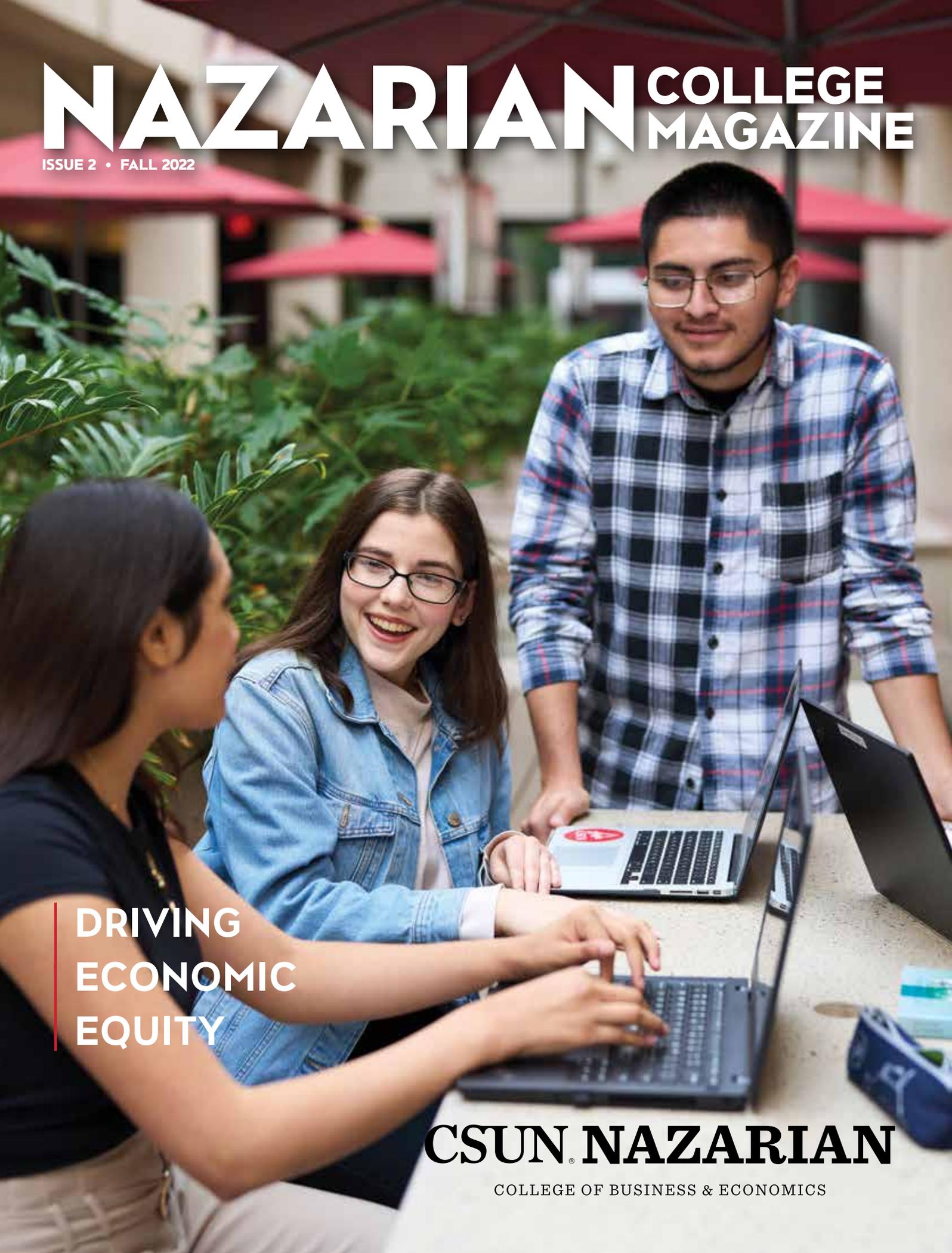


# NAZARIAN COLLEGE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 2 • FALL 2022

A photograph of three students in a casual setting, possibly a cafe or study area. A young woman in a black shirt is seated in the foreground, typing on a laptop. Behind her, another young woman in a blue denim jacket and glasses is smiling and looking towards the first student. Standing behind them is a young man in a blue and white plaid shirt and glasses, looking down at a laptop. There are several laptops on a table, and the background shows greenery and red awnings.

DRIVING  
ECONOMIC  
EQUITY

**CSUN NAZARIAN**

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

**BACK TO SCHOOL**

Summer's slower pace on campus came to an end in late August with the start of fall 2022 classes. Students, many with maps in hand, took to the sidewalks, waited in line for coffee at the Freudian Sip coffeehouses on campus, and streamed through the doors and courtyards of Bookstein Hall — home to the Nazarian College. Here's to a great year ahead, Matadors! For more photos of Nazarian College and campus life, visit [csun.edu/nazarian](http://csun.edu/nazarian).



# LETTER FROM THE DEAN



**CHANDRA SUBRAMANIAM, PH.D.**

“  
**EXPLORATION**  
IS THE  
**ENGINE THAT**  
**DRIVES INNOVATION.**  
  
*INNOVATION DRIVES*  
*ECONOMIC GROWTH.*  
  
**SO LET'S ALL GO**  
**EXPLORING.**  
  
- EDITH WIDDER

Dear friends,

This past academic year, we experienced a profound sense of gratitude as students and faculty were able to return to classrooms in person, and our campus began to come back to life after tackling the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After two years of unprecedented challenges during this pandemic and pivoting to fully virtual learning and back again, I continue to embrace the value of human connection and understanding, especially with our students, faculty and staff. Ensuring their health and safety is still our No. 1 priority. The Nazarian College continues to harness technology such as Zoom to provide hybrid instruction, but we also have been able to return in person to much of what we do best: student and faculty innovation, mentorship and hands-on learning.

Our students have thrived, even in uncertain times. We graduated more students this year than in the previous years before the pandemic. We also enrolled more students this academic year than in previous years. Through programs such as the CSUN Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Clinic, support for small businesses through student consulting courses, and providing a Road Map to Exporting program, we've also expanded our service to our surrounding community.

This issue of the Nazarian College magazine highlights some of the ways we have innovated and moved forward — toward success — through some of the most formidable times. These include a new certification program, the Road Map to Exporting, which helps CSUN students and local business owners learn about the factors they must consider when planning to export products from the United States to countries around the globe; and a discussion with Tim Tiemann, managing director of the CSUN Innovation Incubator in the Nazarian College, on his work with aspiring young entrepreneurs in South Africa.

I hope you enjoy learning more about the Nazarian College and those that make us great: our students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors.

Sincerely,

Chandra Subramaniam, Ph.D.  
Dean

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**CSUN** DAVID **NAZARIAN**  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

## NAZARIAN COLLEGE MAGAZINE

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COVER PHOTOS BY LEE CHOO.

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## COLLEGE JOINS GLOBAL EFFORT TO DEVELOP AI FOR ENHANCED CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

By: Carmen Ramos Chandler

Using the wrong word or misinterpreting body language can throw off an international business deal or sabotage efforts to negotiate an agreement between countries.

Hoping to ease tensions and enhance cross-cultural dialogue, the Nazarian College is part of a multi-university, interdisciplinary project — funded with \$5 million from the U.S. Department of Defense’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency — to develop an artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted app to help with real-time interpretations.

The project’s researchers said the smartphone-based app, when paired with smart glasses, could play a key role in facilitating diplomatic talks, international business and tourism.

“While this project is being funded by the Department of Defense, and clearly has applications in the diplomatic world, it also has applications in the business world,” said Zhaleh Semnani-Azad, an assistant professor of management and the primary behavioral scientist on the project. “If there is one thing that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, it is that business is truly international.

“Dealing with people is already messy,” she continued. “When you’re dealing with people with different values, norms and beliefs, it’s even more complex. I think that this will be just the kind of tool that can help alleviate some of the uncertainty we all have when we are interacting with people we don’t know, particularly in those situations where tensions are high. You can think of it as a smart mediator.”



In addition to Semnani-Azad, an expert in cross-cultural communication that incorporates comprehensive analysis of verbal and nonverbal patterns over a period of time, the project includes engineering teams from the Vision and Language Group at the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University in Australia and the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King’s College London in England.

“Dr. Semnani-Azad’s research plays a crucial role in the success of this project and will ultimately affect how diplomatic talks, international business and tourism will be approached in the future,” said Chandra Subramaniam, dean of the Nazarian College. “It’s great to see the impact our faculty’s research has on such critical programs at the national level. We are very proud of this accomplishment and congratulate Dr. Semnani-Azad.”

The goal of the project is to develop a smartphone-based assistive dialogue system using smart glasses, such as Google Glasses, that will apply machine learning, speech recognition and vision technology to provide cross-cultural communication assistance in real time. Specifically, the AI will incorporate cultural norms and communication styles, along with advanced speech technology and multimedia analysis, to generate an assessment of communication patterns to help the user avoid the wrong word or the wrong gesture when they are talking to someone from another culture.

