



# DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 1:37:19 PM

**Nominee:** Orin Bennett

**Grad info:** BS 1971 (Civil Engineering)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Since graduating from Sacramento State, Orin has been a champion and actively involved alum for the university and the college. He is a founding member and former chair of the Civil Engineering Advisory Committee (IAC), long-time members of the Industry Advisory Board (IAB) for the College of Engineering and Computer Science. He has given his time mentoring and advising Senior Projects for Civil Engineering, helping launch the Ken Kerri luncheon and endowment and actively encourages his staff and peers to be actively involved in supporting the university through time and treasure.

As a founder and sustaining member of the American Public Works Association Education Endowment Fund, Orin has been a key factor in garnering individual and industry support College of Engineering and Computer Science in supporting and help grow the Traffic Lab, Concrete Lab, Environmental Engineering Lab, Geosynthetics Lab, and the Shake Table in the Structures Lab to name a few. He has also modeled the way by annually supporting the ECS Dean's Fund by providing a Give Sac State Day challenge to help raise crucial discretionary funding.

Through Orin's leadership and commitment to the university, we are able to continue to graduate engineers that meet the workforce needs of the local Sacramento region and across the State of California.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Professionally, Orin has served as a Past President and remains an active member of the following professional groups: American Public Works Association (APWA) Sacramento Chapter, American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), Consulting Engineers & Land Surveyors of California (CELSOC), and American Water Works Association (AWWA). Orin has served as a member of the Engineering and Computer Science Industry Advisory Board for over 30 years and has served on the Redding Bank of Commerce since 2005.

Personally, Orin is a great father to his two children including coaching their sports teams, career days at their schools, and bring your kid to work days. These experiences played a significant role in his daughter Stacey taking over leadership of Bennett Engineering Services.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Throughout his career, Orin has served as a mentor to countless generations of civil engineers with a strong reputation of helping identify and support the current generational leaders in the local civil engineering industry. Orin greatly impacted his daughter, Stacey Lynch's, career in both becoming a civil engineer and throughout her career. He has provided great guidance, mentorship, and is a great role model.

One of his lasting legacies has been helping lead the establishment and growth of the Sacramento Chapter's APWA Education Endowment. Through his leadership, this fund has grown to over seven figures providing a stable base of funding for the foundation board to support civil engineering students, faculty and laboratories throughout Northern California. These educational grants have and continue to support improvements in teaching, opportunities for research and serve the future on the engineering profession.

**Nominator:** Kevan Shafizadeh



California State University, Sacramento  
College of Engineering & Computer Science  
Office of the Dean  
6000 J Street, MS 6023 · Sacramento, CA 95819  
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April 11, 2025

Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6029

Dear Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee:

It is with enthusiasm and respect that I write this letter in support of **Orin Bennett** for a **Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Service Award**. As the Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science (ECS), I have had the privilege of observing Mr. Bennett's extraordinary dedication to our University, his professional excellence, and his unwavering commitment to the engineering community.

Mr. Bennett, a proud Civil Engineering graduate of Sacramento State (Class of 1971), exemplifies the very essence of what it means to be a distinguished alumnus. His contributions to our College and the broader Sacramento State community have been transformative, consistent, and deeply impactful over the span of decades.

Orin has maintained an exceptional level of involvement with Sacramento State throughout his career. He has served with distinction on both the Civil Engineering Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and ECS Industry Advisory Board (IAB), including terms serving as chair of both boards. His industry expertise and leadership have been instrumental in guiding our programs toward excellence and ensuring that our programs remain relevant, innovative, and responsive to industry needs.

His leadership extends beyond advisory roles. Orin has been remarkably generous with his financial support, making significant contributions to various Sacramento State funds. Most recently, he served as a match sponsor for our annual Give Sac State Day challenge, inspiring others to contribute and multiplying the impact of their gifts.

Perhaps one of Orin's most enduring contributions in the professional community has been his role as a Founder and Sustaining Member of the American Public Works Association (APWA) Sacramento Chapter's Education Endowment Fund. This visionary initiative has directly benefited our engineering students through grants to essential learning facilities, including the Transportation Engineering Lab – for which I personally proposed and received funding for Sacramento State, the Concrete Lab, the Environmental Engineering Lab, the Structural Engineering Lab, and the Geotechnical Engineering Lab. These facilities provide invaluable hands-on learning experiences that prepare our students for success in their careers.

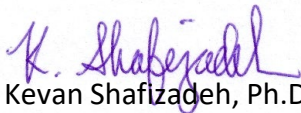
For over 40 years, Orin has been an active member of the APWA Sacramento Chapter, serving on the board, including terms as Chapter President and Education Endowment Fund Board of Trustees. This long-term commitment demonstrates his exceptional dedication to the engineering profession and to creating opportunities for future generations of engineers.

Orin's professional achievements are equally impressive. As the founder of Bennett Engineering Services, he built a respected firm known for excellence in civil engineering and infrastructure projects. His firm has become a model for ethical practice, technical excellence, and community engagement in the engineering field. Orin has consistently used his professional success as a platform to champion Sacramento State's College of Engineering and Computer Science and its Civil Engineering program. He actively encourages his staff to engage with our University as senior project clients, attend University events such as the Ken Kerri Endowment Luncheon and career fairs, and mentor our ECS students. His enthusiasm for Sacramento State is well known as he often expresses his preference for hiring Sac State graduates over other engineering programs in the state, recognizing the quality of education and preparation our programs provide.

Beyond his institutional contributions, Orin has made a profound impact as a mentor. His guidance has shaped the careers of countless engineers, most notably his daughter, Stacey Lynch, who followed in his footsteps as both a Sac State ECS grad, a professional civil engineer, and an APWA leader. He has created a legacy of engineers who carry forward his values of excellence, service, and community engagement.

Orin Bennett represents the highest ideals of Sacramento State. His career exemplifies professional excellence, his service demonstrates unwavering commitment to our University and community, and his mentorship has created a lasting legacy that will benefit generations of future engineers. The Distinguished Alumni Award would be a fitting recognition of a man who has dedicated his life and career to advancing the engineering profession while consistently giving back to the University that helped shape him. I offer my strongest possible endorsement of Orin Bennett for this well-deserved honor.

Thank you for your consideration,



Kevan Shafizadeh, Ph.D., P.E., T.E., PTOE, PTP  
Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science  
[shafizadeh@csus.edu](mailto:shafizadeh@csus.edu)



TRUSTED ENGINEERING ADVISORS

**Bennett Engineering Services**

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Sacramento | Livermore | Milpitas

April 11, 2025

Kevan Shafizadeh, Ph.D., P.E.  
Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Mail Stop 6029  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6029

**Subject: Recommendation for Orin Bennett - Distinguished Alumni Award**

Dear Members of the Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee,

As a proud Sacramento State alumnus, it is my honor to write this letter of recommendation for Orin Bennett—a distinguished graduate of California State University, Sacramento; a respected leader in our engineering community; a successful business owner; a dedicated mentor; and a friend who has had a profound impact on my career.

From the moment I met Orin, I was struck by his sincere belief in building a company where people come first—where individuals are valued more than profits, clients are treated with the utmost respect, and the work we do contributes meaningfully to our communities. That vision continues to inspire me to this day.

Orin's mentorship extended far beyond professional advice. It was a genuine collaboration grounded in shared values and a commitment to excellence. His influence helped shape not only our company's culture, but also the leadership philosophy of those who have worked alongside him. He fostered an environment where everyone felt a true sense of belonging—values that closely align with those championed by Sacramento State.

Over the course of more than 12 years working together, I came to know Orin as one of the most resolute, visionary, and principled business leaders in the industry. Through his leadership, I learned the importance of organizational culture, serving with integrity, and creating opportunity for others. That is one of the many reasons we actively seek to hire Sacramento State graduates—they are prepared, diverse, and equipped to lead and succeed in the workplace from day one.

One of the guiding principles Orin instilled in us was the importance of becoming a trusted engineering advisor. To him, that meant forging lasting partnerships, solving complex problems, and empowering clients with the knowledge to make informed decisions. That commitment to trust and service has become the cornerstone of our firm's success—and it mirrors Sacramento State's mission of producing graduates who are ready to lead and make a difference.

Orin is more than deserving of this honor. His unwavering support of Sacramento State is evident in his longstanding service on the College of Engineering and Computer Science Industrial Advisory Board, his generous financial contributions, and his passionate advocacy for the university's mission, vision, and values. He has lived these ideals in both word and action, inspiring countless alumni and future engineers along the way. Thank you for considering this nomination.

Warm regards,  
Bennett Engineering Services

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leo Rubio", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leo Rubio, PE  
Principal | President | CEO



TRUSTED ENGINEERING ADVISORS

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April 11, 2025

**Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee**

California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Orin Bennett, P.E. - Distinguished Alumni Award

Dear Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee,

It is with immense pride and deep admiration that I nominate my father, **Orin Bennett**, for the Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Award. As a proud Civil Engineering graduate of Sacramento State (Civil Engineering, 1971), Orin has dedicated his life and career not only to advancing the engineering profession, but also to giving back to the University and the greater community that shaped him.

Orin has remained deeply committed to Sacramento State over the decades, serving on both the Civil Engineering and ECS Advisory Boards, including terms as Chair. His leadership and insight have helped strengthen the programs that meant so much to him as a student and Alumni, providing strategic guidance to ensure the University's programs remain cutting-edge and impactful. His generosity is also unmatched; he has made significant monetary contributions to a variety of Sacramento State funds, including serving as a match sponsor for the annual Give Sac State Day challenge.

