

# FRESNO STATE®

MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2020



## *Looking* **FORWARD**

*Challenges come and go, but a degree lasts a lifetime*

**Castro** named  
**CSU chancellor**  
*page 2*

# Everlasting VALUE



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

This message comes about a month after my appointment by the Board of Trustees to serve as the eighth chancellor of the 23-campus California State University system, beginning in January 2021. I am thrilled to be the first California native to serve as the leader of the nation's largest public university system at a time when the University's continued success could not be more consequential for our state and country.

That said, the decision to leave our home at Fresno State was not easy. Mary and I, both born and raised near Fresno, enjoy being close to so many family members and friends. What we all share in the Central Valley — the sense of community and pride in our region — is not easily replicated.

Our collective Bulldog pride extends itself to the University's highest student enrollment in history, despite being in the midst of these unprecedented times. This affirms the exceptional value of a Fresno State education, and the cover story of this issue of Fresno State Magazine takes a deep look at the value of a college degree in today's day and age while sharing insight from a student, alumni and statewide and national experts on the topic.

While highlighting a current student who, like many of her peers, continues to persevere through extraordinary challenges in pursuit of her goals and dreams, we hope this story will be an inspiration to many.

For the fifth straight year, Fresno State ranked among the top three of the nation's best public universities for graduation-rate performance according to the U.S. News and World Report, and Fresno State ranked No. 26 in Washington Monthly's annual national list that ranks universities on social mobility, research and service.

Our recent national rankings suggest what our alumni and students demonstrate every day — the value of a Fresno State degree is only growing stronger. Mary and I have been blessed to be a part of Fresno State's distinguished history, and we look forward to staying connected for years to come as the University continues to prosper.

Sincerely,

**Joseph I. Castro**  
President, Fresno State

## FALL/WINTER 2020

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*Fresno State serves the richly diverse region of Central California. We are proud to have the U.S. Department of Education designate our University as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution.*

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Photos by Cary Edmondson

**Cover:** Transfer student Vivica Thomas keeps in shape for her job in the U.S. Army Reserve by running at Woodward Park in Fresno.

**Left:** After more than seven years serving as president at Fresno State, Dr. Joseph I. Castro will begin as California State University chancellor in January, overseeing all 23 CSU campuses.

## Stay in touch!

We welcome your comments about Fresno State Magazine at [magazine@csufresno.edu](mailto:magazine@csufresno.edu).

If you receive more than one copy, please pass it along to a friend of Fresno State. If you would like to support the University, visit [fresnostate.edu/givenow](https://fresnostate.edu/givenow) to make your contribution. Thank you.

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# The Castro Presidency: 2013-2020

Castro to begin new appointment as CSU chancellor in January

By Eddie Hughes

**D**ressed in a navy suit with a neatly pressed white shirt and a Bulldog red tie covered with Fresno State logos, Joseph I. Castro notices a group of about 20 elementary-aged children in matching orange T-shirts having a picnic on the lawn outside his hometown Hanford Auditorium. He's on a tight schedule, but he doesn't want to miss an opportunity to inspire. He walks up to the group with his wife, Mary, and, one-by-one, they introduce themselves to each child.

"Are you the *real* president? Do you live in the White House?" one little girl asks.

Castro smiles and says, "Yes, I'm the real president of Fresno State. I do live in a white house, but it's not *the* White House."

That interaction between the Castros and those young students on a field trip from Fresno to Hanford's Superior Dairy happened seven years ago, during Castro's first week on the job as Fresno State president. It was the first of what turned out to be many times when the Castros demonstrated how deeply they care about the success of young people, and showed their natural gift of making each student feel special and valued.

On Jan. 4, 2021, the Castros will take that same servant leadership to Long Beach, where Joseph I. Castro will begin his new role as the next chancellor of the 23-campus California State University system. He is the first California native and first Mexican American to be appointed to the role. Castro will succeed Timothy P. White, a Fresno State alumnus who has served as chancellor since late 2012.

Castro is a first-generation college graduate who was raised by a single mother in Hanford. In 2013, during his first week as president, Castro invited Fresno State Magazine to tag along for a day-in-the-life story and visit his childhood home and the Burger King where he and Mary worked when they first met, and attend one of his first "friend-raising" meetings with a family of Fresno State supporters. For this issue, the magazine looks back at the past seven years of the Castro presidency while sitting down for this Q&A with the new chancellor-select.

*Continued*



▼ Looking back at photos from the fall 2013 Fresno State Magazine.



Joseph I. Castro with his grandparents on the day he graduated with a master's degree from UC Berkeley.



Joseph and Mary Castro sit side by side, sharing a few bites of a chocolate chip sundae at Superior Dairy in Hanford, near their childhood homes.



Joseph I. Castro leaves his mother's home in Hanford, where he grew up, after an early-morning breakfast.

**FSMag:** Describe the feelings you had the moment you learned you were selected to be the next CSU chancellor.

**Castro:** On Sept. 21, I had returned from campus to University House in the mid-afternoon to be with [my son] Jess while Mary was taking care of her father at his apartment. We were swimming and playing ball just before the call came in from Board of Trustees Chair Lillian Kimbell. So, as I was listening to Chair Kimbell share the great news, Jess was in the background cheering from the swimming pool. He takes great pride in being the first in the family to learn this news. Mary and our two adult children, Isaac and Lauren, arrived shortly thereafter, and we were all able to experience together the joy of that special moment.

After I received the news, Mary and I immediately began to think about all of the sacrifices made by our grandparents and parents so this moment could occur. It is impossible for me not to become emotional when I reflect on the fact that fewer than 100 years ago, my grandfather (a Dreamer of his time) was living in a tent with his parents along the railroad, not far from Fresno State, while his father worked on the Santa Fe Railroad, and later the fields. And now, his grandson will be the first California native to serve as the eighth chancellor of the CSU, the largest public university system in the nation. I hope my appointment as chancellor will inspire some of our California youth to dream even bigger than usual.

**FSMag:** What was the No. 1 thing you learned while serving as president at Fresno State, and how will that influence your work moving forward?

**Castro:** I have learned many valuable lessons at Fresno State. The lesson that immediately comes to mind has occurred during the global pandemic: that the cabinet and I must be flexible in our thinking about ideas or solutions. Over the past [eight] months, I have found ideas or solutions that seem unreasonable at a given moment may be quite reasonable (even ideal) the

next day, week or month. There is no rulebook for leadership during a pandemic. When one must make a decision about a highly contested matter, especially with imperfect information, it is vitally important that our mission and values guide the decision.

**FSMag:** What are you most proud of during your time at Fresno State?

**Castro:** I am most proud of the extremely talented and diverse cabinet members I have appointed and of our campus's strengthened commitment to student success. This commitment is now firmly embedded into our mission, priorities and campus culture. While we should celebrate the significant increase in graduation rates and decreased equity gaps since 2013, there is more work to be done to achieve our bold Graduation Initiative 2025 goals.

I am also proud of new initiatives we established together, which have contributed to our success in achieving national recognition for serving diverse

students. We were among the first universities in the CSU and the nation to establish a comprehensive basic needs program. Our Student Cupboard, Good Samaritan Fund and Clothing Closet have each played crucial roles in supporting our talented and diverse students. The Dream Outreach and Success Centers were among the first programs of their kind in the nation and demonstrate our unwavering commitment to undocumented students. Our Cross Cultural and Gender Center's array of programs have also contributed significantly to supporting our diverse students.

We have led the way nationally in our commitment to using mobile technology to support greater engagement between students and faculty. This has occurred through our Technology Services' programs, DISCOVERe Mobile Technology Program and the Center for Faculty Excellence, all of which have been critically important to our continued success in serving students during the global pandemic.



**FSMag:** What physical campus improvements are you most proud of?

**Castro:** Over the last seven years, we have also rebuilt much of our campus's physical and technological infrastructure, including our new electrical system — the most modern of its kind in the nation — and the planned new central utility plant. These projects will serve our campus for at least the next 40 to 50 years. We renovated many classrooms, laboratory and outdoor spaces, including several athletic venues. And, importantly, we are building the new Lynda and Stewart Resnick Student Union, which will transform the experience for our growing student body in the decades ahead. Much more work remains.

With strong community support, we also constructed the Armenian Genocide Monument, the only one of its kind on a university campus in the nation. I was deeply honored to participate in what was the most moving and meaningful opening ceremony of my life. Mary and I stood quietly after the ceremony that night bearing witness to the overwhelming emotions of thousands

- A** Joseph I. Castro high-fives students at a Fresno State commencement ceremony, one of his favorite events.
- B** Castro meets with University supporters on campus.
- C** As was common, Castro makes time to walk around campus and chat with students.
- D** The Castros participate in a ribbon-cutting for the Armenian Genocide Monument on campus.
- E** Castro and other University officials speak to churchgoers in an effort to recruit and inspire more African American students.

of our alumni and friends who were there to honor their ancestors. Because of my Valley roots and longtime personal connection to the Armenian community, I understand what a powerful statement this monument makes every day about our University's values and commitment to human rights.

**FSMag:** How important was the community's support in your efforts as president?

**Castro:** I am proud of the way we have all engaged the Central Valley (and beyond) over the past seven years. We have embraced everyone and welcomed

them to become more involved at Fresno State. I believe that this is why we have experienced significant success in our governmental relations efforts, our private fundraising and, most importantly, in inspiring our Valley's most talented and diverse students to view Fresno State as their first choice. The fact that Fresno State has the largest entering class in its history during a global pandemic is nothing short of a miracle and is due to the efforts of our entire community.

Visit [fresnostate.edu/magazine](https://fresnostate.edu/magazine) for the full Q&A.

## Night Vision

Photo by Cary Edmondson

As the sun sets on 2020 — a year that has brought about so much change — a photo like this one helps us pause to reflect on the beauty of our campus and the opportunity that awaits. As the intellectual and cultural center of campus, the Henry Madden Library has welcomed more than 12 million people through its doors in the past decade. That came to a halt midway through the spring 2020 semester when library access was limited to mostly virtual resources because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the fall semester began with 81 in-person courses being held on campus that could not be effectively taught in a virtual setting. While the California State University system announced that its 23 campuses will remain mostly virtual in spring 2021, the hope is the number of students, faculty and staff being welcomed back to campus will continue to grow in the months ahead.