Semnani-Azad said the project is expected to take part in two phases over the course of three years, with the first prototype being released in March 2023.

## KEEPING UP THE GOOD WORK: PROFESSORS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS

In an effort to recognize the talent and dedication of faculty in the Nazarian College, three professors have been awarded prestigious fellowships that will allow them to expand their research while also enhancing their teaching and areas of expertise.



Edward Kung, an assistant professor of economics, is the inaugural recipient of the Schweitzer Faculty Fellowship, established by alumnus Richard Schweitzer '87 (Accounting Theory and Practice/Finance) and Julie Schweitzer to recruit and retain high-quality faculty at the Nazarian College.

The award will help Kung focus more on his research into how home-sharing platforms affect the housing market, studying the connection between Airbnb and increasing rent and house prices, as well as how the platform encourages people to upgrade their homes or add structures to them.

“It means a lot to me that my work is being recognized as impactful and, as a faculty member, it’s definitely a great honor to be recognized through this award,” said Kung, who teaches principles of microeconomics and public economics.



Professors Kunpeng Li and Na (Amy) Wen have been awarded the Stelmar Faculty Fellowship, created by alumni Lisa '79 (Accounting) and Wayne Stelmar '76 (Business Administration) in recognition of the impact their own professors had on them during their undergraduate studies and on their careers.

“I’m very honored to receive this fellowship. It’s a recognition of what I did in terms of research and teaching,” said Li, an associate professor of operations management and supply-chain management. “I’m very happy that the college recognizes our effort and achievement, and the fellowship gives us more incentive to do better.”

The fellowship will allow Li to continue her research into supply-chain management, which is focused on green operations management, sustainability issues and e-commerce, she said.



Wen’s research is more focused on consumer behavior — which she teaches in the marketing department — studying how consumers respond to seemingly subtle factors such as the design elements in a website when making buying choices in their daily life. The fellowship will allow her to continue conducting the studies necessary to push her project forward, Wen said.

“I’m very grateful because we have so many great faculty here. [The fellowship] means a lot to me because it shows the college’s recognition for my teaching and scholarly work,” she said. “It also provides me tremendous motivation, momentum and responsibility to continue to pursue excellence in the work I do and contribute to the community.”

## FACULTY PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

### Liu Dong

- “Top Management Service Commitment and New Product Development in Manufacturing Firms: The Moderating Role of Dysfunctional Competition” – Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing
- The Spillover Effect of Product Recalls on Competitors’ Market Value: The Role of Corporate Product Reliability – Journal of Business Research

### Leily Farrokhvar

- “Integrated Student to School Assignment and School Bus Routing Problem for Special Needs Students” – Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review

### Valerie Flugge and Kurt Saunders

- “Food For Thought: Intellectual Property Protection For Recipes and Food Designs” – Duke Law and Technology Review

### Amir Gharehgozli

- Gharehgozli, A., Xu, C., & Zhang, W. (2021). “High multiplicity asymmetric traveling salesman problem with feedback vertex set and its application to storage/retrieval system.” European Journal of Operational Research, 289(2), 495-507.
- Gharehgozli, A., & Zaerpour, N. (2020). “Robot scheduling for pod retrieval in a robotic mobile fulfillment system.” Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review, 142, 102087.

### Amir Gharehgozli and Kunpeng Li

- “Mixed Integer Programming Models on Scheduling Automated Stacking Cranes” – International Journal of Business Analytics

### Sanjay Jain

- “From Jugaad to Jugalbandi: Understanding the Changing Nature of Indian Innovation” – Asia Pacific Journal of Management

### Nora Moran

- “Illusion of Safety: How Consumers Underestimate Manipulation and Deception in Online (vs. Offline) Shopping Contexts” – Journal of Consumer Affairs

### Nora Moran and Sigalit Ronen

- “Emotional Costs of Service Labor: Do Consumers Care?” – Journal of Service Marketing

### Hu (Eric) Tao

- “Developing a Value Assessment Framework of Habitual Social Media Use: A Grounded Theory Approach” – Journal of Electronic Commerce Research

### Kristen Walker

- “Connecting With the Future: The Role of Science Fiction Movies in Helping Consumers Understand Privacy-Technology Trade-offs” – Journal of Consumer Affairs

# ROAD MAP TO EXPORTING

## New Certificate Program Trains CSUN Students in Specialized Field of Exporting

By: Danielle Fairlee



Dean Chandra Subramaniam (at right) thanks the college's partners for presenting the new "Road Map to Exporting" certification program.



CSUN students and local business owners take part in a free, new certification program in exporting, hosted by the Nazarian College in spring 2022.

Tariffs, international labeling requirements, trade agreements, export financing, risk mitigation and shipping costs. These are just some of the factors entrepreneurs and businesses must consider when planning to export products from the United States to countries around the globe. Now, thanks to the new Road Map to Exporting program at California State University, Northridge, 28 students have a deeper understanding of the specialized process.

Over four Saturdays in February and March, the CSUN students, along with four local business owners looking to start exporting, took part in the free certification program presented by the District Export Council of Southern California (DECSC) and the U.S. Commercial Service, the trade promotion arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration.

CSUN's David Nazarian College of Business and Economics and Tseng College of Graduate, International and Mid-Career Education hosted the program, in partnership with the agencies. During the sessions, DECSC members instructed the students and business owners on the finer points of exporting, with the goal of each participant creating a viable export plan for a product.

Organizers said learning about the detailed process of exporting will provide students with valuable hands-on career skills as they prepare to enter the workforce. They plan to offer the program annually to CSUN students.

"We want these students to be thinking about exporting right from the beginning," said Julie Anne Hennessy, director of the Los Angeles office of the U.S. Commercial Service. "We want them to be born global."

Chandra Subramaniam, dean of the Nazarian College, said hosting the Road Map to Exporting program at CSUN was incredibly beneficial for students, especially those majoring in entrepreneurship.

"This is part of entrepreneurship," Subramaniam said. "We are building skills for the students to go out and build their own companies. That should not be determined by where you are geographically. There may be places in the world where your products might have a much better market."

### BRING IN THE EXPERTS

Sessions during the four-week program covered everything from international contracts to different business cultures. Nazarian College professors led discussions on the benefits of exporting and on supply-chain logistics. The remaining sessions were taught by DECSC members, all of whom were volunteers appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to help connect U.S. businesses with global markets. "These are experts with large companies involved in exporting, or people who specialize in international tax law or financing," Subramaniam said. "They are all trade professionals sharing their knowledge, resources and insight."

The process of exporting is not typically taught in business schools as a specific course or major, according to Joanne Scillitoe, the Nazarian College's inaugural Paul Jennings Chair in Entrepreneurship and a professor of management.

The Road Map to Exporting program "is really valuable in terms of giving the students a head start in this area," Scillitoe said. "It puts it all together so that the students are not trying to connect the dots."

The students will be well positioned in their early careers with this knowledge, she said. "They'll also have a certificate from the U.S. Commercial Service that legitimizes their learning," Scillitoe added.

### STUDENTS GLIMPSE A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Jenna Wooster, a senior studying systems and operations management, said the program opened her eyes to opportunities in exporting. "We conceptualize exporting as something you do once

you've dominated the domestic market, but there are tremendous opportunities right away," she said, adding that taking part in the program taught her the nuts and bolts of the process. "There is so much help and support for exporting available, but without this program, I would never have had this much information all in one place."

For student Jeffrey Hill, a U.S. Navy veteran who is studying business administration and global supply chain management, participating in the program meant more than a certificate.

"I learned that the process of exporting is possible," Hill said. "I left the sessions knowing I can do this — I'm capable of exporting. They told us exactly what we needed to do."

During the program, Wooster and Hill were part of a team of students working to develop an export plan for local business owner Cristina Martinez, who runs Cafe El Divisadero in Los Angeles and hopes to export her coffee overseas. The students helped Martinez develop a plan to sell her coffee in Germany, France and Italy. For the plan, the students researched each country's labeling requirements, taxes and costs for freight, among other considerations.

Martinez said she came away from the experience knowing how to get started. "It's possible," she said. "Sometimes you have an idea, and you just need to know where and how to begin."

The idea to bring the Road Map to Exporting program to CSUN was forged by Subramaniam in conversations with Robert N. Saikali, vice president and manager of international banking and trade finance for City National Bank, who also serves on the executive committee of the DECSC. The two began working on the concept and planned to launch it at CSUN in March 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic scuttled their efforts. After several postponements, they launched the program on campus, in person, on Feb. 19, 2022.

Saikali called the program "a service to the San Fernando Valley and to Los Angeles." With the U.S. importing far more goods than it exports, the country has a trade deficit in the hundreds of billions of dollars, Saikali said. "This has a tremendous negative impact on the U.S., in terms of wealth going to other countries," he said.

