



INSIGHT

CAL NEWS MAGAZINE
FALL 2023



SDSU

College of
Arts and Letters

DEAN'S MESSAGE

It's my pleasure to welcome each of you to our year-end digest of important activities in CAL.

I am happy to report that CAL researchers secured more than **\$13 million** in grant awards. CAL faculty contributed to the university's 365 principal investigators, who received 805 awards from 331 funding sources, and submitted 1,270 proposals to further research-related funding. In total, SDSU faculty and staff secured \$192.2 million in grants and contracts last fiscal year. The [annual awards listing](#) features an anthropology researcher on the cover.

The fall semester has been full of engaging events, research activity, and student enrichment. I am deeply proud of our college and all of its accomplishments.

CAL's focus on sustainability continues as we welcome the Office of Energy and Sustainability to the physical space in the Arts and Letters building. In October an open house and vine-cutting ceremony helped welcome the office and President de la Torre spoke about the importance of sustainability at SDSU. Along with SDSU's Office of Energy and Sustainability, this exciting and collaborative hub consists of the Center for Regional Sustainability, the Center for Better Food Futures, and the Sustainability major and minor.



Highlights in this edition:

- ISCOR students have developed an innovative new podcast
- Faculty have received invitations to join prestigious organizations
- Two CAL faculty were awarded the SDSU Alumni Distinguished Award and two were awarded Fulbrights
- Alumni are actively engaged and making a difference in our communities
- CAL amassed more than \$1 million in transformative gifts from a multitude of gracious donors and foundations

As we look forward to the new year, I'd also like to take a moment to express my appreciation and acknowledge you and the entire CAL community for a phenomenal year.

Sincerely

Ronnee Schreiber
Interim Dean
College of Arts and Letters

FALL 2023 CONTENTS

STUDENTS

- 3 | Student Success: Benefits of Being Active on Campus
- 5 | Student Showcase Shines Light on Undergraduate Research in CAL
- 6 | Economics Graduate Student Selected Farm Foundation Ag Scholar 2024
- 7 | SDSU Mundt Peace Scholars Engage in Humanitarian Work in South Africa
- 9 | ISCOR Students Create “The Spotlight” Podcast to Demystify Current Events



FACULTY

- 11 | Pascale Joassart-Marcelli and Jeanette Shumaker Honored with 2023 Alumni Distinguished Faculty Awards
- 13 | Fulbright Brings Dris Soulaïmani to Morocco in Search of Historic Berber Manuscripts
- 14 | Gregory A. Daddis Elected to the Board of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
- 16 | National Humanities Center Invites Joanna Brooks to Complete Work on an Emergent Humanities Toolkit

RESEARCH

- 17 | Center for Comics Studies Receives NEH Grant to Help K-12 Educators Learn to Teach Social Justice Through Comics
- 19 | NEH Grant for New Empowerment Tool That Helps Communities Document Heritage of Historic Buildings
- 21 | \$5M USDA Grant Helps Train Next Generation of Food and Agriculture Scientists
- 23 | Preservation and Digitization of Tijuana’s Historical Archives Broadens Public Access

ALUMNI

- 25 | Fiske Legal Series at SDSU Gives Students Insight Into the Law Profession
- 27 | Thomas Claypool Creates Sustainable Solutions to Recycle, Repurpose, and Remix Shoes
- 29 | Alumnus Unveils a Chicano Park Mural, 20 Years in the Making

PHILANTHROPY

- 31 | Transformative \$1 Million Gift Bolsters the Future of Asian Studies at San Diego State University
- 33 | New Scholarship to Benefit Students Studying War and Society, History, and Political Science
- 34 | College of Arts and Letters First-Generation Program



CAL IN THE NEWS

- 36 | CAL Faculty, Alumni, and Students Featured in a Variety of Media Outlets
- 37 | Faculty Bookshelf
- 39 | Fall Events Recap



CAL Council President Billie Butler leads a CAL Council meeting.

Student Success: Benefits of Being Active on Campus

Participation in student councils can create connections and leadership opportunities that last a lifetime

By [Leslie L.J. Reilly](#)

When students are new to San Diego State University, oftentimes they feel alone as they navigate their academic journey. Student councils provide connections to other like-minded students who are studying in a particular college.

With nine active student councils, students can help steer events, make programming recommendations, and collaborate with clubs and organizations. Councils advocate for students and provide a bridge between the colleges and SDSU's governing body, Associated Students. Clubs and organizations work in tandem with the councils to obtain funding for specific events and projects.

In addition to running for leadership positions, students can share their concerns

and ideas by attending the public college council meetings that take place weekly. Council meetings also help students find out about the many academic, professional, and social activities across the entire campus.

Tess Larsen, executive vice president of the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) Council is a third-year English major and this is her second semester as a council leader. Larsen is and works with.

"Being involved in the student council has given me the opportunity to build leadership skills that I had not previously had the chance to develop, become more involved on campus, and meet people I would not have had the chance to meet otherwise," Larsen said.

Employers and graduate schools value leadership experiences as it shows them that students are willing to go the extra mile in their community, to serve others while being a team player and being part of a larger vision.

Many council members represent clubs that engage historically marginalized communities.

CAL Council VP of Finance, **Ethan Pellegrini**, a third-year history and political science major said, “Getting to know the administrators of my college has been extremely valuable to me, as it has made me more confident in my decision to become heavily involved in CAL.”

Pellegrini added that through the council, he sees how both administrators and professors support CAL students.

“Knowing my administrators has illustrated their commitment to our educational journey and how they want to see us reach our highest potential and succeed,” he said.

Being part of the CAL Council has dramatically improved his feeling of community at SDSU and CAL. A council member for the past two years, he interacts with CAL students and others from across campus who are involved in all aspects of student government.

“I have built and improved many skills that will be transferable to my professional career, including leading the budgeting process,

creating budget plans, and further building my ability to work within a team,” Pellegrini said. “The biggest surprise while being on the council was how much my role allowed for growth.”

College administrators often seek input from students in the councils to gain perspective on what students want.

Aileen Taylor-Grant, advisor to the CAL Council said, “The CAL council has been instrumental in providing feedback on student services and resources provided to CAL students. Our shared governance model has allowed us to enhance and improve the overall CAL learning community in a meaningful way.”

“Many student leaders on the executive board have used the leadership skills they developed while serving on the council to propel them into their careers or the next phase of their academic journey,” she said.

Two CAL alumni who served on the executive board in 2020-21 are currently serving in leadership roles now — one is now a Senate Fellow for the California State Senate and pursuing a graduate certificate in applied public policy and government through the Center for California Studies, and the other is pursuing a graduate degree in Postsecondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs at San Diego State University. ■



CAL Council members review requests for funding from student organizations.



Students share their research in the Finch conference room.

Student Showcase Shines Light on Undergraduate Research

Students present their research and creative activities at October event.

By Leslie L.J. Reilly

Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (URSCA) is a top priority at San Diego State University. The College of Arts and Letters provides research support for students through the Undergraduate Research Office in CAL (UROC).

“Undergraduate research makes learning more meaningful and enhances cognitive and intellectual growth,” **Elisa Sobo**, director of UROC said. “It opens career pathways, increases career readiness, and builds community.” Studies show that when students add research and creative activities to their studies, graduation rates increase as well. With faculty mentors and grant funding, students are supported by the campus-wide effort toward becoming a premier public

research university, as outlined in the strategic plan.

On Oct. 25, CAL presented the URSCA showcase, giving students a chance to engage with the audience and answer questions about their research, scholarship, and creative activities. Interim Provost **Bill Tong**, Interim Dean **Ronnee Schreiber**, and Interim Associate Dean **Mike Borgstrom** were in attendance.

Students **Audrey Lacher**, **Avi Martin**, **Callie Summerlin**, **Emily Mooney**, **Elizabeth Fomine**, and **Toki Lee** presented posters highlighting their research and creative work. Topics included: socioeconomic effects of age of arrival for U.S. immigrants, impacts of

arctic oil/gas exploration, water quality in the Tijuana Estuary, Free Verse poetry, Ukraine War battlefield trends, and the creative writing process.