**BOLD**  
*gives*  
**BACK**

## Seedlings from Hiroshima

At 8:15 a.m. on Aug. 6, 1945, an atomic bombing in Hiroshima, Japan instantly killed about 70,000 people, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Tens of thousands more would die by the end of the year due to the effects of radioactive fallout. Except for a few buildings, the city was leveled.

Less than three-quarters of a mile from ground zero, in the shadow of Hiroshima Castle, a camphor tree was damaged and bent by the blast but remained standing. It was one of 170 hibakujumoku, a Japanese term meaning atomic-bombed tree, that survived the cataclysm. They would become symbols of peace and hope.



Three seedlings from this tree were planted on Aug. 6 outside the Henry Madden Library to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, remember those who died and instill hope that nuclear weapons are never used again.

"We are honored that our Peace Garden will be home to such special trees — trees whose ancestral memory imparts insight about life, hope and the human power to envision a harmonious future," says Fresno State Provost Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval.

The seeds from the parent tree (No. 17) were collected by the Green Legacy Hiroshima, and eventually sent to California Health Sciences University for distribution in the Central Valley with the help of the local Japanese-American community.

— Benjamin Kirk



Photo courtesy of Lyles College of Engineering

## Researchers Simulate Virus Spread

Clouds of white and pink smoke loom from the windows of a Fresno County Rural Transit Authority electric bus in a Selma transportation yard during an airflow simulation study. Sitting inside — 6 feet away from one another — is a masked, multidisciplinary team of researchers and industry professionals working to understand how COVID-19 could be spread on modes of public transportation. The smoke generated by non-toxic candles is being used to simulate the movement of airflow and airborne contamination — one of many tests being used to understand and quantify both air circulation as well as virus mitigation inside the bus.

"This study aims to understand air circulation patterns inside the cabins of busses, as well as test the impact of different approaches in mitigating potential virus circulation and infection," says Dr. Aly Tawfik, associate professor of civil engineering in the Lyles College of Engineering at Fresno State and founding director of the Fresno State Transportation Institute.

Tawfik and Dr. Deify Law, associate professor of mechanical engineering at Fresno State, were part of a research team that included Dr. Juris Grasis, assistant professor in molecular and cell biology at University of California, Merced, and several industry partners. Law provided full HVAC data including air and smoke circulation behavior, air speed, static pressure, temperature and relative humidity.

"This will allow us to investigate the dynamics of ventilation flow and the airborne contamination in a scenario of a COVID-19 infected person who was breathing or coughing inside a transit bus," Law says. "I am very optimistic that this research will make an impact on the future of public transportation. I see now is the time to reevaluate the HVAC design of public transportation, especially the locations of supply and return air grilles relative to the seating area of the driver and passengers."

— Rebecca Wass



Cary Edmondson

## Perenchio Foundation Gifts \$5.5M

Fresno State students facing a financial hardship on the road to academic success will soon be able to apply for more grants and scholarships thanks to two gifts totaling \$5.5 million from the Perenchio Foundation, which was established through the estate of an entertainment executive who has long supported the University.

The Perenchio Foundation, which aligns support with the philanthropic wishes of Jerrold "Jerry" Perenchio, who died in 2017, donated \$500,000 to the Good Samaritan Fund to help students who have faced unexpected financial roadblocks during the 2020-

21 academic year. The foundation also donated \$5 million to create the Perenchio Family Endowed Scholarship Fund to support Fresno State students from all backgrounds and majors, including "Dreamers," immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children.

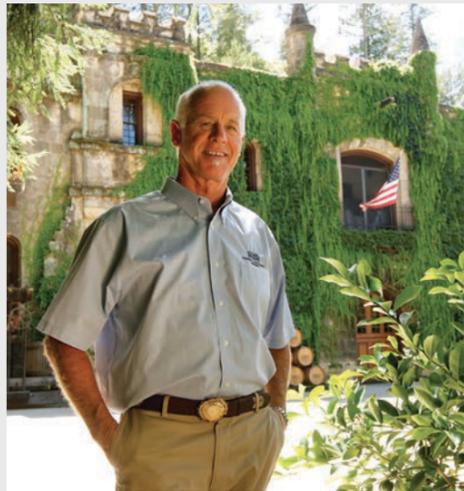
"By helping to remove barriers to achieving a college degree, the Perenchio Foundation is profoundly transforming the lives of current and future students, our next generation of leaders, thereby making a lasting gift to the hometown that gave Mr. Perenchio his start in life," says Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro.

The Perenchio scholarships will first be awarded in the 2021-22 academic year to freshmen and sophomores to encourage retention, and juniors and seniors to increase degree completion.

Perenchio, whose grandparents emigrated from Italy, was born in Fresno. His family owned the Fresno Grape Exchange and the Crestview Winery. He earned a bachelor's degree from UCLA before joining the United States Air Force and becoming a jet-fighter pilot. Following his honorable discharge, Perenchio established his career in the entertainment and communications industries.

In 2011, Perenchio was awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts at Fresno State's centennial commencement. After accepting the degree, Perenchio encouraged the graduates to dream big and said success could be theirs as it was his with "lots of hard work, perseverance, mentoring, faith, ambition and a good dose of luck."

— BoNhia Lee



Cary Edmondson

## Introducing the Alumni Vintners Wine Club

Ever wonder which well-known wines are produced with the help of Fresno State alumni? Now, there's a fun way to find out – the Fresno State Winery created the Alumni Vintners Wine Club to unite wine enthusiasts and alumni.

The club's October selection featured Chateau Montelena wines from Napa Valley. Chateau Montelena and its CEO and president Bo Barrett (*left*), a Fresno State alumnus, were featured in the 2008 film "Bottle Shock" – a Napa Valley love story highlighting the rise of California wines.

Club deliveries will occur three times a year in the same delivery time frame as normal wine-club shipments. The next shipment, in February, will feature Toca Madera Winery (Madera) and the selections of alumnus winemaker Shayne Vetter.

### Canned wine now available

In other recent winery news, the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology introduced its first canned wine selection in September with its Tailgate series. Consumers can now purchase 12.7-ounce cans, half the size of a normal wine bottle, at the Gibson Farm Market on campus. Each can sells for \$3.50 or \$14 for a four-pack. The cans are also available locally at restaurants and stores such as the Clovis Meat Market, Fresno Meat Market, Mar Val in Prather, The Market and Simonian Farms.

The red wine is blended from Barbera and Cabernet Sauvignon varieties; the white wine is a mix of Albariño and Muscat varieties; and the rosé is from its Syrah variety.

– Geoff Thurner



## AROUND THE FOUNTAIN



### Largest Class

Amid times when many universities nationally are concerned about decreasing enrollment due to the pandemic, student interest in Fresno State remains high. The largest incoming class in the University's history enrolled this fall, including about 3,700 freshmen and 2,800 transfer students.



### Tune In

ABC30 is now home to Bulldog Breakdown, the official weekly show of Fresno State athletics. The show airs Sundays at 5 p.m. PT, featuring highlights, exclusive interviews and stories about student-athletes, alumni and coaches. Content is also available on [abc30.com](http://abc30.com) and on the station's social media channels.



### Coming Up for Air

Dr. Tania Pacheco-Werner, co-assistant director of the Central Valley Health Policy Institute at Fresno State, was appointed to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District by Gov. Gavin Newsom.



## 1 of 10 to Earn Global Fellowship

Fresno State sophomore Mistique Davis (*left*) was selected as a 2020 Frederick Douglass Global Fellow, earning a scholarship to study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa (tentatively scheduled for July 2021). She is one of 10 college students across the nation – out of 2,000 applicants – to earn the prestigious fellowship.

"Now, more than ever, the world needs individuals with strong leadership skills who have the ability to work across cultural divides," says James Pellow, president and CEO of the Council on International Exchange, the scholarship's sponsor.

The fellowship launched in 2017 to expand access to international education for underrepresented students who exhibit strong leadership skills, a history of service to others and a commitment to social justice.

For Davis, receiving this fellowship now is significant as she has been a passionate and steadfast advocate for the Black Lives Matter movement. She helped to organize a series of peaceful protests with other youth organizers in Stockton, where she spent a majority of her childhood. As the vice president of the Fresno State NAACP chapter, Davis feels a personal responsibility to give back to her community.

"This fellowship is not [just] for me," says Davis, who is studying exercise science and aspires to become a physical therapist. "It's for my little sister. It's for the people of Stockton, which is such an incredibly diverse community, and it's for my black peers and classmates here at Fresno State. This gives me an opportunity to represent the University in a positive way."

– Melissa Tav



### Handy Work

To answer a growing need in the community and on campus, faculty and students from the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology produced a 74-gallon batch of Bulldog hand sanitizer and bottled it for purchase at the Gibson Farm Market, while supplies last. The four-ounce bottles cost \$3.49 each.



### 11 Years, 1 Million Hours

Despite the pandemic putting a halt to many service initiatives this spring, Fresno State students, faculty and staff provided 1.2 million hours of service. This is the 11th straight year the University has topped 1 million hours.

## Supporting Future Health Leaders

Each year, over 5,500 students at Fresno State declare majors in health care-related fields – with a majority of those students staying and serving in the Central Valley long after graduating.

CalViva Health is creating opportunities for these future health care leaders with a \$200,000 gift to fund scholarships that will empower future physicians, nurses, physical therapists, social workers and other students studying in health care-related majors on campus.

"We are happy to invest in future qualified health care professionals who will, in turn, serve our region," says Greg Hund, CEO for CalViva Health. "It is a known fact that the Central Valley is in dire need of health care providers, and we believe in reinvesting back into our community to help ensure our provider needs are met."

CalViva Health's gift has the potential to help students like recent biochemistry graduate Bagieng Keophimphone, a son of Laotian refugees who saw firsthand the struggles his father faced in receiving quality care, or those like social work graduate James Borunda, who faced many personal hardships throughout life that inspired him to become a strong advocate for others in his community.



A total of 41 students have been offered the scholarship for the fall 2020 semester.