Students who learn about exporting now will add value to their future employers, especially if those employers are not yet exporting or planning to expand their exports, Saikali said.

#### COMPETITION TIME

For the program's final session on March 12, five student teams leveraged all the exporting knowledge they had absorbed and presented their export plans for different products to a panel of judges. The students' plans examined a variety of factors, including

potential international markets, competitors, regulatory compliance issues, risk mitigation, taxes, tariffs and cultural issues.

One team of students worked with Lisa Grabow of Beyond the Olive, a Pasadena-based purveyor of award-winning California extra-virgin olive oil. Grabow said she hopes to export her products worldwide. "I've always wanted to export, and I've been envious of my competitors getting to export their products," she said.

One key question the team identified for Grabow to consider is whether her olive oil should be shipped abroad and then bottled locally to reduce freight costs. Meanwhile, the team working with Martinez and her coffee company said focusing on Germany, France and Italy — three countries with deep cultural devotion to coffee — would allow her to expand to other European Union countries quickly, once she has established a foothold in the region.

"Many of these students have never even traveled abroad," Subramaniam said. "It is great to see them thinking about other countries and markets in this way."

"The students are fantastic," Saikali said. "They are committed, they ask a lot of great questions and they put a lot of work into developing their plans."

#### STUDENT COMPANY SHINES

When the final scores were tallied, one student team stood out above the rest, representing a brand that is no stranger to business competitions at CSUN. The team representing Synergy Active Aero earned the award for best export plan from the judges. Synergy is a CSUN student-run startup that makes a universal morphing wing similar to a rear spoiler, for use in high-end motorsports. Synergy won the 6th Annual Bull Ring New Venture competition in 2021, a

"Shark Tank"-like event hosted by the Nazarian College in which CSUN students compete for a \$10,000 prize.

Jeffrey Astorga, a mechanical engineering student who represented Synergy at the Bull Ring competition and at the Road Map to Exporting, said completing the exporting program was important for the startup company.

"The motorsports industry is a global industry," Astorga said. "There's no way around exporting eventually. I thought it was better to learn about it sooner rather than later so that by the time we are ready to sell, we aren't waiting on a lack of business knowledge."

For Synergy, Astorga and his teammates looked at market factors and selected Australia as the first target for their export plan. They also identified other countries with large motorsports communities and prominent race series for future expansion, including Japan, Germany and Italy.

Mary Beth Walker, CSUN's provost and vice president for academic affairs, presented the award for best export plan to Astorga and his team. She congratulated Synergy, along with all the participating students and business owners in the Road Map to Exporting program.

"I love continuous learning activities like this," Walker said. "This provides a meaningful career skills-oriented experience for students. This opportunity creates additional paths for students to improve, change and move internationally."

#### AN ANNUAL EVENT

Subramaniam said he aims to make the Road Map to Exporting an annual event at CSUN. One of the best aspects of the high-caliber program is that it is free for students, he added.

From left: Trade and exporting experts share their wisdom and insights with CSUN students, local business owners and other aspiring entrepreneurs, at the "Road Map to Exporting" program, held in the University Student Union Grand Salon on campus.





Robert Saikali, VP & Manager –International Banking & Trade Finance of City National Bank, introduces the Road Map to Exporting program.

With DECSC members volunteering their time to lead sessions, the minimal costs associated with staffing, room rental and refreshments were covered by sponsors, which included City National Bank, Avalon Risk Management, Edwards Global Services, the Port of Long Beach, Roanoke, and Rosenthal & Rosenthal. The sponsorships also helped underwrite the costs for the local small business owners to attend.

“We are grateful to the DECSC members and to these sponsors, but it is good for them too,” Subramaniam said. “They get to see our students who are interested in exporting, which in turn grows our pool for internships and future employers. It is good for the students and for the employers.”

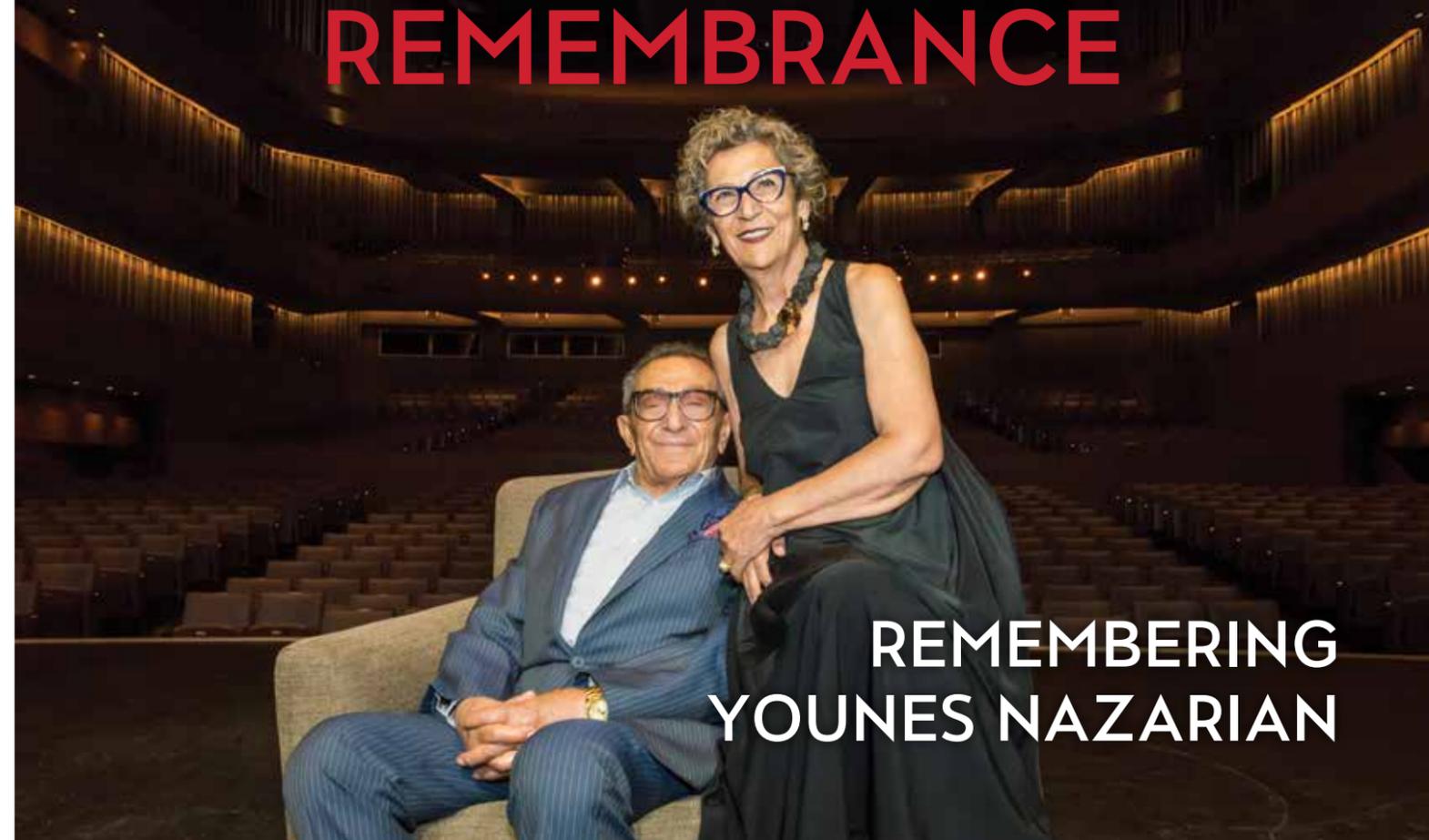
Upon completion of the Road Map to Exporting program, participating students and business owners received a certificate from the U.S. Commercial Service. Completion of the non-credit program also will be included on the students’ academic transcripts, said Joyce Feucht-Haviar, dean of CSUN’s Tseng College.

“

**I love continuous learning activities like this. This provides a meaningful career skills-oriented experience for students. This opportunity creates additional paths for students to improve, change and move internationally.”**

MARY BETH WALKER, PROVOST

# REMEMBRANCE



## REMEMBERING YOUNES NAZARIAN

**Y**ounes Nazarian, a passionate supporter of education and the arts and a principal supporter of CSUN’s Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya), passed away on March 18, 2022. He was 91.

“His legacy, represented by The Soraya, affirms our inherent connectedness, attuning our hearts and minds to what really matters — our humanity,” said CSUN President Erika D. Beck, in addressing the tremendous impact Nazarian had on the university.

Nazarian’s name is well known throughout the Los Angeles region and in Israel for the many programs established and funded through the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Family Foundation. In addition to The Soraya, the family helped establish UCLA’s Israel Studies Program and created an endowment that led to the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for Israel Studies. The family also founded the Nazarian Pavilion in the Doheny Library at USC and helped build the Beit Midrash at Milken Community School.