Melanie Hussey, a social science major and editor-in-chief of Splice, the journal of undergraduate scholarship at CAL shared impacts of publishing in the journal. About the showcase event, Hussey said, “I enjoyed learning from my peers through their amazing work. I felt as though the professors and other faculty mentors wanted to really listen and understand the student perspective to learn what research means to us.”

The Splice Collective staffed a display showcasing the most recent issue of the journal, which attendees enjoyed reviewing. Students there to answer questions included **Amireh Boroujeni-Ellington**, **Emily Tablak**, and **Ethan Pellegrini**.

Sociology student **Hazel Fernandez**, presented a speed talk about the factors that shape undergraduate career decisions. She discovered students use 34% positive words and 66% negative words in their top 15 descriptors of feelings and emotions about career search.

“URSCA really has allowed me to grow as a student by allowing me to build a community that encourages me to dream big,” Fernandez said. “I was really nervous to present my research but seeing the genuine curiosity of those present, gave me confidence to share my knowledge.”

Hattie Jenkins, an economics and statistics double major, presented a speed talk about her research on forest law and trade programs in Latin America and Africa. Her research seeks answers about the effectiveness of the program, and the impacts on forest loss and timber production.

Callie Summerlin, an environmental sciences student said, “Being involved in URSCA has given me the opportunity to pursue ideas and questions while being guided by inspiring mentors. The experience makes me feel excited for the future!” ■



Economics Graduate Student Selected Farm Foundation Ag Scholar 2024

Olivia Richard, first-year master’s student in economics, has been selected to the 2024 class of the Farm Foundation Agricultural Scholars Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS).

“The objective of the Agricultural Scholars program is to inspire and train the next generation of agricultural economists interested in agricultural policy, commodity market analysis, agricultural finance, and other applied fields of economics,” stated Jenna Wicks, Farm Foundation Agricultural Scholars program manager.

In 2024, scholars selected from colleges across the U.S. will engage in learning experiences that allow them to gain a deeper understanding of government and agricultural policies. Richard will attend two round tables (the first is in Hawaii), where thought leaders from government, academic, and agribusinesses will explore issues that impact food and agricultural sectors. She’ll conduct and present research alongside USDA ERS economists in topics related to agricultural economics such as agricultural policy and commodity market analysis.

“My career goal is to become an economist for federal agencies producing research that has the potential to impact real policy within our country,” Richard said. “This opportunity will provide me with knowledge and skills about agricultural policy and an understanding of research within government as a whole.” ■

SDSU Mundt Peace Scholars Engage in Humanitarian Work in South Africa

Four students from CAL made impacts during their eight-week service-learning internships with humanitarian and social justice organizations in Cape Town.

By Leslie L.J. Reilly and Maria Keckler

The William R. Mundt Memorial Scholarship for Cross-Cultural Peace Internships extends a transformative opportunity to San Diego State University students, honing their leadership acumen and cultural competence. Through semester-long service internships that actively immerse participants in hands-on projects alongside NGOs, the scholarship transcends conventional learning boundaries.

The program's dynamic engagement not only fulfills internship requisites across various majors but also resonates deeply with SDSU's Peace Corps Prep program. As students collaborate with humanitarian and social justice organizations, they gain a profound understanding of global dynamics, enriched by diverse perspectives and real-world challenges.

The inaugural Mundt Peace Scholarship was launched in 2019 with students working in Cambodia. This year, internships took place in Cape Town, South Africa, a city with a rich and complex history that includes colonialism, apartheid and the struggle for freedom and democracy. It is a city that is still grappling with the legacies of its past, while also dealing with contemporary issues such as inequality, poverty and environmental sustainability.

This summer eight SDSU students spent eight weeks with a variety of organizations working to help solve some of South Africa's most pressing issues.

Alisha Alexander, majoring in public health interned with Lovelife, an organization that

promotes healthy, positive, HIV-free living among South African teenagers.

"I have been embraced by the people of Langa like I am one of their own. I have learned so much about the struggle that has shaped the community but the resilience of the people is amazing," Alexander said. "The fight for a better South Africa flows in the veins of this younger generation."

Valeria Hutchings, majoring in international security and conflict resolution interned at Lovelife with Alexander. "The most educational part about my trip has been trying to learn Xhosa," Hutchings said.

Hutchings said that the Mundt Peace Scholarship internship taught her that the fight for equality is different in each country or region.

"When I arrived in South Africa I had an expectation that the history and politics would mostly be similar to the United States," Hutchings said. "I slowly discovered that race and class are viewed very differently because of the Black and mixed-race majority in the country."

Hutchings enjoyed meeting new people and she was able to contribute with her creative talents — which opened many doors during the internship and made her feel welcome and appreciated. During a holiday break, she did face painting and drawing with students, "which allowed me to bond with everyone at LoveLife."

Dana Patterson, a master's student in health management and policy, and Chyna Oyola, a master's student in educational leadership,



interned at Ikamva LaBantu, a nonprofit organization that works throughout Cape Town’s township communities towards a more just society where human rights can be fully actualized.

“Being in Cape Town, South Africa I have been fortunate to interact with people in various communities such as Langa, Gugulethu, and Khayelitsha where Xhosa is spoken. Their sense of community is unmatched,” Patterson said. “In the Xhosa language, there is a word, ubuntu, which means ‘I am because we are.’ This philosophy prioritizes the well-being of the community as a whole, something that as a public health major I feel I can understand well.”

“Beautiful is likely the word people use to describe the sights in South Africa, but it is the word I would use to describe the people of South Africa as I have experienced their love, generosity, kindness and warmth,” she said.

Oyola wanted to come to South Africa to learn about racial equity within the education system.

“In South Africa, I learned how much communities continue to grapple with the consequences of apartheid,” she said. “The racial, geographic, and even linguistic separations between different racial groups here are still clear, despite being nearly 30

years past the end of legal segregation through apartheid.

“Navigating my identities, especially socio-economic privileges I don’t have in the U.S., and learning how to communicate professionally in a high-context culture is challenging.”

Darya Ardehali, a humanities major, worked with Senait Hagos, a sociology major at Just Grace, a nonprofit that designs and implements sustainable initiatives to help the Langa community achieve reduced poverty, quality education, economic growth, and equal opportunities.

“Being able to kickstart the Writing and Debating club while interning at Just Grace with Senait Hagos has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life,” Ardehali said. “It truly has been such a joy and an honor connecting with the students on how to build confidence in their creativity and critical thinking skills.

The other Mundt Peace Scholars are:

Jesa Miclat | Major: Television, Film, and new Media | Ikhaya Le Langa

Daniel Carr | Majors: International Security and Conflict Resolution and Spanish | Ikhaya Le Langa. ■



ISCOR Students Create “The Spotlight” Podcast to Demystify Current Events

The first two episodes featured interviews with Pierre Asselin, history professor and Jonathan Graubart, political science professor.

By Leslie L.J. Reilly

When international security and conflict resolution (ISCOR) Director and Professor **Latha Varadarajan** was discussing issues in global security with her class in spring 2023, she floated the idea of a podcast about current events that would be student-focused and student-led.

Enter **Avery Cochrane**, a fourth-year political science student, and **John-Michael Ellis**, a history student, who had met in Varadarajan’s ISCOR Global Systems class in fall 2022 and were part of the cohort in her upper-division class on National Security Policy in the spring. Both are minoring in ISCOR.

>>LISTEN
TO THE
PODCAST
HERE >>

“John-Michael and I both loved her classes, and were active participants. So I think we were kind of on her radar for people that would be good for it,” Cochrane said.

Cochrane, a musician and singer/songwriter and Ellis, a history buff, bring their talents and curiosity to the microphone. “The Spotlight” podcast is produced in collaboration with the Digital Humanities Center at SDSU and ISCOR Student Society.

“I think many times students who are not political science or history majors can be misinformed about current global events,” Cochrane said. “Geopolitical conflicts or tensions seem daunting when someone reads about it online or in a textbook.”