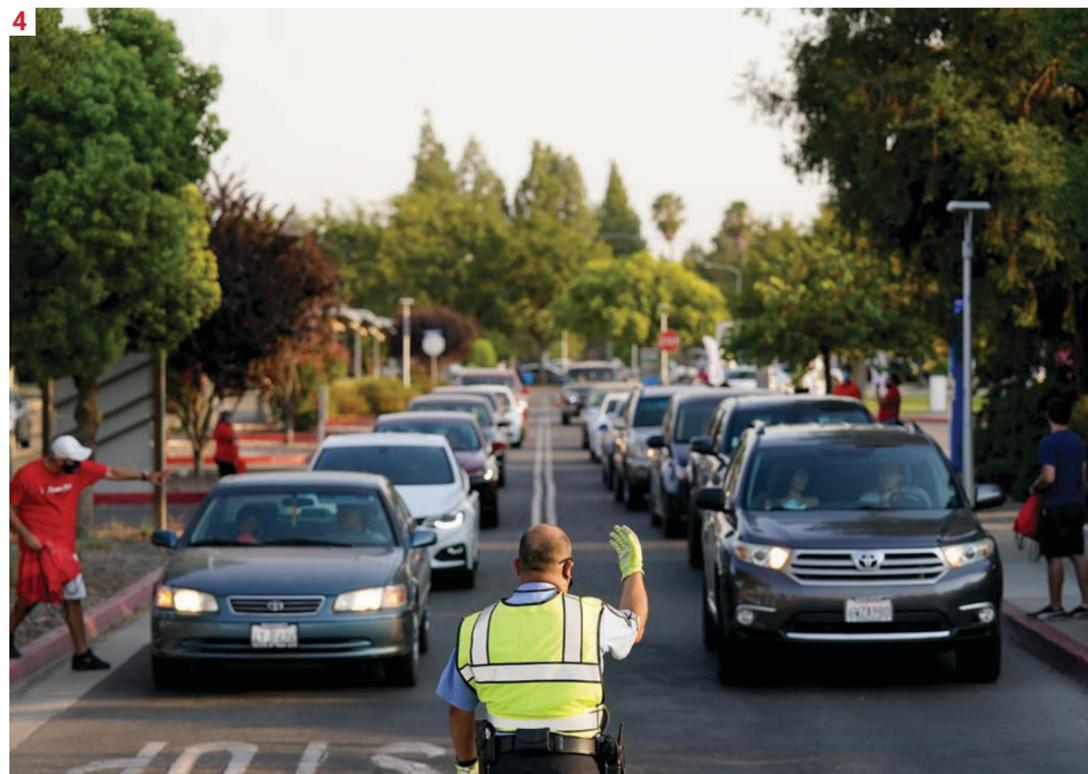
CalViva Health – a locally managed public health care plan – serves Fresno, Kings and Madera counties, and strives to provide access to quality, cost-effective health care throughout the region.

– Melissa Tav

## CAMPUS LIFE 2020

Photos by Cary Edmondson

Many things about college life at Fresno State have temporarily changed during the past eight months — but one thing remains the same. The Bulldog spirit carries on, whether it's virtual, in person or during a drive-through celebration like this one pictured for New Student Convocation. As University President Joseph I. Castro has made clear, Fresno State faculty and staff remain as committed as ever to boldly empowering students for success — while making sure safety continues to be a top priority. Whether it has been years or weeks since you've been on Fresno State's campus, here is a look at how the University has adapted to the times, courtesy of award-winning University photographer Cary Edmondson.



**1.** Greg Saldade of Facilities Management sprays disinfectant on desks in a Lab School classroom in August, just before the fall semester is set to begin. There are about 81 in-person courses on campus this fall, and the campus population is limited to about 2,200 students, faculty and staff (7.5% of the overall campus population as compared to fall 2019).

**2.** Resident adviser Kiara Graves helped clean and sanitize dorm-room desks before a limited number of students moved in for the fall semester.

**3.** Gene Mazza, director of operations for the Save Mart Center, measures the appropriate space to place social distancing decals on the floor in preparation for COVID-19 testing being offered at the arena for those who are attending classes or working on campus.

**4.** Campus police direct traffic during the New Student Convocation parade that took place the first week of the semester. New Student Convocation has become a growing tradition in recent years, as faculty and staff typically form a human tunnel inside the entrance to the Save Mart Center and high-five each new student. This year, it was limited to non-contact cheers and distributing welcome packets so students can learn about campus traditions and resources.

*Continued*

**5.** It wasn't the typical move-in day for the campus residence halls, based on numbers, but about 225 students moved into the dorms for the fall semester.

**6.** Rooms have been assigned single occupancy to help maintain physical distancing for students living in the dorms, and facial coverings are required in all common housing areas.

**7.** Dr. Miguel Pedroza prepares viticulture and enology students during a wine production class on the first day of school, Aug. 19.

**8.** Student Karley Curtis works the assembly line as students helped with the first-ever wine canning at the Fresno State Winery. The Tailgate Series of wines are now available for purchase at the Gibson Farm Market and other retailers.

**9.** A student exits the Madden Library, now open for limited in-person services, on the first day of fall semester instruction.



5



10



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12



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9

**10.** Physical therapy students adhere to safety policies by wearing masks and keeping the proper physical distance during the first week of class.

**11.** A student visits the DISCOVERe Technology Hub for help with a device on the first day of the semester.

**12.** Dr. Leslie Zarrinkhameh works with physical therapy students during a lab class on Sept. 14.

**13.** With safety and testing protocols in place, Fresno State football student-athletes returned to campus in October with the goal of playing an eight-game, conference-only season.



13



**Dear Reader,**

**We have always been a bold community of alumni and friends who takes care of each other.**

Reassuring students that some of their most basic needs can be met during this challenging time continues to be a high priority for Fresno State. Many of our students are experiencing hardships they never imagined, and our campus efforts are hyper-focused on ensuring pathways to success.

**Today, I am asking those of you who can to boldly donate to the Student Success Fund.**

Your gift will help strengthen student success by supporting initiatives such as food and hygiene items, hotspots to access virtual classes and campus resources (like health and counseling services) from home, and funding for unanticipated student emergencies.

**A generous donation from you will offer relief and peace of mind, enabling Fresno State students to stay focused on their academic achievements.**

This is an unparalleled moment for the greater Bulldog community to rally in support of our future leaders.

Join me to make a tangible impact on thousands of students' lives and demonstrate how Bulldogs boldly band together to care for one another.

**P.S.** Donating today will provide essential support to the Fresno State Student Success Fund, helping to remove barriers for students to achieve a college degree. **Thank you!**

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Castro, Ph.D., M.P.P.  
President



Cary Edmondson

# Welcome Home

New program welcomes back students who once left home for college

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic gripped California, Jennifer Alvarez began worrying about her family, finances and academic future.

Alvarez, 19, a first-generation student from Madera, was in her first year at the University of California, Davis, when the crisis emerged in early 2020. Her mother's clothing business was forced to shut down and the future of traditional college life became uncertain.

"I didn't know at first that COVID would affect me so much," Alvarez says. "You started hearing about the coronavirus and how finals were being canceled and going online ... it got really scary."

She worried about how classes would be conducted in the fall, how far she was from home and whether to secure an apartment for her second year. Then a friend mentioned a social media post by Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro. In it, he described his idea for the University's new Welcome Home Initiative that offered a pathway back for those who prefer to be near family during these challenging times.

"I saw it as an opportunity," she says. "I just wanted to be closer to home and my family. You honestly don't know when college learning will go back to normal."

Alvarez is one of about 40 students enrolled through the initiative from universities around the state and country.

The novel program — the first of its kind in the 23-campus California State University system — allows qualified students to enroll at Fresno State through a streamlined admissions process. In part, students had to live

in Fresno, Kings, Tulare or Madera counties, attend a four-year university outside the area and meet admission and impaction requirements for Fresno State.

Alvarez appreciates the chance to come home and also to finish her bachelor's degree at less expense. To cover her expenses at UC Davis, she was using a combination of financial aid, community scholarships, loans and family support.

She plans to major in child development and to complete her bachelor's degree at Fresno State.

"The Welcome Home Initiative made things a lot easier for me and it gave me a plan," she says. Fresno State "really took into consideration how the pandemic can be affecting students and how students might want to come back home for several reasons."



— Cyndee Fontana-Ott is a freelance writer based in Fresno.

## Yes! I am pleased to contribute to the Fresno State Student Success Fund:

Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check enclosed, payable to:**  
Fresno State Foundation

**Charge my credit card:**  
 VISA  MasterCard  AMEX  Discover

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We may publicly recognize your gift unless otherwise instructed.

Please keep my gift anonymous.

Please contact me about adding Fresno State to my will to support future students.

**APPEAL CODE: 21D37**

# Looking FORWARD

By Eddie Hughes | Photos by Cary Edmondson

**V**

ivica Thomas briskly runs through the golden hills of Woodward Park, building up her stamina as the sun sets on another day in the life of a college student in this new, mostly virtual norm. She seldom strays off path, hoping to avoid any obstacles on her journey — while armed with the confidence that she has overcome challenges before.

This run is part of her training regimen to stay in shape for her job in the U.S. Army Reserve. But it also symbolizes her educational journey and the determination that keeps her striding forward in her quest to finish college.

This year, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought about change pretty much everywhere for everyone — higher education included. There's been an unprecedented use of the word "unprecedented" as college students all over the country have transitioned to mostly virtual learning. Many university employees continue to work remotely and, on many campuses, major events like commencement and college sports are in limbo.

For students, questions abound. "Where should I live?" "Which college should I attend, or should I attend college at all?" "Maybe it's best to take some time off?" "Is college even worth it?"

What is the value of a college degree?

It's not a new question, but it is one many are considering as they help their loved ones map out their college and career choices in today's climate.

While the decision about *where* to attend college may be difficult, experts say the choice about *whether* to attend should be easy — even amidst a global pandemic.

"The value of a college degree gets questioned for a number of reasons, and the pandemic is surely one of them," says Shae Collins, communications manager for the Campaign for College Opportunity, an organization that works to ensure all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college.

