teachers for a New Era Initiative, which has brought national prominence to CSUN—owe much to her outstanding support and hard work through the years. As anyone who knows her well can tell you, her values, passion, and dedication are rooted in a deep commitment to the University’s mission to give students—particularly those from traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education—every opportunity to succeed. This commitment is the direct result of Provost Kennedy’s personal experiences, the challenges she has faced in her career as a woman, a working student, and a working parent instilled in her great character and tenacity, and deepened her commitment to community service and to higher education.

In the next few weeks, I will announce details of the search for an interim appointment to the provost and the search for the regular appointment. Provost Kennedy’s retirement date happens to coincide with the very month of her tenth year of service to Cal State Northridge. We are proud of the impact she has had on the University and the system and the especially, our students. Her shoes will be very hard to fill and the influence of her work and leadership will be felt for many, many years at CSUN. In the months ahead, I know there will be opportunities for the University community to honor and celebrate Provost Kennedy’s service and achievements. I hope all of you will take part and join me in expressing recognition and appreciation for her work, her leadership, and everything she has contributed to Cal State Northridge.

CSUN to Award Doctorates to Phil Magaram & Albert McNeil
University Recognizes Philanthropist Who Helped Create Food Science Center and Acclaimed Choral Director

Tax attorney and philanthropist Philip Magaram and acclaimed choral director Albert McNeil will receive honorary doctoral degrees from Cal State Northridge during the university’s commencement ceremonies in late May.

Magaram—whose support led to the creation of the university’s Marilyn Magaram Center for Food Science, Nutrition and Dietetics—will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. McNeil—who founded and directs the internationally celebrated Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers—will receive an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts.

Magnanimous Magaram

Philip Magaram is a noted philanthropist with a long record of leadership in the field of community service and he is a longtime friend of the university. Albert McNeil’s life and achievements serve as a model of how diversity strengthens and enriches the community and its cultural life,” said CSUN President Jolene Koester. “I am delighted that we are honoring two such extraordinary people who have touched our lives and made them better in very distinct ways.

The president will confer the honorary degree on McNeil during the commencement ceremony for the College of Arts, Media, and Communication at 8 a.m. Wednesday, May 28. Then at 6:30 p.m. that day, Magaram will receive his degree from Koester during the commencement ceremony for the College of Health and Human Development.

Studied at CSUN in her honor

Marilyn Magaram was a CSUN graduate alumna and faculty member who had studied food and nutrition.

The Magaram Center is the only one of its kind at a California university, conducting research and community outreach programs from its state-of-the-art facilities in the College of Health and Human Development.

Prominent McNeil

Albert McNeil is hailed as one of America’s most gifted choral directors, having founded the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers more than 35 years ago. He has also been a mentor to CSUN’s own choral director, associate professor of music Paul Smith, and helped several CSUN students launch their careers by touring with his ensemble.

The Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers is dedicated to upholding a choral tradition of excellence with the presentation of the concert spiritual, and the ever-increasing contributions of African American composers of concert music, opera and theatre music. Under his direction, the group has performed in 70 countries, including in eastern and western Europe, the Middle East, and north and west African countries. McNeil has been invited to serve as guest conductor for several choral groups, including the DeKalb International Choral Festival held at Stone Mountain, Ga., in 1994. He led the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in its recording of Negro Spirituals’ CD.

McNeil, currently a professor emeritus of music at University of California at Davis, served as that campus’ director of choral activities for 21 years and headed its music education program. He also taught courses in ethnomusicology at the University of Southern California for 12 years.

Albert McNeil began his career as a music teacher in elementary, junior and senior high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District. He was director of the Sacramento Chorale for 10 years and co-founded the Sacramento Symphony Chorus. He also was a founding member of the National Association of Negro Musicians.

Phil Magaram received a degree in tax planning, probate and trust law while on vacation with her family in Australia, Magaram in 1991 helped establish the center for nutrition studies at CSUN in her honor.

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## 2003 Honors Convocation and Commencement Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue., May 27</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>University Club Lawn</td>
<td>CSUN Alumnus Vincent Barabba, Former U.S. Census Bureau Director and General Motors Executive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., May 28</td>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
<td>Oviatt Library Lawn</td>
<td>Albert McNeil, Founder and Director of the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers, a world-renowned gospel music group. McNeil also will receive an honorary doctoral degree.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>University Club Lawn</td>
<td>CSUN Alumnus Kenneth Newabaeze, Founder and CEO of Sagametrics Corp., a leading outsourced business intelligence provider. Student speaker: Ms. Nathelth Gutierez</td>
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<td>Thu., May 29</td>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
<td>Oviatt Library Lawn</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>University Club Lawn</td>
<td>C. Richard Tracy, Professor of Biology and Director of the Biosciences Research Center at the University of Nevada, Reno.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Oviatt Library Lawn</td>
<td>Dr. Yvonne Chan, CSUN Alumna and Principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri., May 30</td>
<td>9 a.m.</td>
<td>Oviatt Library Lawn</td>
<td>Fortuna Ippoliti, Graduating Senior and Field Deputy to L.A. City Councilman Jack Weiss.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>University Club Lawn</td>
<td>Charles Hanson, CSUN Professor of Educational Psychology and Counseling.</td>
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### Beating the Odds…

Continued from page 1: because the university is non-sectarian, “and I wanted to experience a non-Catholic environment,” she said. Many of her fellow students were surprised to learn she is a nun. “I don’t wear a traditional habit, but once they saw me wear the same type of clothes and the same colors day after day, some of them realized I was a nun,” she said. “I enjoyed CSUN. The professors were really respectful of me and the students would be very curious at first. But when they got to know me, we’d converse on a peer level.”

