

ASPIRE

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*College of
Liberal Arts*

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Aspire is a publication of the
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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the fifth annual issue of Aspire, the magazine that celebrates the people, honors, awards, and events happening here in the College of Liberal Arts. In this issue, we look back at a highly successful 2024-2025 academic year and look forward to the year ahead!

We begin our issue by introducing you to our six new tenure-track faculty. Read their bios to learn about the wide range of research interests and disciplinary expertise they will bring to our college. We also recognize faculty, students, and staff who were recipients of honors and awards over the past year.

In the year ahead, the CLA will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our American Studies Program, which recently became a stand-alone department in the college. We will also receive an update on the Beach XP program which curates a variety of academic and support services for incoming students. We'll look at the program from the perspective of the students.

During the academic year, CLA hosts a wide variety of functions that bring the community to our campus and extend our campus out into the community. Every fall, CLA Day brings together representatives from our academic programs and student groups to spread the word about CLA course offerings and ways for students to get involved in the college. Every spring features Discover CLA at Day at the Beach, which is designed to share information about our programs to incoming students. Last year, approximately 3,000 potential new students and their friends, families, and supporters visited our booths.

Throughout the academic year, CLA departments and programs host intellectual events such as keynote speakers, roundtables, and conferences that share disciplinary expertise with our campus and community. You can learn about upcoming events by visiting our CLA calendar website.

We hope to see you at The Beach in the year ahead!

Sincerely,

DAN O'CONNOR

Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts

New Tenure-Track Faculty



ROBERT MEJIA

Assistant Professor, Communication Studies

Dr. Robert Mejia joins the Communications Studies department this fall, where he will be teaching Communication Criticism.

Dr. Mejia holds a B.A. in English and Communication Studies and an M.A. in Communication Studies from California State University, Long Beach, as well as a Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with a graduate minor in Gender and Women's Studies and a certificate in Criticism and Interpretive Theory. His research looks at communication and culture, with a focus on how communication technologies and practices shape social behavior.

Dr. Mejia has taught at multiple institutions, including the University of Southern California, UC Santa Barbara, North Dakota State University and SUNY Brockport and has also worked as a communications manager at A New Way of Life Reentry Project, a nonprofit organization supporting formerly incarcerated women.

As a CSULB alumnus, Dr. Mejia looks forward to reconnecting with the community. "Long Beach gave me so much," Robert said. "I am looking forward to returning the favor with this generation of incredible students."



BARIKISU ISSAKA

Assistant Professor, Journalism & Public Relations

Dr. Barikisu Issaka joins the Journalism and Public Relations department this fall, where she will be teaching classes in strategic communication and public relations

Dr. Issaka earned her B.A. in Information Studies with a minor in Psychology from the University of Ghana, an M.S. in Journalism and Mass Communications from Kansas State University and a Ph.D. in Information and Media from Michigan State University. Her research focuses on health communication, specifically how digital media can influence health behaviors, and reduce disparities in underserved communities.

She has taught public relations and advertising courses at Kansas State and Michigan State and brings professional experience in PR and digital media management.

**WEI LAI***Assistant Professor, Linguistics*

Dr. Wei Lai joins the Linguistics department this fall, where she will be teaching *The Nature of Language* and *Laboratory Phonetics*.

Dr. Lai holds a B.A. and M.A. in Chinese Language and Literature from Beijing Normal University and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. Her main area of research is phonetics and linguistics, with a focus on the social-cognitive mechanisms involved in processing sociolinguistic variation.

Before joining CSULB, Dr. Lai worked as a postdoctoral researcher at Vanderbilt University and spent several years as a language engineer at Amazon Web Services, where she contributed to speech and language technologies on the Bedrock Data Team. This experience informs her commitment to teaching computational linguistics and supporting students interested in tech careers.

"I'm looking forward to connecting with students and colleagues at CSULB," she said. "I'm excited to bring my experience in computational linguistics and speech science to the classroom and lab."

**PER-ERIK MILAM***Assistant Professor, Philosophy*

Dr. Per-Erik Milam joins the Philosophy department this fall, where he will be teaching *Introduction to Ethics* and *A.I. Ethics*.

