

2021 College Scholars

Each of the following students was nominated by their Academic Department to serve as the College's nominee for the University's highest honor, the CSUN Wolfson Scholar Award.

Although they were not selected for the award, their merit is recognized by the College through this award. This distinction is of great significance. These students were recognized at the All-University Commencement ceremony in May.

Shelby Joanna Becker, Family and Consumer Sciences



“My name is **Shelby Becker** and I am a graduating senior in Nutrition and Dietetics. I also wish to note that I am a dancer, and have enjoyed my experiences with Salsa Libre and CSUN dance classes where my passion for movement has been further cultivated. I began my academic journey at CSUN in the Business department however a passion for healthy eating and helping others led me to nutrition. I took on leadership positions in the Student Dietetic and Food Science Association, as co-editor and diversity chair and I learned from fellow students and gained insight in the field of dietetics.

“I continued to gain leadership experience within my position as an outdoor trip leader with Outdoor Adventures, and began to greater understand the role that nature had in overall wellness. Within that organization, I also held a marketing position where I utilized my previous business experience and learned to express creativity through the content that I shared.

“I continued to build upon those skills within my position as a research student assistant with Drs. Nelida Duran and

Mirna Sawyer at CalFresh Healthy Living on College Campuses, the most enriching role during my time at CSUN. I had the honor of working alongside more than a dozen incredible interns, providing free nutrition education to students and greater understood the importance of emphasizing student support and development.

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“Moving forward I plan on continuing my exploration of nutrition as a dietetic intern with VA Greater Los Angeles, and intend to become a Registered Dietitian and plan on working with the elderly, mothers and children. My time at CSUN has been invaluable, the opportunities for life shaping experiences and the people I have befriended created an unforgettable college career. I could not have done any of this without the support of my friends, family and mentors.”

Sydney Gilbert, Kinesiology

College Nominee for Wolfson Scholar Award



Sydney Gilbert graduates with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology, Exercise Physiology Option, and a GPA of a 3.98, making the Dean’s List every semester. She was the 2021 CSUN Wolfson Scholar Nominee representing the College of Health and Human Development, and has also been named a College Scholar.

In 2017, Sydney came to CSUN excited about the opportunity to bring together her love of sport and her passion for the science behind it, motivated by sports medicine courses she took in high school.

She said that the beginning of her experience at CSUN marked a significant shift in her life, and that the vibrant and diverse environment helped her quickly realize the potential and impact she could have on others. She

recognized the privilege of a University education and was determined to use it wisely.

She made the CSUN NCAA Division One Women’s Soccer team in her first year and stayed with the team throughout her degree program. In that first year, Sydney was named to the Big West Conference Chairs’ Honor Roll for Academic Achievement.

She has been a CSUN Varsity N recipient, was named CSUN Female Scholar Athlete of the Year and, in 2018 and 19, played on the Big West All-Academic Team.

She served as treasurer of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, which is the collective voice of the CSUN student-athletes, and, most recently, has been a Peer Learning Facilitator helping other students through some of the most challenging Kinesiology courses.

When a shoulder surgery in her sophomore year sidelined her from games, she used the time to investigate her life on a deeper level, asking herself who she wanted to become. She found the

greatest motivation in her desire to help others realize their potential without comparing themselves to others or those around them.

As she recovered and rejoined her teammates, she volunteered more of her time, working with children throughout Southern California coaching and teaching soccer fundamentals.

She said that during her four years at CSUN, she found inspiration in every opportunity to meet people from all walks of life, and said that, seeing how passionate they were in their sport or craft motivated her to continue to pursue excellence.

Serving as an aide Center of Achievement through Adapted Physical Activity, Sydney discovered the power of interpersonal relationships in health and well-being as she helped a client recover from injury and return to work and the pursuit of their own passions. This sparked a recognition in Sydney that she could continue to give to others throughout her life by becoming an Athletic Trainer. Her next step is to earn her Master's Degree in Athletic Training at CSUN, an allied health profession specializing in the prevention and care of injuries and illnesses that occur during physical activity.

Savannah R. Gourley, Health Sciences (Public Health)



Savannah Gourley is a Health Sciences major with an emphasis in Public Health. She graduates with Honors, earning an overall GPA of 3.95. Whilst conducting her studies, she played for CSUN's Division I Women's Soccer team for three years and was acknowledged as a Varsity N recipient multiple times.

During her public health courses, Savannah developed a passion for epidemiology and public health research. She credits her professors, Dr. Chu and Professor Walter, for fostering her enthusiasm for public health.

During her senior internship, she worked at the Boys and Girls Club in the San Fernando Valley where she assisted in constructing surveys about the community's knowledge and attitudes about COVID-19 and vaccinations.

Savannah also volunteers for the International Health and Epidemiology Research Center where she collects data concerning gun violence in children under six years old in the United States. After graduating this May, Savannah will be interning at the California State Department of Public Health where she will be working with the COVID-19 Testing Task Force.

She plans to earn her Master of Public Health (MPH) in epidemiology and hopes to focus in either infectious diseases or women's health.

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Elizabeth Pitpitan, Child and Adolescent Development



Elizabeth Pitpitan graduated in December 2020 with a BA in CADV - Applied Developmental Science and earned a 3.96 cumulative GPA. She has been on the Dean's List every semester since she started at CSUN in fall 2017.

Elizabeth told us she was born in the Philippines and grew up in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley areas. She said she believes that her upbringing in such culturally diverse communities is what led her to be interested in helping students succeed academically and personally.

In her freshman year, Elizabeth was chosen to receive a Marino J. Riccomini Family Scholarship and also began volunteering at the CSUN Child and Family Studies Center (CFSC). She then started a CADV internship at the preschool and eventually became an Assistant Teacher.

Elizabeth also supported freshmen students as a Supplemental Instruction Leader for writing courses in the Asian American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and English departments. Additionally, she provided peer advisement, conducted workshops, and developed advising resources for university students as a CADV Peer Academic Leader (PAL), eventually becoming a Project Lead for the program.

Through her education, work, and internship experiences, Elizabeth has better established her interests in working with students in the education and counseling fields as a career. She is grateful for the support throughout her undergraduate education from her family, friends, professors, and mentors.

She told us she is especially thankful to the CADV Department faculty for the guidance that contributed to her academic, professional, and personal growth. She is forever inspired by them and hopes to be as supportive to students in her future career, especially to other first-generation college students like herself. Elizabeth is excited to pursue her passion professionally as she begins her graduate studies at CSUN's MS in College Counseling and Student Services program this fall.

Congratulations to each of these distinguished scholars!

May, 2021