Perhaps most notably, Orin is a Founder and Sustaining Member of the APWA Sacramento Chapter's Education Endowment Fund, an initiative that has directly benefited the University's engineering students through grants to essential learning facilities such as the Traffic Lab, Concrete Lab, Environmental Lab, Shake Table, and Geosynthetics Lab. He has been a very active member of the APWA Sacramento Chapter including service on the board, including Chapter President and EEF Board of Trustees, for over 40 years—demonstrating long-term vision and unwavering commitment.

Within our own firm, Orin champions the Civil Engineering program at Sacramento State, often encouraging staff to become involved as senior project clients, attend university events like the Ken Kerri Endowment lunch and career fairs, and most of all, to support and mentor student engineers. He often jokes that if it were up to him, we'd only hire Sac State grads—and honestly, he's not really joking.

Beyond the professional accomplishments, what I truly want to share is how Orin has shaped *me*—both as his daughter and as a fellow civil engineer. Growing up, I watched my dad live and breathe this profession with passion, humility, and an unwavering work ethic. He coached my sports teams, showed

up for every school event, and was the dad who brought his kid to work not just to show off a cool job, but to open up a world of possibilities.

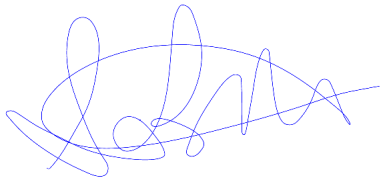
As I made my way through engineering school—at Sac State, of course—and into the early years of my career, he was always there with encouragement, tough love when I needed it, and advice that was never sugar-coated but always came from a place of belief in me. His mentorship helped me grow into the engineer and leader I am today, and I know I’m far from the only one who’s had that experience. At BENEN and throughout his career, he’s taken so many young engineers under his wing, giving them opportunities, guidance, and the confidence to succeed.

His impact is lasting. The programs and funds he helped build will continue to support generations of students. The engineers he’s mentored—myself included—carry his values forward every day. He is a man who leads quietly but effectively, who gives generously without seeking credit, and who believes deeply in the power of education and service.

Orin embodies the spirit of Sacramento State: passionate, community-driven, generous, and relentlessly supportive of student success. His legacy as a distinguished alumnus is already firmly rooted in the lives he has touched and the future engineers he has empowered.

For these reasons and so many more, I can’t think of anyone more deserving of this honor. Thank you for considering this nomination.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Stacey Lynch, PE  
Vice President, BEN|EN  
Proud Sac State Grad (Civil Engineering, 2008)



April 7, 2025

Kevan Shafizadeh, Ph.D., P.E.  
Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Mail Stop 6029  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6029

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Orin Bennett, P.E. - Distinguished Alumni Award

Dear Kevan:

It is with great enthusiasm that I provide this letter of recommendation for Orin Bennett's nomination for Sac State's Distinguished Alumni Award. I have known Orin for over 30 years and have seen firsthand his commitment and passion for Sac State.

Orin and I are both Past Presidents of the Sacramento Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA). In addition, we have served together for the last 15 years as Trustees of the Chapters Education Endowment Fund. During Orin's tenure on the Education Endowment Board, he has been a strong supporter and advocate of Sac State. This has been invaluable in the multiple grant awards the Department of Civil Engineering has received over the years.

As a fellow Sac State alumni, Orin and I have shared many times how proud we are to be graduates of the Sac State Civil Engineering Program. We have both been very successful in our careers and credit that to our long involvement and support of Sac State. I have also had the pleasure of knowing Orin's daughter Stacey, who is also a Sac State alumni and an APWA Past President. Her and Orin are the only Father – Daughter Past Presidents in the 60 year history of the Sacramento Chapter!

Orin has always represented the engineering consulting industry, Sac State and APWA as a professional with integrity and dedication. His service over the years has benefited hundreds of Sac State students and his recognition is well deserved.

It is my opinion that Orin Bennett fulfills all of the requisite requirements of a Distinguished Alumni. I strongly support his nomination.

Respectfully,

Marco J. Palilla, P.E.  
HDR Vice President  
APWA Past President and Education Foundation Trustee  
Sac State Class of 1981 (BS) 1985 (MS)

# ORIN N. BENNETT, PE

## Professional Registration/ Certification

- Civil Engineer, CA 25169
- Civil Engineer, OR 10404

## Education

- Bachelor of Science Civil Engineering, CSU Sacramento
- Graduate Studies Environmental Engineering, CSU Sacramento

## Professional Affiliations

- American Water Works Association
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- American Public Works Association
- Civil Engineers and Land Surveyors of California
- CSUS Industry Advisory Board American Council of Engineering Companies

## Contributions to Sacramento State University

Industrial Advisory Board Member: Mr. Orin Bennett, a 1971 graduate of Sacramento State University, serves on the College of Engineering and Computer Science's Industrial Advisory Board. In this role, he provides strategic guidance and helps bridge collaboration between industry and academia.

Philanthropic Support: He has demonstrated a strong commitment to Sacramento State through philanthropic efforts. During Give Sac State Day 2024, he offered a \$5,000 challenge gift to support the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

## Professional Achievements

Founder of Bennett Engineering Services: In 1995, Mr. Bennett established a civil engineering firm that later became Bennett Engineering Services in 2008. The firm is based in Roseville, California, and is well known for its infrastructure and development projects.

Board Director: Since 2005, he has served as a director at Redding Bank of Commerce. His engineering and real estate expertise have contributed significantly to the bank's strategic direction and growth.

## Professional Engineering Summary

Orin Bennett, PE, has more than four decades of experience as Project Director, Project Manager, and Project Engineer on public and private projects with an emphasis on water resources.

He served as president of many Sacramento area engineering organizations, including the American Public Works Association, American Council of Engineering Companies,

and the California Society of Professional Engineers. Orin is a recipient of the Sacramento Area Engineering Council 1995 Outstanding Service to the Profession Award and the Sacramento State Civil Engineering Alumni Honors Award.

As an engineer, Orin's responsibilities included conceptual analysis, planning, technical studies, design, and quality assurance/quality control. His range of technical capabilities includes roadway design, water and wastewater pumping and pipeline systems, drainage systems studies, and design. Orin served 22 years as consulting District Engineer for Sierra Lakes County Water District, 14 years as Executive Director of the Placer Nevada Wastewater Authority, was District Engineer for Newcastle Sanitary District, and provides engineering counsel Markleeville Public Utility District.

## Engineering Project Experience

- Sewer Forcemain Conversion to Recycled Water, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Zinfandel Drive Commercial Site, Catlin Properties
- 7800 Cucamonga Ave Parcel Split, Steve Rainwater
- 9314 Greenback Lot Line Adjustment, Russ Castilone
- Alta Sierra Tank Scope Development, Nevada Irrigation District West Roseville Annexation, West Roseville Property Owners
- Antelope/PFE Road Water Pipeline, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Auburn Lake Trails Leachfield Capacity Evaluation, Georgetown Divide Public Utility District
- Bickford Ranch Antelope Canal Improvements, Placer County Water Agency
- Butler Circle Pump Station, Placer County Water Agency
- Bickford Ranch Reservoir Pump Station, Placer County Water Agency
- Bickford Ranch Sewer Lift Station, Placer County
- Bickford Ranch Off-Site Sewer, Placer County Water Agency Project Cancelled, Placer County Water Agency
- Big Creek Pipeline Repair, Big Creek Hydro
- City Engineer, City of Biggs
- Gold Run Pipeline Replacement Phase V, Placer County Water Agency
- Boundary Line Adjustment, Sierra View Country Club
- General Engineering Services, City of Lincoln
- Lincoln Metering and Hydroelectric Station, Placer County Water Agency
- Banner Taylor Tank Design-Build Reservoir Replacement, Nevada Irrigation District
- Bay Street Reservoir Restoration, City of Santa Cruz
- Highland Reserve North Pump Station, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Cottonwood Project, Sage Development Group
- Dale Rd / Kiernan Ave Intersection, City of Modesto
- 6th Street Bridge Replacement, City of Biggs
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements, City of Biggs
- Lincoln Regional Sewer Pipeline, Placer County
- Gold Run In-Conduit Hydro Station, Placer County Water Agency
- Santa Cruz Bay Reservoir Replacement, Phase 3, City of Santa Cruz Green Hill Estates Evaluation, BMGH, LLC
- Intertie and Zone 4 Transfer Pump Stations, City of Roseville - Environmental

## Utilities

- California High Speed Rail Right-of-Way Engineering HSR13-63, California High Speed Rail Authority
- On-Call District Engineering Consulting Services, Markleeville Public Utility District
- District Engineering Services, Kirkwood Meadows Public Utility District (KMPUD)
- Sewer Mains and Manholes Repair, City of Grass Valley
- Gold Run Pipeline Replacement, Phase IV, Placer County Water Agency
- Gold Run Boardman Canal Improvements, Placer County Water Agency
- Gold Run Pressure Sustaining Valve Station, Placer County Water Agency
- Coastal KMS Commerce Center ALTA, Symphony Dreams, LLC Highway 50 Pipeline Crossing, California American Water (CalAm) Expert Witness-Palo Alto Water, Caltrans - Headquarters
- Citrus Heights Lower Lateral, Eric and Shelby Baltzley City Engineering Services, City of Williams
- City Engineering, City of Gridley
- Downtown Waterline and Street Replacement, City of Lincoln
- Bickford Ranch Sewer System, Placer County
- Skatetown Parking Lot and ADA Improvements, Skatetown
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Decommissioning and Pump Station, South Placer Municipal Utility District
- Clover Valley Reservoir Desilting and Reservoir Supply Pipeline, Placer County Water Agency
- Pleasant Grove Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, City of Roseville
- Environmental Utilities
- Video Product Distribution Phase II, Williams+Paddon
- Portola Well Design, The Hodgson Company
- The Groves at East Tabor, Prudential
- St Alban's Lift Station & Trunkline, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- North Industrial Water Pipeline, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Regional Wastewater Master Plan Review and Evaluation, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Rocklin 105 Project Summary, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Sun creek Specific Plan, Shalako Investors
- Sunridge Specific Plan Engineering Assistance, City of Rancho Cordova
- North Sacramento Mini Storage, Spensa California III, LLC
- Sewer Pump Station Decommissioning, City of Roseville - Environmental Utilities
- Oakley Improvements, Catlin Properties
- Infiltration and Inflow Study, Newcastle Sanitary District Collection System Repairs, Newcastle Sanitary District
- Triangle Infrastructure Improvements, City of West Sacramento Sacramento Railyards, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
- Consolidated Fabricators, Lord Constructors, Inc.
- Sunrise Boulevard Complete Streets, Phase 1, 2A, and 3, City of Citrus Heights
- North Natomas, BD Properties
- Sunrise Douglas 2 / Sun cree, The Hodgson Company
- Placer County/City of Lincoln Regional Sewer Transmission Facility, Placer County Environmental Engineering