Dr. Milam holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Pomona College and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of California, San Diego. His research focuses on the nature and ethics of blame, apology and forgiveness, with broader interests in ethics, moral psychology and social and political philosophy.

He has held academic positions at institutions across the U.S. and Europe, including the University of Gothenburg, the University of Twente and Lewis and Clark College and has worked as an ethics consultant with the XPRIZE Foundation.

EGAMARIA ALACAM

Assistant Professor, Psychology

Dr. Egamaria Alacam joins the Psychology department this fall, where she will be teaching Intermediate Statistics and Multivariate Statistics.

Dr. Alacam holds an A.A. in Humanities and Social Sciences from Dutchess Community College, a B.A. in psychology with a minor in Applied Mathematics from SUNY New Paltz and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Quantitative Psychology from UCLA. Her research focuses on Bayesian statistics, missing data methods and advanced psychometrics, with applications across clinical, health, social, and developmental psychology.

Dr. Alacam brings experience as a visiting professor at Scripps College and as a teaching assistant for both undergraduate and graduate statistics courses at UCLA. A first-generation college student herself, she is passionate about inclusive teaching and fostering statistical curiosity in her students.

"I'm most looking forward to teaching the psychological statistics courses at CSULB," she says. "I hope to not only demonstrate the critical role statistics plays in psychological research and beyond, but also to help students discover that a subject they may have dreaded can become one they genuinely enjoy and feel empowered to master."



RAMONA MARTINEZ

Assistant Professor, Psychology

Dr. Ramona Martinez joins the Psychology department this fall, where she will be teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in social psychology.

Dr. Martinez holds a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Sociology from Loyola Marymount University, an M.Sc. in Social and Cultural Psychology from the London School of Economics, a post-baccalaureate certificate in Psychological Science from UC Irvine and a Ph.D. in Psychology with a concentration in Social-Personality from UC Riverside. Her research focuses on how people pursue social goals, develop personality, particularly extraversion and sociability, and experience subjective well-being, with attention to individual differences and culture.

When she first visited CSULB, Dr. Martinez was struck by the enthusiasm of the student body. "I am very much looking forward to teaching and mentoring students and enabling budding social scientists to use applied psychological insights in their professional and academic careers," she said.

Faculty Tenure & Promotion

PROMOTED TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



PREETI SHARMA

Associate Professor, American Studies

Dr. Preeti Sharma, whose research focuses on feminist theories labor, racial capitalism, South Asian diasporas and service economies, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. Her current book project, *The Thread Between Them*, examines how the South Asian threading salon workers in Los Angeles navigate labor and build community within the beauty industry. She has co-authored national policy reports for the UCLA Labor Center and co-wrote and edited *The Auntie Sewing Squad Guide to Masking, Racial Care, and Racial Justice*. Sharma's work appears in *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Labor Studies Journal*, *Society & Space*, and *Feminist Studies: An Introductory Reader*.



KARA MILLER

Associate Professor, Anthropology

Dr. Kara Miller, whose research centers around health systems and healing practices, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. Her work contributes to conversations in public health on humanizing medicine and culturally meaningful wellness models. She began her work studying traditional midwives in Southern Uganda and now investigates the links between health and ecology, including therapy techniques that help communities protect themselves.

LORETTA RAMIREZ

Associate Professor, Chicano & Latino Studies

Dr. Loretta Ramirez, whose research focuses on Latinx rhetoric, trauma studies, decolonial theory and archival methodology, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor and is the incoming Chair of the Chicano and Latino Studies department. Her 2024 book, *The Wound and the Stitch*, maps a genealogy of Chicana rhetoric through the works of Chicana artists and writers. She created a course to help students develop their primary source skills. Ramirez has received the 2024 Ethics Across the Curriculum Award, CSULB's 2023–2024 Early Academic Career Excellence Award and the 2020 Scholars for the Dream Award from the Conference on College Composition and Communication.