Younes Nazarian was a successful entrepreneur in Iran who established an import/export business in construction machinery and equipment, which became one of the largest of its kind in the region. In 1979, he and his wife, Soraya Sarah Nazarian, and their four children came to the United States, fleeing the Iranian Revolution and religious persecution. In the U.S., he became a co-owner of Stadco, a specialty parts manufacturer in the aerospace industry. He was also an early investor and board member of Qualcomm, a leader in wireless telecommunications research and development.

The Nazarian family’s support for CSUN started in 2014 when their son David, a prominent businessman, philanthropist and alumnus, made a transformative gift that was recognized with the naming of

CSUN’s business college as the David Nazarian College of Business and Economics. In 2016, Younes and Soraya donated 50 laptops to business students and served as title sponsors for the Nazarian College’s 50th anniversary celebration, an event that capped a two-year, \$25 million fundraising drive for the college.

In 2017, the Valley Performing Arts Center was renamed The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts, in honor of the couple’s \$17 million gift in support of the center’s programs and operations. The CSU Board of Trustees and CSUN conferred an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters on Younes Nazarian in 2018; he also received an honorary doctorate from the University of Haifa.

In 2016, when Younes and Soraya came to the Nazarian College to donate laptops, he cheerfully posed for selfies and shared a bit of his background with students at the event. “My father passed away when I was 2 years old,” he said. “We came to this country in ’79 with zero — scratch. [Soraya and I] wanted to build the best future for our four children, and now the nine grandchildren I have. You, also, are going to build your future. That’s why you have to rely on yourself. You have to work very hard. You have to build it yourself.”

Younes Nazarian is survived by his wife, Soraya; children David Nazarian, Shula Nazarian, Sharon Nazarian and Sam Nazarian; daughters-in-law Angella and Emina; sons-in-law Fernando and Matt; grandchildren Ariel, Aaron, Phillip, Elan, Sarah, Eli, Layla, Adam, Ella, Mia and Sha; and great-grandson Lev.



Tim Tiemann (above, second from right, and pictured below) works with young aspiring entrepreneurs in South Africa, in summer 2022. Photos courtesy of Tim Tiemann.

# INSPIRING ENTREPRENEURSHIP ABROAD

## CSUN Takes Innovation Message to South Africa

By: Andrew J. Skerritt



Lower left photo: Tiemann works with University of Johannesburg students, as part of a four-workshop series.



Lower right photo: Tiemann presents a financial modeling workshop to Johannesburg venture accelerator 22 on Sloane.

Tim Tiemann understands the challenge of helping the underdog — particularly young entrepreneurs in developing countries, with big ideas and small budgets.

The managing director of the CSUN Innovation Incubator in the Nazarian College used a U.S. State Department grant earlier this year to take his entrepreneurship ideas to women and underserved groups in South Africa, a country with 65 percent youth unemployment and where job opportunities are scarce even for university graduates.

“I’m thrilled that I’ve been given the opportunity to go to South Africa and these other places and to work with our CSUN students, to teach them how to apply those tools that, up until this point, have largely resided within the Ivy Leagues and the tech-heavy universities,” said Tiemann, who has extensive experience in corporate America and business startups.

CSUN doesn’t have a long legacy of attracting venture capitalists or being a launchpad for startups, but since 2017, Tiemann has been part of a Nazarian College team spearheading efforts to help diverse groups collaborate to kickstart new businesses.

After he delivered a lecture and a workshop at Vinh University in Vietnam in 2019, students and faculty there wanted to continue the collaboration. Tiemann worked with a group of students trying to develop a sustainable bamboo design. In virtual sessions, Tiemann and the students reviewed what they had done each week to move their venture forward.

“It was very exciting and suggested to me that this methodology does transfer, and you don’t have to be English-speaking,” Tiemann recalled. “It doesn’t have to be in the United States — it doesn’t require all the things that we normally associate with success.”

Inspired by that experience, during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, Tiemann worked on grants that would enable him to take the entrepreneurship message and methods global. The South Africa initiative was initially planned for 2021, but his travel was delayed by a succession of variant surges.

In preparation for his trip in February 2022, Tiemann hosted two virtual sessions to lay the groundwork for hands-on workshops at the University of Johannesburg. When he arrived in South Africa, Tiemann conducted two in-person workshops with aspiring entrepreneurs. While in Johannesburg, Tiemann also worked with 22 on Sloane, a business accelerator program for small- and medium-size enterprises at the University of Johannesburg. What he found in South Africa were the same traits that would make successful entrepreneurs anywhere in the world.

“They’re coming with their assets, but it’s not money,” Tiemann said. “It’s their personal creativity, it’s their diligence and it’s their coachability. ... These teams are very open to learning new tools.”

Among the student entrepreneurs was a 21-year-old woman who led a microfinancing organization offering small loans, who was looking for ways to expand. Another had a passion for baking and wanted to develop a cookie delivery service. She bakes all night on Fridays and takes a bus to sell her specialty cookies at the university’s student housing on Saturdays.

“That young woman is making a choice about where she finds joy,” Tiemann said. “That’s exceptional.”

Another student entrepreneur wanted to begin a storage unit venture but lacked funds and couldn’t secure a bank loan. He decided to start small — with one shipping container — offering a concierge service to pick up, store and deliver customers’ personal possessions. His best customers, the student reported, were older South Africans who were too frail to move and lift their accumulated possessions. His venture brought personal and financial fulfillment, Tiemann said. Before heading home, Tiemann offered participants the opportunity to stay in touch as they continued to develop and execute their business ideas.

Thea Tselepis, associate professor of business management at the University of Johannesburg, said Tiemann gave her students the one ingredient they lacked most.

“It is the confidence that they truly need. Confidence enables

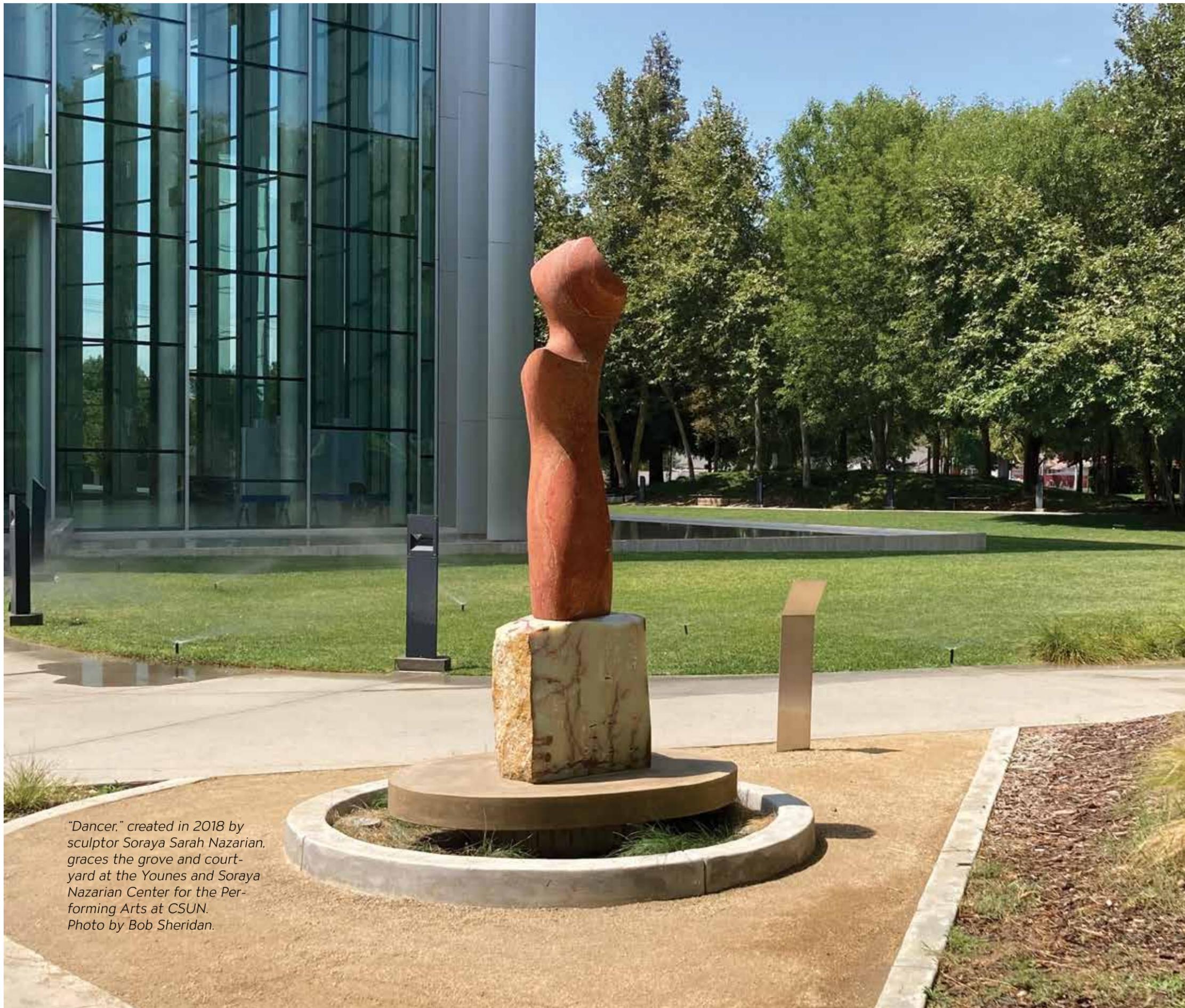
them to secure the networks who can help them move forward their ideas,” she said. “The greatest impact by far is [Tiemann’s] ability to support the students in communicating their ideas and clarifying their ideas in terms of feasibility. You can imagine how profound it is when a man of stature from an international university, with his vast experience, validates your idea and acts as a thinking partner in refining the concept that you are trying to ‘sell’ or communicate to others.”

