



**SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

College of Education



Difference Makers Made Here

2021 YEARBOOK AND IMPACT REPORT

Contents

A Message From Dean Y. Barry Chung

We embark on the 2021-2022 academic year with a sense of optimism. The dark clouds that have loomed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic are beginning to lift. I am excited that our entire college community will be together in person once again.

Yet, as we emerge on the other side, we are left grappling with the difficult lessons of the past year-plus. We have witnessed how the move to digital learning exposed areas of inequity in the classroom. We have watched a generation of PK-12 students suffer unprecedented learning loss. And we have been reminded repeatedly how racism and bias can pervade all areas of American life — including the education and wellness spaces.

Now more than ever, our world needs difference makers. Fortunately, the San Diego State University College of Education is where difference makers are made.

Each year, we work tirelessly to prepare more than 2,000 undergraduate, credential, master's, and doctoral students to take on leadership roles in the education and helping professions. We are one of our region's top producers of high-quality teachers, counselors, therapists, school administrators, and community college leaders. I am

continually impressed by how driven and determined our students are to make the world a better place (see "Seeing Every Child as Precious," Page 16). Their passion — as well as the quality of our instruction and unwavering focus on equity and social justice — is evident in the success of our inspiring alumni who are making a difference in California and beyond (see "Alumni Spotlight," Pages 18-19).

Our faculty are also at the forefront of driving change. In the past year, they have responded to the challenges of this moment in history by conducting timely research (see "Felix Explores the Intersection of COVID-19 and Racial Equity," Page 5), engaging in bold advocacy (see "Tran Provides A Powerful Voice Against Anti-Asian Racism," Page 6) and spearheading transformational new initiatives (see "New Center Aims to Advance Research into Black Education, Wellness", Page 10).

In this magazine you will read about the many ways the SDSU College of Education is a place where positive change begins, where problems find solutions, and where difference makers are made.

Y. Barry Chung, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education



Dr. Sammie Scales celebrates his graduation from the Joint Ph.D. Program in Education at the San Diego State University College of Education commencement ceremony on May 25, 2021 at Petco Park. SDSU offers the joint doctoral program with Claremont Graduate University. Photo by Sandy Huffaker.

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NATIONAL RANKINGS

The SDSU College of Education is recognized as one of the top graduate education schools in California according to the 2022 U.S. News & World Report rankings, and we rank in the top-15 nationally in multiple programs and specialties.

#55

among all universities nationwide

#42

among public universities nationwide

#8

in the state of California

#1

in the California State University System

PROGRAM/SPECIALTY RANKINGS

*Specialty categories are part of the online education master's program rankings.

#15

online master's education program

#15

curriculum and instruction specialty program*

#15

educational administration and supervision specialty program*

#4

rehabilitation counseling M.S. program

RESEARCH AND GRANT FUNDING

Grants and contracts garnered by faculty members in the College of Education (2020-2021).



\$18.7 million
in total funding



133
total awards

TOP FUNDED FACULTY



Dr. Caren Sax
Professor Emerita,
Administration,
Rehabilitation and
Postsecondary Education
\$6,282,507



Dr. Cynthia Park
Professor, School of
Teacher Education
\$1,845,207



Dr. Sarah Rieth
Associate Professor, Child
and Family Development
\$1,783,629



Dr. Ian Pumpian
Professor, Educational
Leadership
\$1,049,634



Dr. Joseph F. Johnson Jr.
Dean Emeritus
\$924,382



COE received more than
\$5.3 million in philanthropic support from alumni, faculty, staff and friends in 2020-21.

DEGREES CONFERRED (2020-2021)

338 bachelor's degrees
407 master's degrees
37 doctoral degrees
463 credentials

A New Center for Early Childhood Development, Education, Mental Health



A CFD student at the SDSU Children's Center.

A new center to improve well-being in early childhood and create a coordinated network of care is being created in San Diego State University's Department of Child and Family Development (CFD).

The Center for Excellence in Early Development (CEED) will work to bring together school districts, pediatricians, care providers, policymakers and scholars with a focus on early childhood. The center will also facilitate research and contribute to the preparation of the early childhood workforce. By merging the overlapping fields, the educators hope to bring greater attention to education issues such as mental health well before children enter the school system.

"This is really seeking to position San Diego State as a leader in the early childhood field," said Dr. Sarah Garrity, associate professor and chair of CFD. "CEED will support the early education workforce and families by building on the strengths of communities and not taking a deficit approach to our work — this is about looking at how we can build on things that are going right in families."

Furthering National Leadership in Vocational Rehabilitation



Dr. Chaz Compton

In Fall 2020, SDSU was awarded a \$16.5 million federal grant to keep the university at the forefront of improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) will provide the funding over five years to support the new Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM). Housed in the Interwork Institute, the center will provide technical assistance and training on quality management to the 78 public vocational rehabilitation agencies nationwide that connect people with disabilities to careers.

