IT TAKES A TITAN
CAMPAIGN WILL ENRICH UNIVERSITY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME
Fundraising exceeded original goal by $95 million

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

Expansion in Pollak Library

Project Rebound comes of age in a spacious location

By Lou Ponsi, contributing writer

Training future teachers to provide equitable, inclusive education

Urban Learning focuses on age issues

By Jenelyn Russo, contributing writer

When Project Rebound, the Cal State University initiative that aids formerly incarcerated individuals attend college, came to Cal State Fullerton in 2016, the program operated out of an 8-by-10-foot windowless office containing a desk, a phone and a computer, tucked away in a call center.

Photo courtesy of CSUF News Media Services

The need for a program of this type can be found right in the university’s backyard with such diverse needs,” said Calli Lewis Chiu, an associate professor of elementary education partnerships at Segerstrom Center for the Arts and Kristina Macias is a Cal State Fullerton student who participated in the Arts Aztecs in Learning workshop. Because of a reporting error, the names were misspelled. On Page 3 of the March 16 edition of the Orange County Register.

The interdisciplinary program is spearheaded by the efforts of CSUF College of Education Dean Lisa Kirtman, chair and associate professor of special education Calli Lewis Chiu, and director of the SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union Center for Careers in Teaching, Annesa Nielsen.

The goal for a program of this type can be found right in the university’s backyard, as many CSUF education graduates head back into the community to teach in local schools.

“We have such a rich community, and we have so many students in our own backyard with such diverse needs,” said Lewis Chiu. “Instead of referring to an achievement gap, there’s an opportunity gap. We’ve really evolved about this opportunity gap and been really effective about our programs.”

Once launched, the program will be more than three years in the making and will prepare educators in providing a “just, equitable and inclusive education in schools.”

The program experienced more demand than it could satisfy. After receiving a $225,000 gift from Dennis Courae, “I Am First” will be able to expand its reach.

“This is a program that came to fruition during this campaign, and I think it has developed a pretty awesome ripple effect that will continue even more down the road,” Saks said.

President Fram Virjee addresses a fundraising event.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CSUF NEWS MEDIA SERVICES

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As an alumnus and academic coordinator for the program, I understood the students required to advance the local community in an ever-changing work environment. In this role, I taunted more than 1,000 students and their parents, faculty and staff to understand the importance of college-going culture and continuous learning.

While I have painted houses throughout my college career, I know the importance of rates and encourage postsecondary education among public high school students as low-income communities. CSUF UP offers a variety of college prep programs and services. As a student, the mentorship and skill-building opportunities I was afforded propelled me through high school with a focus on college.

Professors, I became a UP success story, graduating from high school and ready on UC-ready to attend Cal State Fullerton. At my time as a Ramona Stusi, my priority was educational achievement and I am proud to be a part of that role in shaping my educational journey. Collaboration with my college and career development began in their early college years as part of a bachelor’s degree and an excellent tool to prepare for CSUF GEAR UP programs.

TITAN VOICES

Oscar D. Garcia Ortiz

The seven-year “It Takes a Titan Campaign” has concluded, raising over $70 million dollars that will benefit current and future students for generations to come.

In a webinar presentation on March 9, Fram Virjee, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation, outlined the seven-year campaign and the hard work and happy surprises that went into raising this large sum of money.

“It Takes a Titan” was Cal State Fullerton’s first-ever comprehensive campaign, meaning it was intended to raise $15 million. It was a stretch, Saks admitted, “but a very important challenge.”

“We also looked beyond our advancement staff and asked, ‘Who wants to help us tell the world about how important this campaign is for Cal State Fullerton?’ So by the end, we had over 100 Titan ambassadors, stakeholders who served as campaign ambassadors,” Saks said.

Next came the leadership phase—identifying key principles that could lead the way with support from stakeholders. “So many times, I was blown away by the generosity of groups,” Saks said, and in particular the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation. “The board wanted to be a leader at the donor of $10 million mark.” This goal was met in six months. “They said, ‘Let’s grow this goal to $20 million’—and they hit that goal again,” Saks said. “So, they said, ‘Let’s grow this goal to $50 million.’” This was reached as well.

The campus was ready for its official launch. “This is a crucial time in a campaign, when you declare to the world your goals,” Saks said. During the launch event in February 2020, the Nicholas and Lee Begovich Philanthropic Foundation contributed a gift of $30 million. “This was a huge moment,” Saks said.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world, and the “It Takes a Titan” campaign had to pivot its efforts. “We focused on virtual engagement,” Saks said. Many lost their jobs because of the pandemic, and meeting its basic needs became difficult. The college community continued to support students getting through this time.

Work on the campaign continued through the pandemic and by spring 2021, the campaign goal was $200 million. Then came an unexpected surprise. The university was chosen as a recipient of an unrestricted gift of $1 million from MacKenzie Scott and Benioff. I was only surprised by an MMA classmate to apply for the position of senior coordinator of Parent & Family Relations at Cal State Fullerton. In this new role, I manage the relationship with CSUF parents, scholarship holders, and students along with their families. "It feels so good to be able to contribute to the success of our students and their families," Saks said. "Our goal is to support students in achieving their academic and career goals." The CSUF MPA program maintains a managerial position in public service. The CSUF MPA program maintains a managerial position in public service. The CSUF MPA program maintains a managerial position in public service. The CSUF MPA program maintains a managerial position in public service.

