

Dean's Awards, 2021

A Message to our Honored Students

From Dean Farrell J. Webb



As the spring 2021 semester draws to a close, we celebrate you, a select group of students who have been recommended by faculty to receive Dean's Awards as Outstanding Students in the College of Health and Human Development.

We formally recognize the dedication, accomplishment, and vitality you have brought to your studies, our campus, and our communities. You demonstrate what we mean when we call HHD "The College of Life."

The pandemic changed the way we all work and study, and you have met the challenges of this past year with alacrity and grace.

And at this time of graduation we look forward to how you will work as professionals, improving the quality of life for others across the lifespan. Some of you will address personal and family development, wellness, early-intervention for children, safety and prevention of trauma, and responses to illness and injury. Some will promote health and health care and fortify others through better nutrition, physical activity and recreation. Others will improve environments—from our homes and workplaces to the water and air quality of our planet. All of you will continue the tradition you began as students in the College of Health and Human Development, which is to enhance, enrich, and empower the human experience.

On May 23rd, over 4,480 students will graduate from the College in a virtual ceremony combining the classes of 2020 and 2021. The most outstanding graduate student and senior from each of our academic departments, as well as the College's nominee for the CSUN Wolfson Scholar Award, are featured in the pages that follow.

On behalf of our faculty and staff, I offer enthusiastic congratulations!

Dean Farrell J. Webb

College of Health and Human Development

May, 2021

The Wolfson Scholar Nominee

for the

College of Health and Human Development

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.

The Wolfson Scholar Award is presented each year in memory of CSUN's first vice president, Leo Wolfson. Recipients must show an exceptional academic record and significant contributions to CSUN or to the community through co- and extra- curricular activities. Each college presents one nominee to the university.



The 2021 Dean's Award Recipients

Department of Child and Adolescent Development

David Wakefield, Chair

Outstanding Undergraduate Students

Leslie Marie Hernandez is among the first in her family to attend college. Leslie graduates in spring 2021 with a BA in Child and Adolescent Development/Early Childhood Development Option. Before transferring to CSUN, she earned her Associates' Degree in Child Development at Los Angeles Mission College. She told us that while growing up as a Latina in a low-income family residing in Sylmar, she struggled to understand why her learning abilities were different, and few people provided helpful guidance or mentorship.

Leslie has developed a wealth of professional and internship experiences directly connected to the field of child and adolescent development. Leslie worked as a special education paraprofessional to accommodate children's abilities and developed their learning strategies to succeed in the classroom. As a Child and Adolescent Development major, she wants to make a difference by being attuned to children's cultural struggles and maintaining an open mind to create a thriving and engaging learning

environment. Although educating children is one of her passions, Leslie has also been drawn to counseling undergraduate students, many who are also first generation college students sharing her sound advice and mentoring regarding thriving as a college student.

As an undergraduate, Leslie was selected as a Peer Academic Leader (PAL) for the Department of Child and Adolescent Development. She also serves as the Vice President of the Child and Adolescent Development Association (CADA). She has built solid relationships with department faculty and her peers. As the lead peer advisor for the department, she directs the CADV Department's outreach programs and advising workshops for both continuing and incoming transfer students.

Leslie will be continuing her education by earning her Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and Master's degree in Elementary Education to pursue a career as an educator and advocate for the healthy development of children.

Breanna Lazo is a graduating senior in Child and Adolescent Development/Applied Developmental Science Option. She was raised in South Gate California and made a big decision after high school to move to Northridge and attend college. She has always been passionate about working with children in her community. She loves learning about how children develop socially and cognitively which led her to pursue a career that supports children in reaching their optimal development.

Throughout her time at CSUN, Breanna has been an active student who enjoyed being involved on campus. During her second year at CSUN she began working as a student assistant and contributed to many professional development events. During her third year, Breanna became a Peer Academic Leader (PAL) for the department. As a PAL she managed the department's social media accounts and initiated multiple projects.

One of her most notable contributions to the department social media account was the series, "Meet the Professors" where she interviewed 15 professors in the CADV department. Most recently, Breanna interned at the Child Development Institute Early Learning Center (CDI) in Canoga Park conducting weekly programs for children ages 3-6 that support social emotional wellbeing and cognitive development. Her work at CDI has inspired her passion in strengthening families and supporting children during a pandemic. Breanna is also currently working as an Applied Behavior Analysis Technician for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and is in the process of becoming board certified.