"It is an honor and a testament to the quality of our work that the Interwork Institute was chosen by RSA to lead this new center," said Dr. Chaz Compton, project director. "Our goal is to help improve service delivery to, and employment outcomes achieved by, individuals with disabilities across the nation."

Felix Explores the Intersection of COVID-19 and Racial Equity



Dr. Eric Felix

Dr. Eric Felix, associate professor in the SDSU Department of Administration, Rehabilitation and Postsecondary Education, is leading an 18-month project exploring how COVID-19 affects racial equity efforts at community colleges. Prior to the pandemic, student equity leaders (SELs) in California's community colleges developed three-year plans to address pressing outcome disparities. Yet the pandemic has brought a lot of disruption to community colleges, which significantly influences planned efforts to close equity gaps for racially minoritized students.

Using a critical organizational studies lens, Felix aims to study how four different SELs navigate the pandemic, their unique organizational dynamics and the challenges of remote work to sustain, adapt and advance student equity efforts. The project will inform policymakers, state-level actors and practitioners to navigate and advance racial equity efforts in our current social context. The project is funded by a \$120,000 grant from the College Futures Foundation.

Machado-Casas Shapes Education Policy for a New Administration



Dr. Margarita Machado-Casas

Dr. Margarita Machado-Casas, professor and chair of SDSU's Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education, was tapped by the Biden-Harris presidential transition team to help develop policy recommendations for advancing equity in the education workforce.

Machado-Casas served on the Diversity Education Workforce subcommittee of the Biden-Harris National Education Policy Committee. The subcommittee developed recommendations for recruiting and retaining teachers, school administrators and professors of color, as well as the establishment of a national research diversity education center.

"It was just an honor for me to serve and to be able to contribute ideas that will help shape the new administration," Machado-Casas said.

Tran Provides a Powerful Voice Against Anti-Asian Racism



Dr. Nellie Tran

In response to a surge of racism and violence targeting Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Nellie Tran — associate professor in the SDSU Department of Counseling and School Psychology and vice president of the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) — co-authored the AAPA's written testimony to the House Judiciary Committee's hearing on Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans.

Submitted in March just two days after a white gunman in Georgia killed eight people — six of them Asian American women — the document provided both the historical context for anti-Asian racism as well as several recommendations for federal action.

"I felt a responsibility to write the testimony, and I felt privileged to have a platform," Tran said. "I just thought, 'If I don't do this, I don't know who's going to.'"

Suhrheinrich Works to Improve, Simplify Delivery of Autism Education



Dr. Jessica Suhrheinrich

Dr. Jessica Suhrheinrich, associate professor in the SDSU Department of Special Education, is working on a federally-funded project aimed at empowering educators who work with young students with autism.

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences awarded Suhrheinrich a grant of

more than \$1.4 million over four years to develop a tool to make Classroom Pivotal Response Teaching (CPRT) — a naturalistic, behavioral intervention for children with autism — simpler to deliver and more customizable for preschool and elementary school teachers and paraprofessionals.

"This is a new area of research," Suhrheinrich said. "The model we're developing is to apply to one intervention for students with autism, but it will hopefully be replicable across other interventions."

Addressing California's Rural Bilingual Educator Shortage



A DLE graduate celebrates at the department's 2019 graduation ceremony.

Across California, school districts are scrambling to fill a severe shortage of bilingual educators to keep up with the growing numbers of English learners in the classroom. This is particularly true in rural and high-need communities. As a result, many schools have turned to teachers with only bachelor's degrees and "emergency credentials" — one-year permits typically given to substitutes — to fill in the gaps.

A new collaboration between SDSU's Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education, Feather River College and the Butte County Office of Education is stepping up to address the problem. Project Access, which launched its first cohort in Spring 2021 thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the California Community College Teacher Credentialing Partnership Pilot Program, provides "emergency" educators an opportunity to earn a bilingual credential online in as little as one year.

Celebrating Our Newest Graduates in Palau



From left: Palau grads Jay Watanabe, Ines Kintoki, Sarah Rubario, Debbie O. Ngiraibai and Lestine Rekesmesik.

In May, SDSU conferred degrees on 29 new graduates from the Republic of Palau. The cohort earned bachelor's degrees with a major in interdisciplinary studies in three departments: the School of Teacher Education, the Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education and the Department of Administration, Rehabilitation, & Postsecondary Education (ARPE).

The grads began the program in May 2017 and completed it in January 2021. Typically, SDSU instructors travel to Palau for one week each year to provide face-to-face instruction, with the remainder of courses delivered via distance learning.

ARPE and the Interwork Institute have partnered with Pacific entities to provide degree and certificate training programs in the Western and South Pacific for the past 30 years. Two other cohorts of students are currently enrolled in master's programs in Palau and American Samoa.

Escobedo to Lead Efforts to Transform Urban Schools



Francisco Escobedo and students. Photo Courtesy Chula Vista Elementary School District.

Francisco Escobedo has been named the new executive director of SDSU's National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST), effective Sept. 1, 2021. For the past 10 years, the former San Diego police officer has served as the transformational superintendent of the high-achieving Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD). A 2019 study by the Learning Policy Institute named CVESD a "Positive Outlier" — a

district where students were beating the odds in the face of socioeconomic conditions in their community.