*Continued*

*Challenges come and go,  
but a degree lasts a lifetime*



◀ *Despite the barriers she has faced throughout her college years, Vivica Thomas is determined to reach the finish line and earn her degree.*

"In challenging times, a college degree becomes even more valuable," Collins says. "Usually in these times, people with a college degree weather the storm a lot better. They have more opportunity and more resources that can safeguard against long-term unemployment."

The stats are seemingly endless. Go to college, earn a degree and it will equate to more opportunity and more money over the course of a lifetime.

A 2018 study by Georgetown University's Center for Education and the Workforce shows the median earnings for someone with a high school diploma are \$36,000 annually, compared with \$62,000 for a bachelor's degree holder and \$80,000 for a graduate degree holder. Over the course of a lifetime, that could add up to as much as \$1 million in increased earnings.

Median annual earnings for someone with a:

**High School Diploma**  
**\$36,000**

**Bachelor's Degree**  
**\$62,000**

**Graduate Degree**  
**\$80,000**

2018 study by Georgetown University's Center for Education and the Workforce

"Not only is college worth it, the consequences of not going to college have been increasingly dire for people for quite some time," says Jamie Merisotis, president and CEO of the Lumina Foundation.

"The value of a college degree improves both the quality of your life and the quality of your work."

Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro serves on the boards of both the Campaign for College Opportunity and the Lumina Foundation, a national, private foundation based in Indianapolis. The Lumina Foundation's mission is to make opportunities beyond high school available to everyone and prepare informed citizens.

"Value exists for individuals, but also for us as a society," Merisotis says, pointing out that college graduates are often more active participants in society and in our democracy. "If they make more money, they pay more taxes."

A 2012 report published by the Campaign for College Opportunity shows for every \$1 the state of California invests in public higher education, the state will return \$4.50 from taxes on the increased earnings of college graduates and lower costs for providing safety net services.

**Social Mobility**

Furthermore, there is perhaps no greater driver of social mobility — the movement of individuals or families between social classes — than a college degree. For those who grow up poor, earning a degree provides a 90% chance of escaping poverty, according to Pew Charitable Trusts.

"Social mobility dramatically improves when one person in the family gets a college degree," Merisotis says. "I'm a first-generation college graduate myself. Me getting a college degree ended poverty in my family forever."

This is a particularly powerful narrative at Fresno State, where 80% of students

**"Social mobility dramatically improves when one person in the family gets a college degree. I'm a first-gen college graduate myself. Me getting a college degree ended poverty in my family forever."**

— JAMIE MERISOTIS  
President and CEO  
Lumina Foundation

rely on some sort of financial aid and 66% are the first generation in their families to attend college.

For five straight years, the University has ranked among Washington Monthly's top 30 nationally based on social mobility, research and civic engagement. Money Magazine ranked Fresno State No. 7 nationally among Most Transformative Colleges, "where students beat the odds by doing better than would be expected from their academic and economic backgrounds."

Those rankings are something all Fresno State alumni can be proud of, and, for this issue, Fresno State Magazine reached out to three people — a recent graduate, a current student and an established alumnus who runs a business — to get their various perspectives on the value of their Fresno State educations.

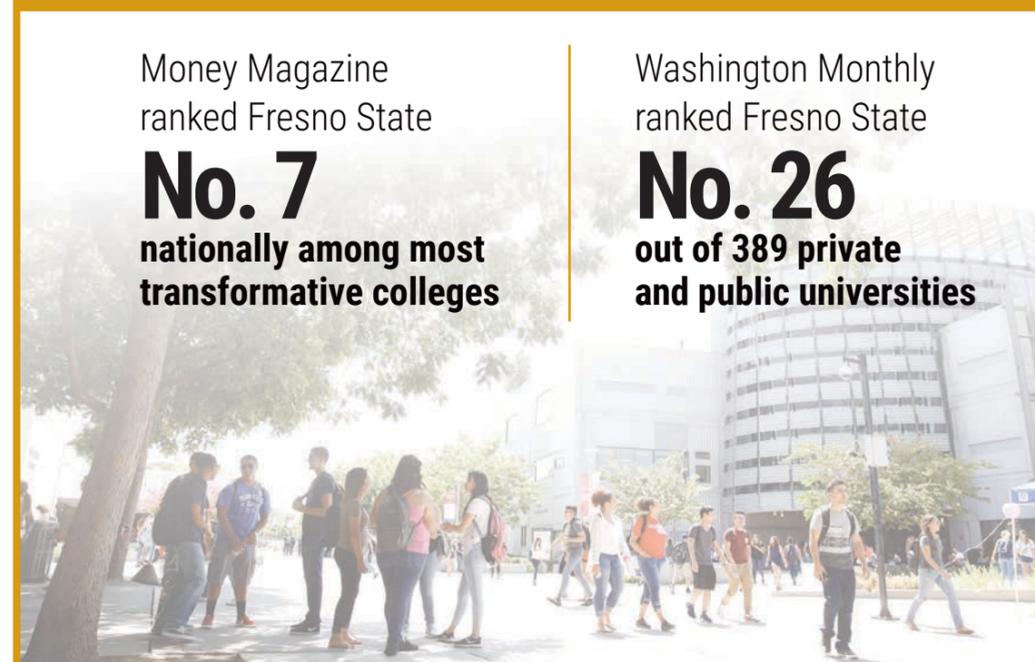
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Fresno State ranked among the **top three of the nation's best public universities for graduation-rate performance** in U.S. News and World Report's 2021 Best College rankings.

Money Magazine ranked Fresno State **No. 7** nationally among most transformative colleges

Washington Monthly ranked Fresno State **No. 26** out of 389 private and public universities



**Every dollar** California invests in public higher ed returns

**\$4.50**

2012 report published by the Campaign for College Opportunity



**80%** of Fresno State students rely on financial aid

Earning a degree provides a **90%** chance of escaping poverty

Pew Charitable Trusts





**“The best thing you can do is to be educated and informed. If you can make it through the pandemic as a college student, you can do anything.”**

– GINA AVALOS  
Multimedia Journalist  
KSBY TV

Avalos once spent a summer working in the tomato fields as a junior at Coalinga High School, and learned how grueling the days could be. “As I was growing up, I would see my mom come home super tired from working long hours in the heat,” Avalos says. “It’s not a job I wanted to do for the rest of my life, although I respect it a lot.”

She remembers the joy she discovered taking a journalism class as a high school elective. Then she attended West Hills College and briefly considered transferring to the University of Miami before learning about Fresno State’s media, communications and journalism program, and opting to stay closer to home.

The value of a Fresno State education was too good to pass up. One of the most affordable universities in the nation, Fresno State was ranked No. 23 by Washington Monthly in the Best Bang for the Buck: West category for how well it helps non-wealthy students attain marketable degrees at an affordable price.

her roaming office, Avalos is sent out on assignment five days a week. She typically sets up her own tripod and video camera and records herself reporting on scene, before editing the footage in her vehicle and uploading it to the station for the evening news.

It’s a daily grind she’s grown to love. Her goal is to one day become a news anchor and possibly return to the Fresno area. But, for now, she’s focused on learning from the news pros she works with every day and gaining all the experience she can. Her career serves as a reminder of the value of her degree and the experiences Fresno State provided that helped her land that first job.

**66%** of Fresno State students are the first generation in their families to attend college

## A Rising Recent Grad

Sometimes trial by fire is the best way to learn when starting a new job. For Gina Avalos, the idiom was a bit too literal. She spent her first day on the job as a multimedia journalist for KSBY TV helping to cover breaking news as a raging fire disrupted the scenic ocean views along California’s Central Coast.

Avalos graduated from Fresno State in May with a degree in media, communications and journalism. The final two months of her college experience were flipped upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic, as her classes shifted to virtual instruction. “The spring semester did not go at all how I planned,” Avalos says. “It was definitely challenging, but I pushed through.”

That’s what Avalos was raised to do. She grew up in Huron, a town of about 7,300 people less than an hour’s drive from Fresno. She was raised by her mother Griselda Lizarraga, a farmworker, in a single-parent household, and she says she also maintained a good relationship with her father. Avalos is the only one of six siblings so far to earn a college degree.

“Coming from where I come from, although people have the opportunity, a lot of people don’t take it,” Avalos says of her decision to go to college.



▲ *Alumna Gina Avalos is on scene reporting the day’s news along the Central Coast during a typical day on the job as a multimedia journalist for KSBY TV in San Luis Obispo.*

◀ *Without a camera operator to assist her on this day, Avalos sets up her video camera and tripod; records her own interviews, video footage and standup; and then returns to her vehicle to edit the package and upload it for the station to air.*

She was determined to take full advantage of her opportunity at Fresno State, saying “yes” to every conference, workshop and on-the-job opportunity she got during college – absorbing the teaching of faculty who spent decades in TV news, working on the Fresno State Focus student newscast and working as a student assistant producing content for the University’s official social media accounts.

Those experiences helped Avalos land a job right out of college, even during a time of uncertainty and job scarcity.

“[They] had me editing, interviewing and shooting all the time, which is something I’m doing every day now,” Avalos says. During the pandemic, while using her company vehicle as

“During these times, it’s so important to have that education,” Avalos says. “The best thing you can do is to be educated and informed. If you can make it through the pandemic as a college student, you can do anything.”

Now, she’s counting down the days until she officially receives her degree in the mail.

“To me, the value of having that degree in my hand is being able to say I’m a first-generation student, and I’m proud of that,” Avalos says. “It just shows how much hard work and determination gets you. I just can’t wait to get my degree and frame it and show it off – and to get that reaction from my parents.”

Continued

## A Student Story — Staying the Course

The American Council on Education projected in April that fall enrollment at universities nationwide would decrease by 15%. Fresno State's enrollment actually grew — perhaps a testament to the value of an affordable education at a University that serves a student population like Fresno State's.

"For first-generation students, for low-income students, for students of color, the degree matters so much more," says Shae Collins, of Campaign for College Opportunity. "These are students who typically don't have as much of a safety net, students who can't afford to take time off. There's so much more value for those students because there aren't many opportunities for upward mobility aside from college."