Tiemann is on a mission, with a message.

“Some people have been dealt a winning hand from life, and that’s great,” said Tiemann, who hopes to connect the aspiring entrepreneurs from Vinh University, CSUN and the University of Johannesburg. “My purpose here on earth is to level the playing field. These communities, wherever they exist, no one handed them anything. There’s a real appreciation for when you help them because ... they didn’t expect it. There’s no entitlement and whatever little bit you can give, they will take and they’ll run with it.”

“**THEY’RE COMING WITH THEIR ASSETS, BUT IT’S NOT MONEY, IT’S THEIR PERSONAL CREATIVITY, IT’S THEIR DILIGENCE AND IT’S THEIR COACHABILITY ... THESE TEAMS ARE VERY OPEN TO LEARNING NEW TOOLS.**

—TIM TIEMANN



*"Dancer," created in 2018 by sculptor Soraya Sarah Nazarian, graces the grove and courtyard at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts at CSUN. Photo by Bob Sheridan.*

# DANCING WITH MACHINES

Robotic Process Automation and the Challenge of Preparing Students for the Workforce of the Future.

*By: Chandra Subramaniam and Robert J. Sheridan*

A few years ago, a cohort of undergraduate students returned from two weeks of classroom study, company visits and cultural immersion in China. After the trip, one student described her biggest surprise:

"When we visited the factory, I expected the automation and the robots," the student said. "What I didn't anticipate was the complex ways that humans would be interacting with them. It was like watching a carefully choreographed dance between the machines and the people, being performed all over this massive facility."

That insight offers an apt metaphor for the challenges we face at the Nazarian College in preparing our students for the workplace of the future. We must teach them how to dance — with technological partners "trained" by artificial intelligence, to music written in the "key of data," played on new-age instruments such as machine learning and the Internet of Things, orchestrated through robotic process automation (RPA) — to accompany intricate ballets for every corporate purpose, both strategic and tactical.

That student who was surprised by factory choreography in Guangzhou would be startled by what RPA is doing to transform the very nature of back-office and customer-facing operations.

RPA provides systems with the authority to perform discretionary decision-making in an operational process. Within defined parameters, RPA empowers machines to "decide and execute" at a specific point in time, without any direct human agency. Effecting such authority requires troves of data, powerful and precise analytics and, indeed, the rich experience of human talent to define the decision-making task and build the solution.



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RPA has advanced to the point where operational decision-making can be automated for almost any repetitive process for which historical data is available, including those previously thought to be the sole province of human judgment. Big and emerging companies alike have developed products with expansive capabilities for a broad array of business applications. These platforms have become extraordinarily sophisticated over the past five years — not least for the increasing ease of their use.

Frontline employees use built-in tools for “task mining” — testing the data sufficiency, viability and the return on investment (ROI) of specific automation opportunities. Those same employees can “record” the task, design a process path toward the decision point and test it, all with point-and-click pull-down menus.

RPA platforms can automate with internal applications as basic as Microsoft Office Suite, or as complex as legacy networks of cloud-based tools with application programming interface (API) interoperability. Some of the more sophisticated platforms are now integrating smart contracts enabled by blockchain.

For those frontline workers, the dance has become less routine. They’ve changed partners from application-based systems to task-driven ones. Large companies have distributed these tools widely and encouraged experimentation. The service divisions of the giant accounting firms and consultants of every size have made RPA a mainstay of their practices, internally as well as for client engagement.

The extent to which work has been augmented, rather than displaced, is illustrated by one RPA vendor’s pitch to prospective clients, offering a “personal assistant bot for every employee.” These would display dashboards, track metrics, log performance and send alerts, triggers and queue status so that frontline workers can monitor the automated, low-error decision-making in progress.

It’s a beautiful thing — except when it isn’t. It’s never fun to watch a dancer collapse on stage in full view of an audience, and the recent debacle of Zillow’s “flipping” business is a testament to what happens when the dance of algorithms and human talent goes unrehearsed and out of sync.

And that’s where the Nazarian College comes into play.

Four years ago, as the realities of digital transformation and its implications for the workforce of the future became apparent, we decided on a very specific and focused strategy: “Data First.”

We’ve reflected that by introducing two new degree programs: a B.S. and an M.S. in Business Analytics. We situated these new programs within our Department of Systems and Operations Management, and we moved all of our Information Systems faculty and programs into this same alignment. We beefed up our engagement in the SAP Alliance, incorporating the firm’s outstanding content into specific courses so that our students earn academic credit and validate professional credentials simultaneously.

At the same time, we’ve reinvigorated our commitment to learning and career-preparation objectives that emphasize critical thinking, teamwork, effective communication and ethical frameworks. We’ve invested heavily in classroom technology and faculty development to deliver hybrid excellence, while still insisting on the centrality of in-person pedagogy and engagement as the best approach for preparing human depth in a technological world.

We’ve also deployed some powerful RPA of our own. In fact, the website for our Career Education and Professional Development Center (<https://nazariancareers.csun.edu>) is powered by a dynamic engine that curates and targets opportunities and resources for our students, based on major, career interest, developmental objectives and personal preferences. In effect, it’s a mass personalization bot.

It is extraordinarily gratifying to see our students graduate, ready to dance on day one of their careers, and to know that employers are inviting them to the party. ■

*This article previously appeared in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Business Journals and has been reprinted with permission.*

**Chandra Subramaniam** is dean of the Nazarian College. **Bob Sheridan** serves as executive director of its Career Education and Professional Development Center.

## MBA AND BUSINESS HONORS STUDENTS EXCEL IN SMALL BUSINESS INSTITUTE COMPETITION

By: Damaris Galeano



From left: Natalie Simonoff, Adrine Arutyunyan and Daniel Madison, part of the undergraduate team that placed second in the 'Comprehensive' category for their work with Red Flight Innovation.

On Feb. 26, 2022, two Nazarian College Business Honors program undergraduate student teams and two graduate teams from the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program earned accolades for their consulting projects and business plans in the Small Business Institute's Project of the Year national competition.

The undergraduate teams, comprised of students in the college's Business Honors Program, won first place in the competition's Consulting Project of the Year category and second place in the Comprehensive Project of the Year category. The graduate teams also placed first in their respective categories: Graduate Specialized – Marketing, and Graduate Feasibility/Business Plan.

"The purpose of the Project of the Year competition is to recognize outstanding student work in consulting," said marketing professor Kristen Walker, MBA director and Small Business Institute supervisor for the MBA program and undergraduate projects. "These projects typically involve working closely with a client as a team, giving undergraduate and MBA students a chance to apply their knowledge, skills and abilities. In essence, the consulting experience brings to life the business curriculum."

The Small Business Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing professional development for those engaged in experiential student team consulting and related entrepreneurship education, research and activities. The Project of the Year competition involves small businesses, entrepreneurship educators and researchers.

"The Project of the Year competition serves as a benchmark that confirms the rigor and quality of CSUN's Business Honors Program," said professor Silvina Bamrungpong, Business Honors Program director. "Earning first place recognition three years in a row is an affirmation that the Nazarian College is a national leader in preparing students to make an impact in their chosen profession. Participating in the competition provides students with the opportunity to share

and reflect upon their experience of serving in a professional capacity as consultants to a small-business client."

The undergraduate teams worked with HipCooks, an in-person cooking school forced to pivot and offer its services online during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Red Flight Innovation, an early-stage venture focused on delivering STEM educational kits to middle school students in underserved communities.

The HipCooks team that won the Consulting Project of the Year award consisted of Anmari Pagtalunan, Rian Denich, Julia Papp, Tina Toonian and Lizbeth Sentoso. The Red Flight team that won second place for Comprehensive Project of the Year consisted of Aramazd Demirkhanyan, Natalie Simonoff, Adrine Arutyunyan, Bronte Almanza and Daniel Madison.

