It’s been a good year for students, faculty, and staff in our Department, with many students successfully completing their degree requirements and graduating! On May 18th, CSUN held commencement ceremonies for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, including the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Some 27 undergraduate majors received their bachelor’s degree in Urban Studies and Planning, while 13 graduate students received their Masters of Urban Planning. Of special note, Quetzalli Enrique, a Department graduate and president of the Department’s student organization, UPSN, served as student commencement speaker for the ceremony. The Department’s students also distinguished themselves professionally in two academic competitions. The Los Angeles County Section of the American Planning Association (APA) selected the culminating master’s cohort project from 2018, “Resilient Northridge: A Plan for a Better Community and Campus” for its Award of Excellence for Academics for 2019. In another competition, undergraduate majors Atticus Lee, Carly Hollas, and David Moreno won the Southern California Association of Government’s (SCAG) Student Showcase Award for their poster research presentation, “Mobility on Zelzah Avenue” at the SCAG Regional Conference and General Assembly in May of 2019.

In April, a delegation of students from the undergraduate program, graduate program, and recent alumni of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning attended the APA National Planning Conference in San Francisco. Members of the delegation participated in panels on topics such as Integrating Urban and Regional Sustainability Planning, Affordable Housing and Growth Management, and Women of Color in Urban Planning. A major highlight of the Conference was the participation in the Plan4Equity Forum by UPSN board member, Ben Verheiden. Ben has participated in the continuing evolution of this guide since 2018, as a California Chapter Delegate advocating for the disability community to be the core of the equity guide. The equity forum had 5 goals: Expand Representation, Address Barriers, Build Capacity, Seek Partnerships, and Be Responsive. We are proud of Ben and his work in advocating for the disability community. Overall, the Conference was a great opportunity for our students to see the variety of career paths that exist within planning and allied professions.
In May, CSUN students voted on and passed a referendum to renovate and expand the University Student Union (USU) facilities, in an ambitious new project titled The New Heart of Campus. The project will include approximately 80,000 square feet of expanded space, providing new areas for students to study, hold meetings, dine, relax, and socialize. Just under 50,000 square feet of existing space will be renovated for improved services and support to students. Among the offerings for the newly-expanded USU are the unique cross-cultural center U-RISE (Unity in Race,Intersectionality, Social and Environmental Justice), an entertainment and games center, and new dining options. While details on these offerings are still thin, USU student leaders believe the New Heart of Campus will create a sense of belonging for all Matadors and become the new center of student life at CSUN. The project involved survey results from over 8,000 students, as well as focus groups, to quantify existing facility usage patterns, desired activities, space demands, and fee tolerance. The expected fee increase of $125 per semester ($75 for summer semesters) will be implemented once construction is completed, in 2022. Previous projects benefitting CSUN students that were funded by student fee increases were the initial renovation of the University Student Union and creation of the USU’s “Main Street” in 2006, which increased student fees by $35 per semester, and construction of the Student Recreation Center in 2007, which provided a 138,000 square foot, state-of-the-art recreation facility at a cost of $130 in increased fees per semester.

CSUN Hotel Project Continues

Planned construction of a hotel on the CSUN campus was put on hold last year, due to developer Jupiter Realty Co.’s failure to secure financing for the $52 million project. Now, CSUN will work with development firm Corvias, which is currently in the due diligence phase of the project, to construct the four-story, 150-room building, pending demolition of the Orange Grove Bistro property. With limited lodging options in the Northridge area, the hotel will provide a much-needed service for visiting athletes, applicants, and families, as well as University guests and partners. The hotel is also anticipated to provide a partnership with CSUN’s Recreation and Tourism Management Department, including curriculum development based on hotel and hotel offerings, site tours, job shadowing, and guest speakers.

Community Partner: CAPE

The California Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) is one of the Urban Studies and Planning department’s distinguished community partners. CAPE is the labor union that represents the professional employees of the County of Los Angeles, with members including the County’s regional planners, recreation and park planners, property assessors, engineers, and other professional employees. In the past few years, CAPE members regularly have visited our classes as guest speakers, sharing their knowledge of planning with our students and encouraging them to consider professional careers in planning and closely related fields with the County. CAPE members also have helped our students secure highly-valued planning internship opportunities with the county. For the past three years, CAPE has sponsored a scholarship for outstanding students in the Department, with this year’s award going to major Monique Barajas. The Department is most appreciative of CAPE’s support of our students and their career aspirations.