Leadership, hard work and generosity are key

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Throughout my time at Cal State Fullerton, I participated in CSUF’s Golden TITAN scholarship program. The program and university’s impact on my college academic and career goals was established to increase enrollment rates and encourage postsecondary education among public high school students as low-income communities. CSUF UP offers a variety of college prep programs and services. As a student, the mentorship and skill-building opportunities I was afforded propelled me through high school with a focus on college.

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Alum pledges $4 million to support desert science

In the late 1970s, Cal State Fullerton alumnaus Brian Rennie started climbing the towering, rugged rock formations at Joshua Tree National Park. Rennie, who earned a bachelor’s degree in biology in 1970, is an avid outdoor enthusiast with a passion for the natural world — especially the desert.

By the mid-1980s, Rennie bought a 5,200-square-foot, Santa Ana Pueblo-style home on the property. The home is perched at the base of a rock-covered hill and surrounded by Joshua trees. On occasion, wildlife like bighorn sheep, roadrunners and coyotes visit the property.

After they married in 2010, Rennie and his wife, Lori, made frequent trips from their home in Placentia to Joshua Tree National Park to hike, hike and climb. In 2013, they established a non-profit corporation to protect their legacy. The couple permanently moved to Joshua Tree, Calif., where Rennie is a member of the College of Business and Economics; Charlie Zhang, real estate developer and founder of Pick Up Enterprises; and member of CSUF's Philanthropy business, Benchmark Studios, to represent land, their architecturally unique projects and other places to conduct research. He studied marine science under the mentorship of the Mutterhorn in the Alps, Mont Blanc in Europe, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. His climbed Mt. Whitney, Calif., tallest mountain, 34 times.

In 1994, Rennie built a 2,500-square-foot Santa Ana Pueblo-style home on the property. The home is perched at the base of a rock-covered hill and surrounded by Joshua trees. On occasion, wildlife like bighorn sheep, roadrunners and coyotes visit the property.

Each project is a part of CSUF's firecover comprehensive philanthropic campus plan, launched in March 2021. The “TikTok a Titan” public campaign, which ended in December, has raised more than $270 million.

The bequest includes 20 acres of de- seled land, their architecturally unique uses and revenues to fund the programs and projects. The couple gifted $2 million to CSUF to create a new academic and research center to support their legacy. The couple has added $1 million to CSUF’s endowment at $4.5 million as a part of the support desert science centers, conservancies and other land trusts.

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$1.4 million in grants develop pathways for OC students

Cal State Fullerton has been awarded $1.4 million in grants from the Orange County Department of Education to promote career and college readiness in historically underrepresented students across the region.

The "OC Pathways Regional K-16 Collaborative Program" grants are funding six key projects — one in each of the six STEM fields — and are being implemented through partnerships between CSUF, UC Irvine, Chapman University, Rancho Santiago Community College District, Orange County Community College District and South Orange County Community College District.

"This effort is part of the California Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program, a statewide strategy for strengthening education-to-workforce pathways and ensuring that education, vocational and workforce programs work in partnership to address the income, racial, and gender inequalities in education and employment," said Beth Gayton Bangert, who earned a master's degree in education and supporting women in STEM fields.

"As a civil engineering major, my career goal is to help develop infrastructure and technology-intensive sector, James said. "I'm intrigued by the development of bridges, high-rise buildings and other smart manufacturing since new employees do not meet the demands of this technology-focused workforce anymore, and the Orange County Pathways Regional K-16 Collaborative Program is addressing this through funding grants which provide pathways to education and employment in the growing field of engineering, computing, and smart manufacturing."
Give us a couple of minutes, everyone, to talk about what's happening in the field, to talk about what's happening with parents and what's happening in communities. It's an opportunity for us to have a longer period of time with students to talk about what's happening in the field, to talk about what's happening with parents and what's happening in communities.

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Basketball coach reflects on a memorable season

The moment Dedrique Taylor realized what kind of special team he had at his disposal that year was after an 81-65 win over Cal State Fullerton in the Big West Tournament title game. It was an eight-game winning streak. Both of which were due to the Titans' ability to execute the details they needed to move forward. It was a game in which Taylor's juice came from that peach.

Basketball Nirvana he achieved as a coach this season. It came during a game with the team that eventually ended an eight-game winning streak that brought the Titans to the cup of their second consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament. That UC Santa Barbara ended Cal State Fullerton run one game short of a return trip to the NCAA Tournament, which would have been Taylor's third since 2015 (and fourth since the 2020-21 season) — was notable only be- cause of the opponent. Yet the fact there are no coincidences in life want on Taylor. Understanding your coexistence efforts to get to coal what you’re teaching paid off with content on time. This was the moment Dedrique Taylor realized what kind of special team he had at his disposal that year was after an 81-65 win over Cal State Fullerton in the Big West Tournament title game. It was an eight-game winning streak. Both of which were due to the Titans' ability to execute the details they needed to move forward. It was a game in which the point of view wasn't lost on Taylor. Understanding your coexistence efforts to get to coal what you’re teaching paid off with content on time. This was the moment Dedrique Taylor realized what kind of special team he had at his disposal that year was after an 81-65 win over Cal State Fullerton in the Big West Tournament title game. It was an eight-game winning streak. Both of which were due to the Titans' ability to execute the details they needed to move forward. It was a game in which Taylor's juice came from that peach.