Escobedo will succeed founding executive director Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., who is retiring from the role after 16 years.

"It's hard to imagine a better choice for NCUST than Francisco Escobedo," said Johnson. "To put it succinctly, he gets it. He believes that we can create schools where all demographic groups of students achieve at high levels of success. Schools where they can be taught in a way that makes them love learning."

Garrity Named to Head Start-Funded National Advisory Group



Dr. Sarah Garrity

Dr. Sarah Garrity, associate professor and chair in the SDSU Department of Child and Family Development, has been named to a national advisory group focused on advancing equity in early childhood education programs.

Garrity now serves on the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning's Research to Equitable Practice Advisory Group. Funded by the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care, the center aims to implement culturally and linguistically responsive child development and teaching and learning practices. Garrity served as a Head Start teacher and administrator prior to joining the SDSU faculty.

School Psychologists, Special Educators Train Together in OSEP-Funded Project



Project BEAMS scholars host an in-person speaker event in June, 2021.

Seven SDSU school psychologist trainees and seven special educators are collaborating as part of Project BEAMS — a two-year interdisciplinary project funded by the Office of Special Education Programs. The goal of Project BEAMS is to improve the preparation

of school psychologists and special educators to serve diverse students with behavioral, emotional and mental health challenges in California's public schools.

During the pandemic, scholars continued to develop their specialization through virtual project retreats, conferences and community projects. In Fall 2021 the scholars will begin a clinical practicum in which school psychologist and special educator scholar pairs will work together in classrooms to implement, and study the impact of, targeted classroom and individual student interventions.

"The cross-training of school psychologist and special education scholars is critical," said Dr. Bonnie Kraemer, associate professor of special education. "Too often training occurs in silos without the opportunity for scholars in these related disciplines to work together and collaborate on implementing evidence-based group and individualized interventions."

Get the latest news and updates from the SDSU College of Education.

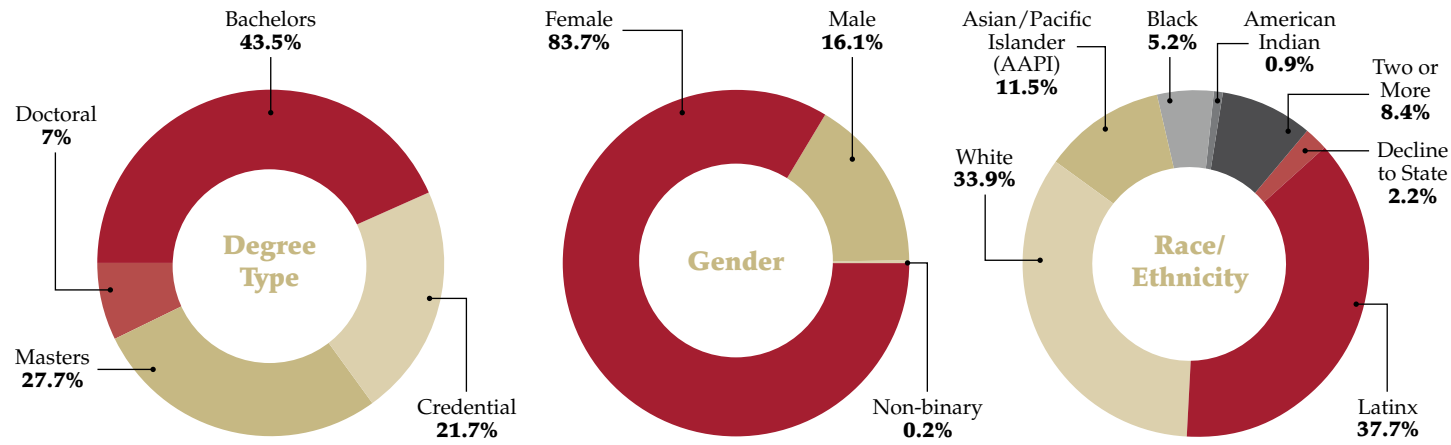
Visit education.sdsu.edu or scan this QR code:



College Diversity Statistics

STUDENTS

The following data are from a sample of 2,447 COE students during the Fall 2020 semester.



Reported Disability

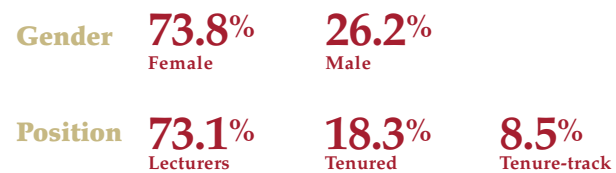
4.8%

Native Language

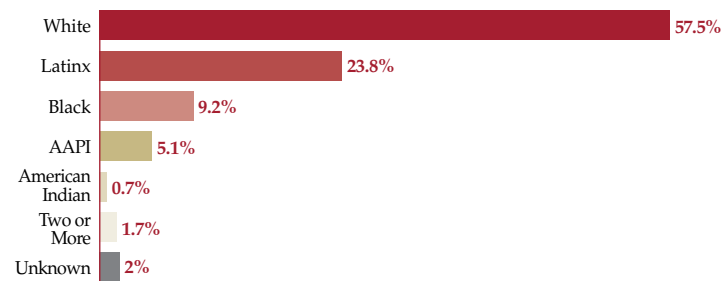


FACULTY

The following data are from a sample of 294 COE faculty members during the Fall 2020 semester.