As an undergraduate at CSUN, Breanna has been on the Dean's list since spring of 2019 and will be graduating with Honors. Breanna told us she had immense support from her professors, Drs. Wakefield and Taylor and Professor Hanna Avnon, and Jamie Olivas. She added that she is grateful for their guidance, opportunities provided and feels fortunate to have amazing mentors, supporters, and inspirations. Breanna said she would also not be here without the unconditional love and support provided by her parents, sisters, friends, and loved ones throughout her life.

Breanna will be pursuing graduate studies for social work programs. She is excited to pursue her future career as a Licensed Social Worker and work with Hispanic communities like hers.

Elizabeth Pitpitan graduated in December 2020 with her Bachelor of Arts in Child and Adolescent Development (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 and was named as a College Scholar for 2021.

Elizabeth was born in the Philippines and grew up in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley areas. 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 soon began 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 better established her interests in a career working with students in the education and counseling fields.

She is grateful for the support throughout her undergraduate education from her family, friends, professors, and mentors. 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 Master of Science in College Counseling and Student Services program this fall.

Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences

Patricia Seymour, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Student

Carleen Couture Evans told us that she is passionate about helping young people realize their fullest communication potential through collaborative, family-focused care. She graduated from the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences Master's degree program in December 2020 with an overall GPA of 4.0.

Carleen is a member of CSHA, ASHA, and the Voice Foundation and is currently a Clinical Fellow at a private speech and language clinic, serving a pediatric population from early intervention through high school.

In 2020, Carleen presented a preliminary outline for her research on literacy outcomes of Deaf students at CSUNPosium. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she was not able to complete her proposed research study. However, she continues to have a strong interest in scholarly research and is working with a colleague to examine the effects of quarantine during the pandemic on young children's speech and language development.

Her journey to becoming a speech-language pathologist has spanned more than three decades, three university degrees, and two careers. (She has her MS, CF-SLP, MFA, CLE.) During her undergraduate tenure at Santa Clara University as a film and television major, Carleen also developed a deep connection to working with exceptional children, which included a four-year position with an afterschool program for children with special needs and several summers as a camp counselor for Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth.

While she had a vision of becoming both a filmmaker and speech-language pathologist, after earning her bachelor's degree, Carleen headed to Los Angeles to accept a spot in the prestigious graduate film production program at USC's School of Cinema-Television. She spent nearly two decades working in the film industry and as a business manager at a boutique, women-led business consulting firm.

When Carleen's daughter began speech therapy in 2015, she realized how at home she felt in those treatment sessions and once again began to consider a career in speech-language pathology. After taking an introductory course in language disorders, she applied to CSUN's Pre-CDS program and never looked back.

Carleen has been involved in service and academic research activities during her time in graduate school, both within and outside of the university. During graduate school, Carleen could often be found volunteering in the early intervention program and at pre-school speech and hearing screenings. She spent a week in 2019 providing speech therapy to at-risk youth as part of a collaboration between CSUN's CDS department and USC's K2C program. In her downtime, Carleen is a Girl Scout Troop Leader and volunteer at her children's school.

Carleen said that she is immensely grateful for the guidance, knowledge, and support of the faculty and staff in the CDS department. She would like to especially send thanks to Amanda Miller whose encouragement led her to take that first CDS course in 2015; to her academic advisor, Dr. Strike-Roussos, who always lent a patient ear and pragmatic, heartfelt advice; to Mrs. Cartwright for her lively and practical guidance during Carleen's first clinical rotation; and to Dr. Yu, whose kindness, support, and quiet persistence kept her moving forward with her research aspirations. Last, but certainly not least, Carleen added that she could not have achieved these academic and personal milestones without the sacrifices and never-ending support of her amazing husband, Neil, and their awesome children, Amelie and Remy. Carleen said her future aspirations include continuing her work in pediatric speech-language pathology, developing her practice as a lactation educator, and pursuing a clinical doctorate (undoubtedly with a little help from those previously mentioned incredible kids and husband!)

Outstanding Graduate Student Distance Learning Program, Graduate Standing

Jennifer Ingle started the program as a member of Cohort 5 in the Pre-SLP Program in Fall 2015, so this has been a 5 year plus journey to completion of her Master's degree in Communication Disorders and Sciences. She and her husband moved to Los Angeles to follow his passion of being a film composer. She told us she never imagined that she would discover her own passion along the way.