During the podcast, Cochrane and Ellis pose carefully calibrated questions to their guest speakers to break down tough concepts into what feels more

like a casual conversation. While the actual podcast is meant to be a conversation, both hosts devote a significant amount of time researching the topic and their guests, with the goal of making something complicated more easily digestible.

Cochrane thinks that oftentimes students are quick to pick a side of an issue before digging deeper into its historical context. She hopes the podcast will help students learn more about current issues of wars past and present, climate justice, intersectional gender concepts, and other relevant topics.

She and Ellis are planning for future episodes that they hope will enlighten students. On their wishlist for a future guest interview is Stephen Kinzer, former New York Times correspondent, American author and well-known public intellectual, whom the ISCOR Student Society hopes to bring to campus in spring 2024. ■



Ellis and Cochrane record the podcast in the Digital Humanities studio at the University Library.

Cochrane thinks that oftentimes students are quick to pick a side of an issue before digging deeper into its historical context.



Pascale Joassart-Marcelli holds her award at the All-University Convocation.



Jeanette Shumaker accepts her award from President Adela de la Torre.

Pascale Joassart-Marcelli and Jeanette Shumaker Honored with **2023 Alumni Distinguished Faculty Awards**

During the All-University Convocation on August 17, 2023, Interim Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs **William Tong** and **Samuel Brown**, president of the SDSU Alumni Board of Advisors, presented the annual Alumni Distinguished Faculty Awards for Outstanding Contributions to eight faculty across the campus.

Honored for outstanding scholarship, teaching, and citizenship were CAL's **Pascale Joassart-Marcelli**, geography professor and director of the Center for Better Food Futures and **Jeanette Shumaker**, professor of English in Imperial Valley (and longtime associate in CAL's Department of English and Comparative Literature).

"SDSU is an extraordinary university, in large part because of our extraordinary faculty," Tong said. "Among them are masterful, inspirational teachers; phenomenal researchers; committed and engaged citizens of our university community; passionate leaders of their scholarly disciplines both nationally and internationally; compassionate servants of our SDSU communities and many who excel in all these areas of professional endeavor."

Pascale Joassart-Marcelli

About Marcelli, Department of Geography Chair **Fernando Bosco** stated in his nomination letter, “In her fourteen years at SDSU, she has flourished as a scholar whose research ranges from urban poverty and social justice to the urban geographies of food — with a particular interest in the relationship between place, ethnicity, and food. Her contributions to the university are wide, encompassing research, teaching, and curricular innovations that have been a benefit to SDSU students and colleagues.

“Through her work, she has raised the exposure of SDSU nationally and internationally. She has been prolific and successful in publishing and obtaining external funding to support her work and her students.

Joassart-Marcelli is the author of two books and editor or co-editor of another three books. She has authored twenty-five peer reviewed journal articles that were published in top journals in her field, including the *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *Environment and Planning A*, *Urban Geography* and *Health and Place*.



“In terms of research, Professor Jossart-Marcelli’s research focus is on the connections between food in urban environments, urban change, urban poverty, and social justice. Much of her work emphasizes the role of food in sustaining immigrant communities, providing economic opportunities, and revitalizing neighborhoods, while also contributing to social exclusion and exploitation,” Bosco stated.

Jeanette Shumaker

“In her over 30 years as faculty on our Imperial Valley campus, Jeanette has exemplified the teacher-scholar model that is integral to the mission of SDSU,” **Linda Abardanell** wrote in her nomination letter.

“She is a distinguished scholar in the areas of Irish and English literature, with an expertise that includes women and Jewish writers and spans many genres including realistic fiction, fantasy fiction, children’s literature, poetry, drama, autobiography, biography, and scholarly works.”

Shumaker has co-authored a two-volume reference guide on Jewish writing in the UK. She is also currently completing a book about British and Irish fiction set in Venice.



“Students not only commend Jeanette for her extensive knowledge, her passion for the subject, and her ability to lead engaging discussions, but also for her respect for students and their ideas, her kindness, and her genuine caring attitude,” Abardanell wrote.

In addition to her work at the Imperial Valley campus, Shumaker teaches master’s seminars at the main campus in CAL’s Department of English and Comparative Literature.



Dris Soulaïmani reads a Tachelhit text from the 17th century at IRCAM. Tachelhit is a Berber language spoken by more than seven million people in southwestern Morocco

Fulbright Takes Dris Soulaïmani to Morocco in Search of Historic Berber Manuscripts

Dris Soulaïmani, an associate professor in the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages is investigating Berber historical manuscripts written in Arabic script thanks to a Fulbright in Morocco for the academic year 2023-24. His study aims to analyze the content of these manuscripts and identify the different genres found in the works — such as religious, historical, or linguistic.

“I will also examine the extent to which these manuscripts reveal, if any, a distinct Berber identity,” Soulaïmani said. Official languages used in Morocco include Arabic and Amazigh (also known as Berber). Since the 12th century mostly religious (and sometimes scientific) texts were written in Amazigh (Berber).

Soulaïmani’s research includes searching for those historical documents, studying and translating a selected few to determine the social context of the writings. During his time in Morocco, he plans to interview families who have historical Berber manuscripts in private collections.

Soulaïmani grew up in Morocco and is bilingual in Arabic and Berber. His journey will take him to a library called King Abdulaziz, located in the city of Casablanca. He will also visit multiple regions in the south of Morocco, like the city of Agadir. He’ll visit Moroccan archives, government offices, local libraries, and mosques as well — in search of these rare, historical archives and manuscripts.

This year, Soulaïmani has met with a number of Moroccan scholars to discuss the Amazigh manuscripts. “I’ve also visited the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, known as IRCAM, and the national library in Rabat,” he said. “I’m currently working on an Islamic text written in the Tachelhit dialect in the Arabic script, and one written in the Arabic language.”

Soulaïmani is looking forward to discovering many surprises along the way as he continues his research through 2024. ■

Gregory A. Daddis Elected to Board of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Center for War and Society Director, USS Midway Chair in Modern U.S. Military History, and Professor **Gregory A. Daddis** has been elected to serve as a board member for the [Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft](#), a major think tank in Washington, D.C. committed to “a less militarized and more cooperative foreign policy.”

Daddis, a retired U.S. Army colonel, specializes in research on the history of the Vietnam Wars and the Cold War era and has authored five books, along with numerous op-eds and articles about military affairs. “I am honored by my appointment and hope it will demonstrate the national and international reach of SDSU’s Center for War and Society,” he said.

“I long have admired the great work being done by the Quincy Institute,” Daddis said. “We need to think more critically about the long-term consequences of war by studying the past to engage intelligently with the present. The Quincy Institute helps us do just that.”

The Center for War and Society at San Diego State University is developing a nationally recognized academic and professional forum for faculty and students, community leaders,

and national policymakers to engage with vital historical questions on war as a human phenomenon. The center, established in 2020, brings together scholars, students, and the community to provide research on peace, war, and armed conflicts throughout history.

The center is designed to be a leadership hub for decision-makers interested in the social, political, cultural, and economic consequences of war.

Students earning a Master of Arts in History at SDSU can enroll in the Concentration in War and Society Studies, providing them knowledge and training on the causes, conduct, and costs of war from a historical perspective with a focus on enabling critical public policymaking and informed citizenship.

Daddis created a graduate student fellowship with the U.S. Department of State and a new scholarship is in development with U.S. Navy Captain (Ret.) Lance Gordon, an SDSU political science alumnus.

In addition to joining the board of the Quincy Institute, Daddis received an NEH grant for work associated with the center, and a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Award, among other accolades.

[CONT. NEXT PAGE>>](#)



QUINCY INSTITUTE FOR
RESPONSIBLE STATECRAFT

CONT. >>

As a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at Oxford-Pembroke in spring 2023, Daddis engaged with UK students and faculty who examine the relationships between the United States and Great Britain during the long Cold War era.