- Portola 192 Subdivision, City of Portola Vacaville Vine Street, BD Properties
- UC Regents Water System Expert Witness, University of California Regents
- Bickford Ranch Offsite Water Review, Placer County Water Agency Master Services Agreement, Olivehurst Public Utility District Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements, Phase 1, City of Biggs
- Siphon Lane Pump Station Design-Build, Nevada Irrigation District
- Rice McMurty Area Benefit District, Vacaville Unified School District
- Water System Management and Optimization Plan, City of Folsom
- Water and Sewer Atlas, City of Biggs
- Plumas Lake Water Treatment Plant Piping Upgrade, Olivehurst Public Utility District
- WWTP Headworks Screen Replacement, City of Grass Valley Verdera North Tank #3 and Pipeline, City of Lincoln
- Sewer Alternatives Analysis and Feasibility Report, Town of Paradise Spray Field Technical Memo, City of St. Helena
- Newcastle Sewer Master Plan, South Placer Municipal Utility District
- Biggs Water Storage Tank and Pump Station, City of Biggs
- The Rivers Tank and Pump Station - Design Build, City of West Sacramento
- New Cement Hill Pipeline, Suisun-Solano Water Authority Portola 192 Subdivision, City of Portola
- Planning Grant Assistance, City of Isleton

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/11/2025 1:01:30 PM

**Nominee:** Rachael Brown

**Grad info:** BA 2002 (Interior Design), MS 2015 (Business Administration - Urban Land Development); Rachael's first exposure to campus was in 1992 when she attend Academic Talent Search (now known as Summer Youth Academies) and attended a Volleyball camp in 1996

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

This nominee is an exceptional Sacramento State alumna due to her strong academic foundation, earning both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Science from the University. Beyond her degrees, she actively engaged with the campus community during her time as a student, working at Java City and as a Student Assistant in the Natural Science & Math Dean's Office. This demonstrates a commitment to the University beyond just academics. Furthermore, she has embodied the spirit of Sacramento State by applying her education and leadership skills in meaningful ways within the local community. Her decision to launch a consulting business, informed by her educational journey, demonstrates an entrepreneurial drive that contributes to the Sacramento economy. Her continued engagement with leadership development programs in the region showcases a commitment to ongoing growth and community impact that reflects well on the values instilled by the University.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

This nominee has a significant history of community involvement that extends well beyond her professional endeavors. During her participation in a local leadership program, she demonstrated a strong commitment to civic engagement by joining the B Street Theater Board of Directors and the Sacramento Steps Forward Board of Directors. Her passion for volunteerism is long-standing and includes active participation with Habitat for Humanity. She also volunteered her time as an usher for the 2000 and 2002 USA Track and Field Trials held in Sacramento. Additionally, she has consistently participated in various community work days over the years, contributing to local initiatives and neighborhood improvements. Her earlier involvement also includes contributing to the Sacramento State campus community through her work at Java City and in the Natural Science & Math Dean's Office.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

The nominee's contributions have a multifaceted and positive impact. Her work on the Sacramento State campus as a student provided valuable support to the University community and fellow students. Her involvement with the B Street Theater Board contributes to the cultural enrichment of the Sacramento region, supporting a vital local arts organization. Her service on the Sacramento Steps Forward Board addresses the critical issue of homelessness in the community, contributing to efforts to provide support and find lasting solutions for vulnerable individuals. Her long-term volunteer work with

Habitat for Humanity has directly impacted families by helping them achieve stable and affordable housing. Her involvement with events like the USA Track and Field Trials showcased Sacramento on a national stage and provided valuable support for these significant events. Overall, her consistent engagement across various sectors - education, arts, social services, and community development - has positively affected countless individuals and strengthened the fabric of the Sacramento community.

**Nominator:** Deneva Shelton



**Distinguished Alumni Award Committee**

Sacramento State Alumni Association  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

**April 8, 2025**

**Subject: Letter of Support for Rachael Brown – Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Award**

Dear Distinguished Alumni Award Committee,

It is with great pride and without hesitation that I submit this letter in strong support of Rachael Brown's nomination for the Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Award. As the CEO of the Nehemiah Leaders Program (NLP), I had the privilege of working closely with Rachael during her time as a Fellow in our Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program (NELP) in the 2023–2024 cohort, which she completed with distinction in June 2024.

Throughout her time in the program, Rachael stood out as a thoughtful, intentional, and purpose-driven leader. She fully embraced the challenges and opportunities presented by our rigorous curriculum, consistently showing up with curiosity, humility, and a collaborative spirit. Her leadership was both quiet and powerful—rooted in integrity, shaped by experience, and fueled by a deep desire to make meaningful impact in the Sacramento region.

During her NELP journey, Rachael's entrepreneurial spirit came into full focus. Inspired by our focus on purpose, service, and systems change, she made the bold decision to launch her own consulting firm. I've watched with admiration as she built her business from the ground up, completing her first year with success and momentum. Her courage to step out, her clarity of vision, and her commitment to community-centered work are a reflection of both her own character and the values she continues to carry from her time at Sacramento State.

Rachael is a proud two-time Hornet, earning her Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design in 2002 and her Master of Science in Urban Land Development in 2015. She also worked on campus during her undergraduate years, giving her a unique perspective and long-standing connection to the university—not just as a student, but as a contributor to its ecosystem.

Rachael's blend of creative design thinking, strategic urban development knowledge, and leadership acumen makes her a standout alumna. She embodies what it means to be a lifelong learner and a changemaker, and she leads with both heart and vision.

For all of these reasons and more, I wholeheartedly endorse Rachael Brown for the Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Award. She is not only deserving of this recognition—she is a shining example of what Sacramento State alumni can accomplish when they lead with purpose.

Sincerely,

**Deneva Shelton**

**Deneva Shelton**

CEO, Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program  
Deneva@nehemiahcf.org  
(916) 548-2027



# RACHAEL BROWN

Elk Grove, CA 95757

916-606-1857

rachael@rachaelbrownconsulting.com

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Polished, professional, and forward-thinking Chief Executive Officer with superior leadership and relationship management skills, coupled with in-depth regional knowledge. Driven to continuous operational and financial improvement, thrives on executing tasks and enhancing long-term success with visionary management. Energetic, innovative, and strategic thinker who enjoys developing new initiatives and partnerships to collaborate on regional economic development issues.

## EXPERIENCE

### Rachael Brown Consulting | Sacramento, CA

July 2024 - present

Founder & Chief Executive Officer

- Direct strategic consulting services for local governments, successfully fostering economic growth and community development through public-private partnerships (PPPs) that enhance local infrastructure and initiatives
- Collaborate with municipal leaders to develop comprehensive economic plans, drive job creation and attract businesses to strengthen local economies
- Navigate complex government regulations and land use planning for private developers, ensure alignment with community needs and facilitate successful project outcomes through a collaborative approach
- Streamline the permitting process for clients by providing expert assistance with permit applications, coordinating with regulatory agencies, and manage project timelines to reduce delays and enhance efficiency

### Power Inn Alliance | Sacramento, CA

March 2022 - June 2024

Chief Executive Officer

- Represented the organization at various community events to increase the district's visibility and nurture working relationships with a wide range of regional leaders and partners
- Evaluated the mission, vision, programs, and operations of the organization to develop new strategies, initiatives, and partnerships, thereby adding value to the businesses within the district and elevating the organization's reputation
- Facilitated a Board Retreat and Strategic Planning sessions, which helped articulate the Board's vision for the organization
- Launched in-person networking events hosted by the organization, including a 300-person breakfast event held in June 2023

### Explore Elk Grove | Elk Grove, California

June 2016 - February 2022

Executive Director & Board Chair President

- Led the development of the Elk Grove Tourism District by serving as Board Chair and managed three different Executive Directors
- Performed Executive Director duties for two years; oversaw the successful district renewal

## SKILLS

- Relationship-Building
- Board Governance
- Strategic Planning and Implementation
- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Nonprofit Management and Operations

process

- Coordinated and activated a vendor booth highlighting the tourism district at the 2019 Farm-to-Fork Festival
- Guided the organization through a lawsuit and made necessary financial adjustments to balance the budget
- Formulated a strategy for Elk Grove's Restaurant Week in 2020, including video creation and content management

## City of Elk Grove | Elk Grove, California

November 2014 - February 2022

Economic Development Manager

- Demonstrated leadership acumen and acted as second in command for the department, which allowed regular communications with City Council and executive leadership
- Developed and managed the small business recovery grant programs using CARES and ARPA funds totaling \$4.75M
- Managed a public-private partnership for a catalyst project that rehabilitated historic buildings in the downtown district; three phased, mixed-use project valued at \$24M
- Represented the organization at various regional events and national conferences to increase the city's visibility and nurture working relationships with a wide range of regional leaders and partners
- Created and marketed the Brewery and Winery Incentive Program, which expanded the number of entities in the city by fivefold; partnered with Explore Elk Grove to create new event, Uncorked & Uncapped, that featured only Elk Grove breweries and wineries