Jennifer holds a BA with distinction in Linguistics, cum laude, from the University of Washington, where she conducted undergraduate field research: design and implementation of a dialect study to isolate potential dialect markers in Pacific Northwest residents. She presented at the Acoustical Society of America, who featured her lay paper write-up in their press release, leading to interviews with local news and NPR.

Inspired by esteemed faculty—and a guest appearance by Noam Chomsky—she pursued graduate courses in speech perception, optimality theory, and psychology of language. Jennifer has studied a variety of languages including Spanish, French, Scottish Gaelic, Old High Saxon, German and French. She participated in “Spring in Vienna” German immersion program abroad, followed by extended visits to Spain, France, Turkey, Scandinavia, and throughout Europe. She expanded on the course through independent study, writing and illustrating a fable in Navajo, which she read aloud to Rocky Ridge Navajo Language School in Kykotsmovi Village, AZ.

According to Jennifer, graduating in the class of 2021 is unique in so many ways. “We have all been through challenges no one could have imagined from politics to a global pandemic. We all have a personal journey of trials and successes. Not least of which is completing a Master of Science degree!” She added that this year is doubly special as it marks her 10-year wedding anniversary. Along the way were unexpected obstacles. In 2017 Jennifer entered ASHA’s Student Ethics Essay Award (SEEA), writing about telepractice. Who could have predicted how important that issue would become in 2020? Writing the essay brought to bear newfound familiarity with ASHA ethics issues almost immediately in the workplace. ASHA’s Director of Administration and Communications for Standards and Ethics asked to quote her words for future SEEA promotions, stating that her experiences would resonate with other students.

When Jennifer began her clinical practicum experiences, her employer gave her an ultimatum: work or school. She learned much about advocacy and prevailed with CSUN’s support in swaying a school district to accept her both as a student clinician and a SLPA in paid status. Then the pandemic hit and Jennifer lost the hard-won externship that CSUN helped her secure, and she was laid off. Another exercise in advocacy, she spoke at board meetings, wrote letters, negotiated as a union rep by day, and plowed through SimuCase by night. The district needed SLPs not SLPAs. In the face of great reluctance, they listened as she explained the Variable Term Waiver (VTW) and to her astonishment, she began work as an SLP overnight! With each hurdle that she jumped, Jennifer grew more confident that this was the right path, and she said she is proud to be graduating together with the remarkable, resilient Cohort 19!

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

Aaliyeh Ayub is a senior who graduates this spring 2021 with her Bachelor of Arts degree from the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences (CDS) with an emphasis in Speech-Language Pathology. At CSUN, she earned an overall GPA of 3.8 and a 4.0 in the major and has been recognized on the Dean's List every semester.

Entering CSUN as a freshman, Aaliyeh said she knew she had an interest in speech pathology after job shadowing several speech pathologists and falling in love with how closely they could impact their clients' lives. Her interest only grew when she began taking CDS courses, building relationships with her professors, and participating in research. Aaliyeh has an extensive record of involvement in research projects as well as a great devotion to scholarly activities. Since her junior year at CSUN, Aaliyeh has been a research scholar in the NIH BUILD PODER undergraduate research training program. Through this opportunity, she served as a research assistant in several laboratories, including labs at San Diego State University, University of Oregon, and here at CSUN, where she contributed to several studies as well as creating her own study on Preschool Early Literacy under the mentorship of Dr. Vickie Yu.

She had the opportunity to present at several local and national-level conferences during her time in the program, including the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Dysphagia Research Society, and SACNAS to name a few. In her five years at CSUN, Aaliyeh also completed a minor in Child and Adolescent Development. As an undergraduate at CSUN, Aaliyeh loved to involve herself in various CDS extracurricular activities to build strong professional and personal relationships within the field.

Aaliyeh is a member of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) and served on the board of the CSUN NSSLHA Chapter, collaborating with her peers to continue to provide virtual events, to enhance community building. She also worked as an ABA therapist, solidifying her passion for helping others and making a difference.

Aaliyeh told us she would like to extend her sincerest gratitude to her mentor Dr. Yu, who helped guide her through her research endeavors and provided constant support and encouragement over the past three years. She would also like to thank the CDS faculty who inspired her and shared the many different paths she could potentially explore. She would like to thank Dr. Gabriela Chavira, the Director of NIH BUILD PODER who opened the doors for her to become a research scholar. Most importantly, she would like to acknowledge that none of her academic achievements would have been possible without the support from her grandma, uncle, and aunt who allowed her to focus on her academic dreams and who continue to be her biggest cheerleaders and support system.