ANDRE HARRISON

Associate Professor, Economics

Dr. Andre Harrison, whose research explores the relationship between global financial markets, economic activity and monetary policy, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. His work has been published in the *Journal of International Money and Finance*, *Economic Inquiry* and *Energy Economics*. Harrison actively mentors student research, including co-authored publications in *Empirical Economics*. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in macroeconomics, international economic development and time series econometrics.



TINA MATUCHNIAK

Associate Professor, English

Dr. Tina Matuchniak, whose research focuses on academic writing, teacher professional development and college access, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. Her work examines writing as a tool for equity and inclusion in higher education. She is the inaugural director of the University Writing Center at CSULB and a recipient of the 2023 P. David Pearson Scholarly Influence Award as part of a research team at UC Irvine.

RAJBIR JUDGE

Associate Professor, History

Dr. Rajbir Judge, whose research examines historical writing, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. His work questions who is deemed viable and professional as a historian and how these are closely tied to race, region and religion. His scholarship resists conventional appeals to experience or professionalism, instead staying with what history often excludes. He credits his wife, Abby, for her unwavering support throughout the personal and professional demands of academic life.



ULICES PIÑA

Associate Professor, History

Dr. Ulices Piña, whose research focuses on the social and political history of Mexico, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. His work centers on the long-term consequences of the Mexican Revolution and the role of ordinary people in shaping democratic culture. His first book, *Rebellious Citizens: Social Upheaval and Democracy in Revolutionary Mexico*, which will be published in 2026, examines the political practices in postrevolutionary Jalisco during the 1920s and 1930s. Drawing on family histories and regional ties, Piña explores how popular movements gave ordinary people the power to shape their own histories and build power beyond the ballot box.



PROMOTED TO FULL PROFESSOR

STEVEN ROUSSO-SCHINDLER

Professor, Anthropology

KARISSA MILLER

Professor, Psychology



CLAUDIA HUANG

Associate Professor, Human Development

Dr. Claudia Huang, an Anthropologist by training and conducts ethnographic research in China, has received tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor. Her research examines the ways in which large-scale social change affects people's aging experiences. Dr. Huang began pursuing this topic when doing her dissertation research on the "dancing grannies" phenomenon, in which millions of retired Chinese women gather together to dance and socialize. She recently published her first book on this research, titled *Dancing for their Lives: The Pursuit of Meaningful Aging in Urban China*, and is really looking forward to asking new questions on how people think and feel about growing older.



PROMOTED TO FULL PROFESSOR



RUIXI AI

Professor, Asian & Asian American Studies

Dr. Ruixi Ai, whose research focuses on Chinese language and cultural studies, has been promoted to Full Professor at California State University, Long Beach. His work spans Chinese linguistics, language acquisition, literature and pedagogy, with influence from mentors C.-T. James Huang and Noam Chomsky. He is the author of *Introduction to Chinese Culture*, *Elliptical Predicate Constructions in Mandarin*, and *Contrastive Analysis of Chinese and English Syntax - A Generative Introduction*. Ai's research has appeared in *Linguistic Inquiry*, *Asian Languages and Linguistics* and *Modern Foreign Languages*.



YUPING MAO

Professor, Communication Studies

Dr. Yuping Mao, whose research focuses on intercultural and health communication, has been promoted to Full Professor. Her work examines how communication can reduce health disparities among migrants and underserved populations across global contexts. Drawing on experience in China, Canada, the Netherlands and the U.S., she studies patient-provider interaction, health information diffusion and social support behaviors. Mao collaborates extensively with scholars in nursing, public health and medicine, contributing communication expertise to interdisciplinary efforts aimed at improving health equity.

ROBERT BLANKENSHIP

Professor, Romance German Russian Languages & Literatures

Dr. Robert Blankenship, whose research focuses on East Germany, has been promoted to Full Professor. His interest began in the 1990s while studying German during a time of intense discussion around unification and the Cold War's aftermath. A first-generation college student from rural Alabama, Blankenship is driven by a commitment to expanding opportunities for students from underrepresented backgrounds.