Jordan Kao, B.S., Information Systems
Kao’s parents don’t talk much about their lives before fleeing Cambodia. This much he knows.

Kao’s Chinese father and Cambodian mother fled the political turmoil of their country in 1979 with three daughters. His parents could not find work for four years before they fled. The family barely survived through farming and bartering with their neighbors. “I’m supposed to have four sisters,” Kao said. “The youngest sister died of starvation, my mom told me. But she really doesn’t like to talk about those days.”

Kao was born in a hospital in Los Angeles’ Chinatown and grew up in Echo Park. His parents struggled to make ends meet on his father’s salary as an appliance repairman.

Kao, 22, of Atwater Village, was determined not to add to his family’s financial burden, so he has paid his way through CSUN using financial aid, student loans and jobs on campus. He would love to get a job in information systems management and eventually own his own business.

Kao will get his diploma at 8 a.m. Thursday, May 29, during the commencement ceremony for the College of Business and Economics on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Cynthia Olson, B.A., Sociology
One of Olson’s most vivid memories of CSUN is of squatting beside her desk and crying while taking an exam. “It wasn’t the test I was crying about,” Olson said. “I don’t know what prompted it, but I was in so much pain.”

Olson, 19, of Agoura Hills, had married just after high school and worked through much of her young adulthood while raising two children. Now that she had the time and the resources, she decided to fulfill a lifelong dream and return to school. She enrolled at CSUN in spring 2000. But injuries she suffered during a traffic accident while working as an ambulance attendant in her 20s came back to haunt her.

During the past few years, she had to leave four surgeries and a right rotator cuff, which, being right-handed, hampered her ability to write and take notes. She postponed her studies for a semester last year when she had a three-level lumbar fusion in her back. The fusion had to be repeated this year.

“It was an incredible struggle at times—the pain was so bad sometimes that I couldn’t think,” Olson said. “But I didn’t want to give up my goal.”

She was unable to use her right arm at times, so professors devised creative ways to accommodate her. One taped a test to her desk to make it easy to write, while another arranged for her to take an essay exam orally. This past semester, professors in three classes modified their curriculum so she could do most of her work online.

Despite her disabilities, Olson still managed an internship at the county Probation Department’s Camp David Gonzalez, tutoring young men for their GEDs. She said she wants to continue her relationship with the camp once she graduates.

Olson will receive her degree at 8 a.m. Friday, May 30, during the College of Humanities’ commencement ceremony on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Stephanie Grabow, B.A., Liberal Studies
After serving four years in the Army, Grabow had a tough decision to make. She loved the military and wanted to go to college, but she couldn’t afford it. She joined the Army recruiter and accepted his offer.

Grabow said her military experience prepared her for going to school full time while being a single parent, and supplied financial support for her education through the GI Bill.

The first in her family to attend college and a third-generation single parent, Grabow said she and her daughter, now 6, will break the cycle. “I have become a much better person because of her. She was my inspiration for going back to school and sticking it out when it’s 9:30 a.m. and all you want to do is sleep and there’s a paper to write and a test to study for,” she said.

Grabow wants to be an elementary school teacher and enter the local credential program at CSU Channel Islands in the fall. She will receive her degree at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 29, during the College of Humanities’ commencement ceremony on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Ari Soto, B.S., Manufacturing Systems Engineering
When Soto was 14, his stepfather fired a shotgun at him in an attempt to kill him. With his stepfather then gone, Soto dropped out of high school to take care of his mother and three younger brothers.

His family immigrated to the United States only four years earlier and settled in a drug- and gang-ridden area of Canoga Park. Soto didn’t have many options, and quickly realized that he had to take care of his family was to finish high school. His mom didn’t work, so the family survived on donations from local churches and charities and whatever income Soto brought in from part-time jobs.

Soto, 21, said he had no intention of going to college until a high school counselor convinced him to apply to CSUN just days before the admission deadline. He enrolled in 1999. Despite his obligations, Soto has been active on campus. He started a nonprofit, Technology Empowering Communities Hands-on, which recycles corporate technology casts off into resources for middle schools, community centers and churches. He also has been determined to serve as a role model for his younger brothers. “My little brother, he’s 14, is my project. He’s definitely college-bound. He wants to be a marine biologist and I’m going to make sure that happens,” Soto said.

Another brother is a junior in high school and Soto expects he will go to college. One brother dropped out of school, but Soto convinced him to return. The brother is now studying to become a firefighter.

“I have hope for all of them,” Soto said.

Soto, meanwhile, has accepted a position with General Electric’s management training program. Though he will be required to travel in North and South America, Soto said he will continue to support his family in Canoga Park to ensure that his brothers have a stable home so they can complete their educations.

Soto will receive his diploma at 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 28, during the College of Engineering and Computer Science’s commencement ceremony at the University Club.