Daddis collaborated with internationally recognized scholars at Pembroke College's Department of Politics and International Relations. In addition, he facilitated long-term institutional connections between the SDSU Center for War and Society and Pembroke's Changing Character of War Centre. ■



Jane D. Hartley, the United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Gregory A. Daddis in England.



Task Force Hornets by Lawrence Beall-Smith, 1943. Naval History and Heritage Command



National Humanities Center Invites Joanna Brooks to Complete Work on an Emergent Humanities Toolkit

Brooks, a visiting scholar-in-residence in spring 2024, will support humanities scholarship nationwide



The National Humanities Center (NHC), a private nonprofit organization based in North Carolina, will host **Joanna Brooks**, SDSU associate vice president for faculty advancement and student success and English and comparative literature professor, as a visiting scholar in 2024.

Brooks plans to complete work on an emergent humanities toolkit to support innovation in university-based humanities scholarship, which NHC will publish as a dual digital and printable toolkit for a wide audience of scholars across the U.S.

Brooks and **Pamella Lach**, digital humanities librarian and [Digital Humanities Center](#) director, previously forged a unique four-year partnership with NHC, which informed the new toolkit project. “We have established SDSU as a national leader in humanities innovation,” Brooks said.

Brooks and Lach created podcasting workshops to train 400+ faculty, postdocs, and graduate students, (at universities ranging from Ivy Leagues to major R1s to HBCUs), in emergent humanities theories and methodologies.

Specific examples of the resources in the new toolkit include:

- Stories from leading humanities scholars who have made the jump to new forms of research and scholarship;
- Tools for humanities innovators drawn from design thinking, convergence science, and emergent strategy;
- Support for progressive dissemination and evaluation of humanities research;
- New frameworks for measuring and communicating humanities project impact.

“The goal of my project is to help humanities departments and scholars nationwide to grow a new future: to become more courageous, confident, and collaborative, to deepen our relationships with the publics who inspire us, and to answer the call for applied and translational work that engages essential and urgent human questions,” she added. “I am honored by the trust NHC has placed in me, and by SDSU’s support for my humanities career.”

Brooks is now interviewing future-facing humanities scholars nationwide and welcomes [nominations](#) or [voluntary participation](#). ■

The NHC is one of ten institutes for advanced study in the world, and the only one fully dedicated to the humanities.



NEH Grant to Help K-12 Educators Learn to Teach Social Justice Through Comics

Center for Comic Studies is developing a summer institute at SDSU that includes participation in Comic-Con International.



The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded San Diego State University's [Center for Comic Studies](#) an Institutes for K-12 Educators grant of \$175,000.

With this grant, the Center for Comic Studies will bring 25 K-12 teachers from across the nation to SDSU for a two-week summer institute in 2024, focused on teaching social justice through comics. This is the second NEH grant and third grant overall for the center.

In addition to lectures and workshops on SDSU's campus, participants will attend the four-day Comic-Con International as panelists with SDSU comics scholars. Applications for teachers will be available in late fall.

"The summer Institute is going to help participants develop lesson plans, be involved in our local comics scene, use the huge collection of comics in the San Diego State University Library, and interact with the SDSU faculty who have been designing curriculum that

addresses the relationship between comics and social justice," said **Elizabeth Pollard**, co-director of the Center for Comic Studies and Senate Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in history.



Pamela Jackson and Elizabeth Pollard at Comic-Con 2023.

Since 2021, when the center was designated a finalist in the SDSU President's Office [Big Ideas](#), it has built a pool of experts on specific social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion topics tied to comics studies. Katie Sciorba, associate professor in the School of Teacher Education, serves as the K-12 education lead for the institute. Other SDSU scholars include **Michael Domínguez**, **Jess Whatcott**, **Ajani Brown**,

Bill Nericcio, **Desmond Hassing**, **Mary Stout**, and others. The K-12 educators will have access to faculty in the areas of history, English, Chicana and Chicano studies, American Indian studies, women's studies, and Africana studies.

"We'll leverage that expertise to share what we've done here in a much bigger, far more impactful way. Just imagine the ripple

effects of 25 K-12 teachers from across the nation coming here, developing lesson plans, interacting with one another and having them go back to wherever they came from, and teaching hundreds of students a year with those lesson plans,” envisions Pollard.

One serious challenge in hosting teachers from across the country, is the current issue of banned reading materials. **Pamela Jackson**, co-director of the Center for Comics Studies and University Library pop culture librarian, plans to help educators learn how to manage it. “I’m excited to find ways where, even given these limitations, they can still teach these social justice issues,” she said. Jackson will be in charge of finding appropriate content for the educators from the vast comics available in Special Collections and University Archives.

Beyond sharing access to the comics collection for pedagogical ideas and teachable content, the center has partnered with the [Comic-Con Museum](#) to host a field trip for the educators. Participants will also have exposure to content and presentations from the [Comic Book Legal Defense Fund](#) (CBLDF), [Creators Assemble!](#), [Little Fish Comic Book Studio](#), and [Comic-Con International](#) — all longtime collaborators with the center.

Participants will see how a comic book studio works, and they will each receive a kit for comics creation, plus they’ll have the chance to go through the process of creating their own short comic that they can take back to their students as a teaching tool.

“It’s rewarding to have built something in a grassroots effort with the faculty here at SDSU. And now that it has coalesced — we can take it out to help our K-12 educators,” Jackson said. “Finding meaningful ways to use comics — which we know the students love — builds the next generation of students that come to college interested in comics. It’s a win-win for everybody.”

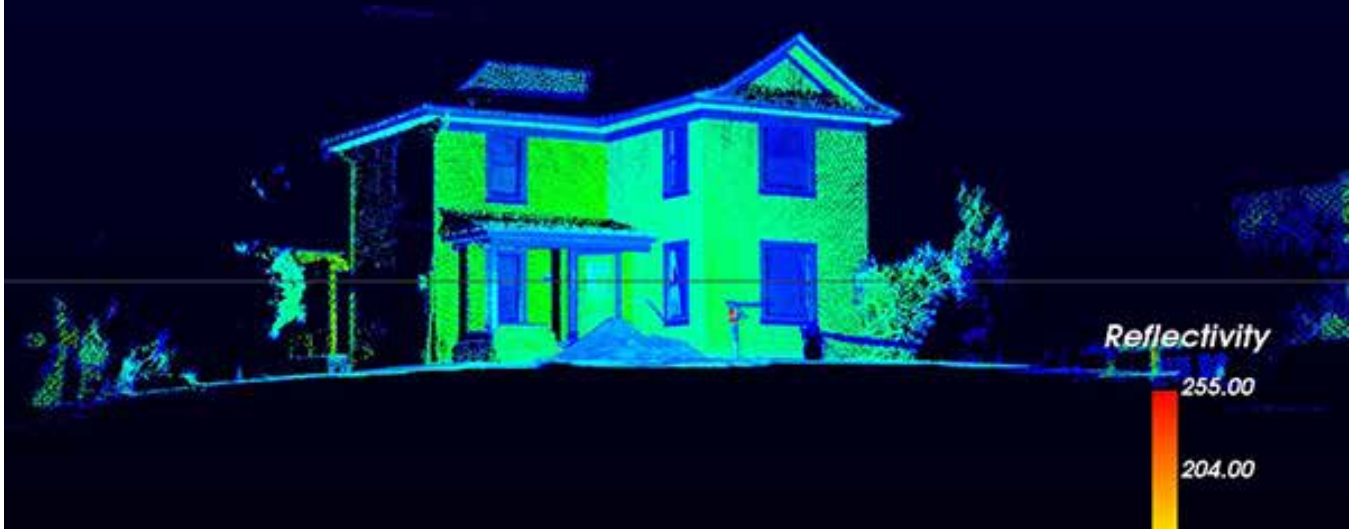
Pollard thinks this is the sensible next step — reaching out beyond the walls of the university to make an impact — and the impact is not one way. “I truly think we’re going to learn from the K-12 teachers,” Pollard said. “We’re going to learn from the challenges that they face on a daily basis. We’re going to learn from their innovative teaching styles.”