"The goal of the consulting project is to deliver a high-quality report and presentation that has value to the client. However, it is also essential to deliver a great experience through collaboration between the student team and the client," Bamrungpong said. "Along with the experience, students take away skills that set them up for success in their chosen field and practice what they have learned throughout their academic program."

One of the graduate teams worked with Teen Therapy Center: TTC, a marriage and family counseling corporation in Woodland Hills. The team aimed to create a marketing plan to increase overall brand awareness and attract prospective clients. The T3 team, which took first place in the category of Graduate Specialized – Marketing, consisted of Amaris Miller, Kenny Pineda, Richard Klein, Wendy Medina and Oluwaseun "Sheun" Ukpogon.

The second graduate team worked with a CSUN alumna to develop a needs assessment and feasibility analysis for providing technical assistance to small businesses in the San Fernando Valley, calling their project "Stuck in a Maze."

The Ace Consulting Team, which took first in the category of Graduate Feasibility/Business Plan, consisted of Jason Cascio, Hannah Labra, Thomas Lee, Kirsten Mosesson and Anna Russell.



From left: Students Rian Denich and Anmari Pagtalunan, from the consulting team that placed first in the category of Student Consulting Project of the Year.

## STUDENT TEAM 'OCTOBIT' CONQUERS BULL RING AND FAST PITCH NEW VENTURE COMPETITIONS



A graduate-student initiative, Octobit, captured first place for its innovative design.

With more than 100 people in attendance, the CSUN Nazarian College hosted the 7th annual Bull Ring New Venture Competition finals virtually on April 26, with five finalist student teams competing for \$10,000 in total cash prizes.

First place this year was captured by Octobit, an online, simulation-based training platform designed to help users such as behavioral clinicians and therapists better develop their communication skills with clients in clinical settings.

Through their own experience in behavior analysis, founder AnAn Chang '21 (M.S., Applied Behavior Analysis) and co-founder and graduate student Ryan Moradpour (Applied Behavior Analysis) noticed that their fellow behavioral clinicians often had a hard time interacting with their patients.

The training platform presents students with a variety of scenarios they will encounter in real life and gives them options on the best ways to communicate with patients and their family members.

Throughout the Bull Ring competition, which began in March with 20 teams, participants had access to free workshops, dedicated mentoring and coaching sessions to learn more about entrepreneurship, receive critical feedback on their product concept and business plan, and hone their ideas for the final event.

"Our students have been putting a lot of work into their new venture ideas, and the competition has been incredibly competitive," said Ryan Holbrook, director of the CSUN Entrepreneurship Program.

In addition to Octobit, this year's finalists were SubmitIt, a system for instructors to check for plagiarism in computer coding sequences; Canmove, an online platform that connects users to independent drivers and moving companies; Vanzari, an online resource for music fans and professionals that displays renowned artists' album sales; and Atra, a cost-effective and customizable alternative to standard memorial headstone markers. Awards included an Audience Choice Award winner determined by a live vote; this year's winner was Vanzari.

Since its inception, the Bull Ring competition has been supported by alumnus Jeff Marine and his family, allowing CSUN students to develop their entrepreneurial skills and make their visions become a reality.

In addition to the Bull Ring, another annual event that offers students the opportunity to present their startup ideas is the Fast Pitch New Venture Competition, also sponsored by the Nazarian College. This fall competition, held in November, challenges students to pitch their innovation in three minutes before a panel of distinguished judges and a live audience. Octobit also won the fall 2021 competition on their way to victory in the Bull Ring.

## NAZARIAN COLLEGE NAMED TOP-PERFORMING 'CAREER-READY' BUSINESS SCHOOL

In late 2021, the Nazarian College was named a Top 5 "Career-Ready" Business School by SkillSurvey, where students were rated by supervisors on 30 behaviors tied to eight National Association of Colleges and Employers competencies.

"We are proud of this ranking, which is greatly due to the efforts of our staff in the Career Education and Professional Development Center," said Dean Chandra Subramaniam. "Students at the Nazarian College have the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience to adequately prepare them for their future careers with the resources and events the center offers."

Employers providing supervisor ratings and evaluative feedback via SkillSurvey represent more than 20,000 companies, government agencies and nonprofits. Amazon, Apple, Daimler, Google, International Paper and Northwestern Mutual are among the top 20 companies submitting the most feedback on students.

The Nazarian College's Career Education and Professional Development Center provides students, alumni, faculty and staff with various resources on career development in the business field. From resume feedback to networking events and mentorship programs, the center aims to help students find their career path and ready themselves to enter their designated industry.

## BUSINESS LEADERS SHARE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AS PROFESSORS FOR A DAY



Nazarian College alumna and Chief Marketing Officer at AutoFi, Keri Wise, addresses students during the 2018 "Professor for a Day" event. Photo by Jordan Helo.

While he was a student at CSUN, Steve Rabuchin '85 (Organizational Systems Management) discovered his passion for business, landing an internship during his senior year and being offered a job at IBM upon graduation. Through the "Professor for a Day" program, Rabuchin returned to CSUN last fall to share his journey as a successful businessman and now Amazon Web Services vice president for worldwide revenue operation.

The "Professor for a Day" program is held every October by the Nazarian College and aims to connect students with professionals who share industry insights, job interview advice and stories of their own journeys.

"Professor for a Day is a crucial initiative for us," said Chandra Subramaniam, dean of the Nazarian College. "Our students hear from successful professionals who typically happen to be alumni — people who were once in their shoes as students — giving them the confidence that they can be just as successful, while also lending them firsthand career advice."

The program presents students the opportunity to hear from experts in a variety of industries on how to apply what they've learned in college in a "real-world" environment, as well as how to get their careers started.

During his virtual presentation in the Operations Management class taught by professor Amir Gharehgozli, Rabuchin shared his career journey, as well as insights from his work at Amazon — particularly the company culture, which highly promotes innovation. Rabuchin

also encouraged Matadors to apply at Amazon as they start their careers.

"We are constantly seeking top talent across a wide variety of backgrounds," he said. "For people who like to invent, there's no better place to build than Amazon Web Services. There are a lot of opportunities, and I think CSUN students would fit great there."

Deanna Austin '90 (MBA, Business Administration) was another notable speaker at this year's Professor for a Day program. The alumna is the chief commercial officer for Princess Cruises, leading teams that create and optimize global revenue for the cruise line.

During her presentation, Austin shared valuable information on how to choose the right career path and went into detail on how to earn a promotion, as well as offering relevant resources for dealing with inequality at work.

Austin also gave students business tips, including revenue-management strategies, sharing her decision-making process, time management advice and her approach to resolving conflicts.

"I truly enjoy connecting with students to help them think about their future career. If I have helped at least one student, then I have succeeded as the Professor for a Day," Austin said.

In addition to Rabuchin and Austin, nearly three dozen other prominent guest speakers — including many alumni — shared their experiences with students during the program.

## MEET THE FIRMS AND INDUSTRY NIGHT FAIRS HELP STUDENTS GLIMPSE THE FUTURE

Employers consistently strike gold at two career fairs hosted by the Nazarian College — Industry Night and Meet the Firms. In fall 2021, companies went mining again at both events, held virtually to connect well-known businesses and firms with students.

"I only go back to schools that I see career success from, and CSUN is undoubtedly one of them," said Amanda Luu, senior campus recruiter for Target. "The quality of these students automatically makes us want to invest in them. Historically, we have had a great base of CSUN alumni on our teams, and I do not see that changing any time soon."

Luu aimed to recruit management candidates for the retail giant at Industry Night. The event gave CSUN students the perfect chance to connect with employers and companies, and explore career paths.

Forty-four employers — including Goldman Sachs, Keller Williams Real Estate/Niko LA Leasing, JusticeCorps, Target and Aflac — engaged with students during group and one-on-one sessions. Representatives spoke about job opportunities, career outlooks, networking and other topics to help students identify their post-graduation plans. They also provided contact information and job applications, offering students further opportunities to follow up with their companies.

Owner Niko Deleon represented Keller Williams Realty/Niko LA Leasing. He has been working with CSUN students for five years, and he called CSUN a hotspot for creative and talented students with high potential.

"First and foremost, CSUN students are awesome because they have the uncanny ability to create original content," Deleon said. "Their organizational skills are of a much higher caliber, [compared] to other institutions."



Hundreds of students attend the college's Industry Night to meet with a wide variety of employers. Photo by Carissa Rhoads.

Meet the Firms, the largest career fair for accounting and information systems students in Southern California, was held on three separate days in September and October 2021. The events gave CSUN students the opportunity to showcase themselves and their resumes in one-on-one sessions with representatives from Big Four, mid-tier, regional, local, private industry and government firms.