## EDUCATION

Master of Science (M.S.) - Urban Land Development

California State University, Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) - Interior Design

California State University, Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

## VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Board of Directors

January 2024 - present

B Street Theatre, Sacramento, CA

Board of Directors

January 2024 - present

Sacramento Steps Forward, Sacramento, CA

Class XIV, Senior Fellow

September 2023 - June 2024

Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program, Sacramento, CA

Community Relations Council, Business Community Member

2023

District Attorney's Office, County of Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

Cap-to-Cap Program, Team Lead for the Economic Development Team  
2023, 2024  
Sacramento Metro Chamber, Sacramento, CA

Safe Stay Shelter - Community Council, Community Member  
2022-2023  
Supervisor Kennedy's Office, County of Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

PBID Coalition, Committee Member  
2022-2024  
Sacramento, CA

Rock the Block Events, Volunteer  
2019-2023  
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

Programs and Event Committee, Committee Member  
2019  
Commercial Real Estate Women, Sacramento, CA

Leadership Sacramento Program, Participant  
2018  
Sacramento Metro Chamber Foundation, Sacramento, CA

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/7/2025 6:24:45 PM

**Nominee:** Sandy Holman

**Grad info:** MS 1991 (School Counseling)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Sandy Holman is truly an exceptional Sacramento State alumna. Sandy received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of California, Davis, and her M.S. in School Counseling with a focus on Education from California State University, Sacramento. Sandy is the founder of The Culture C.O.-O.P., a Davis-based organization she established to assist people and organizations working for diversity and equity in education, business, and the community. Her 36+ years of experience as an educator, program coordinator, counselor, outreach consultant, prevention coordinator, diversity/equity specialist, and author have given her a practitioner's insight, one that goes well beyond theoretical research, into the challenges communities and organizations face each day. Sandy is recognized as a true treasure in Yolo County, the Sacramento region and nationally, where she is recognized as the author of five children's books -- "Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?", "We All Have a Heritage", "Grandma Says Our Hair Has Flair", "Honor Your Elders", and "Love Is The Root Of All People." In this and in many other ways, Sandy is a champion for literacy and equity for all.

Notably, Sandy has given her time and talents to support Sacramento State. For example, on May 7, 2021, Sandy was the invited community member to provide the opening of the Community Engagement Center's annual Community Engagement Showcase (held online that year due to the COVID pandemic), where she included a powerful centering activity, beautiful land acknowledgement, and the memorable lighting of a candle for those lost to COVID in the prior year. She formerly served multiple years as a community member on the advisory committee for the Family Studies and Human Development (FSHD) degree program in the Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) department. In this capacity, Sandy supported the faculty with her insights and knowledge of using family-centered, historically informed, research based, multigenerational, and equity lenses for course and curriculum revision.

Sandy offers workshops, serves on panels, and offers community enrichment and support in innumerable ways. Her contributions to the community extend well beyond her business and form the basis for her non-profit, United in Unity.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

While I quote here from published information, I also met with Sandy to make sure all information is correct and current. It is difficult to draw a line between the "normal scope" of her work, and the passion she has that extends well beyond running a business and a non-profit organization.

"The Culture C.O.-O.P. promotes understanding and respect for diversity/equity, cultural competency, literacy and a quality education for all. We accomplish our mission through a comprehensive approach which engages key partners who interface regularly with youth. Our approach is holistic, culturally relevant and intergenerational, using approaches and tools which are research based and incorporate the arts. We serve people of all ages and backgrounds and create new paradigms for how people see each other."

"Sandy has served as a consultant to countless organizations, locally and nationally, to help meet the needs of diverse populations. She also has committed herself to advocacy for children and education. Her experiences as an educator, program coordinator, counselor, outreach consultant, prevention coordinator, equity specialist, and author have given her a practitioner's insight into the challenges communities and organizations are facing that goes well beyond theoretical research."

"Organizations she has worked with include: the National Head Start Conference and regional affiliates, The United States Navy Children and Youth Program (CYP) conference with early childhood educators worldwide, California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC), The Center for Community and Family Services, The Women's Health Leadership Project, Friday Night Live youth programs, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), various State Reading Associations, school districts nationwide, countless early childhood programs, as well as social service and reading organizations."

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

"Sandy's innovation in approaching a broad array of difficult issues has had a tremendous impact on those she has worked with. She continues to work directly with many challenged youth and with those working with youth to demonstrate it is never too late to make a difference. Sandy is truly inspirational and committed in all her endeavors and currently continues to work on quality multi-cultural literature, providing training for youth and adults, and promoting literacy around the country. She is releasing a CD next year with songs for educators and youth."

Over the years, Sandy has directly mentored hundreds of youth, ages Kindergarten through college, who are now located throughout the world and are making their own contributions to their communities. Sandy has worked with thousands of youth and adults in various events, assemblies, festivals, workshops, including school visits, parent conferences, youth leadership programs. It is not unusual for Sandy to hear how she has changed the lives of those who have been fortunate enough to work with her. Her cross-generational work provides an example of how each generation can learn from the other generations. Her work illustrates that we are the human family and when we come together we are rich in opportunities, impact, and love. Sandy inspires us to share our gifts with the hurting world. She encourages people to love themselves and others and to share power and resources for a better world!

Without a doubt, her contributions extend well beyond any typical work boundaries. For Sandy, her professional work and community service are intertwined. Being a counselor and an educator are integral parts of her life, the air she breaths.

**Nominator:** Ann Moylan



California State University, Sacramento  
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences  
6000 J Street • Mariposa Hall 3000 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
Mailstop 6053 T (916) 278-6393 • <mailto:facs@csus.edu>

April 7, 2025

Sacramento State Alumni Association, Awards Selection Committee,

It is my honor to nominate Sandy Holman for the 2025 Distinguished Service Award. I have known Sandy for more than two decades and know that I can count on her to exemplify inspiration, understanding, and compassion through her work in our community and far beyond. I have witnessed her tackling some of the most challenging and sensitive issues, in the most difficult times. Sandy completed her Master's degree in Counseling with an emphasis in Education from Sacramento State in 1991. Over the years, she has demonstrated the heart, the courage, and the empathy to teach, heal, encourage, and inspire through serving the community in various capacities. Here I will touch only the surface of her contributions to Davis, Yolo County, the greater Sacramento region and well beyond.

Sandy founded The Culture C.O.-O.P. to assist individuals, groups and organizations who are working with issues and opportunities involving diversity and equity in education, business and the community. In order to best serve a broad range of diverse communities, Sandy also established a not-for-profit business, United in Unity, which also addresses systemic change, literacy, and equity in education. Through these two organizations, she serves as an innovative educator, offering workshops to audiences of children, youth, adults, and elders; a masterful program coordinator; a sensitive counselor; an empathetic outreach consultant; and an inspiring public speaker. Sandy is also a published children's author. Her children's books include the titles "Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?", "Grandma Says Our Hair Has Flair", and "We All Have a Heritage." Sandy's award-winning documentary, created with local high school students and students at U.C. Davis, "The Cost of Darkness" was highlighted on the television program Your California Life, ABC channel 10, in 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8fliyoKKXg>

Sandy has worked with local and national organizations, including the National Head Start Conference, The United States Navy Children and Youth Programs (CYP), the California Association for the Education of Young Children, The Center for Community and Family Services, The Women's Health Leadership Project, and State Reading Associations in numerous states. She has given back to Sacramento State by serving multiple years as a community member on the advisory board for the Family Studies and Human Development major in the department of Family and Consumer Sciences, and by providing a sensitive, informative, and moving opening to the 2021 Community Engagement Showcase.

Among her many awards, Sandy has been recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the City of Davis, Citizen of the Year from the City of Davis, the Outstanding Community Leader of the Year Award from the United Way, Woman of the Year from Congressman John Garamendi for her work as a culturally competent educator and mentor, and the U.C. Davis Calvin E. Handy Leadership Award for leadership in equity and diversity both locally and nationwide.

I am confident that Sandy Holman embodies the character, hard work, bravery, intelligence, and heart that the Alumni Association seeks to honor with the Distinguished Service Award.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'J. Ann Moylan'.

J. Ann Moylan, PhD, CCLS, CFLE  
Professor Emerita, Family Studies and Human Development  
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

# The Culture C.O.-O.P.

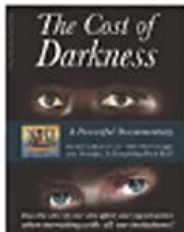
Caring, Optimistic, Open - Minded People

<http://www.thecultureco-op.com>

## Our Services

### A Paradigm for Change.

We provide culturally relevant and responsive services that can be tailored to a variety of topics for educators, youth, families, communities, businesses, and organizations.



#### Art and Cultural Products

We provide culturally relevant and responsive services that can be tailored to a variety of topics for educators, youth, families, communities, businesses, and organizations.

*Our services and products reach audiences locally, nationally and internationally*

#### Presentations



- Equity 101/102
- Equity/Inclusion 101
- Advanced Equity Topics

#### Special Events

- Key Notes
- Author Days and Signings
- Youth/Adult Events
- Faciliatlions
- Staff Retreats



#### Workshops & Seminars



- Motivational
- Change Management
- Parent Involvement
- Positive Youth / Adult Development
- Alcohol and Drug Prevention
- Mentor Program Development
- Communication Skills
- Team-Building

You can request a particular service that fits your needs or explore a more comprehensive approach that increases the chances of systemic change and impacts overall success.