Pollard is looking forward to the energy that the K-12 teachers will bring. “It’s going to shape the way we teach and interact with our students here at SDSU,” she said. “I’m excited about the momentum.” ■



NEH Grant

New Empowerment Tool Helps Communities Document Heritage of Historic Buildings



Faculty at SDSU are developing digital tools for use by grassroots preservationists locally and across the country.

By Leslie L.J. Reilly

San Diego State University in partnership with the University of Central Florida received a \$150,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities “Digital Humanities Advancement” program to develop a smartphone-enabled digital documentation toolkit for grassroots community preservationists.

The project, called the Community Heritage Empowerment Toolkit (CHET), will empower local communities to document their own heritage by collaboratively developing accessible workflows and other resources they need to collect and preserve information about their historic buildings and structures.

PIs from San Diego State University include: Lead PI **Isaac Ullah**, associate professor of anthropology, and co-PIs **David Cline**,

professor of history and director of the Center for Public and Oral History, and **Seth Mallios**, professor of anthropology and San Diego State University history curator.

CHET will be developed in collaboration with two case-study communities: Hollywood, Florida, and La Mesa, California (at the [La Mesa History Center](#)). These communities were chosen because they represent a diversity of geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The project team will work with community members in these two communities to identify their needs and priorities for heritage documentation. These important, two-way collaborative relationships will help CHET develop useful tools in service of community-led preservation projects.

CHET will include a variety of tools and resources, including:

- A vetted and documented set of smartphone app-based documentation workflows that will allow users to capture 3D scans, photos, videos, and audio recordings of historic buildings and structures.
- A web-based platform where users can store and share their data.
- A training program that will teach users how to use the tools and resources provided by CHET.

CHET is still in the development phase, but the project team is confident that it will be a valuable tool for grassroots community preservationists. The project has the potential to help communities preserve their heritage and tell their stories in a way that is accessible to everyone.

“We are excited to start this project, and grateful to the NEH for funding it,” said Isaac Ullah, associate professor of anthropology at SDSU. “We believe that CHET is an important step in helping local communities across the country (and hopefully the world) preserve their stories and their sense of place.” ■

WATCH VIDEO >> [Interview with Isaac Ullah](#)

These important, two-way collaborative relationships will help CHET develop useful tools in service of community-led preservation projects.



Isaac Ullah at the La Mesa History Center.



Scan of the La Mesa History Center.

\$5M USDA Grant Helps Train Next Generation of Food and Agriculture Scientists

Faculty from CAL are among a large team at SDSU leading the effort to prepare career-ready students for work on food system challenges on the U.S.-Mexico border.



The university was awarded a [\\$5M U.S. Department of Agriculture grant](#) to continue work that is part of a \$1M HSI educational USDA grant received last year. The new project is entitled: “Expanding and Diversifying Careers in Sustainable Food Systems along the U.S.-Mexico Border.”

The five-year grant supports students, including those from historically excluded communities, through funding, mentoring, and high impact learning opportunities, such as undergraduate research, internships, and community-engaged classes.

“This grant is focused on regenerative agriculture,” Pascale Joassart-Marcelli, co-PI and director of the Center for Better Food Futures.” But our focus is broad; we are thinking about regenerating soils and the environment, but we are also considering how food and agriculture can

rebuild local economies, strengthen health, engage communities, and reclaim cultural knowledge.”

Indigenous and immigrant communities are a focus of the research. “By working with immigrant and tribal communities, such as the Kumeyaay, on the issues of sustainable food systems, we hope to attract students whose knowledge and experiences are linked to ancestral practices that are extremely valuable in developing solutions to make our food system more sustainable and equitable,” she said. The grant will support 240 undergraduate, 18 master’s, and 7 doctoral students, with funding set aside for up to 50 Indigenous students.

The goal is to help train the future generation through diversifying and expanding opportunities for careers in food and agriculture. Students will learn strategies to address

issues of the day that include climate change, food insecurity, poverty, and environmental degradation.

New grant projects will focus on urban agriculture and agroforestry in San Diego, water use and heat stress in Imperial Valley, ethnobotany and forestry in Baja, among other topics.

Projects associated with the previous USDA grant have included research in Baja and Oaxaca, Mexico as well as locally at the SDSU Community Garden and elsewhere. SDSU students traveled to [Oaxaca](#) in the summer to examine how its traditional food culture is shifting — from the field to the plate. And, students in San Diego worked locally with food scientists to analyze the nutritional content of eggs within a hyper local sustainable food system.

Co-principal investigators from across campus include, from CAL: **Pascale Joassart-Marcelli** (Better Food Futures and geography); **Ramona Pérez** (Center for Latin American Studies and anthropology); **Trent Biggs**, and **Amy Quandt** (geography). From other colleges: Lluvia Flores Renteria, John Love, and David Lipson (College of Sciences), Changqi Liu (Health and Human Sciences), and Iana Castro (Fowler College of Business).

The project is housed in the new [Center for Better Food Futures](#) and linked to the [Food Studies Program](#). ■



RELATED ARTICLE

SDSU Receives \$1 Million USDA Grant to Support Sustainable Food and Agriculture Training for Latinx Students

READ MORE>> [SDSU NewsCenter](#)

Preservation and Digitization of Tijuana’s Historical Archives Broadens Public Access

Teams from the University Library and the Center for Regional Sustainability take the lead on a massive bi-national project

By Leslie L.J. Reilly | Photos: Rachel Crawford

Hundreds of stacked file boxes, and shelves filled with news clippings, vinyl records, cassette tapes, videos, and other ephemera represent the rare recorded history of Tijuana since its founding in 1889. The Archivo Histórico de Tijuana, housed in the Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura (IMAC) in downtown Tijuana, is set to receive a new space — online.

San Diego State University’s **Lisa Lamont**, head of Digital Collections at the University Library, and **Jessica Barlow**, director of the [Center for Regional Sustainability](#), are leading digitization of the archives with support from staff and students. Providing metadata - searchable descriptive tags - in both English and Spanish about each of the tens of thousands of items will make it easier to glean information directly from the region’s primary sources.

“Together, we are building a new model for promoting equitable access to scholarly materials supporting bi-national learning, scholarship, and engagement,” said **Scott Walter**, Dean of the University Library.

“This brings to light our commitment to our bi-national region and peoples, and to our support of this first-ever IMAC dual language database,” said College of Arts and Letters (CAL) Interim Dean **Ronnee Schreiber**. “By collaborating with the University Library,

CAL provides valuable resources that will ultimately aid researchers around the world.”

Snapshots of history

Since the IMAC was severely underfunded for so many years, the biggest issue is disorganized files. Nearly 68,000 visual images including printed photos, slides and negatives need to be digitized.

Print materials and other ephemera that document the people, buildings, political activism, and public events in history, once digitized, will give researchers and the public access to these hundreds of thousands of documents that have

never been shared outside the walls of the IMAC in Tijuana.

“The archive shows the vibrancy of the region — the music, maps, photos, and government documents,” Barlow said. “It provides a peek into a city often overshadowed by stereotypes.”

Barlow added that there is an urgent need to preserve the archive since the IMAC space is not humidity controlled. Changes in humidity can cause documents to rapidly warp and decay.

Lamont and University Library Digitization Specialist Matt Ferrill commute to Tijuana once or twice a week to oversee the work of



Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura (IMAC).



L to R: Ricardo Huerta, Andrea Esquivel, Matt Ferrill, Lisa Lamont, Jesús Emmanuel Villalba León, Jessica Barlow, Kristofer Patrón-Soberano, María Luisa Trampe Días, and Hilario Castillo Castillo.

two graduate students from Mexico, who are scanning images in a very large format.

“Right now the students work 20 hours a week to scan thousands of photos. They are scanning 13-14 images per hour and assisting with dual language metadata,” Lamont said.

One student found 3,000 images — not in any particular order — and she created and organized them with a new numbering system. Another photo collection of Tijuana’s origins in the first 20 years (1889-1909) provides a historical context not seen elsewhere.