GINO GALVEZ

Professor, Psychology

Dr. Gino Galvez, whose research focuses on program evaluation and student success in STEM, has been promoted to Full Professor. His work assesses grant-funded interventions aimed at broadening participation in science, including collaborations with CSULB's BUILD program and a UCSF summer research initiative for first-generation and underrepresented students. As Co-PI of the NSF-funded METRIC program, Galvez studies the role of mentoring in shaping noncognitive factors such as science identity and sense of belonging. His research reflects a long-standing commitment to equity in education and the transformative power of mentorship in academic and professional pathways.



AMY WAX

Professor, Psychology

Dr. Amy Wax, whose research focuses on workplace diversity, has been promoted to Full Professor. Her work examines how organizational practices can advance equity and social justice, with an emphasis on the applied impact of research findings in professional settings.

WENDY KLEIN

Professor, Linguistics / Anthropology

Dr. Wendy Klein, whose research focuses on language socialization and language ideologies, has been promoted to Full Professor. Trained in linguistic anthropology, her work draws on ethnography of communication and discourse analysis to explore how everyday interactions reflect broader sociocultural and political ideologies. She has published on Punjabi Sikh cultural socialization, bilingual practices in Japanese families with autistic children and dynamics of family conflict and collaboration. Klein's interest in language and social justice has led to partnerships with the City of Long Beach Office of Equity, mentoring students in evaluating language access in public services.

R. VARISA PATRAPORN

Professor, Sociology

Dr. R. Varisa Patraporn, whose research focuses on economic mobility among Asian American and immigrant communities, has been promoted to Full Professor. Her work examines the social and spatial factors shaping mobility and highlights community-based strategies for advancing equity. An applied researcher and Long Beach native, Patraporn has held positions at the White House Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Treasury and the LA County Commission on Children and Families. She has also served as staff and advisor to numerous immigrant and social justice organizations across Southern California and nationally.



Faculty Milestones

NEW DEPARTMENT CHAIRS & PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Rezenet Moges-Riedel