Learn More:





## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/9/2025 2:42:42 PM

**Nominee:** Sara Morin

**Grad info:** BS 2001 (Criminal Justice) [Editor's Note: Very likely, but unconfirmed, student name - Sara Clemmensen]

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Sara Morin exemplifies the very best of what it means to be a Sacramento State alumna. With more than two decades of distinguished public service, she has built an extraordinary career as a Crime Analyst with the California Department of Justice, dedicating herself to supporting violent crime investigations across the state. Her tireless work has directly contributed to solving complex cases, securing justice for victims and their families, and enhancing public safety in communities throughout California.

Since 2007, Sara has specialized in communication and historical cell site/location data-a field that demands advanced technical expertise, precision, and ethical standards. She has reviewed and analyzed telephonic, email, and text messaging data in over 150 criminal investigations, often producing key evidence through cell site mapping, charting, and lead development. Her daily work with sensitive digital records and real-time phone data has made her an indispensable resource to law enforcement agencies statewide.

In addition to her analytical excellence, Sara is a highly regarded expert in the courtroom. She has provided expert testimony in over 30 jury trials, preliminary hearings, and grand jury proceedings - testifying on complex subjects like cell site analysis, communication patterns, and geolocation data. Her ability to translate intricate technical evidence into clear and compelling testimony demonstrates both her subject matter mastery and her commitment to ensuring justice is accessible and understandable.

Sara's excellence has not gone unnoticed. In 2008, she received the coveted Innovations Award by the California Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association, recognizing her contributions to the field. In 2016, Sara was honored with special recognition from then-Attorney General, Xavier Becerra, for her outstanding achievements.

Sara is also deeply committed to lifelong learning and professional development. She has completed more than 500 hours of specialized training - over 250 of which focus specifically on cell site and communication analysis. She remains at the leading edge of her field by attending and presenting at professional conferences, collaborating with experts across agencies, and mentoring new generation of crime analysts. Her presentations-delivered at events such as the International Association of Crime Analysts Conference, the National Child Protection Task Force, and other specialized law enforcement trainings-reflect her dedication to sharing knowledge and strengthening the crime analysis profession statewide and nationally.

What makes Sara particularly deserving of this award is not just her technical skill, but the integrity, leadership, and commitment to public service that define her career. She embodies Sacramento State's mission to prepare graduates who are committed to service, community engagement, and the public good. Through her work, Sara elevates the reputation of her alma mater and serves as a powerful role model for current students-especially those aspired to pursue careers in criminal justice, public safety, or crime analysis.

Sara Morin is not just an exceptional analyst-she is a transformative figure in the field of criminal investigations, a lifelong learner, and a proud Sacramento State Hornet who continues to make a profound impact on California and beyond. I can think of no one more deserving of this honor.

**Question 2: What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.**

Sara is a proud and active member of the Elk Grove Soccer (EGS) community, where she has volunteered as a coach for more than a decade. For the past four years, she has also served as an at-large board member, taking on responsibilities as a volunteer age group coordinator and acting as a liaison between the league, coaches, and families. In these roles, Sara has worked to ensure the club remains inclusive, innovative, and welcoming-believing that every child, regardless of skill level or financial background, should have the opportunity to play soccer.

Her commitment to the power of sport in building community extends beyond local youth soccer. This past summer, Sara volunteered with Street Soccer USA during the Homeless World Cup, an international event that uses soccer to foster teamwork and connection among marginalized populations. She found inspiration in seeing how communities around the globe are using the game to strengthen relationships and support personal growth.

Sara's passion for soccer began in her hometown of Rancho Cordova, where she played and refereed as a youth. The volunteer coaches and teammates she encountered during those formative years instilled in her a deep sense of teamwork and service-values that continue to shape her coaching and leadership today. Her early experiences also led her to play soccer at the collegiate level at California State University, Sacramento, and to begin her volunteer coaching journey with the American River Youth Soccer League. She is deeply committed to giving back to the game and the community that gave so much to her.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Sara Morin for this prestigious award. Sara has made an indelible and lasting impact through both her professional role as a Crime Analyst with the California Department of Justice and in her extensive volunteer work within the local community.

With over 15 years of experience, Sara has consistently demonstrated exceptional expertise in the analysis of communication and historical cell site/location data. Her work - often involving complex telephonic data - is crucial to supporting violent crime investigations across California. Sara's daily work involves reviewing cellular and social media records to assist law enforcement in generating leads and building strong, data-driven cases. Her ability to effectively chart and map data has proven to be invaluable to numerous law enforcement agencies, directly contributing to over 150 investigations and

provided critical expert testimony in numerous court trials. Her insights have directly impacted the successful prosecution of violent crimes throughout the state.

Sara's technical acumen is matched by her commitment to ongoing professional development. She has amassed over 500 hours of specialized training, earning certifications in cell site analysis, open-source intelligence, and digital investigations. She regularly participates in peer review and speaks at conferences, sharing her knowledge with fellow analysts and law enforcement professionals. Sara's dedication to staying at the forefront of technological advancements and analysis methods ensures that her work remains both innovative and effective.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Sara's contributions to the community are nothing short of extraordinary. As a dedicated member of the Elk Grove Soccer (EGS) Community, she has given over a decade of her time as a volunteer coach and board member. Sara's unwavering belief in providing opportunities for children to play soccer, regardless of their skill level or financial status, has created a welcoming and supportive environment for youth athletes. Her roles as an age group coordinator and liaison between coaches, players, and families have positively impacted countless young people. Sara's leadership has fostered a welcoming space where young athletes not only develop soccer skills, but also learn the values of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance.

The impact of Sara's contributions is immeasurable. Her work has directly benefited law enforcement agencies, enhancing their ability to solve violent crimes and bringing justice to victims and their families. In addition, Sara's dedication to her community, especially in the realm of youth soccer, has helped shape the lives of many young athletes, providing them with the tools to succeed both on and off the field. Her volunteerism, mentorship, and leadership have created a ripple effect that will continue to benefit generations to come.

Sara's extraordinary achievements in her professional and personal endeavors make her an exemplary candidate for this award. Her tireless commitment to improving public safety, fostering community spirit, and empowering the next generation through sports demonstrates the profound and positive impact she has made in her community and the field of criminal justice. She is truly deserving of this recognition.

**Nominator:** Allison Law

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Award Selection Committee  
California State University, Sacramento

Dear Members of the Award Selection Committee,

It is a great honor and privilege to nominate Sara Morin for this Distinguished Alumni Award. As a graduate of California State University, Sacramento and a current Crime Analyst with the California Department of Justice (DOJ)'s Violent Crime Investigative Support Section, Sara has made an extraordinary impact on the criminal justice system across the state of California.

In her role at the DOJ, Sara provides advanced analytical support to law enforcement agencies in the investigation and prosecution of homicides, gang-related shootings, and other violent crimes. She specializes in interpreting complex communications and historical data, conducting link analysis to identify patterns, and producing comprehensive case reports and visual presentations that directly assist investigators and prosecutors. Her meticulous attention to detail and ability in translating raw data into meaningful intelligence has provided critical insights and direction to some of California's most challenging investigations.

Sara is widely known and deeply respected by the law enforcement professionals she supports. Time and time again, officers, detectives, and prosecutors have expressed their admiration for her professionalism, the exceptional quality of her work, and her unwavering commitment to justice. She consistently makes an immediate and positive impression in any professional setting, elevating the performance and morale of an entire team.

What sets Sara apart is her balance of analytical rigor and empathetic dedication. She never loses sight of the human impact of the cases she supports, approaching each assignment with integrity, humility, and a deep sense of purpose. As a generous collaborator, Sara is always willing to support her colleagues, share her knowledge, and offer valuable insight where needed.

It is truly a privilege to work alongside Sara. Her contributions exemplify the highest standards of public service, and she serves as an outstanding representative of her alma mater. Her dedication, intellect, and character make her a role model within the criminal justice community and a shining example of the values this award seeks to recognize and

honor.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this exceptional nominee.

Sincerely,



**Allison Law**

Staff Services Manager I

Investigative Services Section

Violent Crime Information Center

Department of Justice

(916) 210-2442 | [Allison.Law@doj.ca.gov](mailto:Allison.Law@doj.ca.gov)



California Statewide  
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION

(<https://cslea.com/>).

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CALEE  
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## Attorney General Awards CSLEA Members for Achievements in 2016

Posted on October 11, 2017

SACRAMENTO – On October 10, 2017, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra held an awards ceremony at the Courtyard Marriott Midtown, to thank Department of Justice employees for their excellent work and outstanding accomplishments.

Among those awarded were California Statewide Law Enforcement Association (CSLEA) and California Association of Law Enforcement Employees (CALEE) Members Reva Headley, Sara Morin, and Ashlee Onwurah. The three received recognition for their work on the Violent Crime Investigation Support Team.



Also awarded were CSLEA-CALEE Members Carmen Keeler, Samira Nassar, Marie Perez-Gonzalo, and Sarah Wesley for their work on the APPS Historical Team.



In addition, Attorney General Becerra recognized CSLEA – Association of Criminalists-DOJ Members from Sacramento, Ripon, Fresno, Redding and Eureka for excellence in Rapid DNA Service.

“The RADS program is designed to get the most probative DNA samples in sexual assaults analyzed in 20 days or less,” said John Miller, president of AC-DOJ. “The law requires this be done in four months (120 days), but the DOJ Bureau of Forensic Science is getting this analysis done in less than three weeks. It can take up to 60 days to get DNA analysis done in a typical lab, due to heavy casework loads, but RADS is designed to get the most egregious offenders off the street as soon as possible. The program is just about a year old now.”