“To see the evolution of the city through these photos is remarkable,” said SDSU Center for Regional Sustainability Programs Administrator **Kristofer Patrón-Soberano**.

“It’s very important to remember that this is one region, and one metropolitan area that has been there for a very long time with plenty of cross-border interaction and collaboration,” Patrón-Soberano said. “It’s not just important for Tijuana, it’s important for San Diego County.”

The Tijuana archived materials and bilingual metadata is now broadly accessible at both UCLA and [San Diego State University](#) libraries, thanks to a grant from the [UCLA Modern Endangered Archives Program](#).

Beyond Tijuana, the project complements

ongoing work led by **Ramona Pérez** and the SDSU Center for Mesoamerican Studies in Oaxaca to digitize documents in Oaxaca as well.

“The opportunity to work with the staff at the Archivo General del Estado de Oaxaca (AGEO) to preserve a wide range of textual and visual documentation of the history, cultures, and languages of this diverse state is a reflection of our commitment to participatory and community-engaged research and scholarship,” said Pérez.

The Oaxaca archives are also available in the SDSU University Library Digital Collections. ■



Student Ricardo Huerta scans hundreds of photos and documents each day at the Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura (IMAC).

Fiske Legal Series at SDSU Gives Students Insight Into the Law Profession

Aspiring law students have an opportunity to meet law professionals to learn about career pathways thanks to alumnus John Fiske.

When **John Fiske** ('04) decided he wanted to go to law school in the fall of 2003, he had minimal understanding of what lay ahead for him.

A political science student, Fiske won a spot in the [Panetta Institute Congressional Internship Program](#) to study for two weeks with Leon Panetta and other CSU awardees at CSU Monterey. It was there that Panetta told students, “Go to law school, you’ll learn to think properly.”

During Fiske’s semester-long internship in Washington, D.C. he worked for Congresswoman Susan Davis. He had just turned 20 and decided to take Panetta’s advice and look at the prospect of law school. It was September and he had to fast-track preparation for the December LSAT test. His test score was high enough for a full-ride scholarship to



California Western in San Diego.

Without mentorship or information to help guide him through the process, he began the tough journey through law school. He said it was a shock to his system. As a young first-generation law school student, he learned to “thrive and survive.”

Fast forward 15+ years and Fiske, partner at Baron & Budd, and environmental (public entity as plaintiff) expert, wants to give back — to help undergraduate students prepare for what lies ahead in law school. He wants to provide a resource for students considering law school by helping them

answer questions about debt, competition, happiness, and stress. He wants to help students determine the right fit and to discover what can become a fulfilling life.

The advice Fiske wished he had known before entering law school was “to be mentally and psychologically prepared to do something that very likely is more difficult and intense than you’ve ever done before — in terms of focus and concentration.”

He wants new law students to learn how to manage health, relationships, and one of the biggest challenges — the financials. Students have to decide how they will manage all these factors. Fiske said that “one of the best decisions in my life” was the decision to go debtless by accepting a scholarship, rather than taking on student loans in order to attend one of many prestigious law schools.

“I think the most fulfilling life someone can lead is when they find service and they seek out service unique to them,” Fiske said. “The best I’ve ever felt is when I’m meaningfully serving the community.”

Fiske and his wife Courtney (through an endowment from the [Fiske Family Foundation](#)) created the [Fiske Legal Series](#) at SDSU to help aspiring law students make the jump from undergraduate to graduate school by demystifying the law profession and the process.

The first event in the education and networking series took place in April and featured two practicing lawyers who attended SDSU as CAL undergraduates — **Jennifer Stone** (English ‘96), sr. deputy county counsel, Office of County Counsel, County of San Diego Office and **Rodney Cruz Pizarro** (sociology ‘03), lead counsel, Airbnb Host Community. Fiske was ecstatic about the focused and engaged responses from student attendees from across campus disciplines.

The goal of the series is to offer insights about the law school experience — “to peel back the layers and have time for some real talk from the panelists,” Fiske said. The Fiske Legal Series helps answer questions about how to prepare and uncovers how to fail. “You will

fail — and how will you react after that? How will you recover?” Fiske said. “One of my favorite questions to ask guests is: tell me about a failure.”

At the debut event, both Stone and Pizarro opened up genuinely to share their career experiences with students and alumni in the audience. Attendees had a chance to network and ask questions of the panelists afterward. Watch the inaugural Fiske Legal Series video to learn more.

The College of Arts and Letters dean’s office, Department of Political Science, the [Pre-Law Society](#) and [Mock Trial](#) student groups, the Alumni Association, Aztec Law Alumni group, and Pre Law Advisory Board are significant contributors to the series.

The Fiske Legal Series offers open access to all SDSU students. Since there are so many areas of law including education, immigration, sports and entertainment, tax, real estate, municipal, animal law and more, students studying in any of these fields may find the series a valuable resource. “We plan to broaden the scope of the next event by including panelists working in intellectual property, sciences, and engineering fields,” Fiske said. ■

WATCH VIDEO >> [Inaugural Fiske Legal Series](#)



The inaugural Fiske Legal Series featured Jennifer Stone, John Fiske, and Rodney Cruz Pizarro.

Thomas Claypool Creates Sustainable Solutions to Recycle, Repurpose, and Remix Shoes



The Native Shoes co-founder and international business alumnus is dedicated to social and environmental initiatives at his company based in Vancouver, BC.

By Leslie L.J. Reilly

Growing up in the Chicagoland area, **Thomas Claypool** began skateboarding at an early age. He wore the classic skate shoe designs of the '90s as a teen, and noticed how skateboarding shoes transcended into pop culture. He worked part-time in retail while in high school and after moving to San Diego, at local skate shops.

As an international business student at San Diego State University, Claypool was required to study abroad and take on an internship. "Those experiences propelled me in the direction that my life took in terms of the business-related experiences," he said.

In Reutlingen, Germany, Claypool connected with a skateboarder sponsored by Volcom. He landed an internship with the European distributor of the global clothing and sports brand, learning all about marketing and sustainability on a global level.

"Europe has always had a green mentality," Claypool said. "The study abroad and internship really exposed me to a more sustainable and responsible mindset."

He also learned about testing and quality standards including the hazardous substances that are restricted in textile manufacturing. "I was just starting to

have conversations about environmental degradation and how the manufacture of denim, cotton, and outerwear impact the environment," Claypool said.

Upon his return to the U.S. and graduation from SDSU in 2001, Claypool saw a job posting sent by advisors to recent graduates of the international business program. A German clothing company was looking to get into the U.S. market.

At the time Claypool was heavily involved in developing San Diego's Washington Street Skatepark. He was on the board of directors for the nonprofit tasked with raising funds and



Thomas Claypool helps construct the Washington Street Skatepark (2002).



Remix Maison sculptural seating designed by Irina Flore. Photo: Thom Allen



Claypool sorts shoes.

constructing the project as a safe, legal public space for skaters to hone their craft.

Claypool wound up spending eight years with the German company, building its U.S. division, all the while thinking about creating his own brand.

In 2009, Claypool co-founded [Native Shoes](#) in which the majority of shoes are injection-molded — a manufacturing process that requires fewer resources than traditional footwear manufacturing. Today, many of the shoes now contain lower impact bio-based compounds, sourced from sugar cane and algae.

New Ways to Recycle

Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Native Shoes is committed to a continued, lower carbon footprint which it measures via [carbon accounting software](#).

“The complete body of work outlined in Native

Shoes’ climate reduction roadmap can be daunting at times, with some required technologies not yet in existence,” Claypool said. “However, making incremental changes such as swapping out the desiccant used in retail boxes from silica packs to dry clay packs, or consistently increasing the bio-based content in raw materials, are examples of some of the small wins which are achievable whilst tackling bigger picture challenges around energy production and consumption in manufacturing.”

Another way Native Shoes seeks to reduce its environmental impact is through R&D into finding solutions for the end of a shoe’s useful life.