Director, American Sign Language & Deaf Studies

Steven Rousso-Schindler

Chair, Anthropology

Loretta Ramirez

Chair, Chicano & Latino Studies

George Hart

Chair, English

Lily House-Peters

Director, Environmental Science & Policy

Michael Ahland

Chair, Linguistics

Nancy Martin

Chair, Sociology

Faculty Service Awards

20 YEARS

Khonsura A. Wilson

Associate Professor, Africana Studies

Cynthia Alvitre

Lecturer, American Indian Studies

Paul Scotton

Professor, Classics

Lowry Sweney

Lecturer, Classics

David Edwards

Lecturer, Communication Studies

Steve Yamarik

Professor, Economics

Sharron Flynn

Lecturer, English

Zachary Locklin

Lecturer, English

Barbara Doten

Lecturer, History

Brian O'Neil

Lecturer, History

Adam Wemmer

Lecturer, History

Heather Rae-Espinoza

Professor, Human Development

Christopher Karadjov

Associate Professor, Journalism & Public Relations

Peter Larsen

Lecturer, Journalism & Public Relations

Rebekha Abbuhl

Associate Professor, Linguistics

Nuria Giralt

Lecturer, Psychology

Gabriel Estrada

Professor, Religious Studies

Sophia Pandya

Professor, Religious Studies

Nielan Barnes

Professor, Sociology

Alfonso Hernandez-Marquez

Lecturer, Sociology

Leakhena Nou

Professor, Sociology

25 YEARS

Maria Pacho

Lecturer, Chicano & Latino Studies

Maythee Rojas

Professor, Chicano & Latino Studies

Christina Derme

Lecturer, Communication Studies

Marc Rich

Professor, Communication Studies

Stacy Thompson

Professor, Communication Studies

Mason Boyer

Lecturer, English

Lloyd Kermode

Professor, English

Anthony Olah

Lecturer, English

Martine van Elk

Professor, English

Unna Lassiter

Lecturer, Geography

Angela Wranic

Lecturer, Geography

Gregory Beirich

Lecturer, History

Brett Mizelle

Professor, History

Sherry Vatter

Lecturer, History

Rachna Soni

Lecturer, Human Development

Keith Kaiser

Lecturer, Philosophy

Lewis Ringel

Lecturer, Political Science

Andrew Lohmann

Lecturer, Sociology

30 YEARS

Linda Maram

Professor, Asian & Asian American Studies

F. Elizabeth Dahab

Professor, Comparative World Literature

Suzanne Greenberg

Professor, English

Mary Caputi

Professor, Political Science

Lisa Maxfield

Professor, Psychology

David Whitney

Professor, Psychology

35 YEARS

Mary McPherson

Professor, Communication Studies

Jose Rodriguez

Professor, Communication Studies

Emma Daugherty

Professor, Journalism & Public Relations

John Dwyer

Lecturer, Psychology

Faculty Retirements

CRAIG STONE

American Indian Studies

STEPHEN COOPER

English

FRED WEGENER

English

KEN CURTIS

History

MARY CAPUTI

Political Science

COLLIE CONOLEY

Psychology

Staff Milestones

NEW STAFF HIRES

Valerie Tellez
CLA Advising Center (ATLAS)

Spencer Otte
CLA Dean's Office

Christopher Knight
English

Fabiola Colon
Geography

Arleth Rodriguez Maciel
Journalism & Public Relations

Janine Rodriguez
Political Science

Alyssa Correa
Psychology

Saul Ventura
*Romance German Russian Languages
& Literatures*

Gisselle Rodela
Sociology

Marissa Garcia
*University Relations & Development,
CLA Dean's Office*

STAFF PROMOTIONS

Blanca Piguing
CLA Advising Center (ATLAS)

Soraya Rivas
CLA Advising Center (ATLAS)

Marcy Bacani
History

Jonathan Micklis
*University Relations & Development,
CLA Dean's Office*

STAFF RETIREMENTS

Debbie Hildreth Pisarcik
CLA Dean's Office

Dan Olson
Journalism & Public Relations

Jacqueline Southern
Sociology

Staff Service Awards

10 YEARS

Matt Estrella
CLA Advising Center (ATLAS)

20 YEARS

Julie Ortiz
CLA Dean's Office

35 YEARS

Terie Bostic
CLA Dean's Office

Terie Bostic began her CSULB career in 1989 as a Clerical Assistant in the Provost's Office, later becoming Administrative Secretary to Provost Karl W.E. Anatol. She previously worked as a student assistant at the University of Oklahoma. After moving to Long Beach, she joined the College of Business as assistant to the Administrative Services Manager, eventually becoming ASM herself. She later transitioned to the College of Liberal Arts, where she currently serves as Administrative and Business Manager.

Bostic served on Staff Council from 1992 to 2002 and was named Employee of the Month in 1997. She received the Advancing Women Award in 2014 and was a President and Provost's Leadership Fellow in 2015–16. She earned her MBA from CSULB in 2000.

Known for her problem-solving skills and mentorship, Bostic values her many friendships and relationships around campus. As she approaches retirement, she looks forward to travel, acting and continuing to support others in finding their passion.



John & Phyllis Jung Awards

PART-TIME FACULTY AWARD

Elizabeth Guzik

Department of English

FULL-TIME STAFF AWARD

Ana Canela

Department of Chicano & Latino Studies

In Memoriam

DOROTHY "DEE" ABRAHAMSE

Former Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Dorothy "Dee" Abrahamse, former Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, died in November 2024. A historian of the Byzantine era, Abrahamse joined CSULB in 1967 and became the university's first Dean of Liberal Arts in 1992, serving for over 15 years.

She held several leadership roles, including Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs, Interim Provost, and Chair of the History Department. After retiring in 2007, she continued to support the campus through an endowment that funded collaborative academic initiatives.

Abrahamse was also active in public service, dedicating 15 years to the Long Beach Public Library Foundation. She was also a passionate musician and was a member of the Long Beach Camerata Singers ensemble.

Colleagues remembered her as a generous mentor, principled leader, and dedicated advocate for education and the Liberal Arts.