CTF Education Symposium 2018 Carly Hollas

Last November, Urban Studies and Planning majors Carly Hollas and Ryo Nagai had the privilege of attending the California Transportation Foundation (CTF) Education Symposium. The unique, two-day event paired 40 transportation-minded students from California with their own personal mentor. These highly esteemed professionals shared their journeys, from entry-level engineers and planners, all to becoming directors and executives. Students were assigned to teams and competed in a mock Request for Proposal competition. Attendees were also given the opportunity to apply for three scholarships. The Department is proud to announce that major Carly Hollas was the recipient of the “In Honor of the CTC Scholarship.” The California Transportation Commission acknowledged Carly’s scholarship award at its meeting in Los Angeles on March 13th.
**Alumni Updates**

Jordán Barbakow (MUP ’17) is an associate at the private equity firm SGS Group, in Westwood, CA. His duties include allocating new market tax credits to viable projects and funding supportive housing projects in south Los Angeles.

Diana Benítez (’14) is an intermediate planner/designer with Rami+Associates in Berkeley, CA. She recently received the Pete Garcia Community Economic Development Fellowship with the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders.

Joe Brazas (’78) is retired.

Meredith Burnley, nee Mitchell (’97), is an assistant project manager at Harper Construction in Los Angeles.

Cynthia Campana (’14) is an associate planner at the City of Lancaster.

Tracy Chu (MUP ’18) is a planner with Placeworks. She is currently working on the vote-center placement project with the LA County Registrar Recorder’s Office for the 2020 elections.

Jenny Cristales-Cevallos (’03) is a senior manager with the Los Angeles County METRO. She currently works on mobility corridors to implement bus, rapid transit, and rail projects.

Jane Farkas (’03) is director of land and regulatory affairs at Carbon California. She is also the vice-chair of the City of Ventura Planning Commission.

Adam Garrett (’13) is an assistant planner with the City of Salinas.

Jose D. Jimenez (’02) is the community development director for the City of South El Monte.

Jim Kingsley (’74) is retired.

Lionel Lawrence (’05) is the director of financial services for the Associated Students, Inc. at CSU, Fullerton.

Paul McClaren (’10) is an associate planner in the City of Oxnard.

Ayda Memary (’13) is a commercial real estate broker with Marcus and Millichap in Encino, CA.

Jason Naanos (’11) is an analytics manager at Deloitte.

Ira Needelman (’73) is an educator with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for the Greater Los Angeles health care system.

Dominick Ortiz (’17) is a planning assistant with the City of Los Angeles.

David Reyes (’03) is the community development director for the City of Pasadena.

Cameron Stein, nee Schmidt (’88), is an associate attorney in the Kern County Superior Court In Bakersfield, CA.

Sonja Tristan (’12) is the principal at Tristan Management and Consulting Company in Los Angeles, CA.

Marquis Williams (’16) is a junior manager of network planning for Flixbus.

**Faculty Spotlight:**

Claude Willey

Urban Studies and Planning’s lecturer Claude Willey just completed his 115th course with the department this spring. Claude began teaching at CSUN in the winter of 2002 and continues to this day, teaching URBS 150, 310, and 350. He regularly rides his bicycle from his home in Pasadena to the Northridge campus. That’s a 25-mile, 2 and a half hour trip, one way! Claude also teaches both Urban Studies and Environmental Philosophy part time for the ArtCenter College of Design, in Pasadena, CA. His research interests include Los Angeles Transportation History, California Water, Environmental History, and Art and Urbanism. He is also known for projects such as “Moisture,” a multi-pronged water-retention and garden project on a 1.5-acre parcel of uninhabited land, just Northwest of Hinkley, California, and “Invisible Trajectories: Passing Through the Inland Empire,” a series of interwoven, overlapping, and intricately linked stories, told by a group of urban travelers, their hosts, and guides, who have surveyed the vast empire on foot and bicycle.

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We love correspondence from our alumni!
Please keep in touch with us. We would like to learn about the exciting events and accomplishments in your life. Please consider keeping us updated on any changes in contact information, so we can stay in touch.

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

Donations
Please consider giving; no gift is too small. Your support provides both financial support and encouragement to students. Information on ways to give can be found at: https://givenow.csun.edu/ or by calling Dr. Rob Kent at 818-677-4372.

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 upcoming issues, or if you have any questions, contact the Chair of the Department Dr. Rob Kent at rkent@csun.edu; phone: 818-677-4372.