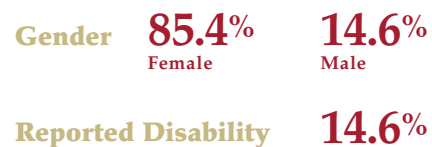


Race/Ethnicity

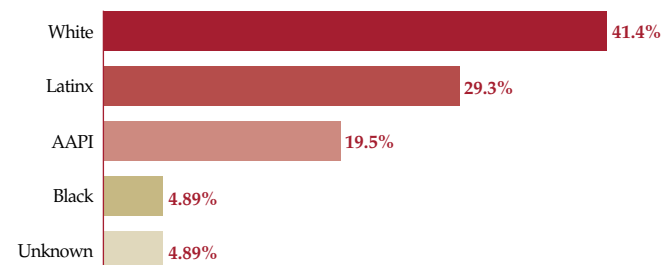


STAFF

The following data are from a sample of 41 COE staff members during Summer 2021.



Race/Ethnicity



The College of Education Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

On Dec. 17, 2020, the SDSU Senate and the Office of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity approved the College of Education Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) that will guide our main diversity equity and inclusion initiatives for the next five years (2021-2026). The plan is aligned with SDSU's strategic plan, *We Rise, We Defy: Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives*, and contributes to the University's resolve to infuse "Equity and Inclusion in Everything We Do," and to become "a global leader in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in research, teaching and community engagement."

After completing an equity-minded assessment on institutional climate and faculty and staff representation and success, the COE Diversity and Inclusion Plan Committee (DIAPC), with input from the COE faculty and staff community, formulated the following institutional goals:

Climate

By 2026 faculty and staff who often have not experienced the college as a place of belongingness, particularly faculty of color and LGBTQ+ faculty, will experience the COE as a welcoming, affirming, collaborative and supportive environment.

Diversity

By 2026, we will increase the diversity of faculty and staff to better reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Success

- By 2026, all faculty seeking to advance to full professor, particularly women of color, will have access to equitable opportunities, support and resources to meet promotion goals.
- By 2022, COE will develop structures and procedures to assess and promote the success of members of our staff.

Next steps

We will continue to develop instruments and processes to collect and analyze additional institutional data for the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion. Aligned with diversity planning at University and COE levels, all our academic departments are conducting assessment of student success, reviewing existing coursework, and/or developing new curricula to advance racial and social justice, anti-racism and cultural diversity across the curriculum.



Scan this QR code to read the full DIAP

Kumeyaay Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we stand upon a land that carries the footsteps of millennia of Kumeyaay people... In this same spirit, we understand that Diversity and Inclusion Planning in our college community is also a quest for harmony and balance in our relational, academic, and professional life. We find inspiration in the Kumeyaay spirit to open our minds and hearts as we work to realize this vision.

Diversity and Inclusion Action Planning Committee (DIAPC)

Cristian R. Aquino-Sterling, Ph.D. (co-chair)
Associate Dean for Diversity and International Affairs

Nina Potter, Ph.D. (co-chair)
Director of Assessment and Accreditation, College of Education

Marva Cappello, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Teacher Education / Director, Joint Ph.D. Program

Idara Essien, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Child and Family Development

Audrey Hokoda, Ph.D.
Professor, Child and Family Development

Heather Jaffe, M.S.
Lecturer, Child and Family Development

Paul Luelmo, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Special Education

Sarah Maheronnaghsh, Ph.D.
Lecturer, Dual Language and English Learner Education

Vicki Park, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership

Sonia Peterson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education

marcela polanco, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Counseling and School Psychology

Manny Uribe, M.S.
Web & Multimedia Specialist, Dean's Office

Taking Action Against Anti-Blackness

New CABWARE center serves as hub for scholarship, service and professional development around Black education and wellness

By Michael Klitzing



Dr. Estella Chizhik (left) and Dr. Sesen Negash. Photo by Ian Ordonio.

In the aftermath of the police killing of George Floyd last spring, a group of Black faculty in the San Diego State University College of Education met virtually to share their grief, vent their frustration — and strategize what to do about it.

“I was attending UCLA during the beating of Rodney King, so I’ve seen cycles of this,” said Dr. Estella Chizhik, professor of teacher education, referring to the Black motorist whose brutal beating by police in 1991 sparked worldwide outrage when the officers were acquitted on charges of using excessive force.

“I just wanted it to stop somehow. It seemed like there

needed to be some very intentional thinking behind these issues related to bias, police violence and the Black experience.”