Aaliyeh has received offers of admission to several prestigious graduate programs for this upcoming fall to pursue her Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology. She has accepted the offer from San Diego State University and is excited to continue to grow as a student clinician as well as a researcher.

Department of Environmental and Occupational Health

Nola Kennedy, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Student

Aaron Southard graduates this spring with a GPA of 3.91, at the top of his graduating class. Faculty tell us that Aaron has been an exceptional and highly engaged student, consistently raising the bar in every class he has taken with thoughtful contribution to classroom discussions, helpful feedback for his peers, and impressive scholarship., and that although new to EOH, Aaron rapidly invested in his chosen field and demonstrated distinguished academic performance, professional service, and mature career skills in a relatively short time frame.

An example provided was that for his independent research project in the graduate research methods course, he exceeded expectations by interviewing increasingly high profile experts to inform his comparative analysis of the department's Cal-OSHA mining regulations vs. their federal counterpart. One of his key informants suggested that he develop his paper for publication.

Last year Aaron was selected as a volunteer research assistant working to assess chemical exposures with the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD). Aaron worked with CSUN alum and Professor Tony Machado in collaboration with scientists from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), to investigate chemical and particulate exposures during cadet training exercises involving intentional burning.

Aaron assisted in developing the sampling plan, conducting personal monitoring, and documenting work practices during a high intensity training activity. He also created a toxicological profile for a flame retardant used by the LACFD to fight wildland fires. This project was of special interest to LACFD in the evaluation of alternatives for safer decontamination procedures following firefighting.

Aaron's personal statement is that, "Not just I, but every graduate from this program has a duty. A duty to ensure workers have a safe working environment. A duty to incorporate sustainability and environmental protection into our daily tasks. And finally, we have a duty to adhere to scientific integrity when taking our first steps as environmental and occupational health professionals."

Aaron recently accepted a job with the Santa Clarita Valley Water District as an EHS Specialist. The CSUN Department of Environmental and Occupational Health is confident in his ability to do just that.

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

Taylor Morais graduates this spring with a GPA of 4.0, at the top of his graduating class. He told us that previous to his time at CSUN, he served in the Army for 3.5 years, leaving with a commendation for meritorious service, which noted his "above and beyond dedication, high standards, and commitment to excellence". He has been able to attend CSUN on the GI Bill and is the first in his

family to obtain a college degree. During his time at CSUN, he has remained engaged with the veteran community by volunteering at the USU Veterans Resource Center.

Faculty tell us that in the classroom, Taylor stands out among his peers for his scholarly diligence and intellectual curiosity. Taylor's personal story is compelling, so we have included his statement: "I come from a background where education was never a forethought pertaining to my future. My dad worked most of his life since he was a kid, and soon dropped out of high school to help support his parents.

"When I was young, he had the mentality that working was the only answer to succeed in life, but I believe this statement to only be half true. As a teenager, I seldom put effort into my high school education because my frame of mind was to 'get by', so I could graduate and start working as soon as possible. Upon graduation, I felt like I was thrown to the wolves and had to act quick on my feet. Since I was young, I always wanted to be a firefighter because it was an occupation that gave back to my community, but my mind was set elsewhere.

"My family background, on my mother's side, has a rich military history, and being close to my grandfather, I decided to join the Army. My experience in the Army really opened my eyes on the importance of selflessness and hard work, which helped me to be my own person when setting goals for myself. This is the second half of succeeding in life, which is to make sure you work in something you love.

"My first year in the Army was difficult because it was something I never encountered before, but towards the end of my service I truly understood the significance of always trying to excel no matter the obstacle, which led me to receive the Army Commendation medal for meritorious service. I joined community college and immediately had a different mindset compared to when I was in high school. My grades were near-perfect, and I volunteered to help my college veteran community. At CSUN, I do my best to help my peers with projects and homework, while trying to model what a motivated, inspired student can achieve. I credit my continuing success at CSUN to all the professors and faculty in the EOH program who have supported me."

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Yi Tom Cai, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Student

Brianna Bosson states that: "As a former college student-athlete pursuing a career as a Registered Dietitian, I have a specific interest in sports nutrition and the unique needs of the student-athlete population. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in dietetics from the University of Nevada, Reno I chose to further my education and pursue a Master's Degree in Human Nutrition at California State University, Northridge near my hometown.