CSLEA – AC-DOJ members recognized by Attorney General Becerra were criminalist and senior criminalists:

**Broadway.**

Lillian Burt

Stephanie Carpenter

Nathan Himes

Lisa Langford

Jonathan Sewell

Shavonne Sicher

Heather Tomchick

**Central Valley (Ripon)**

Stephen Cavanaugh

Bobby Cheseldine

Katy Ciula

Sheltri Gresham

Kimberly Keane

Pin Kyo

Jennai Lawson

Sara Penn

Nancy Seger

Michelle Terra

Gordon Wincott

### **Fresno**

Mindy Crow

Korie Faber-Neale

Julie Hale

Christopher Johnson

Adrian Mendoza

Holly Scott

Joel Thomas

Johnny Upshaw

Kara Ward

Maria Woodcock

### **Redding**

Rebecca Gaziola

Sara Larson

Simone Pugh

### **Eureka**

Kay Belschner



CSLEA – CALEE Member David Sanchez, Department of Law Enforcement, San Diego received a Sustained Superior Accomplishment Award.

And three CSLEA – Association of Special Agents-DOJ member were awarded, one for Excellence in Supervision and two for Excellence.

"We congratulate all of our members on receiving these very special awards from Attorney General Becerra," said CSLEA President Alan Barcelona. "Some we have not named here due to the nature of their duties, and or upon request. But each of these members deserves our praise and our thanks for jobs well done."



**SARA MORIN**  
CRIME ANALYST  
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**CURRICULUM VITAE**

**SUMMARY:**

Crime Analyst with over fifteen years of experience with the California Department of Justice. Since 2007, major focus of work has been communications and cell site analysis; assisting sworn law enforcement personnel who conduct investigations involving telephonic data (call detail records, pings, pen registers, wiretaps). Since 2013, specialized in assisting state and local law enforcement agencies with their violent crime investigations to include communication and historical cell site/location information analysis (telephone, email, text messaging), charting, mapping (cell site, locations), case consolidation, and lead generation while assigned to the Violent Crime Investigative Support Section. Work daily with telephonic data records.

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE:**

- California Department of Justice: January 2003 to Present
- Over 500 hours of training in the area of analysis
  - Over 250 hours of training in the area of communication and historical cell site/location information analysis
- Provided communication and historical cell site/location information analysis to local law enforcement agencies on over 150 cases
- Regularly review cellular telephone, social media related records and device extractions approximately 5 days a week from multiple providers
- Assist with pen register and wiretap investigations involving pings and real time phone data
- Regularly speak with experts in the field including fellow analysts, and sworn law enforcement personnel who conduct investigations involving the analysis of telephonic data and call detail records, as well as specialists at the provider companies
- Receive in person and telephonic support and training for software from GeoTime and Pen-Link representatives
- Review papers and findings published by my peers to keep apprised of changes in the area of communication and historical cell site/location information analysis
- Conduct peer review of similar work products completed by fellow analysts
- Speak with, present, and train the law enforcement community in the field of communication and historical cell site/location information analysis

## EXPERT COURT TESTIMONY

1. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Dangelo Webb (DA# CR-2021-4257433), Subpoena for jury trial 11/5/2024 – Provided testimony in historical communication and location analysis
2. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Christopher Carlson (DA# CR-2022-4270738), Subpoena for jury trial 10/31/2024, 11/1/2024, 11/7-11/8/2024, and 11/12/2024 – Provided testimony in historical communication and location analysis
3. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Ronell Obelton (DA# CR-2021-4245246), Subpoena for jury trial 1/30/2024 – Provided testimony in historical communication and location analysis
4. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Christopher Carlson (DA# CR-2022-4270738), Subpoena for jury trial 7/11/2023 and 7/12/2023 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site location analysis
5. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Rangel Hernandez (DA# CR-2020-4230030), Subpoena for jury trial 2/22/2023 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site location analysis
6. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Rosantito Castaneda and Draygo Monie Peraza (DA# CR-2022-4271930), Subpoena for preliminary hearing 9/19/2022 – Provided testimony in communication and historical location analysis
7. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Christopher Carlson (DA# GJ-2002-4268995), Subpoena for grand jury 5/18/2022 and 5/19/2022 – Provided testimony in communication and historical location analysis
8. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Robert Elmo Lee (DA# CR-2018-4180549), Subpoena for jury trial on 3/8/2022 and 3/9/2022 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
9. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Shaun Terriel Perkins (DA# CR-2015-4103200), Subpoena for jury trial on 2/2/2022 and 2/3/2022 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
10. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Andrew Whitlatch (DA# CR-2019-4193397), Subpoena for jury trial on 12/9/21 and 12/14/21 – Provided testimony in communication analysis
11. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento: People of the State of California v. Christopher Simpson (DA# 16FE010597), Subpoena for jury trial on 11/8/2021 – Provided testimony in communication analysis
12. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Shaun Terriel Perkins (DA# CR-2015-4103200), Subpoena for jury trial on 11/2/2021 and 11/3/2021 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
13. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Christopher Costello (DA# CR-2018-4180549), Subpoena for jury trial on 7/13/2021 and 7/14/2021 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
14. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Xianthon Westbrook, Jr., Tremain Bunton, et al (DA# CR-2020-4220455), Subpoena for preliminary hearing on 9/11/2020 and 9/15/2020 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site/location analysis

15. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Tyrise Jhons (DA# CR-2018-4181645), Subpoena for jury trial on 2/18/2020, 2/26/2020 - Provided testimony in cell phone records and Google location analysis
16. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Kenneth Vanderford and Kevin Etherton (DA# CR-2017-4136418), Subpoena for jury trial on 2/13/2020, 2/18/2020 - Provided testimony in communication and cell site/location analysis
17. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento: People of the State of California v. Danqwail Laquinn Jones and Edward Lewis (DA# 16FE012489), Subpoena for trial on 12/4/2019 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
18. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Tyrise Jhons (DA# CR-2018-4181645), Subpoena for jury trial on 8/7/2019 - Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
19. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Raymond Jacquett (DA# CR-2018-4180549), Subpoena for jury trial on 7/9/2019 - Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
20. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Robert Arthur Clark (DA# CR-2017-4146482), Subpoena for jury trial on 4/25/2019 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
21. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento: People of the State of California v. Jordan Asberry (DA# 16FE012489), Subpoena for juvenile trial on 3/13/2019 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
22. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Ralph Hauerta Gamboa, Jesus Rodriguez, and Sirenia Alcauter (DA# CR-2015-4098842), Subpoena for jury trial on 5/8/2018 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
23. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Kenneth Vanderford and Kevin Etherton (DA# CR-2018-4163183), Subpoena for preliminary hearing on 3/8/2018 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
24. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento: People of the State of California v. Richard Gutierrez and Laurencio Quintero (Case# 15F03952), Subpoena for jury trial on 1/30/2018 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
25. Superior Court of California, County of El Dorado: People of the State of California v. Nalana Omega (DA# 15-02-001146), Subpoena for jury trial on 6/28/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
26. Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento: People of the State of California v. Robert Henry Faler (Case# 14F05242), Subpoena for jury trial on 6/22/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
27. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Joel Lewis (DA# CR-2016-4126089), Subpoena for jury trial on 6/8/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
28. Superior Court of California, County of El Dorado: People of the State of California v. Roberto Escobar Barrera and Raul NMN Gonzalez Jr (DA# 15-02-001146), Subpoena for jury trial on 5/9/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
29. Superior Court of California, County of Placer: People of the State of California v. Robert Carlo Yandolino (DA#: 62-137894), Subpoena for jury trial on 3/17/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
30. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Arthur Thomas (DA#: CR-2016-4134367), Subpoena for preliminary hearing on 2/10/2017 – Provided testimony for in cell site analysis

31. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Jayontay Thomas (DA#: CR-2015-4107682), Subpoena for jury trial on 1/13/2017 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
32. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Tomas Morelos (DA#: CR-2015-4108454), Subpoena for jury trial on 5/17/2016 – Provided testimony in communication and cell site analysis
33. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Ryan Charles Lee Matlock, Kenneth Wayne Gatison and Tito Tomito Jones, Jr. (DA#: CR-2015-4107682), Subpoena for preliminary examination on 5/12/2016 – Provided testimony in cell site analysis
34. Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Thomas Spear and Michael Thurman (DA#: CR-2013-4063499), Subpoena for grand jury trial on 12/19/2013 – Provided testimony on communication and cell site analysis

VIRTUAL TRAINING COURSES (ABOUT 100 HOURS):

**YEARS: 2018-2024**

**CONTINUED EDUCATION AND BEST PRACTICES IN THE AREA OF HISTORICAL COMMUNICATION & LOCATION ANALYSIS AND OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE** – By Representatives from: Phone/Application Providers, Federal State, and Local Resources and Law Enforcement Agencies; Private Companies

More details available upon request

IN-PERSON TRAINING COURSES:

**OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE & DIGITAL INVESTIGATIONS:** Instruq, Los Angeles Police Department – March 2024 (2.5 hours)

**PRESENTATION OF COURTROOM EVIDENCE – CALIFORNIA CRIMINALISTICS INSTITUTE:** California Department of Justice, Bureau of Forensic Services – December 2023 (16 hours)

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE:** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST) – Rancho Cordova, CA – August 2023 (24 hours)

**OPEN SOURCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING:** Western States Information Network (WSIN) and Western Regional Counterdrug Training Center (WRCTC) – January 2020 (8 hours)

**WIRELESS CARRIER AND INTERNET PROVIDER CAPABILITIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATIONS:** Northern California HIDTA in conjunction with: Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, AT&T, NDCAC, FBI CAST, Uber, Google, and Apple – August 2019 (16 hours)

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE (HANDS-ON):** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team – Sacramento County Sheriff's Department – April 2019 (20 hours)

**COLD CASE SYMPOSIUM:** Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, California Department of Justice, California Highway Patrol – January 2019 (24 hours)

**GATHERING EVIDENCE FROM TODAY'S COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:** National Domestic Communication Assistance Center (NDCAC), U.S. Department of Justice – August 2018 (5 hours)