SHIRLEY MANGINI

*Professor of Italian, Romance German Russian
Languages & Literatures*

Dr. Shirley Mangini, former professor and administrator in RGRLL, died in October 2024. A scholar of 20th-century Spanish literature and culture, Mangini was widely recognized for her work on women's voices during the Spanish Civil War.

She served as Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (before it merged with other language programs to form RGRLL) and later as Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts.

Prior to her time at CSULB, Mangini taught at Yale University, where she also completed her doctoral studies. She continued to publish actively throughout her career and into retirement.

Colleagues remembered her for her warmth, intellectual rigor, and dedication to scholarship and community.



Student Success in CLA

OUTSTANDING BACCALAUREATES



LAURA EMIKO CHIKAMI

Anthropology

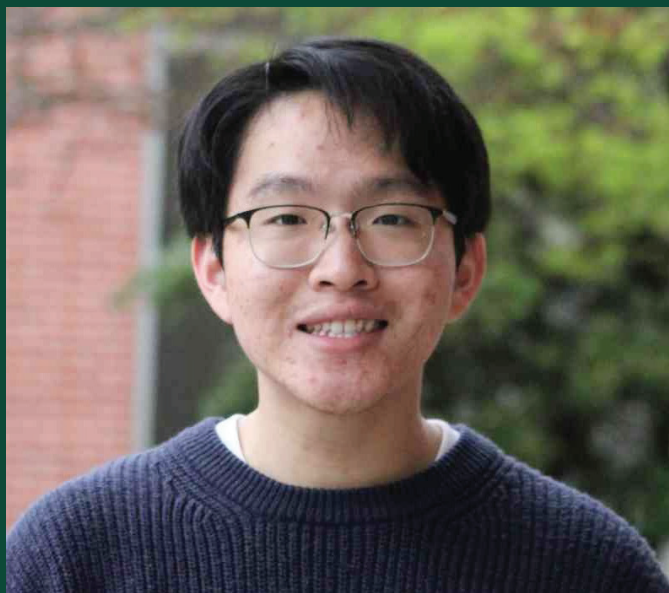
Laura has maintained a high academic record and made extraordinary contributions to their department and outside academic research. Laura presented a paper and research poster at prestigious anthropology conferences while completing a special exhibition research internship at the Bowers Museum. Laura is currently doing a second research internship at Bowers publishing two articles on their Bowers Blog.



CIARAN LOVICK-DANIEL PIERCE

Comparative World Literature

Ciaran is a Comparative World Literature major with a Theatre minor, maintaining a stellar 4.0 GPA. Ciaran has presented a conference paper that his professor said “was so compelling that several colleagues remarked on its exceptional quality”. His most notable achievement that impacts the campus community is his work on the Beach Pluralism Fellowship Project where his group project focused on the queer lived-experience as a model for pluralistic practices.



CALVIN ALAN CHIU

Psychology

Calvin is a scholar who has sought extensive research training and experience at CSULB while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Calvin worked in multiple faculty labs whose projects have led him to five poster and oral presentations at various student research conferences and five more research presentations this spring at professional conferences.

BEST MASTER'S THESIS AWARD



BRENDAN SCOTT SCHULTHEIS

Geography

"Estimating oak tree biomass using canopy-based estimates of trunk diameter derived from high resolution SUAS imagery"

Supervised by Dr. Paul Laris

Brendan's thesis involves developing a new method for mapping and estimating tree biomass using drones. Brendan's research uses very high-resolution images from a drone to map the size and biomass of different trees in a Californian woodland environment. The work is novel in that only a few published studies have experimented with applying this approach and all of those involved mapping conifer (pine) trees.



ROBERT CURTIS THOMAS

History

"Angered by fear: Thrash metal, youth culture, and American society in the 1980s"

Supervised by Dr. Eileen Luhr

Robert's thesis makes a significant contribution to US cultural history by contextualizing thrash heavy metal music within conservative shifts in American politics and culture during the Reagan Era. The thesis demonstrates an exceptional ability to blend a broad array of primary source material with a sophisticated command of interdisciplinary secondary literature drawn from history, musicology, sociology, and gender studies.