Fresno State welcomed the largest incoming class in its history this fall with about 3,700 freshmen and almost 2,800 transfer students. Total enrollment for the 110th academic year exceeds 25,000 students.

One of those students is Vivica Thomas, an Africana studies major who transferred from Fresno City College.

Thomas' story is one of perseverance and inspiration that she hopes will encourage other students facing barriers to earning their degrees. Though she doesn't yet know exactly what career her schooling will lead her to, she is unwavering in her goal to finish what she started and graduate just as her four sisters did.

Her father, who served in the U.S. Navy for 18 years, has pennants on the family room wall of the family's Stockton home representing each college his daughters have attended.

The Fresno State pennant is the third for Thomas, who initially attended Cal State East Bay before Fresno City College. Like many college students, unexpected obstacles have dotted Thomas' path.

She left East Bay after a difficult living situation, and enrolled at Fresno City College when her sister, Olivia, moved to town. That same semester, Thomas was diagnosed with a learning disability after another sister, Sheila, a doctor, suggested she get tested for reading comprehension. With access to services and support, Thomas says her grades went up tremendously.

While progressing in school, however, she also needed a job. A U.S. Army recruiter visiting Fresno City College convinced Thomas to come meet with him, and within about a month's time, she says, she was being sworn in to the U.S. Army Reserve. Her parents were not surprised.

"My family is involved in all my decisions, down to what color shoes I wear. We're very close," Thomas says. "They were not shocked because out of all five of us [children], I'm the most likely to do something like that. Dad was in the Navy 18 years, one of us had to do it. It was inevitable."

Serving as a mechanic (she wanted a job that would tech her a skill), Thomas reported to Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos once a month. That was pre-pandemic. Now, her training mostly consists of computer courses and meetings, while she runs four days a week to stay in shape. On top of that, she moved into her first apartment in August, and she has started styling hair out of her home to help make ends meet.

She is enrolled in 15 units, and is somewhat nervous about a fall semester requiring virtual instruction — which she knows will require a lot

of reading rather than the face-to-face interaction she thrives with. "I thought about not attending school this semester, but at the end of the day I can either [persevere] this one semester (hopefully it's just one semester) or I can be doing [nothing] with my time," Thomas says.

"The biggest thing I've learned in my college journey, if you have an academic goal, don't let anything discourage you from achieving that goal — if it's a learning disability, if it's your friends, if you lose your job, whatever. If you have a goal, stay focused on your goal."

*Continued*

▼ *Inspired by the academic and career accomplishments of her siblings, Vivica Thomas plans to be the next in her family to graduate from college.*

**"The biggest thing I've learned in my college journey, if you have an academic goal, don't let anything discourage you from achieving that goal — if it's a learning disability, if it's your friends, if you lose your job, whatever. If you have a goal, stay focused on your goal."**

**— VIVICA THOMAS**  
Africana studies student



## An Alumnus Perspective

From media coverage to casual conversations, it's been hard not to pick up on chatter about a "gap year" or whether students should consider taking some time off, during the past few months of the pandemic and the adapting college landscape.

Barry Maas has some personal experience with the topic, from way before it was trending. Maas, a 1994 Fresno State graduate, grew up in South Dakota and attended South Dakota State University his first two years of college before his father relocated to Fresno. Maas ended up transferring to Fresno State, and took a gap year to gain residency and qualify for in-state tuition.

It worked for him nearly 30 years ago, but may not work for many students today, experts say. The biggest concern is that students who take time off, might never come back. "It took me five years total, but I didn't want to stop where I was," Maas says. "I can see where it would be easy to not go back, but you're dealing with an interim issue that's temporary. I would remind people we're in a remote environment, but it keeps you focused, it keeps you engaged. It's always better to stay engaged so you don't miss out on an opportunity down the road."

It's also important to consider that today's college student isn't necessarily between the ages of 18 to 22, and may already be working to support a family while pursuing an education. "A gap year is fine for a very narrow slice of people, people who have economic capacity and family support to be able to do that," says Jamie Merisotis of the Lumina Foundation. "For most people, it's not a realistic prospect. Many people have lost their jobs, are facing economic dislocation, and this idea of taking time off is very unrealistic."

By 2030,  
**60%** of adults

in California must have a college degree to meet workforce demand, close racial equity gaps and maintain the state's economic standing

*2018 report by the Campaign for College Opportunity*

**"Critical thinking is important, and that's a skill that the more education you get, the better you're going to be at it."**

**— BARRY MAAS**  
President, Administrative Solutions, Inc.



▲ Alumnus Barry Maas founded Administrative Solutions, Inc., a third-party benefits administrator, in 2001. It started with him and one other employee and has grown to about 100 employees. Maas says the critical thinking skills he learned in college have applied to various aspects of running a successful business.



By 2030, 60% of adults in the state must have a college degree to meet workforce demand, close racial equity gaps and maintain the state's economic standing, according to a 2018 report by the Campaign for College Opportunity. That means California will need to dramatically pick up the pace to produce 1.65 million more college degrees than are currently projected.

Some of those degree recipients may come to work for Maas, who founded Administrative Solutions, Inc., a third-party benefits administrator, in 2001. It started out with him and one other employee and has grown to about 100 employees. The Fresno-based business merged with Navia Benefit Solutions in 2019.

Maas says the value of a college degree is learning critical thinking. "Critical thinking is important, and that's a skill

that the more education you get, the better you're going to be at it," says Maas, who earned Fresno State's Top Dog Alumni Award in 2019.

"There's tremendous value for me, personally. What I do on a day-to-day basis isn't necessarily what I went to school for, but between running a business, marketing, HR, the value in a degree for me was being able to think through and analyze all the day-to-day decisions you have to make as a business owner."

Most of the Administrative Solutions team works in claims processing and data entry positions that don't require a degree, but many of his managers have degrees, including about 10 Fresno State alumni.

The University is special to Maas for many reasons. He met his wife,

Peggy, at a Bulldogs basketball game in 2000, and they have long supported the Bulldog Foundation. The couple has also donated to the Renaissance Scholars Program to support students who experienced foster care or homelessness, and the President's Circle of Excellence.

"My good fortune rests on a lot of different shoulders," Maas says. "Some of it was working hard, but many others I encountered in my life gave me inspiration and showed me there are ways to be successful. They're instrumental in everything I've done, including Fresno State, which is why I support it in a big way." 

— Eddie Hughes is senior editor for Fresno State Magazine. BoNhia Lee also contributed to this story.



# RIDING AN UNTRADITIONAL PATH

A love for horses leads equine science student down a path of her own

By BoNhia Lee

▲ *Equine science student ZaJria Bradshaw hopes to help bring awareness to the history of African Americans in agricultural-related fields.*

ZaJria Bradshaw read the Canterwood Crest series of books in sixth grade, about a young student at an elite school of competitive equestrian riders. Then, she asked her dad to sign her up for riding lessons, which she says set her on an untraditional path for an African American girl from Manteca.

The Fresno State junior is majoring in equine science with a plan to earn her master's degree and a doctorate to specialize in equine nutrition and research. She thought about teaching, going into physical therapy like her older sister or becoming a veterinarian, but her interest in horses kept her on a path to the farm.

"I picked up (a love of horses) because of the book series. It was so interesting. Once I started, I never looked back," says Bradshaw, whose mother is a hair stylist and father delivers for the United Parcel Service. The family also operates Little Beez Italian Ice at festivals and fairs during the summer. "I'm the only person in my family who rides horses. We never had a farm. No one in my family is in agriculture. It's not really a thing in my family."

Reflecting a national trend that hasn't budged in decades despite outreach efforts, few African American students major in agriculture at Fresno State. There are over 700,000 members of the Future Farmers of America, and according to its 2019 report, 70% of the membership is white while 15% is Hispanic and only 4% is Black.

Bradshaw was among only 31 African American students enrolled in the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology during the 2019 fall semester, according to enrollment numbers from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Fresno State. That semester, a total of 635 African American students were enrolled in programs across the University, making up about 2.6% of the 24,000 students at Fresno State.

Since 2017, the University has focused concerted efforts to increase African American student enrollment, college readiness and graduation rates through the African American Initiative in the Office of Outreach and Special Programs. The goal is to connect with middle and high school students early in order to increase the number of high school seniors who are California State University-eligible, program coordinator Wendy Nelson says.

Program staff have participated in school resource fairs and community events. Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro and his family, cabinet members, college deans and others have attended services at African American churches during Super Sunday, the CSU's annual flagship event focusing on college achievement for African American students. And during Preview Day, African American students have had an opportunity to experience life on campus with an overnight stay in the dorms.

The African American Initiative continues to work with campus offices like the Cross Cultural and Gender Center, Admissions and Recruitment, and local area colleges to increase engagement and recruitment, Nelson says.

The Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology actively recruits students from all backgrounds interested in agricultural majors. Student ambassadors from the college programs and the Multicultural Scholars in Agriculture program also do their part to promote the college and to mentor and support students interested in agricultural careers, says Michelle Perez, Fresno State recruitment counselor and liaison to the Jordan College. Alumni are the biggest advocates of the college, she says.

Bradshaw learned about Fresno State through a high school teacher who grew up in Clovis. The teacher told her about the Jordan College and its agricultural program, which provides early hands-on

*Continued*

**“Bringing awareness to minorities and African Americans in the field is so important. No matter what you look like, race you are or background you are, it’s never too late to learn and keep going.”**

— ZAJRIA BRADSHAW



experiences for undergraduate students. During a campus visit, Bradshaw says she knew Fresno State was where she needed to be.

She took a colt-training class her freshman year that allowed her to be “hands all in with horses.” She loved it, and since then has had motivating experiences with professors who use real-life knowledge and experiences to teach instead of only using textbooks, she says.

But like many underclassmen, Bradshaw had her challenges as well, like self-doubt and a lack of diversity in some classes, which wasn’t unexpected, but discouraging, Bradshaw says, and it left her wondering where she fit in.

“When I sit in my animal science classes, I don’t see anyone who looks like me. This has been a challenge to deal with because all throughout elementary, middle and high school, my classes were always racially diverse, and I would always have at least one other person who looked like me,” Bradshaw says.