[The Native Shoes Remix Project](#) employs a proprietary material blend, resulting from ground shoes that have been collected at the end of their useful life — shoes that otherwise would have been destined for the landfill. Shoes that are still wearable

are sorted out and donated to those in need.

“Customer participation is a key ingredient to the Native Shoes Remix Project. Without our community supporting this initiative, we cannot achieve our climate reduction goals or give life to our ideas around circular materials,” said Claypool.

Illustrating this thought, in 2021, multidisciplinary designer [Irina Flore](#) approached Native Shoes about a collaboration on a furniture design project using repurposed shoe material. The resulting project is named [Remix Maison](#). The unique sculptural furniture pieces have won multiple awards.

Claypool has come full circle by leading a global brand focused on sustainability and environmental stewardship — the same concepts that inspired him during his days as an SDSU student. ■



Alumnus Unveils a Chicano Park Mural, 20 Years in the Making

Jose Olague (left) posed at his Chicano Park mural (center column) with professor emeritus Alberto Ochoa. (Photo: Sarah Wilkins)

Jose Olague's National M.E.Ch.A. mural prominently features San Diego State University faculty and alumni.

By Michal Klitzing

The smell of burning sage, the rhythmic thunder of drums and the kinetic blur of brightly adorned Aztec dancers heralded the completion of a new masterpiece at San Diego's iconic Chicano Park.

The lively festivities on Sept. 3 were part of the unveiling of a mural by the national Chicano student organization, M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). The massive piece is a two-decade labor of love undertaken by San Diego State University alumnus and proud former MEChista Jose Olague ('04, '10).

Located prominently in the southeastern part of the Barrio Logan park — a National Historic Landmark that features the largest collection of Chicano murals in the world, mostly painted on freeway columns — Olague's vibrant work depicts key figures and events in the struggle for Chicano and Indigenous rights, as well as the history of the M.E.Ch.A. student movement on college campuses.

"I wanted this mural to tell the truth about who we are," said Olague. "There's always

been resistance. There have always been different perspectives."

Growing up in San Diego, Olague became interested in art as a youth through lowrider culture. He was never formally trained as an artist, but he immersed himself in Indigenous artwork and symbolism through his involvement in M.E.Ch.A. as a student in high school and college

Olague began painting the pillars in 2003 while majoring in social science and Chicano studies at SDSU. Now a teacher in San Diego's South Bay, he finished the sprawling project on his summer vacation with the help of a team of 60 volunteers, more than three-quarters of them Chicana artists.

Chicano Leaders

It's a work emblazoned with SDSU history. Protest slogans adorn the west-facing pillar, including "I am NOT a MASCOT" next to an image of the now-retired Monty Montezuma logo — a nod to M.E.Ch.A. and

Native American Student Alliance activism that implored the university to change its representation of Aztec culture.

And two-thirds of the way up the southwest column is a tribute to SDSU educators who were key figures in the Chicano rights movement.

Near the top is the late Rene Nuñez, professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano Studies. One of the organizers of the 1969 conference that produced “El Plan de Santa Bárbara: A Chicano Plan for Higher Education” and birthed M.E.Ch.A., Nuñez would later help develop SDSU’s Chicana and Chicano studies curriculum.

On the row below is Alberto Ochoa, professor emeritus in Education. Ochoa is a founding faculty member and later chair of what is now SDSU’s Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education (DLE), California’s largest producer of bilingual teachers.

Immediately to the left is Isidro Ortiz, professor and former chair in Chicana and Chicano Studies, who is a longtime advisor to SDSU’s chapter of M.E.Ch.A.

On the next row down in a red shirt is Jesús Nieto, associate professor emeritus in the School of Teacher Education. Nieto, who taught multicultural education at SDSU, served as M.E.Ch.A.’s campus advisor for 25 years.

Also on the north interior is Mario Aguilar, a University of California San Diego professor emeritus and lecturer in SDSU’s Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. The SDSU triple alumnus is captain of the Danza Mexi’cayotl traditional Chicano dance circle, which performed at the unveiling.

“They’ve always been involved, always been out there with different organizations working to improve conditions in our communities,” said Olague, who earned his teaching credential and master’s degree from SDSU’s DLE program. “It’s time for them to be recognized. These are the examples that we need in our community.”

Surprise and Gratitude

Ochoa, Ortiz, Nieto and Aguilar were all on hand for the unveiling. Ortiz delivered remarks about the significance of SDSU’s M.E.Ch.A. chapter, which he lauded for its recent push to create the university’s [Latinx Resource Center](#) and [Undocumented Resource Center](#).

“We’ve now had four generations of MEChistas (at SDSU),” Ortiz said to the assembled crowd. “It’s changed over time, but the one continuity has been the struggle by these students for justice and for equality in higher education — and that, to me, is very inspiring.”

Ochoa and Nieto well remember Olague from his time in SDSU’s graduate education programs, both as a star student and a stellar artist. Neither knew they would be depicted in the mural until word started to leak out on social media.

“I’m honored and I feel a lot of gratitude,” Ochoa said. “But it’s also recognizing the constellation of people who are working, not as individuals but collectively, to bring about change in terms of the promise of an equal educational opportunity and the right to equal representation.”

Said Nieto: “When I found out about it about six weeks ago, I was just speechless. Today has lived up to everything I hoped.” ■



Aztec dancers perform in front of the pillar at San Diego’s Chicano Park. (SDSU)



Transformative \$1 Million Gift Bolsters the Future of Asian Studies at San Diego State University

A planned gift from the Charles Wei-hsun Fu Foundation will support scholarships, events and programming, and operations for the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies.

By Jeff Ristine

As a faculty member for more than 40 years, **Sandra Wawrytko** has seen Asian Studies manifest a steadily increasing importance at San Diego State University. Now she's committing herself to a personal role in ensuring the university's resources keep up with the times.

A planned gift of \$1 million from the **Charles Wei-hsun Fu Foundation**, named for her husband who was born in Taiwan and died in 1997, will support an endowment for the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS) providing additional money toward scholarships, events and programming, and operations. The Fu Foundation was created after Charles' death and is now a tax-exempt family educational foundation.



In Wawrytko's view, it's a need driven both by cultural heritage and the global economy. Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) enrollment comprises about 14% of SDSU's undergraduate student body, its third largest ethnic group. And the university's position on the Pacific Rim makes for a powerful connection to commerce and a wide range of other relationships with China, Japan, and the nations of Southeast Asia.

There are topics in Asian Studies relevant to SDSU students "whether they're in the business college or they're doing engineering, whatever it is," said Wawrytko, who was director of the center for seven years. "There's something that they need to learn in order to make it in this globalized world."

Wawrytko, who teaches Asian philosophy at the College of Arts and Letters, has been a donor to SDSU for many years. Her newest commitment will come from the future sale of a home she owns in the Sorrento Valley area.

Wawrytko is president of the foundation, an educational nonprofit that has grown from its original focus on Asian philosophy to support a wide variety of ethnic studies.

The endowment is expected to generate about \$40,000 a year for the center, which operates from an office on the fourth floor of the Arts and Letters building. It manages curricula for students with Asian

Studies majors or minors and works with language programs in the linguistics department.

Minjeong Kim, sociology department chair and director of CAPS, said the center needs more support to develop programs for students, organize events and specifically support scholarships for study-abroad experiences.

In the long term, both Wawrytko and Kim say it's important to revive the Department of Asian Studies that previously existed at SDSU, and the master's program that was offered at the time. It could operate in tandem with a future Department of Asian American Studies, they say, a separate discipline but similarly high priority.

Ronnee Schreiber, College of Arts and Letters interim dean, expressed gratitude for Wawrytko's "longtime dedication to Asian Studies."

"As a faculty member, Sandra understands the importance of stable funding for ongoing student programming, events, and experiential learning such as study abroad," she said in a statement. "We know her transformational planned gift will eventually establish CAPS as a leading center of its kind."

Wawrytko said Asia's importance in the world makes it an increasingly attractive job option for some. But even for those who work in the U.S., "it's extremely important in terms of people's career development that they understand Asia."

"They've been around for thousands of years. We really need to make positive connections and I think that comes through understanding."