“From the start of my first semester as a graduate student, I knew I wanted to work closely with student-athletes to provide the nutrition support and education that I felt I was missing during my time as a student-athlete. I dedicated my free time to volunteering with the Registered Dietitian within the CSUN athletic department’s Fueling Station. As a volunteer within the fueling station for two years, I developed nutrition related educational handouts, increased awareness of nutrition and food resources on campus such as the Pop-Up Pantry, and took on responsibilities of managing the nutrition services provided to several teams.

“My experience working with CSUN student-athletes ultimately allowed me to identify a gap in research regarding nutrition concerns for this population with unique needs, which turned into my graduate thesis study. As I am nearing the completion of my thesis investigating specific nutrition concerns among CSUN student-athletes, my hope for the results of my study is to shine a light on the hidden food-related struggles of the student-athlete. By bringing attention to these formerly unknown issues, the community and university can provide student-athletes with the support they need to succeed both academically and athletically. As I continue to grow as a young professional, my hope for my career as a Registered Dietitian is to be able to use my nutrition education to continue to assist my community in our journey towards health equity.”

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

Anush Mkrtychyan is a graduating senior in the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) and is a Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Science major. She is a nutrition educator intern for “CalFresh Healthy Living on College Campuses” program. She creates recipe cards and delivers educational workshops designed to help students make healthier eating choices.

She also volunteers as a writer for the Veteran’s Administration’s “Let’s Get Healthy” email newsletter, where she writes informative and engaging nutrition-related articles and recipes. Also an editor for the Student Dietetic and Food Science Association (SDFSA), Anush obtains and edits the contributions provided by the officers for the Newsletter. As a former sport nutrition and child nutrition intern at the Marilyn Magaram Center for Food Science, Nutrition and Dietetics, she worked with more than 300 athletes to assist them in choosing appropriate snacks suitable for the types of sport they were playing. Also, at the FCS Child and Family Studies Center, (also known as the “Lab School”) she prepared appropriate and nutritionally balanced snacks, making allergy-free snack substitutions for children with allergies.

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Department of Health Sciences

Sal Esparza, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Students

Master of Health Administration

Paul Christian Garcia is an outstanding student in the Master of Science Health Administration program (MSHA). He graduates having only received one A minus in all the classes he took giving him a 3.975 GPA.

He was selected as a member of the program's Healthcare Executives of Southern California Statewide College Bowl team which recently competed against eight other schools. This occurred right in the middle of the period in which comprehensive examinations are held, which caused intense stress for our team members.

Paul has also provided great service to the disadvantaged community. For the last 12 years, Paul has worked at Rancho San Antonio Boys Home, a Behavioral Health program for troubled youth. Currently he is the Director of Training and Development. Paul started his work with the organization as a direct care staff but moved up to lead, unit supervisor, and an After Care Child Family Specialist. He also volunteered while working and going to school as a COPE Health Scholar at St. John's Medical Center in Oxnard assisting nurses with caring for patients and competing administrative tasks.

Master of Public Health

Jada Cantrell is a graduate student in the Master of Public Health program, with a concentration in Community Health Education. Prior to the start of her graduate program, Jada received a Bachelor of Arts in a specialized degree of Global Human Welfare from CSUN.

During her time enrolled in the graduate program, Jada was an employee with the Marilyn Magaram Center for Food Science, Nutrition and Dietetics. Jada was instrumental in the operations of the Marilyn Magaram Nutrition and Wellness Clinic. She also coordinated outreach for CSUN's Women, Infants and Children satellite office and was appointed Research Lab Coordinator for the Marilyn Magaram Center's Research Lab, providing oversight for a series of grant-funded projects.

As Research Lab Coordinator, Jada was responsible for facilitating several Journal Club sessions in an effort to discuss current research publications. During these sessions, Jada also taught the fundamentals of research to a team of undergraduate research fellows and graduate interns. Though COVID-19 presented many obstacles, Jada was able to assist in coordinating tele-health nutrition counseling appointments, as well as a variety of virtual health education workshops for staff, faculty and the CSUN community. Additionally, Jada was able to assist in launching a Women, Infants and

Children mobile app. Jada also served, briefly, as a research assistant contributing to the study of maternal health, mental health, and health equity for African America mothers.

Jada completed an internship at Children's Hospital Los Angeles within the Center for Healthy Adolescent Transition. Her duties included program evaluation and capacity building for a navigation program that serves adolescents and emerging adults in their transition from pediatric to adult health care. During her free time, Jada was the host of a broadcast puppet show teaching children valuable life lessons.