Amid a summer defined by Black Lives Matter, a plan took shape. And a new academic center was born.

Faculty including Chizhik; Dr. Sesen Negash, associate professor of counseling and school psychology; Dr. Nola Butler-Byrd, associate professor in counseling and school psychology; Dr. Frank Harris III,

professor in postsecondary education; and Dr. Tonika Green, professor in counseling and school psychology, developed multiple proposals related to combating anti-Blackness to present to College of Education Dean Y. Barry Chung. The centerpiece was the Center for Achieving Black Wellness and Anti-Racist Education (CABWARE).

“When the Black Advisory Council proposed the idea to me, I couldn’t think of an initiative more timely and important

“It seemed like there needed to be some very intentional thinking behind these issues related to bias, police violence and the Black experience.”

than this,” Chung said. “They called for more than just mere statements, but actions. I was totally on board with supporting this initiative, under the leadership of our Black faculty, and investing our resources and actions to achieving social justice and anti-racism. I believe this is central to the work of our college.”

CABWARE received approval in January from the SDSU Academic Deans Council to become an official center within the College of Education. Chizhik and Negash are serving as its first co-directors.

Connecting scholarship, informing practice

CABWARE will serve as a hub for scholarship, service and professional development that addresses and disrupts anti-Blackness and racism among educators and wellness providers. It will promote community and mentorship among scholars, students and staff interested in Black issues and elevate related research.

“For us, it was important to work within our wheelhouse and the areas that we know — education and wellness,”

Negash said. “We are really excited because we feel like we can be specific within those areas. There are a lot of issues to deal with, but we feel like we have that experience and the training to help communities.”

Negash, who directs SDSU’s Marriage and Family Therapy program, pointed to Black wellness disparities in psychotherapy as an example of the structures they will seek to dismantle. She said Eurocentrism and colonized attitudes within the field often result in a lack of understanding of phenomena such as racial trauma and racial battle fatigue. This, in turn, seeps into the way practitioners are trained, leaving generations of therapists unprepared to support Black individuals.

Chizhik, with more than 20 years of experience at SDSU training future teachers, added anti-Blackness in education is often perpetuated through a lack of academic rigor and expectations for Black students, as well as punitive experiences such as expulsions, which research shows are imposed on Black youth at a significantly higher rate than white youth.

“I think there’s an overlap clearly in how education and wellness work together to really support Black students,” Chizhik said. “We’re talking about how trauma can influence education and how awareness of that by educators can really help better support the students.”

CABWARE will also focus on biases faced by Black university students and faculty at predominantly white institutions, and their impact on wellness.

The idea is to tie it all together — to connect research relating to the Black experience that might otherwise be happening in silos, and to amplify that research both within academia and out to the community of educators and practitioners.

Direct access

“We want to help faculty disseminate their research in a way that gives direct access to those in the classroom and in the therapy room,” Negash said. “It’s about bridging that gap between service and research in a more meaningful, intentional way.”

CABWARE also aims to bring students to the table through opportunities to serve on its advisory board as well as mentorship and advancement activities for graduate students conducting related scholarship.

“I think it was important for us not to be exclusive of the voices of the future,” Negash said. “There are a lot of perspectives that we, as co-directors and the folks that put this proposal together, don’t necessarily have.

I, for one, have really learned a lot from my students about issues of social justice through their own experiences.”

Added Chizhik: “People have come together and thought a lot about this — what it would be and what it should do. We’re trying to make sure that this stays a group effort.”

“We want to help faculty disseminate their research in a way that gives direct access to those in the classroom and in the therapy room.”



CENTERS

College of Education faculty members lead grant-funded centers and institutes that advance research in education and provide services to the San Diego community, including:

- Center for Achieving Black Wellness and Anti-Racist Education (CABWARE)
- Center for Equity and Biliteracy Education Research (CEBER)
- Center for Excellence in Early Development (CEED)
- Center for Family, School, and Community Engagement (FSaCE)
- Center for Community Counseling and Engagement (CCCE)
- Center for Equity and Postsecondary Attainment (CEPA)
- Center for Research in Math & Science Education (CRMSE)
- Center for Teaching Critical Thinking & Creativity (CTCTC)
- Interwork Institute
- National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST)
- Pre-College Institute (PCI)
- SDSU Literacy Center



Learn more about these and other COE Projects, Initiatives and Centers by scanning this QR code



A Commencement Like No Other

After more than a year of separation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the College of Education community reunited on May 25, 2021 for an emotional and unforgettable celebration of its Classes of 2020 and 2021. COE stepped up to the plate for an in-person, socially-distant commencement at Petco Park — the iconic downtown ballpark of the San Diego Padres. Photos by Sandy Huffaker and Michael Klitzing.