It's also important to recognize the demographics and the growth of the Asian American community on campus, Wawrytko and Kim said. ■

Dr. Ora B. Gordon, M.D. and
CAPT Lance B. Gordon, USN (Ret.)

Endowed Scholarship



New Scholarship to Benefit Students Studying War and Society, History, and Political Science

The Dr. Ora B. Gordon, MD and CAPT Lance B. Gordon, USN (Ret.) Endowed Scholarship for the Center of War and Society will support a wide range of SDSU students

Lance Gordon graduated from SDSU with a B.A. in political science. He received a J.D. from the University of California, San Francisco, School of Law, and an LL.M in taxation from New York University, School of Law. He also received a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the U.S. Army War College.

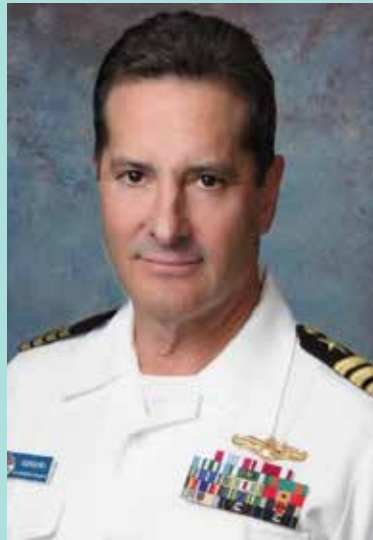
Gordon retired as a captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve after 30 years of service and as a lawyer specializing in international taxation.

“When I reflect on my educational experience at SDSU, I see it as the foundation of my professional careers,” he said. “It is where I learned core critical thinking skills and explored courses in numerous disciplines in a public-school environment with an incredibly diverse, creative, dynamic, and fun student body and faculty.

“My wife and I feel it is essential for any college graduate to give back and support educational institutions that provide so much

for their students. Endowing a scholarship fund for the Center for War and Society is particularly meaningful because the center is so innovative, topical, and focused on areas of interest to me as a retired Naval officer.”

“The generosity of the Gordons and their commitment to our vision of building a nationally renowned Center for War and Society is so inspiring,” said Gregory A. Daddis, the USS Midway Chair in Modern U.S. Military History at SDSU. “With the support of community leaders like Ora and Lance, we will be able to attract some of the very best students from across the country to study a topic that truly has global significance.” ■



“

Endowing a scholarship fund for the Center for War and Society is particularly meaningful because the center is so innovative, topical, and focused on areas of interest to me as a retired Naval officer.

”

Who May Apply

The Dr. Ora B. Gordon, M.D. and CAPT Lance B. Gordon, USN (Ret.) Endowed Scholarship for the Center of War and Society will be utilized by the College of Arts and Letters to provide scholarship support to graduate students pursuing their master’s degree and who are active duty service members, reservists, National Guard, and/or veterans of the United States Armed Forces, or who are pursuing a major in history with a concentration in War and Society or political science, or who are involved in activities or coursework through the Center for War and Society in the College of Arts and Letters at SDSU.



College of Arts and Letters First-Generation Program

This program helps to address noticeable equity gaps in student success for transfer and first-generation students.

The fund supports the CAL Student Success Program, where new first-generation students can access supplemental advising, academic support and community at SDSU. Students often stry find a home and a sense of belonging in CAL through this program.

Your gift to the First-Generation Program ensures that resources are available to provide key opportunities and extra help for these deserving students.

GIVE NOW

First-gen students attend a meet-and-greet event and include, L to R: Luis Valdez (economics); Ruby Martinez Gonzalez (sociology); Alena Chavez (sociology); Edwin Torres (economics); and, Andrea Mendoza (sociology).

CAL in the NEWS

Highlights of faculty and students featured in a variety of media outlets.

Anthropology // Seth Mallios was interviewed for: “Getting comfortable with an uncomfortable history, SDSU professor discusses racism in San Diego.” [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#)

Economics // Student Christopher Ritter wrote an opinion piece: “The Humanities do not need AI.” [The Daily Aztec](#)

Geography // Pascale Joassart Marcelli was interviewed by David Brancaccio for the report: “How to be a responsible foodie.” [Marketplace Morning Report](#)

Geography // Janet Franklin was interviewed in: “Cedar Fire: Restoring Cuyamaca’s tree canopy is years away: Some birds may never return.” [The San Diego Union-Tribune](#)

History // Nathan Ellstrand was a guest on the podcast (episode 2) of the new “An Academic Odyssey” podcast that focuses on understanding and demystifying the path to a doctorate in the humanities. [Audible](#)

Center for Latin American Studies // Ramona Pérez was interviewed by KGTV-10 News for the story: “Why does Hispanic Heritage Month start in the middle of September? San Diego professor, author, explains.” [KGTV-10 News](#)

Philosophy, Classics and Humanities, and IEPA // Joseph Stramondo was interviewed for the article: “Controversial dwarfism drugs spur growth — but do they improve health?” [Nature Magazine](#)

Political Science // Farid Abdel-Nour was interviewed by local news stations about events in Israel/Palestine. [NBC7](#) [KPBS](#) [CBS8](#) [CBS8](#)

Sociology // Neftalie Williams was interviewed by celebrated author Dave Zirin for his Edge of Sports program for the “Ask A Sports Scholar” segment (beginning at 26:40). [The Real News Network](#)

Department for the Study of Religion // Roy Whitaker wrote an article titled, “Through space and rhyme: How hip-hop uses Afrofuturism to take listeners on journeys of empowerment.” [The Conversation](#)

Faculty BOOKSHELF

More than a dozen books were written by CAL faculty and published in 2023 — here are a few highlights. Watch for new book releases in 2024.



Norah Shultz
Professor and Chair
Sociology



Amanda Kearney
Professor
Anthropology



Peter C. Herman
Professor
English and Comparative Literature



Amy Wong
Lecturer
Sociology



Kathleen Jones
Professor Emerita
Women's Studies

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Seth Mallios

*Professor and Director
of the South Coastal
Information Center
Anthropology*

Taharka Adé

*Assistant Professor
Africana Studies*

Marilyn Chin

*Professor Emerita
English and
Comparative
Literature*

*Richard L.
Carrico*

*Lecturer
American Indian
Studies*

*Stephen-Paul
Martin*

*Professor; Co-Director,
MFA Graduate Program
English and
Comparative
Literature*

Fall Recap



Amir Issaa

Italian hip-hop musician Amir Issaa presented his newly released book “This Is What I Live For: An Afro-Italian Hip-Hop Memoir” with contributors from SDSU — Clarissa Clò and Jorge Hernandez (Italian and European Studies), Roy Whitaker (Study of Religion), as well as William Nericcio (SDSU Press).

Marcelo D’Salete

SDSU’s Center for Comics Studies and the Behner Stiefel Center for Brazilian Studies collaborated to host Eisner Award winning social activist Marcelo D’Salete for a wide-ranging conversation about his work.





Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy

The Department of English and Comparative Literature presented a lecture and discussion with Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, who spoke about his book, "The Illimitable Freedom of the Human Mind: Thomas Jefferson's Idea of a University."



Sustainability Hub Open House

A celebration of the new SDSU Sustainability Hub featured comments by Interim Dean Ronnee Schreiber, President Adela de la Torre, and other sustainability faculty, staff, students, and alumni.



Día de Muertos Celebration

In its 20th annual celebration, the Chicana and Chicano Studies Department presented the Day of the Dead altar at the SDSU Library.



Why Iraq Still Matters

The Center for War and Society Speaker Series sponsored by J. Fred and Susan Oliver featured nationally-regarded scholars and a veteran in conversation on the enduring and global consequences of the Iraq war and why it still matters today.



D.S. Waldman

MFA in poetry alumnus Waldman presented "Exercises in Ekphrasis: Ways of Seeing & Responding to Art through Writing."



Anthropology Documentary Screening

Alumnus Brian Mooney presented his film "Connecting Paradise" and met with anthropology alumni at a November event.

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