When you take into consideration Bradshaw’s background, she isn’t the typical ag school student, says Brett Behlen, who was Bradshaw’s colt instructor in 2018-19. But “she’s got the passion and willingness to be outside of her comfort zone and to learn what the instructor is trying to teach so it turns out she has what you do want in the ideal student,” he says.

Bradshaw learned to ride and care for horses at Team Scott Equestrian Outreach, an equine therapy program in the Bay Area operated by an African American deputy from the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office and his wife. The couple started the program 12 years ago to help their son who had behavioral challenges. When Bradshaw was 15 years old, she started working in the program and participating in events like the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, which celebrates and honors African American cowboys and cowgirls, and their contributions to building the West.

“Many people do not know the history of African American cowboys and cowgirls,” Bradshaw says. “Bringing awareness to minorities and African Americans in the field is so important. No matter what you look like, race you are or background you are, it’s never too late to learn and keep going.”

Despite her early challenges, Bradshaw says her time at Fresno State has been fulfilling. She turned to the Office of Black Student Success at Fresno State for mentorship, where she met adviser Davion Baker and a peer mentor. They are “people who can truly support you, knowing and being able to understand the struggle just a little bit because they have been minorities in their own settings as well.”

Her horse, named Sage, also provides her with time away from the stresses of life. The 17-year-old quarter horse was gifted to her from Team Scott during the 2019 Bill Pickett Invitational. “It’s allowed me to step up and put my own knowledge to the test and apply my own knowledge,” Bradshaw says about owning her own horse.

Bradshaw is a member of Alpha Zeta, a professional fraternity for students and industry professionals in the agriculture and natural resources fields. And this year, she is serving as vice president for Fresno State’s chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, also known as MANRRS.

“Being a minority, I have to have as much as I can to build myself up especially because I don’t come from an agricultural family — a family that is established and already has these connections,” Bradshaw says. “I’m starting something new, from the ground up. I love to learn. I have always found knowledge in learning things that are super interesting. I want to continue to grow. I want to continue to learn. I have to fight for things much harder than a lot of other people. You learn to keep going with it.”

— BoNhia Lee is a writer in University Communications at Fresno State. 



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# Legends REMEMBERED

Fresno State community mourns loss of three of its winningest coaches

By Eddie Hughes

**T**he Fresno State community lost three men — each the all-time winningest coach in school history in his respective sport — within the span of four months.

**Bob Bennett**, who racked up 1,302 wins in his 34 years coaching Fresno State baseball, passed away June 14. He was 86 years old.

**Boyd Grant**, who went 194-74 in nine seasons as men's basketball coach, passed away Aug. 17. He was 87.

**Bob Spencer**, who guided the women's basketball program to a 198-147 record in his 12 years as coach, passed away on Aug. 30. He was 87.

In the following pages, Fresno State Magazine takes a look back at their biggest sporting accomplishments, their impact on the campus and in the community and shares remarks from some of the student-athletes they influenced.



▶ Boyd Grant

◀ Bob Spencer

## BASEBALL COACH

### BOB BENNETT 1933-2020

**Fresno State coaching tenure:** 1967, 1970-2002  
**All-time record:** 1,302-759-4  
**Born:** June 22, 1933 in Atwood, Oklahoma  
**High school:** Roosevelt High-Fresno (1951)  
**Alma mater:** Fresno State (1952-55)

#### ACCOLADES:

- Led Bulldogs to 17 conference championships, 21 NCAA Tournament appearances and two College World Series (1988, '91).
- 26 consecutive winning seasons (1977-2002).
- Coached 32 All-Americans and nine first-round Major League Baseball draft picks at Fresno State, including Ben Fritz, Jeff Weaver, Steve Soderstrom, Bobby Jones, Steve Hosey, Eddie Zosky, Tom Goodwin, Eric Fox and John Hoover. Also coached former MLB standouts Terry Pendleton, Mark Gardner, Dan Gladden and Dick Ruthven.
- Named conference coach of the year 14 times in five different conferences.
- His 1988 team won a program-record 56 games and went on a record 32-game winning streak, earning a No. 1 national ranking during the regular season.
- Named National Coach of the Year by The Sporting News in 1988.
- Pete Beiden Field at Bob Bennett Stadium was dedicated in his name in 2016.
- Became seventh coach in NCAA history to reach 1,300 wins in 2002.
- Inducted into College Baseball Hall of Fame in 2010, the American Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame in 1992 and the Bulldog Baseball Hall of Fame in 1991.
- Played catcher for the Bulldogs as a student-athlete from 1952-55, under legendary coach Pete Beiden, earning all-conference honors twice.
- Published several books on poetry and baseball.



#### THEY SAID IT:

- "Bob was not only a great coach, he was a great man in the truest sense of the word. He really cared about his athletes. He cared about their character."*  
 — **Jack Hannah**, Fresno State (1953-55)  
 (via CBS47/KSEE24)
- "What Coach was to the school, the program, what he meant to us former players and alumni, boosters, Dugout Club, that stadium wouldn't be there if it weren't for him and all that he stood for."*  
 — **Josh Labandeira**, Fresno State (2000-01)  
 (via The Fresno Bee)
- "I'm honored to have had him as a friend and also as my coach. He's going to be missed, not forgotten, I know that. He's just a great man. He lived life the right way."*  
 — **Eddie Zosky**, Fresno State (1987-89)  
 (via The Fresno Bee)
- "He expected the most out of his players, and he wanted to teach every one of his players, including me, how to be a man. Being in his program was learning about life and learning how to be a good citizen in our community, a good father, a good husband, and just all the things that went along with it."*  
 — **Tim Thiessen**, Fresno State (1980-82)  
 (via The Fresno Bee)
- "Coach Bennett's impact on our lives is immeasurable. He taught us: discipline, competitiveness, drive, determination, dignity, humbleness, loyalty, perseverance, accountability, respectfulness and selflessness. So in other words, he taught us how to be men. His impact on this community and the sport of college baseball will always have his fingerprints on it. He was a pioneer and a visionary that was 25 years ahead of his time."*  
 — **Steve Pearse**, Fresno State (1987-88)  
 (Twitter statement)

# BOYD GRANT

1933-2020

**Fresno State coaching tenure:** 1977-86  
**All-time record:** 194-74  
**Born:** Aug. 17, 1933  
**High school:** American Falls High-Idaho (1951)  
**Alma mater:** Snow College/Colorado State

## ACCOLADES:

- Led Fresno State to 1983 NIT championship, a 69-60 win over DePaul at Madison Square Garden in New York, before being greeted by thousands of Red Wavers outside the airport when they returned to Fresno.
- Then 6,500-seat Selland Arena, with its raucous fan base that became known as the Red Wave, was nicknamed "Grant's Tomb" during his tenure. The arena soon expanded to 10,000-plus seats.
- Coached Bulldogs to their first three NCAA Tournament appearances.
- His team was ranked as high as No. 11 nationally in 1981-82 with a 27-3 record and a Sweet 16 appearance, beating West Virginia 50-46 before losing to Patrick Ewing-led Georgetown 58-40.
- Coached seven of the Bulldogs' 22 all-time NBA Draft picks, including first round pick Bernard Thompson, second round picks Rod Higgins and Ron Anderson and Pete Verhoeven (fourth round), Donald Mason (fifth), Desi Barmore (seventh) and Mitch Arnold (ninth).
- Guided the Bulldogs to three regular season Pacific Coast Athletic Association conference championships and three conference tournament titles.
- Earned PCAA Coach of the Year honors three times (1978, '81 and '82).
- Inducted into Fresno Athletic Hall of Fame in 1993.
- Fresno State led the nation in scoring defense during Grant's first year, and was ranked in the top 10 in each of his nine seasons.
- Prior to taking the Fresno State job, Grant was an assistant at Kentucky (1972-74) and head coach at College of Southern Idaho (1974-77), where he won a junior college national championship.



## THEY SAID IT:

**"My dad had such a deep connection with the people of Fresno because of what this community embodies — honesty, hard work and the ability to succeed from an underdog role. His teams demonstrated the mindset of our community by focusing on defense."**

— **Kevin Grant**, Coach Grant's son

**"He was a no-nonsense guy. He believed in practice and practice makes perfect, and we did it until we got it right."**

— **Art Williams**, Fresno State (1977-80)  
 (via ABC30's Bulldog Breakdown)

**"That's the thing about Coach Grant, being the ultimate winner, you have to fall in line or you're going to fall out of line, and that's how he coached. I had to be fundamental just to get to my goal, which was to get to the league, get to the NBA. ... To this day, the fundamentals on the defensive end still stick with my philosophies, my mindset. You think about what Coach Grant, Coach Adams and Coach Thrash were teaching us, particularly on the defensive end, that stands the test of time."**

— **Rod Higgins**, Fresno State (1978-82)  
 (via 940 ESPN Radio)

**"Coach was a good man. He really was a good man. I'm biased, but the best coach in Fresno State history is Coach Grant. The brotherhood of the players that were there, that's a special friendship, a special bond."**

— **Tyrone Bradley**, Fresno State (1979-83)  
 (via The Fresno Bee)

# BOB SPENCER

1932-2020

**Fresno State coaching tenure:** 1981-93  
**All-time record:** 198-147  
**Born:** Sept. 10, 1932 in Albia, Iowa  
**High school:** Albia High-Iowa (1951)  
**Alma mater:** Parsons College

## ACCOLADES:

- Twice led the Bulldogs to the Women's National Invitation Tournament (1986, '90).
- Guided the Bulldogs to four seasons of 20 or more wins.
- His 1986-87 team, the program's first to earn a top 25 national ranking, holds the school record for highest scoring average in a season (78.4 points per game).
- Four players from the 1986-87 team went on to earn All-America honors during their playing careers (Wendy Martell, Shannon McGee, Yvette Roberts and Simone Srubek).
- Spencer was named to the American Women's Federation All-American Coaches list four times (1986, '87, '89, '90).
- Coached at Fresno State the final 12 years of his 27-year coaching career.
- Previously coached at John F. Kennedy College, Parsons College and William Penn College.
- Became the first NCAA women's basketball coach to earn 500 career wins and, when he retired, ranked second all-time nationally with 578 wins.