**T-MOBILE CELL SITES & DATA INTERPRETATION:** Northern Valley Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association and Sacramento County Sheriff's Department – November 2017 (4 hours)

**COURTROOM EXPERT TESTIMONY:** California Narcotic Officers' Association (CNOA) – August 2017 (8 hours)

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE (HANDS-ON):** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team – Western States Information Network – June 2017 (16 hours)

**REGIONAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE CENTER (NDCAC):** NDCAC – Western States Information Network – November 2016 (8 hours)

**CELL PHONE INVESTIGATIONS:** Geocell – San Jose Police Department – December 2015 (16 hours)

**CELL PHONE DATA AND MAPPING (HANDS-ON):** Police Technical – Western States Information Network – October 2015 (16 hours)

**CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE SHARING: PROTECTING PRIVACY, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:** U.S. Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Assistance – July 2015 (7 hours)

**INTELLIGENCE WRITING AND BRIEFING:** National White Collar Crime Center – Western States Information Network – September 2014 (21 hours)

**GEO TIME REGIONAL TRAINING LEVEL 2 (HANDS-ON):** Oculus – Sacramento Sheriff's Department – July 2014 (5 hours)

**CHASING PHONES:** CNOA & HIDTA – May 2014 (8 hours)

**ARCGIS 2: ESSENTIAL WORKFLOWS (HANDS-ON):** ESRI – April 2014 (24 hours)

**MICROSOFT EXCEL FOR PUBLIC SAFETY (HANDS-ON):** Police Technical – Western States Information Network – February 2014 (16 hours)

**ARCGIS 1: INTRODUCTION TO GIS (HANDS-ON):** ESRI – January 2014 (16 hours)

**INTRODUCTION TO GEO TIME (HANDS-ON):** Oculus – Sacramento Sheriff's Department -November 2013 (4 hours)

**ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE (WIRETAP):** California Department of Justice Division of Law Enforcement – Training Unit – May 2013 (8 hours)

**CRIMINAL STREET GANG IDENTIFICATION AND INTERDICTION:** Western Regional Counterdrug Training Center—August 2010 (24 hours)

**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL ANALYTICAL TRAINING:** Western States Information Network – December 2009 (20 hours)

**FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ANALYSIS TRAINING (MOBILE FLEAT):** United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration – October 2009 (72 hours)

**ADVANCED TELEPHONE ANALYSIS COURSE:** Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC) & Northern California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)—September 2008 (8 hours)

**CALL ANALYSIS TRAINING SCHOOL (HANDS-ON):** Pen-Link – January 2007 (24 hours)

**SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS ACADEMY:** Office of Attorney General, California Department of Justice – January 2004 (40 hours)

**WRITING SKILLS FOR ANALYSTS:** California State University, Sacramento – June 2003 (16 hours)

**RESEARCH METHODS, COLLECTING DATA AND USING STATISTICS:** California State University, Sacramento – May 2003 (24 hours)

**i2 ANALYST NOTEBOOK VERSION 6 WORKSHOP:** i2 Training Facility – May 2003 (32 hours)

**EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR THE ANALYST:** California State University, Sacramento – April 2003 (16 hours)

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:** California State University, Sacramento – March 2003 (16 hours)

**OVERVIEW OF ANALYTICAL SKILLS:** California State University, Sacramento – March 2003 (4 hours)

#### CONFERENCES & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- Missing and Unidentified Persons Investigations Training – Red Bluff, CA – October 27, 2022
  - *Violent Crime Investigative Support Section Overview* - Presenter
- 2021 National Child Protection Task Force – Virtual Conference – June 21-25, 2021
- Solving Homicides Using Verizon TDR2 Records (Presenter) – Virtual Class – March 2021
- Electronic Crime & Investigations Training Conference – Virtual Conference – November 2020 (20 hours) – Presentations from Verizon, Sprint/T-Mobile, AT&T, Facebook, Google, SnapChat
- Connect the Dots: Value of Social Media Records, The Analyst Perspective (Presenter) – Virtual Class – September 2020
- Solving Homicides Using Verizon TDR2 Records (Presenter) – Virtual Class – August 2020
- Connect the Dots: Value of Social Media Records, The Analyst Perspective (Presenter) – Virtual Class – July 2020
- 2020 National Child Protection Task Force – Virtual Conference – June 22-26, 2020
- Digital Evidence Training Conference – Redwood City, CA – November 2019 (8 hours) – Presentations from Apple, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon, Facebook, Google, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp
- Missing and Unidentified Persons Investigations Training – Beverly Hills, CA – February 12-13, 2019
  - *Everyone has a Story – Working with Analysts* – Presenter

- Electronic Crimes Training Conference – Redwood City, CA – October 2018 (8 hours) – Presentations on Google returns and from Google Security Counsel
- 2018 International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA) Conference – Newport Beach, CA – September 17-21, 2018
  - *Brewing the Best Analysis* - Presenter
- 2017 California Sex Offender Registry Conference – Anaheim, CA – March 1-3, 2017
  - *Utilizing Free State Resources* - Presenter
- 2016 California Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association Training Conference – Lake Tahoe, CA – August 30, 2016-September 2, 2016
- Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice: Organized Crime, Gang, Criminal Intelligence and Terrorism Training Conferences - Sacramento, CA
  - August 22-25, 2006
  - August 23-26, 2005
  - August 24-27, 2004
  - August 19-22, 2003
- International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) Annual Training Conference – Sacramento, CA
  - April 26-30, 2004

#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP:

- International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA) – Member 2008 to present
- Northern Valley Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association (NoVCIAA) – Member 2005 to present

#### AWARDS:

- 2016 California Attorney General's Award – Presented to the Violent Crime Investigative Support Section for Excellence as a Team
- 2008 California Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association – Innovations Award

#### EDUCATION:

- California State University, Sacramento – Bachelor of Science Degree, Criminal Justice (2001)



# RON FREITAS

*District Attorney, San Joaquin County*  
PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1850

April 9, 2025

## Distinguished Service Award Committee

### Re: Distinguished Service Awards – Sara Morin

Dear Distinguished Service Awards Committee,

It is my great honor to nominate Sara Morin for the Distinguished Service Award, in recognition of her professional achievements and extraordinary contributions to the community. Over the past decade, I have had the privilege of working closely with Sara, and I can say without hesitation that her work has not only achieved prominence in her field, but it has also profoundly impacted the pursuit of justice in our community.

A classic saying often attributed to Sherlock Holmes reminds us:

*"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."*

This quote perfectly reflects the essence of Sara's work. As a forensic digital evidence analyst, she operates in the realm of minute details—those fragments of truth buried in GPS data, call logs, deleted messages, surveillance footage, and more. These digital clues often provide the only insight into the **mens rea**, the "guilty mind," which is essential in understanding and proving criminal intent.

What sets Sara apart is not just her exceptional skill, but her **passion**—a deep commitment to uncovering truth, no matter how buried it may be. Her meticulous attention to detail, relentless pursuit of clarity, and unwavering dedication to the principles of justice have made her work the **gold standard** in digital forensic analysis.

Over the past ten years, Sara's expertise has played a key role in the investigation and conviction (or exoneration) of individuals involved in some of the most serious and emotionally charged cases, including:

- Child death investigations
- Domestic violence-related homicides

- Sexual assault cases
- Gang-related shootings and murders

Her work not only helps hold perpetrators accountable, but also brings closure to grieving families, protects the innocent, and upholds the integrity of our justice system.

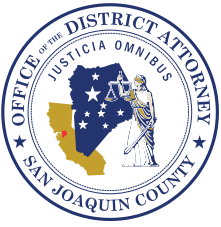
Beyond her technical contributions, Sara brings distinction to our broader community through her mentorship of young professionals, her collaborative work with law enforcement and legal teams, and her quiet but steadfast leadership in the field.

For these reasons and more, I enthusiastically recommend Sara for this well-deserved honor. Her professional excellence and community impact are the very embodiment of the values this award seeks to celebrate. Please feel free to contact me if you would like further details about Ms. Morin's stellar work product at [Elton.grau@sjcda.org](mailto:Elton.grau@sjcda.org).

Sincerely,

Elton Grau

San Joaquin Deputy District Attorney



**RON FREITAS**  
*District Attorney, San Joaquin County*  
**PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY FOR 175 YEARS**

**RICHARD B. PRICE**  
*Assistant District Attorney*

April 8, 2025

RE: Distinguished Service Alumni Award Nomination- Sacramento State University

For background purposes only, I have been a DDA in San Joaquin county for over 27 years. I have been working primarily in the area of Homicide prosecutions, including those that are gang related. As the years have progressed, the use of digital data has become an integral part of the prosecution of offenders using them to inculcate themselves as well as their cohorts in the commission of crimes. Hence, my introduction to the VCISS team at the Department of Justice. I have been working in collaboration with VCISS for over 15 years when technology began to become a research tool for law enforcement to identify perpetrators of crime.

Sara Morin-

I have had the pleasure of working with Sara for many years when she became a member of the team I had worked with for so long. Her addition has been yet another resource from an already fantastic group of women and her inclusion was without any disruption to the unit that we already had come to rely upon for their excellent in this area of work. She and I have worked together on many cases associated with the presentation of Digital data in homicide cases. She has one of the calmest demeanors while having to explain the forensic extractions to those who attempt to challenge the information without cause. She is methodical, patient, honest in her approach and not shaken by any challenges put before her in court. She has been tasked with educating attorney and judges alike. She does not get deterred by last minute changes ordered by the court whether it be just before she goes on the stand or in the course of her testimony.

She is always available for collaboration with attorneys and officers. When questions are posed by the court she is courteous and respectful in her approach to assist them in the process of their duties. I have watched in a trial of a colleague spend 3 days with repetitive, irrelevant questioning by defense counsel and handle it with even handed response and graceful correction.