Outstanding Undergraduate Students

Health Administration

Jef Wheeler is described by faculty as a stand out in the Health Administration program. He is a non-traditional older student who is known by faculty and students alike to be exceptionally personable, caring and kind hearted. He is a Servant Leader whose community service includes participation in the Los Angeles Homeless count every January; regular participation in roadside clean-up and, for many years, facilitation of a weekly support group in a transitional housing facility.

Jef is also a retired dancer, and former President of LA Health Management. He brings his life experiences and leadership skills into the classroom where he always engages very thoughtfully in class discussions and adds exponentially to the classroom experience.

Public Health

Jeremy Morales wrote: "I am a Graduating Senior Veteran completing a Bachelor's in Public Health with a minor in Sociology. At the University, I have been engaged in campus activities as a Peer Health Educator under the Matadors4Wellness program and I have also participated with the Clinical Access Shadowing Experience (CASE) program. Additionally, I am also a Scholar in BUILD PODER (Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity; Promoting Opportunities for Diversity in Education and Research), which is an NIH-funded research training initiative that aims to increase the number of underserved students in the sciences.

Moreover, I also serve as the current Vice-President to the respective BUILD PODER club and through the program, I engage in research activities on campus, where I fulfil my responsibilities as a Project Coordinator for my mentor, Dr. Claudia Toledo-Corral, in the Metabolism and Stress Assessment (MeSA) Lab.

On top of my commitment to serve the college community, I am also a current intern at the California State Department of Public Health, I have participated in a K-12 STEM outreach program with PUC Nueva Esperanza Middle School, and I have provided college workshops to 4-12th grade students to support aspiring students interested in pursuing a higher education. Following my graduation, I am excited to share that I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Health Behavior Research at University of

Southern California's Keck School of Medicine and I was awarded the Keck School of Medicine Graduate Research Fellowship.

Overall, it is my goal to make a positive impact to any or all communities that I can reach, and I am grateful to the faculty, staff, and peers at CSUN who have helped support and shape me to become the person that I am today.

Radiologic Sciences

Kiara Rivas graduates from the Radiologic Sciences program with a 3.77 GPA.

She is an active member of California Society of Radiologic Technologists (CSRT), and member of Radiologic Sciences Student Association (RSSA) at CSUN. As a member of CSRT and part of her community work. She presented: "COVID-19 Protocols in Digital Radiography and Fluoroscopy" at the CSRT Spring 2021 summit to over 60 students and technologists who attended this virtual seminar.

Kiara has always been involved with the various philanthropic activities related to the student club and the state society.

Department of Kinesiology

Rosa Angulo-Barroso, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Student

Christopher Lee wrote: "I first became interested in the concepts of physical activity and fitness during my time serving in the US Army. Especially in the infantry, where rigorous physical standards apply to all, I realized there was an abundant gap between scientific literature and practical applications. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding led to a prevalence of common, preventable injuries. I saw this as an opportunity to challenge myself to learn and educate others that there is more to physical fitness than scoring high on the physical fitness test.

"After leaving the service, I was trying to rediscover my purpose and saw CSUN as a stepping stone to transition back into civilian life. However, it wasn't until my wife was diagnosed with cancer where I developed the utmost respect for exercise physiology, and what was once just an interest evolved into my passion. I began to see the field in a whole new light and saw our difficulty as an opportunity to learn. Whether it was my personal connection or exhausting work ethics, I would often grasp the material with some ease.

"While I was humbled by this, I could not dwell on any achievement, knowing that some of my classmates were struggling around me. I took this opportunity to teach and tutor others to ensure

everyone had the chance to succeed. The greatest feeling was knowing that my classmates exceeded their own expectations, and through that accomplishment, they would be able to retain the knowledge. Through this experience, I was honored to be a Peer Learning Facilitator, where my love for teaching was solidified.

“However, during my senior year, I discovered that there were many students who were unsure about their future after graduation, especially those who were not drawn to physical therapy and occupational therapy. I would often provide peer mentoring to fellow classmates and students about the possibilities of higher education and what it can offer, especially with academia and research. These experiences have led me to be a teaching associate during my entire time as a graduate student.

“Through this, I have been blessed with better opportunities to engage with my students. During my time as a squad leader, I always put the needs and wellbeing of my soldiers ahead of mine no matter what, and my students are no exception. Their success is my success, so I always ensure that I am available and approachable no matter what. Whether it may be for a simple question or extended office hours for tutoring, I thrive on making time for my students and colleagues. Although my priorities lie with the needs of others, I still maintained my own set of standards for academia.