## THEY SAID IT:

**"When I played at Fresno State, Coach Spencer introduced the words 'intestinal fortitude' into our vocabulary. He introduced a sense of courageousness, fearlessness and great heartedness that permeated our program. This spirit of tenacity marked our team and has marked my life. I am thankful for Coach Spencer and the lessons learned that have lasted a lifetime."**

— **Wendy Martell Taylor**, Fresno State (1984-87)

**"He dedicated himself to the team. He worked hard. He wanted to make sure the girls worked hard, and knew that basketball wasn't the only thing that would make your life, you have to get the education also. He poured that into us, that you go to school, you have practice and you have classes and you have to get good grades."**

— **Yvette Roberts**, Fresno State (1986-89)  
 (via CBS47/KSEE24)

**"Besides my father, he was the most touching man that I had in my life. He would want to relax before games so he would say, 'Chuck, I'm going back into the locker room. Don't let anybody in. Come get me when we've got 10 minutes before we're ready to go out. He just wanted his own time to focus and then when he'd come out he was a ball of fire."**

— **Chuck Bandelian**,  
 Fresno State assistant under Spencer  
 (via ABC30's Bulldog Breakdown)

# CLASS NOTES

## 1950s

**Ralph Rago** (1956), a former Fresno State baseball player, retired after 61 years in coaching, including stops at Davis High School, UC Davis and as a Major League Baseball envoy coach in Western Africa and England.

## 1960s

**Willie McDaniel**, a former Fresno County deputy sheriff, announced the release of his book, "I Am Who I Am Because..." It's a story of one man's drive to become a success and an inspiration for others to believe they, too, have the opportunity to be the best they can be.

## 1970s

**Steve Maaske** (1976) retired after 44 years as the owner/manager of Exeter Golf Course.

**Mark Scott** (1972), who most recently served for three years as Indio's city manager, announced his retirement.

## 1980s

**Scott Anderson** (1980) is now superintendent of business services for the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

**Cathy (Carothers) Baur** (1982) retired as vice president for university advancement at Cal State San Marcos. She served the campus for 12 years and led the university through its first comprehensive campaign, raising more than \$55 million. She was conferred with the honorary title of administrator emeritus for her distinguished service to the academic community. The Cathy Baur Student Philanthropy Award was established in her honor and will be presented annually to a student or student group.

**Eric Fredrickson** (1982) is now superintendent for Modesto's Sylvan Union School District.

**Diana Gomez** (1988) is now director of District 6 for Caltrans. The area covers Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties. For the past eight years, she's served as the Central Valley regional director for the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

**Dot Jones**, a former Fresno State track and field standout, performed the role of Dennis Dupree in "Rock of Ages," an off-Broadway show.

**Katie Russell** (1988, '89, '00) is now superintendent for Panama-Buena Vista Union District.

**Barbara Ulman** (1989) won the Akademia 2020 Artist Vision Award for her composition called "One Loon's Afternoon."

## 1990s

**Albert Cano** (1994) is now a research manager for NBCUniversal's Salt Lake City, Sacramento and Fresno Telemundo stations.

**Oliver Baines** was appointed to the commission on police reform in Fresno.

**David Brager** (1990) is now CEO for Citizens Business Bank.

**Michael Carr** (1998) is now general manager for KFSN-TV ABC30.

**Carole Goldsmith** (1994, '05), the president of Fresno City College, served as grand marshal of the 2020 Tower District Mardi Gras Parade.

**Aileen Imperatrice** (1992), an artist, writer and public speaker, wrote about her inspiration and shared photos of her art for the national storytelling project, "My American Dream (PBS American Portrait)" published on pbs.org.

**Eric Maul** (1992) is now director for development for the College of Science and Mathematics at Fresno State.

**Matthew B. Reysen** (1998) received the 2020 Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award.

**Mike Valles** (1998) owns the Liberace home that was featured for the Palm Springs Modernism Week home tour earlier this year.



**Lar Yang** (1999) was appointed to the University Advisory Board by Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro. Yang is the owner and creative director of Yang Design, the graphic design company he founded in 2000. The University Advisory Board is a panel of community members that provides strategic input on development of the University. Members generally serve three-year terms. Yang, born in Laos, founded the Hmongstory 40 project, a multimedia exhibition commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Hmong refugee displacement that was on display at the Fresno Fairgrounds in 2015. He also started a directory of Hmong-owned businesses, "Txhawb," that evolved into a magazine that tells stories of the Hmong community.

## 2000s

**Jonathan Cartwright** (2000) was promoted to the rank of colonel in the Air National Guard, where he serves as United States property and fiscal officer for California. He is the first U.S. Air Force officer appointed to this role in the state's history.

**Daniel Galvez** (2009) is now public works director for the City of Kingsburg.

**Estevan P. Guerrero Jr.** (2014, '18) is now assistant coordinator for LGBTQ+ and gender program and services for the Cross Cultural and Gender Center at Fresno State.

**Rachel Hernandez** (2000) was named 2020 San Joaquin County Teacher of the Year by the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

**Alma Lopez** (2003), a school counselor in Livingston Union School District, was named California School Counselor of the Year.

**Rebecca Murphey** (2002) is now a family nurse practitioner for Adventist Health Medical Office-Hanford.

**Martin Ortiz** (2008) is now news director at KFSN-TV ABC30 in Fresno.

**Frank Puccio** (2005, '20), the manager of finance and administration in Continuing and Global Education at Fresno State, earned his doctoral degree in educational leadership.

**Tommy Rouse** (2009), a production designer, was nominated for a 2020 Emmy Award for his work on "Queer Eye," which airs on Netflix. He was also nominated for an Emmy in 2019.

**Annie Stuhr** (2004) is now president for Ag One Foundation at Fresno State.

**Matt Tobin**, a longtime special education teacher in Clovis Unified School District, is now vice principal at Desmond Middle School in Madera.

## 2010s

**Francisco Barajas** (2018) was nominated for the Resident of the Year award from the National Center for Teacher Residencies. He is currently pursuing his master's degree in curriculum and instruction at Fresno State while simultaneously completing a single-subject teaching credential in science, as part of the Fresno Teacher Residency Program.

**Suzanna Barbosa** (2016) is now the carrier relations manager for the Fresno corporate office of Johanson Transportation Service.

**Virginia Pierce Cummings** (2015) is now principal for Rivergold Elementary School in Coarsegold.

**Micah Escobedo** (2013) is now a digital strategist for New Blue Interactive, based in Washington D.C.

**Dayana Jiselle** is now a journalist for the Fresnoland lab, which is a partnership between The Fresno Bee and the local nonprofit Fresnoland.



**David Bacci** (2010), an alumnus of Fresno State's executive MBA program, is now the regional vice president of the non-profit Hospital Council of Northern and Central California, representing nearly 200 hospitals throughout the state. He works directly with hospitals and public health officials to identify needs and ensure facilities have essential supplies even in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. His team helps provide personal protection equipment such as gloves, masks and gowns to those working on the frontlines.

**James D. Martinez** (2010) is now director of operations for Associated Students, Inc. at Fresno State.

**Leonard Serrato Jr.** (2014, '18), the lead campus adviser at Sonoma State, earned the 2019 Outstanding Fraternity/Sorority Life Adviser Award from Pi Kappa Phi.

**Vicente Velarde** (2015) is now the men's and women's cross country head coach at UC Merced.

## 2020s

**Brittney Steele** (2020) is now associate producer for the morning news program "Wake Up Northwest" at NBC Right Now KNDU/KNDO-TV in Kennewick, Washington.



**Scott Peters** (2020) created Sebastian Boot Company with a modern approach to traditional Western footwear. Peters, who has long been interested in fashion, owns a collection of boots, but he found his traditional cowboy boots were incredibly ill-fitting. Taking his knowledge from an apprenticeship at a local leather and footwear repair shop, he sought a solution. Sebastian's proprietary sizing scale allows customers to size their feet and legs independently to create a tailored fit that otherwise would require a custom-made pair of boots.