2021 Outstanding Graduates

Ten College of Education students earned the title of Outstanding Graduate, as selected by their department, school or program:



Pepin Payzant
Department of Child and Family Development (Undergraduate), Influential Faculty Member: Dan Bacon



Georgia Dickerson
Department of Child and Family Development (Undergraduate), Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Idara Essien



Paola Monserrat Romo
Department of Administration, Rehabilitation and Postsecondary Education, Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Lisa Gates



Colleen Aycock
Liberal Studies Program, Influential Faculty Member: Tishna Asim



Edward Bhagwandeem
Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education, Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Sera Hernandez



Valerie Salgado
Department of Special Education, Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Lauren Collins



Tamryn Hills
Department of Child and Family Development (Graduate), Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Felicia Black



Claudia Aldrete,
Department of Educational Leadership, Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Toni Faddis



Giannela Gonzales
Liberal Studies Program, Influential Faculty Member: Dr. Virginia Loh-Hagan



Ellen Watkins
School of Teacher Education, Influential Faculty Member: Eric Ginsberg

*In light of the challenging academic year, the Department of Counseling and School Psychology recognized all graduates in the department.



Learn more about our Outstanding Graduates, in their own words. Scan the QR code to watch the video.

Seeing Every Child As Precious

SDSU doctoral student and award-winning principal
Precious Jackson-Hubbard transforms lives.

By Michael Klitzing

In a role many associate with punishment and discipline, Bell Middle School principal Precious Jackson-Hubbard is making a difference in one San Diego community by offering students something else entirely: love. It's a love that comes from a place of profound understanding.

"I look at these young people and I see myself, my little brothers, my little cousins — I see a lot of little Preciouses," said Jackson-Hubbard, a student in San Diego State University's Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program whose personal and professional journey was inspired by mentorship she received as a teenager from an SDSU faculty member.

"What I experienced as a child, no child should ever have to experience — but they do," Jackson-Hubbard said. "I got through it because of the support of other people. Now I want to be a part of that change for them."

Bell is located in San Diego's Paradise Hills neighborhood — one of the city's most underserved communities — and students have plenty to contend with before they ever set foot in the classroom. Roughly one in eight students at the school are homeless or are sheltering with relatives or other households. Many more face food insecurity.

With so many basic needs going unmet, only 30% of Bell's students enter the sixth grade performing at grade level in reading, writing or mathematics. For the school to grapple with these challenges, Jackson-Hubbard says accountability must start with a look in the mirror.

"We're just now getting to the point of asking ourselves, 'How did we play a role in that?'" she said. "That's transformational. Many of us at Bell are on a journey to dig deep and figure out how we change the course of history for our students."

In nearly seven years as principal, Jackson-Hubbard has earned the trust of the community, instilling a reputation for

the school as a place of safety for young people. Among her most successful outreach initiatives is a community pantry, where Bell families in need can stock up on everything from nonperishable food to shoes.

In February, the Association of California School Administrators honored Jackson-Hubbard for her efforts, naming her middle school principal of the year for a region that covers San Diego and Imperial counties. The award has made her reflect on her own uncertain, often tragic, upbringing.

"I realize that I am being recognized for my work as an educator," she said. "But I am who I am because of the people who helped me, loved me and believed in me since I was a little girl."

A godmother's love

Jackson-Hubbard talks reverently of the "guardian angels" who guided her on her path, from her first-grade teacher and high school principal who believed in her potential, to her paternal grandmother Mary Coleman Jackson, a 30-year SDSU chemistry department staff member who provided safe harbor from violence at home, to an SDSU faculty member who eventually became her godmother, Diane Lapp.

That relationship started more than 20 years ago when Lapp, a professor in the School of Teacher

Education, was co-teaching at San Diego's Oak Park Elementary school while on sabbatical. Lapp took an interest in a struggling first-grader named Anthony and soon discovered the whole story. A mother haunted by drug addiction and incarceration. A father killed in a car accident. Nine children in the household, including a 15-year old named Precious. Lapp said she immediately recognized something special in Precious.

"I saw that Precious wanted so badly to learn," Lapp says. "She always wanted to know about the world and what difference she could make in it."

"I realize that I am being recognized for my work as an educator, but I am who I am because of the people who helped me, loved me and believed in me since I was a little girl."



"SDSU feels like family. What I've experienced is exactly what the educational experience should be. There's an element of trust and love."

- Precious Jackson-Hubbard

Precious Jackson-Hubbard on campus at Bell Middle School. Photo by Ian Ordonio.

As Lapp spent more and more time with the family, a bond began to form. With their mother's blessing, Lapp soon became godmother to the nine children, taking responsibility for their health and education.

"I guess I had a need to be a mother," Lapp recalls, "and they had a need for a second mother."

Said Jackson-Hubbard: "Diane opened her heart and her home to me and treated me as though I was her birth child. She's been a friend, she's been mom, she's been a confidant. She encourages me, pushes me and challenges me, but she provides me support along the way. I owe her an extreme level of gratitude for the relentless and unconditional love she has provided in my life."

Building students up

Jackson-Hubbard is now the one who provides relentless and unconditional love to young people in need of extra support. She strives, she says, to be the adult champion who believes in them, rather than the principal who metes out punishment.