AMBAR HERNANDEZ

Psychological Research

"Examining self-reported major barriers to seeking mental health services in college students at a diverse university"

Supervised by Dr. Araceli Gonzalez

Ambar's thesis illuminates potential drivers of a major public health concern – despite the rapidly rising rates of mental illness, the majority of individual who could benefit from mental health services do not seek or receive them. Ambar's thesis takes an interesting and infrequently used perspective to address this concern.

2025 Dean's List

MASTERS STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS, & ARTISTS



LISA DING NGUYEN

Applied Anthropology

Lisa earned her Bachelors degree in Anthropology in 2020 and entered the Master's program the following fall. Lisa's desire to improve conditions for unhoused Vietnamese residents of Orange County, specifically in Garden Grove and Westminster, where she has familial connections and a broad social network has made her an advocate for the unhoused population in the community. She continued that advocacy while employed at VietRISE, where she engaged in numerous proactive endeavors, including securing services for Southeast Asians in the county and providing information to them and other community members.



BROOKE NICOLE RODRIGUES

English Literature

Brooke's writing is of professional quality, and her research and engagement with scholarship is frankly beyond the vast majority of her peers. She is the recipient of two prestigious awards in the Department of English for researched writing and she has placed papers in graduate and professional conferences for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, both at the local and international (and most prestigious) levels.



SIERRA MADISON DARWIN

Political Science

Sierra's primary research interests are in judicial politics and public law, especially questions around the nature of legal change within judicial hierarchies. She was selected for the highly competitive California State University system-wide Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholarship to fund her research as an MA student in Political Science. Her Casanova Scholar project examines the construction of Second Amendment precedent in the Federal Appeals Courts.



AMIRA ABOUZEID

International Affairs

Amira has been named the Outstanding Graduate of this year's MA International Affairs cohort. Not only for her 4.0 GPA, but also for her outstanding intellectual contributions in all her graduate seminars, which as one faculty member noted in his nomination letter for the department's Outstanding Graduate award, said Amira "raised the bar for intellectual contribution for the whole class." She is the kind of student who listens carefully to what others have to say before responding, building the level of analysis and often finding connections among the disparate comments of her peers.



TRAVIS BARNETT

Philosophy

Travis is a stand-out student in the MA program, exceptional in his motivation, direction, organization, and productivity. Travis has taken two independent studies that required mastery of literatures on distinct figures in the history of early modern philosophy, René Descartes and Nicolas Malebranche. These independent studies, organized and spear-headed by Travis, have resulted in substantial pieces of research that could be accepted at academic peer-review journals of the history of philosophy, a highly unusual accomplishment at the Master's level.



EMILY SIMONE DOFFING

Psychological Research

Emily is a truly exceptional scholar whose dedication to research, mentorship, and academic excellence makes her highly deserving of this honor. As a Master's student, Emily has demonstrated an exceptional level of academic achievement, far exceeding what is typically expected at this stage. Beyond her impressive CV, Emily is a generous, self-aware, intellectually curious person, and highly motivated to continue her academic pursuits in doctoral study in the future.



BUILDING COMMUNITY IN BEACH XP

BeachXP helps first-year students adjust to college life by building community and making campus resources more accessible.

Students are placed in cohorts and take General Education classes together, along with an activity section led by peer mentors. These mentors bring in campus services like Student Health Services, CAPS, Basic Needs, and the Writing Resource Center to present directly in class, ensuring students know what help is available and how to access it.

Heather Armistead, a peer mentor at BeachXP who participated in the program as a student said the program helped them during their first year. "It helped me connect with other students and introduced me to resources I wouldn't have found on my own," they said. "As a first-generation college student, having someone I could reach out to when I felt overwhelmed made a huge difference."

That experience led them to become a peer mentor, wanting to support others the way they had been supported. "Thanks to BeachXP, I've built relationships across campus that allow me to help students resolve issues, both academic and personal," Armistead said.

The most valuable part of the program, Armistead said, is the network it helps students build.

"Networking is a crucial life skill, and this program gives students an early start."