“Prior to my service, I made the mistake of not taking my education seriously, and when CSUN entered my life, I knew that this was a second chance, and I did not take it for granted. These personal standards helped me turn around my GPA, and I received my bachelor’s cum laude. They also guided me through my struggles with PTSD, helped me juggle my teaching duties, and encouraged me to meet the rigors of my graduate research project, all while transitioning to an online/virtual environment in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, I am achieving my master’s with distinction. My time at CSUN has been life-changing. Not only did I discover my true passion, but I was also able to become a certified strength and conditioning specialist. Ultimately, my humbling and grateful experience at CSUN has led me here within reach of my Master of Science.

“I am proud to say that this fall, I will begin the next chapter of my academic and research journey at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where I will pursue my Ph.D. in Kinesiology. By pursuing this degree, I hope to continue building upon the skills I gained at CSUN and, hopefully, come back to teach within the CSU system.”

Outstanding Undergraduate Students

Athletic Training

Afsy Cruz wrote, “For most of my schooling I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I had so many interests (music, medicine, sports, math, and health) but never really knew what would help me put it all together. I mainly wanted something where I could help people, be involved in sports, and not have to sit behind a desk for the rest of my life.

“It wasn’t until I was in college that I was even introduced to the world of Athletic Training and I loved it. It just seemed to fit what I was looking for in a career. I cannot say that my journey has come without obstacles. One of the biggest ones has been losing a family member to suicide last year. It was

a big unexpected blow, but I try to use that unfortunate experience to value life and each opportunity that I am given.

“There were times where I really struggled to balance school, work, and my personal life and sometimes I really thought if it would be worth it. Fortunately, I have an amazing support system from my family and my girlfriend and they definitely pushed me and motivated me to get through my experience. I am nothing but grateful to them for letting me use them as my patients and for the times they yelled at me to take a break because I was burning myself out.

“My other motivation is that I will be the first generation college student in my immediate family. I want to help pave the way for our future family to show them that they can achieve whatever they want and hopefully they’ll surpass me, which would make me proud. Apart from the education, the Athletic Training program has helped me grow as a person.

“I came into this program being a timid person lacking some confidence and, while I’m still a bit quiet, I have definitely come out of my shell and have gained confidence in myself as a person and a future practitioner. I’ve also learned how to deal with stress better and realized that I still need to take time to myself. Whenever I have an opportunity I’ll play the guitar or will go play soccer. These are two main hobbies that help me relax and help me re-focus. As I continue my journey through life I am looking forward to all experiences that will come and I hope to learn from future colleagues and patients. I want to keep growing to help others grow also.”

McKenzi Fauria **Kinesiology**

McKenzi wrote, “For my entire academic career, I have been a highly motivated and competitive student. My education has always come first, and I hold myself to very high standards. My cumulative GPA is 3.938.

“I have received all A’s in my college classes, except one B. That was quite devastating as I tried my best, I simply had a difficult time with this professor’s teaching style. I always try to find the positive in things, and this only made me stronger. It taught me that in life, you may have to work with people with different work ethics and ideas, and one must adapt to the situation. In the end, this experience helped me in the classes to follow, as well as in my work environment.

“I owe all of my academic success to my impeccable study habits, time management skills, and ability to balance my time between school, work, and dance rehearsals. From a young age I developed smart and efficient study habits. This includes, but is not limited to, active learning and participation during lectures, excellent note taking, proper preparation, material review prior to and after class, and utilization of study groups. All of these practices are nothing without the capability to balance one’s life.

“Being a working student and dancer comes with a busy schedule. Although difficult at times, I made sure to create proper time for each, while leaving room for self-care and family time. Keeping busy has

given me the tools I will need when I graduate. I plan to go to nursing school in a year, while remaining at my place of employment, and dancing on the side...an exciting yet busy time ahead! Alongside my academics, I've remained involved in my campus and community.

“My relationship with the CSUN Dance Department introduced me to an amazing opportunity to dance for “Theatre of the Mind.” This production uses different forms of art including dance, film, acting, and music to explain different psychological matters and allow for an open conversation about each. I have had the honor and privilege to participate in this event twice. “Theatre of the Mind” is in association with the Los Angeles Psychological Association (LACPA), San Fernando Valley Chapter of the California Association of Marriage & Family Therapists (SFT-CAMFT), and California State University, Northridge (CSUN). I also volunteered to be studied in the Kinesiology Biomechanics lab in an experiment to better understand dancer fatigue and injury.