One of the representatives offering sessions was Keilyn Robinson, campus recruiter for Ernst & Young (EY). Robinson said CSUN students are the reason the Big Four company continues to come back to the event each year.

"CSUN has a diverse candidate pipeline, and it really sets it apart. The students here are skilled, prepared and ready for the workforce, based on the courses offered," Robinson said. "We've had an amazing history with CSUN students and this event in general. Currently, our firm has over 200 CSUN alumni, and we are always looking for more — which is why we continue to come to this campus."

## STUDENT SELECTED AS PCAOB SCHOLAR

Recent graduate Arev Mkrtychyan '21 (Accountancy) was named a Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) Scholar and awarded the board's prestigious \$10,000 scholarship for the 2021-22 academic year. This award is given to undergraduate and graduate accounting students enrolled in accredited U.S. colleges and universities.

"[The] PCAOB Scholar award means a lot to me. I am so thankful for this financial support, which will help me to achieve my educational goals," said Mkrtychyan, who received the scholarship during her senior year. "[It] gave me a new goal: do more, get more and give more."

In December 2021, Mkrtychyan completed a bachelor's degree in accountancy, gaining a better understanding of what she called "the language of any business." In a world where accountants will always be needed, she plans to use her degree to assist her community with managing their budgets, doing their taxes, and completing financial reports and audits, Mkrtychyan said.

"This is a great achievement for Arev, and we are very proud of this recognition," said Rishma Vedd, chair of the Department of Accounting and Information Systems. "I know Arev's ambition as a student will translate into the professional world, where she will make significant contribution to the community."



The PCAOB, a nonprofit that oversees the audits of public companies, brokers and dealers, was established by Congress through the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. Since 2011, the PCAOB Scholars Program has assisted students who are likely to become auditors, and those who might choose a different career path if not for the organization's scholarships.

## BETA GAMMA SIGMA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Beta Gamma Sigma welcomed 41 new students into the business honor society, at the New Member Recognition Ceremony in November 2021. The virtual event was presided over by Chandra Subramaniam, dean of the Nazarian College; Valerie Flugge, faculty advisor; and Noreen Keh, the chapter's student president.

Membership in Beta Gamma Sigma is offered only to students from the top 5 percent of business schools that have been accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Undergraduate students with a 3.8 GPA or higher and whose academic records place them in the top 10 percent of the Nazarian College are eligible to join. Graduate students must be in the top 20 percent of their class to join.

"It is such a joy to celebrate our students who have worked so hard and have excelled academically," Flugge said. "Beta Gamma Sigma is not just a resume builder. Membership will allow these students to network internationally and continue to build the skills necessary to have a successful and fulfilling career."



Students from Beta Gamma Sigma (BGS) and the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA) donate their time to Project Angel Food, as part of the "BGS Gives Back" program.

## ALUMNI HONORED AT BUSINESS JOURNALS' CFO & HR AWARDS



Alumnus Nick Tarditti '04 (Finance, *pictured at left*) was honored as the Rising Star CFO of the Year at the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2021 CFO Awards, for his work on Psomas's pandemic response team.

Eight additional alumni also were nominated in other categories at the October 2021 event, where the Nazarian College was a presenting sponsor. Alumnus Steve Aleman '98 (Accounting) was a nominee and finalist for the Enterprise Private Company CFO category, for his efforts in executing

strategic growth opportunities and driving Prime Healthcare's future company growth. Diane Duncan '92 (Business Administration), Mark Fleischmann '84 (Accounting Theory and Practice), Nadia Litovskaya '07 (Finance and Real Estate), Peter Rivera '86 (Accounting), Mitchell Thomas '76 (Accounting) and John Yeressian '00 (Finance) also were among the nominees.

In June 2021, alumnus Paul Erickson '85 (Finance, *pictured at right*) was honored at the San Fernando Valley Business Journal's 2021 CFO & HR Awards. The Nazarian College also was a presenting sponsor of the event, held virtually.

Erickson was named CFO of the Year in the category of Emerging Private Companies, for his work at Contemporary Services Corp. in Northridge. He joined the company as CFO in 2015. Previously, Erickson served as executive vice president and CFO at Great American Group, where he played a key role in the company's

growth over 17 years, from a small company to a global corporation with more than \$300 million in transaction revenues.

Elizabeth Salazar '15 (Health Administration), alumna of CSUN's College of Health and Human Development, also was honored at the event. Salazar was named HR Professional of the Year in the Large Public Company category, for her work at Antelope Valley Hospital.

"It's incredible to see our CSUN alumni get recognized for their work — especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, where these two professions have had to make significant changes in the way they approach their roles," said Chandra Subramaniam, dean of the Nazarian College. "CSUN alumni are making an impact, and it's great to see them being recognized by such prestigious regional publications."

Subramaniam also spoke at the event about the challenges and expectations CFOs and HR professionals face as a result of the pandemic. Going forward, he said, CFOs will need great analytic skills, and they must be "master communicators" who are able to embrace new technologies — in addition to maintaining financial stability. HR professionals will need to manage a return to workforce growth and recharge employee engagement and productivity, as employee burnout has become too common during the pandemic, the dean noted. He also added that they will need to address urgent diversity, equity and inclusion issues.



Fred Nigro and CSUN President Erika D. Beck

## ALUMNUS FRED NIGRO HONORED WITH DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Nazarian College alumnus and business manager Fred Nigro '74 (Accounting) was one of three special Matadors honored with CSUN's Distinguished Alumni Award on June 4. The event took place at the Skirball Cultural Center, with CSUN alumnus and former honoree Bill Griffeth '80 (Journalism) returning as master of ceremonies. All three honorees have built successful careers in Hollywood: Nigro, actor Lauren Ridloff '01 (English – Writing) and Sony Pictures Entertainment executive and entrepreneur Keith Weaver '96 (Journalism), M.P.A. '07,

"We recognize and honor the collective impact that CSUN has on the world through the powerful contributions of our tremendously talented and inspiring alumni," CSUN President Erika D. Beck said.

Nigro reflected on attending Cal State Northridge on the G.I. Bill, after serving in the U.S. Navy in Vietnam. His courses in accounting taught him creative thinking, he said. "When you think about accounting, it's all about numbers and statistics and verification," Nigro said. "But my teachers taught me to be able to communicate that, and to use those tools to be able to communicate in everyday English."

He spoke about working in CSUN's VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Clinic, which provides cost-free tax service for low-income individuals in the community and an opportunity for CSUN students to gain experience with handling taxation.

"It allowed me to both listen to people and be able to explain things in clear English," Nigro said.

After graduating, Nigro worked at a small CPA firm in Beverly Hills, where he became a bookkeeper for the long-running soap opera "Days of our Lives." From there, he worked for the band Fleetwood Mac, and went on to become a founding partner at Nigro Karlin Segal Feldstein & Bolno, now known as NKSFB, LLC — one of the largest and most influential business management firms in the country. Nigro and his partners started the firm with three clients: David Letterman, Van Halen and Joan Rivers. He noted that his company has hired more than 300 CSUN graduates.

Nigro is still deeply involved with CSUN as an active member of the Nazarian College Advisory Board. He and his wife, Sharon, created the Fred and Sharon Nigro Scholarship Endowment in the College.

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS EARN TOP RANKINGS



This year, the Nazarian College continued its reputation for earning top rankings for its graduate programs. The Princeton Review named it among the "Best On-Campus MBA" programs, in its list of 2022 Best Business Schools. Intelligent.com ranked the Nazarian College's program No. 3 in its list of Best Online Master's in Taxation Programs of 2022 — with a special award for "Best Cohort-Based Program."

U.S. News & World Report ranked the MBA program No. 14 (No. 8 among public universities) in California and No. 3 among CSUs, for 2023. Globally, the publication ranked the program No. 76 among public universities.

## SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF ACCOUNTING AT CSUN

By: Danielle Fairlee

Expanding their longstanding support for the Department of Accounting, financial executive and CSUN alumnus Charles “Chuck” Noski and his wife, Lisa, recently donated \$1 million to establish an Endowed Chair in Accounting at CSUN.

“This generous gift from Chuck and Lisa Noski gives the Nazarian College the opportunity to recruit on a national level from among the best and brightest in accounting education, helping us form the future of our well-established accounting program,” said Nazarian College Dean Chandra Subramaniam.

The Charles H. Noski Endowed Chair in Accounting will be an important tool for recruiting a tenured accounting professor to CSUN, Subramaniam said. The endowed chair will help create a competitive compensation package on par with other public and private colleges and universities in the region.

The compensation package will help offset the high cost of living in Los Angeles, and the Noski Endowed Chair can also provide

additional funding for research or teaching interests, Subramaniam added.

Supporting CSUN and the Department of Accounting is nothing new for Chuck and Lisa Noski. In 2015, they established the Noski Family Scholarship, supporting four accounting students annually with up to 100 percent of their total cost of attendance. The Noskis also have supported other CSUN priorities, including the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya).