"I don't think God put me on this earth to be the judge or the jury," said Jackson-Hubbard. "With that comes some accountability, but I want to build my students up, not break them down."

That explains why she's transparent with her students about her own life story, going so far as to share the difficult details at school assemblies. She wants the kids to know she gets it. She also wants them to know that, despite

their challenges, success isn't outside their grasp if they work hard. Jackson-Hubbard points out that she struggled with reading and writing as a child and spent most of her education academically below grade level.

It also explains her approach as a principal. Jackson-Hubbard says disruptive behavior at school is an indicator of trauma students are experiencing in the home or in the neighborhood. She believes a punitive mindset is often rooted in bias and acts as a driver of inequity in communities of color.

It's a philosophy shaped both by personal experience and her experiences as an SDSU student. Jackson-Hubbard received her teaching credential, administrative services credential and master's in educational leadership from the university. Now, this first-generation college student is on her way to becoming Dr. Precious Jackson-Hubbard.

"SDSU feels like family," Jackson-Hubbard said. "What I've experienced is exactly what the educational experience should be. There's an element of trust and love."

And among Jackson-Hubbard's SDSU family, there's no shortage of pride.

"She would laugh and probably not want me to tell you this, but I want her to be the U.S. Secretary of Education someday, or the superintendent of a big school district," Lapp said. "She has a voice that a lot of people need to hear."

Ready Teacher One

Alumna builds a vibrant community for high school gamers

By Michael Klitzing



Angelique Gianas

In her spare time while earning a teaching credential at San Diego State University, Angelique Gianas would often livestream on the popular video game broadcasting platform Twitch. Yet when she was subsequently hired as a teacher at Helix Charter High School in La Mesa, the lifelong gamer decided it was probably time to pull the plug.

"I told myself, 'There's no way this can transfer over,'" said Gianas ('13, '16, '19), a graduate of the College of Education's teaching credential and online Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. "I stopped streaming because it's kind of a weird place to be as a teacher — I don't want my kids to find me."

Four years later, it's safe to say that the gamers of Helix found Ms. Gianas. In addition to teaching sophomore English, the

San Diego native founded and currently facilitates two clubs that engage nearly 100 students on a weekly basis.

Prior to COVID-19, casual players would pack into a converted cafeteria every Thursday, gathering around Xbox, PlayStation and Nintendo Switch consoles to enjoy Super Smash Bros. Ultimate and other games.

Gamers with a more competitive streak would flock to the esports club to test their mettle at League of Legends in the Helix computer lab. The students organize tournaments and even utilize the school's 3-D printers to forge trophies for the winners.

If this looks like mere fun and games to you, Gianas says think again.

"It's done so many wonderful things for my kids," she said. "Our casual gaming club especially reaches kids who don't have a place — who haven't found their people in high school. It's a lot of kids who are not involved in sports or just haven't really found their niche. This allows them to find that."

Gianas also points to the soft skills her students are picking up, like problem-solving, communication and teamwork — "every skill an employer wants in someone they're hiring," she added.

"Our casual gaming club especially reaches kids who don't have a place — who haven't found their people in high school."

During the pandemic, the two gaming clubs have also given students an outlet to stay connected to school and with one another.

"Kids are struggling to navigate distance learning

just as much as we are, maybe even moreso," Gianas said. "We talk about gaming (on Discord), but we also talk about life, the pandemic, distance learning and being stuck inside. We talk about everything. It's become such a great support network for them.

"It's more than just gaming."

Alumni Difference Makers



Dr. Eric Becerra ('10 School Counseling) launched a male success initiative at Long Beach City College, aiming to improve academic success for men of color. The son of migrant farmworkers, he recently earned his doctorate from Harvard, taking his graduation photos in the Central California lettuce fields with his parents.

"I think the SDSU program prepared us really well to do our jobs and to reimagine what counseling is supposed to be. I feel like a lot of programs train future counselors to just fit right into the existing model and mode of operation. SDSU's program really empowered me to push the system."

— Dr. Eric Becerra



Dr. Hossna Sadat Ahadi ('07 Community-Based Block, '19 Community College Leadership) received the "Under 40" national award from the American Association of Women in Community Colleges, the "Women to Watch" regional Award by Connected Women of Influence San Diego and the Faculty Service Award from Palomar College Academic Senate. The counselor and assistant professor at Palomar is a champion for social justice on her campus.



Dr. Valita Jones ('12, Educational Leadership), Director of the Office of Success Coaching at Cal State San Marcos, and her team received the 2021 American Association of State Colleges and Universities Excellence and Innovation Award for Student Success. Their Students Success Coaching Program focuses on eliminating equity gaps and boosting retention efforts from a student-centered perspective.



Cheryl Baker ('98, School Counseling), Bonnie Hayman ('87, School Counseling) and Ann Pierce ('07, School Counseling) were named the three recipients of the 2021 School Counselors of the Year honor by the San Diego County Office of Education. Baker provides an empathetic ear to students from immigrant communities and military families. Hayman is the lone counselor for 1,100 students at an interdisciplinary arts academy. Pierce has worked to increase access to counselors for indigenous students in rural San Diego County.