“Having a personal experience dancing with an injury, I was eager to participate. This study was done under Dr. Danielle Jarvis and her team of students. This opened my eyes to the world of research and allowed me to learn more about myself as a dancer and my capabilities.

“Throughout these amazing opportunities and achievements, I have had my fair share of challenges. Though difficult and at times life changing, I have come out a better person, sister, daughter, and friend. My freshman year my family lost my uncle unexpectedly. This was a tragic experience that left us sad, confused, and distressed. While mourning, I did not think there could be any beauty in such a dark time, but through my grieving, I expressed myself through dance. This resulted in the creation of dance pieces that are close to my heart. This same year, I also suffered an ongoing back injury that was debilitating. This made it difficult to stand, walk, and especially dance. This required professional treatment that offered minimal relief. Through these experiences, I learned how to be there for others and how to persevere through hard times. I have become the person my friends and family lean on for support, and I am honored to be that person for them.”

Department of Nursing

Rebekah Child, Chair

Information unavailable at time of publication. For updates, visit [CSUN Nursing](#).

(continued)

Department of Recreation and Tourism Management

Mechelle Best, Chair

Outstanding Graduate Student

Andrea Flores Cervantes wrote, “I was born in Mexico City and came to the United States when I was very young, and grew up in San Diego, CA. I’ve been a DACA student for the last eight years, and I benefited greatly from that program for allowing me to work in the hospitality industry and get this far into my education. I am proud to be the first generation in my family to pursue a Master's degree. I have struggled with hearing loss all my life, identifying myself as hard of hearing. Instead of letting myself down because of my hearing limitations, I have seen them as an obstacle to overcome.

“The reason I decided to pursue a career in hospitality is because of a vivid memory of a family member getting married when I was six years old. Ever since then I fell in love with event planning, I looked for an internship during my undergrad program with a wedding planning company. I’ve been working with them for three amazing years. I’ve also worked at Universal Studios Hollywood for the last seven years providing good care and services to guests. After getting my Bachelor's degree, I continued to pursue my Master's degree in RTM because I felt that I could learn and provide more. I plan to continue pursuing my goals with excellent service to the community and leave a smile on their face during their leisure time.”

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

In recognition of **Mackenzie Miravet**, the Recreation and Tourism Management faculty recognizes her overall academic excellence, attention to details, excellent data analytical and interpretation skills, volunteer initiatives and her passion for the hospitality industry. Faculty said that she has been following her interest in hospitality since high school and has worked with various companies including popular restaurants and luxury hotels. In addition to pursuing the BS in Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation Management, Mackenzie has completed certificates in Spirits and Wine and Hospitality and Tourism Management.

In Mackenzie’s words: “I am grateful and excited to be finishing my degree in Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management. I will use what I have learned through my education in my professional career in food and beverage management within luxury hospitality. I would like to thank all of the faculty within the RTM department at CSUN for bolstering my success in both my higher education and career path.”

(continued)

Department of Physical Therapy

Aimie Kachingwe, Chair

Christine Matsuda graduates with her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from CSUN this August. A 2020 recipient of the Roy and Roxie Campanella and LA Dodgers Foundations Scholarship, faculty told us that Christine made a strong effort to be very involved throughout her 3-year graduate program.

She has volunteered for various department and community events, including multiple JIKEI seminars, which involved conducting various educational workshops for visiting Japanese students in conjunction with fellow peers. She participated with community outreach and education of the physical therapy profession at CSUN's Family Education Day. Christine has also served one year on the CSUN Physical Therapy Club board as an event coordinator, assisting with contacting and organizing outreach events and guest speakers to present to current physical therapy students. With all of the changes experienced due to the pandemic in the last year and a half of the program, Christine took advantage of the opportunity to continue with community involvement via virtual outreach. She presented to college students from San Francisco State University about the physical therapy profession and provided guidance on future career opportunities.

Christine was also instrumental in initiating and developing a CSUN student-run Physical Therapy Pro Bono Telehealth Clinic, establishing a partnership with the Filipino American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI) to provide physical therapy telehealth services to the community. In addition to coordinating bi-monthly telehealth clinics with current physical therapy students, she and two of her peers presented their experiences with developing the student-run clinic at the 2020 Virtual Pro Bono Network Conference.

We Honor and Thank the families, friends, mentors, teachers, staff, colleagues and community partners who have contributed to the success of the students receiving Dean's Awards.

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