“We focused first on the students, but the other part of the education equation is outstanding teachers,” Chuck Noski said. “We want to make sure CSUN has the resources to attract and retain very talented people who can bring ideas and energy to the department.”

**“I’ve always felt that my accounting education, my business education and my time at CSUN prepared me really well to go out into the business world and have success professionally”**

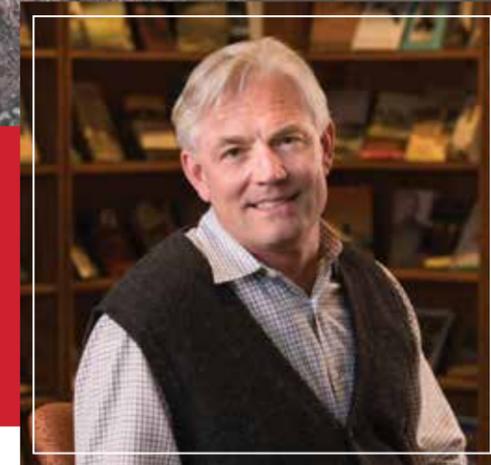
Chuck Noski ’73 (Business Administration), M.S. ’95 (Accountancy) ’07 (Honorary Doctorate) — who spent nearly two decades at Big Four accounting firm Deloitte, before holding senior leadership positions at AT&T, Bank of America, Hughes Electronics and Northrop Grumman and retired as chairman of the board of Wells Fargo & Co. in 2021 — credited CSUN for his business success.

“I’ve always felt that my accounting education, my business education and my time at CSUN prepared me really well to go out into the business world and have success professionally,” he said.

Noski said he hopes the professor who holds the Noski Endowed Chair will build on CSUN’s tradition of excellence in accounting education. “Dean Subramaniam and the professors in accounting are very motivated, passionate and committed to excellence in education and research,” Noski said. “This is an opportunity to sustain that and to drive excellence going forward.”



Lisa and Chuck Noski recently donated \$1 million to establish an Endowed Chair in Accounting. Photo by Lee Choo.



## CSUN RECOGNIZES ENTREPRENEUR PAUL JENNINGS WITH HONORARY DOCTORATE

More than 30 years after earning his undergraduate degree in marketing, distinguished alumnus Paul Jennings returned to the CSUN commencement stage to receive an honorary doctorate in 2022.

Jennings is a pioneer in deregulated telecommunications services and an advocate for sustainability and those with learning disabilities. In May, the Nazarian College recognized his exceptional career accomplishments and community service with a Doctor of Humane Letters.

CSUN sparked his entrepreneurial spirit, Jennings said.

“What made me an entrepreneur was the ability to take basic economics and understand how to monetize it, and I would say those skillsets, I absolutely learned at Northridge,” he said.

Jennings is founder and CEO of PCS Energy, the largest commercial solar provider for the city of Los Angeles. The company focuses on energy solutions for multifamily apartments.

Throughout his career, Jennings has been a strong advocate for education.

He sits on the board of trustees for Park Century School in Culver City, which was founded in 1968 for students with language-based learning differences. He created the Jennings Family Foundation to help fund facilities, scholarships and student activities. The foundation has supported more than 20 organizations, with an emphasis on services to underserved, abused or neglected children and temporary support for homeless families.

Jennings has remained an active and generous supporter of his alma mater. Among his contributions:

- A \$1 million gift to create the Paul Jennings Endowed Chair for Entrepreneurship.
- Participation in the Nazarian College’s “Professor for a Day” events.
- Serving on the advisory board for the Nazarian College and the CSUN Foundation board.

CSUN honored Jennings with the university’s Volunteer Service Award in 2014 and Distinguished Alumni Award in 2015.

Jennings first moved to California from New York in 1980 and took a job at Lockheed Martin’s Burbank Skunk Works. Laid off within a couple of years, he enrolled at CSUN, earning a bachelor’s degree in marketing in 1985.

Jennings worked his way through college by selling long-distance phone plans. Seeing an opportunity in the dismantling of the monopolies in the telecommunications industry in the early 1980s, he developed a vertical integration strategy — integrating and delivering various telecommunication services primarily to federal and state agencies, including correctional facilities nationwide.

The company, Public Communications Services Inc., became the third-largest provider of inmate telephone services in the country. He

**“What made me an entrepreneur was the ability to take basic economics and understand how to monetize it ... those skillsets, I absolutely learned at Northridge.”**

moved into real estate, eventually amassing a portfolio with annual sales exceeding \$100 million.

His current focus, installing EV charging stations in apartment buildings, is important because “there’s a lot of efficiency to go around,” Jennings said. He compared transportation to telephones, noting that phones were expensive when that technology was new. “Transportation is no different,” he said. “The cheaper transportation gets, which electrification will bring, the more accessibility people get and the better our society does.”

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## WAYNE AND LISA STELMAR

By: Andrew J. Skerritt

Wayne and Lisa Stelmar with Stelmar Scholarship Fund recipients at the 2022 Nazarian College Scholarship Dinner.

### “We are in a position to change lives the way ours were changed.”

Lisa Stelmar arrived on the CSUN campus in fall 1977, after Wayne Stelmar had graduated and started his public accounting career at Grant Thornton.

Today, bound by their commitment to philanthropy and commitment to their alma mater, the couple is giving back through scholarships to business students and by supporting recruitment and retention of faculty in the Nazarian College.

“I was the first in [my] family to go to college, and there were certain professors who helped push me along,” said Lisa ’79 (Accounting). “They would sit down next to my desk as class was ending and say, ‘This work is really good.’ That meant so much to me. There were some really great professors [at CSUN].”

Lisa met Wayne in 1980, soon after she joined Grant Thornton, where she became a CPA. Passionate about tax accounting, she later moved to Ernst & Young, where she became a tax manager before leaving to

establish her own tax and accounting practice. In 1983, the couple married.

Meanwhile, fellow CPA Wayne, who has a passion for real estate, left Grant Thornton to pursue real estate at Kenneth Leventhal & Co., an accounting firm that was involved with some of America’s largest real estate transactions. After three years, he moved to the Watt Companies and focused on homebuilding as the CFO of Watt Residential. During the next 18 years, Wayne was involved with the company’s merger with John Laing Homes, the leveraged buyout of John Laing Homes and its sale to Dubai-based Emaar Properties in 2006. Three years later, Wayne and three partners founded The New Home Company. As CFO, he took the company public in 2014. He retired in 2017 and remained on the board until the company was sold in 2021. Now, the Stelmars are in the next chapter of their lives, focused on family, friends and giving back.

“We never thought we would be in the position we are,” said Wayne ’76 (Accounting). He and Lisa have three grown children and a grandson. They want to help many deserving students and faculty.

“We are in a position to change lives the way our lives were changed,” said Wayne, who joined the Nazarian College Advisory Board in 2021. “Our CSUN education allowed us to open doors we never knew existed.”

The Stelmar Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to sophomores, juniors and seniors in the Nazarian College, while the Stelmar Fund for Faculty Excellence supports recruitment and retention of exceptional faculty in the college.

During their careers, the couple enjoyed attending fundraising galas each fall. Now, they focus on causes that were already part of their lives to support.

“I’ve always wanted to be involved in philanthropy at some stage in my life,” Lisa said. “It was just something that was ingrained in me, even though my parents didn’t have the money to give back.”

Wayne counted Kenneth Leventhal, Leventhal’s colleague Stan Ross and Ray Watt as mentors. The three men were renowned for their philanthropy in higher education, and Lisa and Wayne were inspired by their example. The Stelmars try to match their giving with their passions — education, faith, conservation, music — through organizations including CSUN, the San Diego Zoo, the Orange Catholic Foundation and the Hollywood Bowl.

“We have other causes that are important to us individually, but CSUN is our number one,” Lisa said. “It’s where we both started our lives and our careers.”



**THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT**  
Graduates celebrate at the Nazarian College commencement ceremony on May 22, 2022, on the University Library lawn. Photo by David J. Hawkins.

**Alumni:**

**Connect and give back.**

The David Nazarian College of Business and Economics Alumni Chapter welcomes you to join us for events and opportunities. The chapter's mission is to:

- Create opportunities for alumni to become more connected to and interactive with CSUN and the college.
- Honor and showcase our alumni.
- Strengthen and improve the Nazarian College Alumni Chapter and its engagement with alumni, faculty and students.
- Forge connections and provide additional resources to promote the welfare and intellectual progress of current and former students at CSUN.

The Alumni Chapter needs you! Please consider serving on the chapter's board of directors. To learn more about upcoming events and programs, and to join the chapter, visit: [csun.edu/alumni/join-csun-alumni-chapter](https://csun.edu/alumni/join-csun-alumni-chapter).