Phet Pease ('05 Teacher Education, '13-'18 Noyce Master Teaching Fellow), was named one of six California finalists for the 2020 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Using hands-on robotics and app-building projects, Pease has stoked a passion for science and STEM careers among middle schoolers from the underserved community of City Heights.



Paula Richardson ('06, Teacher Education, '19 Educational Leadership) was named a 2020-21 San Diego County Teacher of the Year by the San Diego County Office of Education. The former member of the Marching Aztecs drumline is a middle school music teacher and advocate for music education.



Supported by a Familia

DLE lecturer's scholarship honors beloved great aunt, makes a difference for a future bilingual teacher.

By Michael Klitzing



Millie Agostino

San Diego State University's Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education (DLE) often dubs itself a *familia*. How fitting, then, that the tight-knit department's scholarship for bilingual credential students was motivated by a deep family bond — and recently empowered one student's dream to inspire the children of immigrant families like her own.

In 2019, DLE lecturer and credential advisor Emily Jullié and her mother Melinda Morgan, a retired elementary school teacher, created the Millie Agostino Memorial Scholarship to support two bilingual credential students each semester. Its namesake was Jullié's great aunt, a tough Brooklyn native who put herself through SDSU in the 1970s and later worked in IT for the County of San Diego.

"She was like a grandmother and mentor to me — a fairy godmother," Jullié recalls. "Everything that I was able to do in terms of travel, in terms of education, she always supported me. I wanted to pay it back by helping our students."

Pushing for more

Family was also what kept 2020-21 scholarship recipient Virginia Ramirez motivated on her often difficult path from immigrant and English learner to university graduate and education professional.

Ramirez was 17 when her family moved from Tijuana to the U.S. Aspiring to set an example for her younger brother and sister, she overcame shyness to learn English — her third language after Mixteco and Spanish — and succeed academically.



Virginia Ramirez

"I wanted to show them that I can do it — that we can do it," said Ramirez, whose parents never completed formal schooling. "So I kept pushing for more."

After a year of ESL classes followed by a senior year of high school to finish requirements for her diploma, Ramirez earned entry into SDSU. She graduated with a degree in liberal studies in 2016 and then set her sights on her next goal.

"I wanted to be a teacher someday to inspire students who were also immigrants, so they can see that it's possible," Ramirez said. "I wanted to make parents believe in their child and support them, even if they don't know how to read or write at home — that's what my mom always did for us."

But before trying for her teaching credential, she put her education on pause, hoping to save up enough to cover a year as a full-time student.

That break turned into a grueling 3½ years. Commuting an hour each way to San Diego from her parents' home in Boulevard on the southeastern edge of the county, Ramirez worked as a child development assistant in a Head Start program by day, and a fast food employee by night. When the pandemic set in, Ramirez shifted to full-time hours as an essential restaurant worker.

Ramirez said the experience took a physical and emotional toll. "I thought, 'Is this really my destiny?'" she recalls.



Emily Jullié

A scholarship's impact

In the fall of 2020, Ramirez had saved enough to change her destiny for good. She quit her food service job and entered DLE's multiple-subject bilingual credential program. She was excited, but still anxious about money. Little did she know, help from her new *familia* was on its way.

"When I got the Millie Agostino Scholarship, those worries went away," said Ramirez, who was able to use the award to pay for books and school essentials. "I could now breathe."

She made the most of it, earning her credential in 2021 and securing a teaching job at a Chula Vista charter school less than a month after graduation.

Earlier in the spring, Ramirez was able to meet Jullié at a virtual event connecting College of Education scholarship donors and recipients.

"She told us her story about coming to the United States, and it really reflected my family's heritage and history," said Jullié, whose great grandparents had come to the U.S. from Calabria, Italy, with nothing but a few coins sewn into their clothes. "Not much has changed in the last 100 years — people still leave their countries to have better opportunities, and it's not easy to leave your heritage, country and language behind."

"We are all part of the DLE *familia*," she added. "And Aunt Millie always believed in family helping family."

Support the College of Education

To learn more about making a difference and giving opportunities, contact Megan Beardsley, director of development, at mbeardsley@sdsu.edu or 619-594-2277. Or learn more by scanning this QR code:



"I wanted to show them that I can do it — that we can do it."

College of Education: In Focus



1. SDSU Literacy Center instructor Emily Rogers works with students as part of Literacy on the Rise, a partnership in Summer 2021 with King-Chavez Neighborhood of Schools in San Diego's Barrio Logan Neighborhood. Photo by Ian Ordonio.
2. Multiple subject credential student Tasha Irianto was able to finally meet her Oak Park Elementary students in person in April as San Diego-area school districts returned to in-person instruction. Courtesy photo.
3. SDSU Pre-College Institute staff members delivered more than 30 digital learning devices — including laptops and hot spots — to local high school students in its Upward Bound/Health Careers Opportunity Program during summer 2020. Courtesy photo.

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