Armistead said one standout moment came when they helped a student navigate an issue with a professor who was in the same situation they had once struggled with. "It felt like a full-circle moment that reminded me how much I've grown."

Armistead's advice to new students is simple: "Show up and speak up." They said BeachXP is still growing and that student feedback plays a big role. "If you participate actively and advocate for your needs, BeachXP can truly transform your college experience."

FORENSICS TEAM RANKS THIRD NATIONALLY, EARNS TOP INDIVIDUAL AWARD

In April, the CSULB Speech and Debate team traveled to Gonzaga University to compete at the National Debate Tournament, the nation's oldest and most prestigious policy debate competition. Two CSULB teams qualified, including the university's first all-Latina partnership. Also, Curtis Ortega and Daneil Medina advanced to the semifinals, marking the best finish in school history and earning a third-place national ranking, ahead of teams from Harvard, Stanford, Michigan and other major programs. Ortega was named First Speaker, the top individual honor, at the Cross Examination Debate Association Nationals. The CSULB team also secured first place in the season-long Pacific Region sweepstakes. The program has increased its public engagement efforts, hosting debates in partnership with the Institute for First Amendment Studies and inviting policymakers to campus.



AMERICAN STUDIES MARKS 50 YEARS

Last semester, the American Studies program at Cal State Long Beach celebrated 50 years with a lecture by CSULB alumnus and UCLA professor, Robin D. G. Kelley.

Formally established in the mid-1970s, the program emerged during a period of national social upheaval and campus activism. Faculty and students pushed for a program that would examine American culture through a broad, critical lens. Early efforts included courses offered under Sociology, and by Fall 1974, American Studies launched its first course, AMST 300: Introduction to American Studies.

The founding faculty included professors from English, History, Political Science and Art. David Fine, the program's

first director, described its purpose as asking, "What is the nature of American culture?" The program formally offered a major in 1974 and a minor beginning in 1976. Early elective patterns included The American People, The Arts in America and American Institutions.

In April, the program hosted a standing-room only event featuring Robin D.G. Kelley, who spoke about the present state of American Studies globally.

The program has been part of CLA since 2021 as part of the History department and will be its own department beginning in Fall 2025.

Featured Alumni

MICHAEL ANASTASI

*Senior Vice President of Local News, Gannett
and The USA Today Network*

A first-generation college student who was born in Kitzbuhel, Austria, and raised in the small Northern California town of Knights Landing (pop. 987), Michael Anastasi came to CSULB as a Journalism major — rising to Editor-in-Chief of the Daily 49er (now the Long Beach Current) during his senior year — and has been an enthusiastic champion of his alma mater ever since. Although his academic and professional pursuits eventually brought him to Tennessee, where he is currently the Senior Vice President of local news for Gannett and the USA TODAY Network, the nation's largest news organization, Anastasi has remained an active part of Beach life over the years. In addition to serving as a member of CSULB's Journalism Advisory Board since 2008, Anastasi assisted the Department of Journalism & Public Relations during its accreditation process; coached, hired and taught journalism students; and funded, with his wife, Julie, an endowed scholarship that will support returning Journalism students at CSULB in perpetuity. A nationally recognized supporter of diversity who founded the APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) Diversity Fellowship Program, Anastasi says he is immensely proud of being a Pulitzer



Prize-winning editor, but prouder still to have been named in 2021 as co-laureate of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Journalism Award, which annually recognizes the best human rights and social justice journalism in the world. Anastasi's proudest personal accomplishment is raising, with Julie, two daughters who are university graduates. The couple looks forward to celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary later this year.

2001, B.A., Print Journalism, CSULB

2020, M.A., Leadership & Public Service, Lipscomb Univ.



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2024 - 2025

41,189
STUDENTS AT CSULB

9,335
STUDENTS IN CLA

2,782
GRADUATED WITH A
DEGREE IN CLA

187
CLA STUDENTS RECEIVED
SCHOLARSHIPS

\$365,000
AWARDED IN
CLA SCHOLARSHIPS

\$11.368M
RAISED BY CLA
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