## IN MEMORIAM

# 'For thee, our hopes and memories'

**Beverly J. Allen (Field)** (1965).

**Edith N. Shantz Armistead** (1956), July 25, San Jose.

**Robert R. Aurner** (1950), June 10, Carmel.

**Louise J. Avedisian** (1958), May 1, Fresno.

**Charles W. Baley** (1964), April 2, Fresno.

**April Barajas** (2006), Aug. 20, Fresno.

**Dorothy Bassett** (1951), Aug. 10, Fresno.

**Clara A. Bedrosian** (1958), June 3, Fowler.

**Yvonne (Lung) Benson** (1955), March 30, Fresno.

**Melvin W. Blalock**, March 26, Madera.

**Walter Ray Blevins** (1950), Aug. 12, Merced.

**John E. Boaz** (1957), April 22, Colorado Springs, CO.

**Lloyd W. Bookout** (1971), April 7, Fresno.

**John D. Boydston** (1965), July 31, Los Osos.

**Blanche A. Campbell** (1968), June 25, Madera.

**Jack Carouso** (1983, '89), Clovis.

**Janet G. Carvalho**, Aug. 11.

**Diane L. (Tomasetti) Christenson** (1966), March 27.

**Stephen Collum** (1981), Aug. 11, Stockton.

**Breck M. Conner** (1988), April 4, Fresno.

**Judith A. Curtis**, March 26, Visalia.

**Michael E. Ducey** (1972), March 19, Turlock.

**Margaret C. (Phillips) Dula** (1948), April 17, Walnut Creek.

**Linda Fay Dunn** (1961), June 27, Fresno.

**Walter C. Engstrom** (1954), Aug. 18.

**James A. Enos** (1961), July 29, Sacramento.

**Nancy L. Esajian** (1988), June 8, San Leandro.

**Carlos Fuentes Esparza** (1973), Aug. 14.

**Dana Christine Fabbri** (1985), Aug. 13, Visalia.

**LeRoy C. Facciani** (1969), Aug. 24, Santa Maria.

**Ken Farley** (1963), Dec. 3, Bakersfield.

**Jack Fortner**, June 25, São Paulo, Brazil.

**Leona R. (Van Stone) Fryer** (1955), Aug. 5, Hayward.

**Brian J. Ginsburg** (1953), May 19, Fresno.

**Robert "Jerry" Guinn** (1957), May 4, Fresno.

**Lloyd E. Hall** (1959, '66), July 17, Merced.

**Fay Harper** (1935), May 19, Fresno.

**William "Bill" Head** (1960), March 21.

**Lorraine Martin Hebert** (1945), July 18, Fresno.

**John D. Homsy** (1958), March 16, Granite Bay.

**Alvin Horn Sr.** (1967), July 30, Fresno.

**David Hornbeck Jr.** (1968, '69), April 22.

**Clarice A. "Lollie" Horstmann** (1956), March 16, Fresno.

**Richard L. Hover** (1948), March 11, Visalia.

**George Kauffman** (1952), May 2, Fresno.

**Judith E. Knapp Woodward** (1969), July 24, Fresno.

**Larry E. Lindgren** (1964), March 31, Porterville.

**Francis X. Lorson** (1957), April 15.

**Jonathan R. Rivas Magana** (2015), May 17, Fresno.

**Rose Valorosi Meister** (1961), April 10, Clovis.

**Gary D. Nicholson** (1962), April 21, Sun Prairie, WI.

**George Ortiz** (1958).

**Dianne M. Pilgrim** (2012), May 27.

**Lloyd C. Porter** (1996).

**Howard Ray** (1935), April 12, Clovis.

**Ernest B. Rice** (1972), Aug. 5.

**Harold Rich** (1937), Aug. 1, Nashville, TN.

**Robert Richner** (1951), Aug. 2, Fresno.

**William E. Robinson** (1923, '48), March 21.

**June E. (Dooley) Rodriguez** (1963), July 20, Wasco.

**Ernest P. Rojas** (1957), May 1.

**Jerry C. Sullivan** (1961), May 6.

**Tanya M. (Toubbeh) Steenerson** (1995), April 14, Santa Maria.

**Rolando Todd**, Sept. 3.

**Norma J. Wallace** (1965), April 29, Greenfield.

**Vince Wesson** (1987), Aug. 22, Clovis.

**Sharon Wilcox** (2000), April 11, Fresno.

**Sharon L. Winslow** (1954), June 21.

**Marsha J. Wiswall** (1989, '94), May 4, Bakersfield.

**John L. Woolf Jr.** (2009), July 28.

**Margaret Wyckoff** (1972).

## FACULTY/STAFF

**Bendt A. From**, April 14.

**John B. Grant**, Aug. 17.

**Robert Spencer**, Aug. 30, Des Moines, IA.

**Alex Vavoulis**, June 9, Fresno.

# LET'S LOVE OURSELVES ENOUGH TO LIVE WELL AND BE HEALTHY.

- MARGARET JACKSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL BROKERS INC.

FROM PHYSICAL LONG-TERM EFFECTS TO THE ECONOMIC FALLOUT, COVID-19 HAS GREATLY IMPACTED OUR BLACK COMMUNITY. BUT WE CAN DO OUR PART TO SLOW THE SPREAD:

- WEAR A MASK
- STAY HOME WHEN SICK
- SOCIAL DISTANCE



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## Salvation in Education

Trafficking survivor appointed to national advisory council

In 2015, then 21-year-old Suleman Masood sat among more than a dozen students in a victimology course at Fresno State, learning the subject while also learning how to cope with his personal experience as a victim of domestic labor trafficking.

"I was learning something new every day, and I was getting stronger and it was helping me come back to who I used to be," Masood says.

His salvation was education. He graduated magna cum laude in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in criminology with an emphasis in victimology.

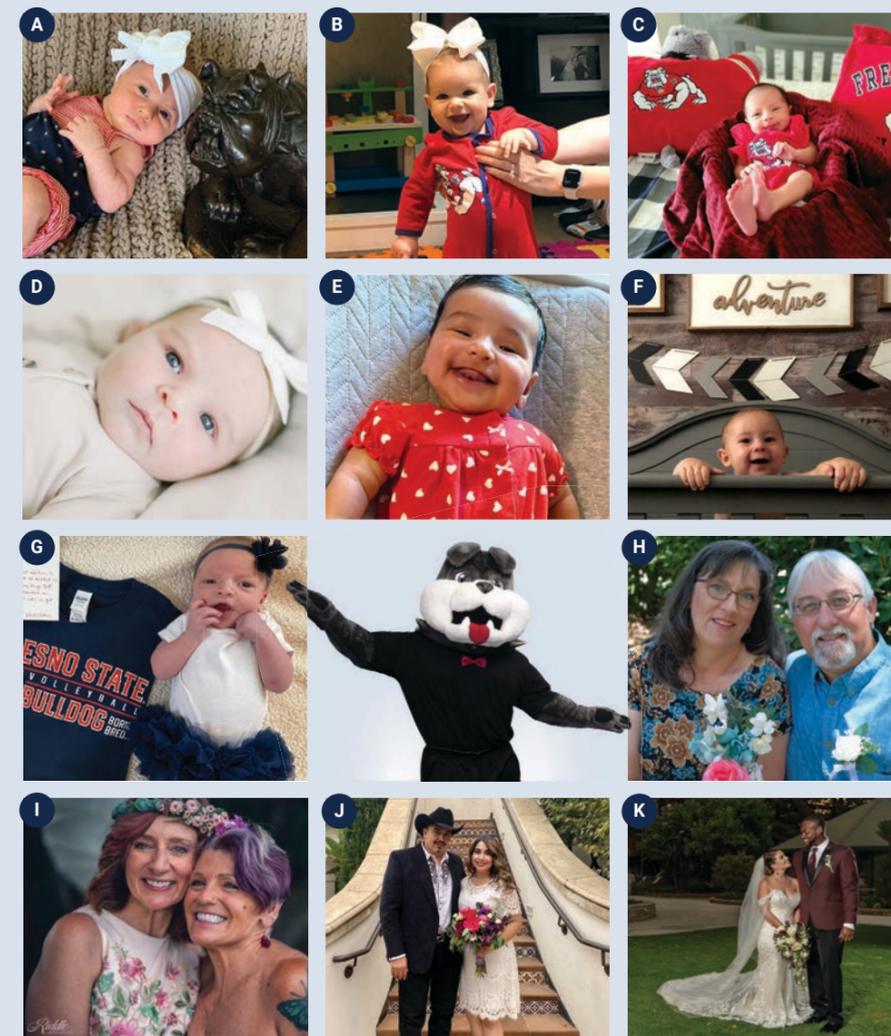
This year, Masood was appointed by President Donald Trump to serve on the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. "It's a two-year term, and it provides a platform for subject-matter experts on labor and sex trafficking to make recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies to the President's Interagency Task Force to monitor and combat trafficking in persons," Masood says.

— Lucero Benitez



Hasain Rasheed Photography

Visit [fresnostate.edu/magazine](https://fresnostate.edu/magazine) for the full story.



### BULLDOG BORN

- A** Kristen (Andreasen) Battles (2012) and Eric Battles (2011) welcomed their child, Julia, on June 25.
- B** Steve Detwiler (2011) and Emma Detwiler welcomed their second child, Sienna, on Feb. 16. Their first child, Easton, was born Jan. 8, 2017.
- C** Abby Guerra (2016, '19) and Ernie Perez Jr. (2016) welcomed their child, Elijah, on Aug. 27.
- D** Megan (Morales) Kane (2010) and Nolan Kane welcomed their first child, Chloe Diane, on July 2.
- E** Carissa Menchaca (2018) and Moses Menchaca (2015) welcomed their child, Tatiana, on June 19.
- F** Cole Powers (2007, '09) and Stephanie Powers welcomed their child, Maverick, on Nov. 15, 2019.
- G** Marissa (Brand) Taff (2013) and Jared Taff welcomed their child, Colby, on Aug. 26.

### BULLDOG WED

- H** Randy Bell (1993) married Lisa Boyles Bell (1995) on June 19 in Fresno.
- I** Barri Brennan (2017) and Lilly Dale Reed were married on June 18.
- J** Yesenia Candelaria (2018) married Jorge Fuentes on Sept. 11.
- K** McKennah Plummer (2016) and Justin Ayers were married on Sept. 4, 2020 in Fresno.

### IMPORTANT PRIVACY CHOICE

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## Throw to Home

Second-year physical therapy students play a makeshift game of baseball, using a tennis ball, during a break from their orthopedic management lab outside the Physical Therapy and Intercollegiate Athletics Building in September.

# Leaving a **BOLD** Legacy

### Marge Winters is a Bulldog for Life.

Richard and Marge Winters were farmers out in Easton where they grew raisins and almonds. Although they are not from the Central Valley, they have always been passionate about Fresno State and, in particular, the athletics program. For over 30 years, they were season ticket holders, cheering on the Bulldogs and supporting student-athletes at every home game.

Marge's dedication to Fresno State athletics only grew stronger and, in 2014, she became an active member of the Senior Dog Squad. She cherishes the memories made and is grateful for the relationship the Dog Squad has with the cheerleaders.

Marge appreciates what Fresno State athletics provides for the community, so when it came to supporting organizations that mattered most to her, she immediately thought of the University. That's why she is leaving a generous \$1.5 million gift in her will to support student-athletes through the Bulldog Foundation.

"I immediately thought, 'How can we help make the Bulldog Foundation successful?' Fresno State athletics has given so much to us through unforgettable experiences. Now, we can give back to them."

Richard, a life-long rancher, passed away in 2019, but Marge continues to display their eternal Bulldog spirit. Planned gifts like this one help support student-athletes as they strive for excellence in the classroom and in competition.

If you would like information on planned giving opportunities, please contact Liz Garvin, director of planned giving, at 559.278.4038 or [egarvin@csufresno.edu](mailto:egarvin@csufresno.edu).

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Mark your calendars for **Nov. 17** for Fresno State's annual online Day of Giving. Your gift on this day, no matter how large or small, will directly support student success. Every donor counts, and demonstrates the strength of Fresno State in the Valley.



**#FresnoStateDOG**

[dayofgiving.fresnostate.edu](http://dayofgiving.fresnostate.edu)