Sara embodies the professionalism needed in today's climate. She works independent of anyone's agenda and will base her work and any testimony needed on the analysis of the facts. She ensures our system is just and fair to all. I look forward to working with her for the foreseeable future.

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**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY**

**MAIN OFFICE** | 222 E. Weber Avenue, P.O. Box 990, Stockton, California 95201  
**Tel.** (209) 468-2400 | **Fax** (209) 465-0371

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OFFICE OF THE  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COUNTY OF YOLO

JEFF W. REISIG  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



JONATHAN RAVEN  
CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOHN EHRK  
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

NIKKI ABAURREA  
CHIEF FISCAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

September 29, 2021

Staff Services Manager II Megan Eschleman  
CA DOJ/VCISS  
4949 Broadway, Kilgore Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95820  
RE: Letter of Commendation for VCISS Analyst Sara Morin

Dear SSM Eschleman:

I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of Analyst Sara Morin in the Jasyn Bigasan-Carter Human Trafficking case and conviction.

In April 2020, West Sacramento Police responded to a domestic violence call at a motel on West Capitol Avenue. They contacted the first victim, who had recently turned 18 years old, and learned that she had been trafficked by Bigasan-Carter for the previous two months. West Sacramento Police Detectives immediately opened an investigation and discovered a second minor victim who lived out of county. Investigation revealed Bigasan-Carter had been involved in human trafficking since January 2020.

Large amounts of electronic evidence was seized in this case, including gigabytes of phone, cloud and social media-based data. A DA Investigator contacted VCISS for assistance in data analysis and location mapping. Analyst Sara Morin was assigned the case, and she worked her way through the massive amounts of data which including videos, social media productions, cell phone extractions and call detail records. She was able to identify numerous instances of trafficking of both adult and juvenile victims that spanned multiple states and multiple counties in California. Her analysis assisted the investigators in the on-going investigation and her final work product, a detailed PowerPoint of location mapping and communications, clearly detailed Bigasan-Carter's involvement in the trafficking of juvenile and adult victims.

On July 30, 2021 Bigasan-Carter pled no contest to multiple crimes including sex trafficking of a minor, pimping a minor, felon in possession of a firearm, and dissuading a witness. He will be sentenced in October of 2021 and is facing 29 years and 4 months state prison.

Analyst Morin showed a willingness to tackle a very challenging case involving a large amount of analysis and data. The quality of her work product was excellent, and our office appreciates her dedication to the mission of seeking justice for our most vulnerable victims.

A blue ink signature of John Ehrk, written in a cursive style, is positioned above a horizontal line.

Chief Investigator John Ehrk

## Nicholas Blanco

---

**From:** Megan Eschleman  
**Sent:** Friday, November 3, 2017 10:16 AM  
**To:** Sara Morin  
**Subject:** FW: Sara Morin

FYI

Megan Eschleman  
Program Manager  
Investigative Services Program  
Missing & Unidentified Persons Section  
Violent Crime Investigative Support Section  
P.O. Box 903387  
Sacramento, CA 94203-3870

Office 916-210-3090  
Fax 916-227-3270  
[Megan.eschleman@doj.ca.gov](mailto:Megan.eschleman@doj.ca.gov)



---

**From:** West. Laura (DA) [mailto:WestLa@sacda.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 03, 2017 10:07 AM  
**To:** Megan Eschleman <Megan.Eschleman@doj.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Sara Morin

Good morning Ms. Eschleman-

I recently had the great pleasure of working with one of your analysts, Sara Morin. Ms. Morin analyzed cell data in one of my attempted murder gang cases (*The People vs. Robert Faler*, Sacramento County Superior Court Case # 14F05242), then prepared a significantly helpful PowerPoint presentation and testified as an expert during the jury trial.

I was consistently impressed with Ms. Morin's work throughout the case, and sincerely appreciated how generous she was with her time in meeting with me to prepare (not to mention, in responding to my many calls and emails along the way). Her testimony at trial clearly reflected her notable expertise, as well as her diligent preparation. On top of that, she is extremely personable, which put her jury appeal through the roof in my humble opinion as a twenty-year prosecutor. The evidence offered via her work and testimony was critical in obtaining guilty verdicts on all charges. I simply cannot thank Ms. Morin enough for helping me obtain a just result at trial.

Ms. Morin is most certainly a credit to your office. I look forward to the opportunity of working with her again in the future.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or if there is any other information about the case you may need.

Best regards,

*Laura West*

Deputy District Attorney

Gang Unit

Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

(916) 874-4788 (Desk)

(916) 321-2218 (Fax)

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## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/11/2025 4:05:02 PM

**Nominee:** Kenneth Munson

**Grad info:** BA 1988 (Communication Studies)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Ken Munson is an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus whose remarkable career exemplifies the transformative potential of a SacState education. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in Communications, Ken cultivated a versatile skill set that he later augmented with an MBA from St. Mary's College, propelling him into leadership roles across finance, engineering, marketing, and public affairs in the energy and technology sectors. His journey from SacState to becoming a visionary CEO driving innovations in cloud-based demand-side management, AI, and grid-edge energy solutions showcases the adaptability and foundation provided by his alma mater. Ken's professional achievements are extraordinary: he has raised over \$80 million in venture capital, secured multiple patents, and led companies like Sunverge Energy and Congruitive to global prominence. Notably, Sunverge was named to the Global Cleantech 100 list for three consecutive years (2015-2017), ranked No. 3 in Navigant Research's Leaderboard Reports for Virtual Power Plant Software (4Q-2016) and Distributed-Scale Energy Storage Systems Integrators (2Q-2017), and received the Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Best Practice Award in 2016. These accolades, combined with his role as an adjunct lecturer at St. Mary's College and the University of San Francisco, where he teaches Entrepreneurial Finance and Managing Technology Innovation, position Ken as a true ambassador for SacState's mission of fostering innovative, impactful leaders.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Ken Munson's community involvement is extensive, reflecting his commitment to education, sustainability, and advancing the energy sector beyond his professional responsibilities. He serves on the Board of Directors for Box Power, delivering clean energy solutions to rural communities, and mentors emerging technology companies through Launch Alaska and Early Stage Montana, guiding startups in energy and renewables. Ken's dedication to education shines through his role as an adjunct lecturer at St. Mary's College and the University of San Francisco, where he teaches courses like Entrepreneurial Finance and Managing Technology Innovation. As a thought leader, he has authored influential publications, including "It Doesn't Have To Be A Battle Between Utilities & Solar Power Providers" (Clean Technica, March 2016) and "The Energy Cloud" (Public Utilities Fortnightly, December 2015), and has spoken at high-profile events such as the EY Energy Summit in London (September 2017), Solar Power International in Las Vegas (2016), and the Microgrid Global Innovation Forum in Washington, D.C. (May 2017). These efforts-spanning board service, mentorship, teaching, publishing, and public speaking-demonstrate Ken's profound commitment to sharing knowledge and empowering others, far exceeding the scope of his role as a CEO.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Ken Munson's contributions have had a profound and lasting impact on the energy sector, environmental sustainability, and the broader community. As a pioneer in grid-edge technologies, AI, and cloud-based energy management, Ken has driven the adoption of clean energy solutions through his leadership at Sunverge Energy and Congruitive. His innovations, including virtual power plants and AI-driven analytics platforms, have optimized energy distribution and reduced carbon emissions. Ken shepherded the development of multiple patents, such as US Patent No. US9063525B2 (Distributed Energy Services Management System) and US Patent No. US9600045B2 (Solar Energy Grid Integrated System with Energy Storage Appliance), which have shaped the future of energy storage and management. His work on projects like California's first residential solar power and storage microgrid at 2500 R Street in Sacramento and Australia's largest virtual power plant has created jobs, spurred economic growth, and enabled utilities and consumers worldwide to transition to renewables. Additionally, Ken's mentorship through Launch Alaska and Early Stage Montana, along with his teaching, has influenced the next generation of entrepreneurs and leaders. His legacy of innovation and empowerment benefits utilities, consumers, students, startups, and underserved communities, ensuring a sustainable impact for years to come.

**Nominator:** Mark Rawson

April 11, 2025

**Mark Rawson**

350 Stoneridge Drive  
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Selection Committee**

Sacramento State Alumni Association  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

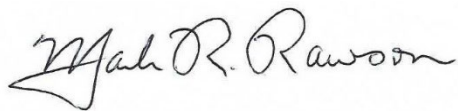
I am honored to nominate Kenneth Munson for the Lifetime Achievement Award. I've known Ken for over 15 years, since collaborating with him as SMUD's project manager on California's first residential solar power and storage microgrid at 2500 R Street in Sacramento. His leadership in clean technology and sustainability inspires me to wholeheartedly endorse him for this recognition.

Ken graduated from SacState with a B.A. in Communications, a foundation that shaped his ability to bridge communication, technology, and sustainability—a testament to the university's well-rounded education. He earned an MBA from St. Mary's College and became a pioneer in cloud-based demand-side management and grid-edge solutions, raising over \$80 million in venture capital. Ken's innovations, including his contributions to multiple patents in distributed energy services and solar energy grid systems, have been instrumental in advancing clean energy. At Sunverge Energy and Congruitive, he led projects like SMUD's 2500 R Street microgrid and Australia's largest virtual power plant, optimizing energy use and creating jobs globally. His work earned accolades like the *Global Cleantech 100* list (2015-2017) and the 2016 *Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Best Practice Award*.

Beyond his career, Ken mentors energy startups through programs like Launch Alaska and Early Stage Montana, fostering innovation and sustainability. He also teaches entrepreneurial finance at St. Mary's College and the University of San Francisco, sharing his expertise with the next generation.

Ken's transformative career reflects SacState's mission to drive progress. I believe he embodies the Lifetime Achievement Award's spirit, and I'm confident his story will inspire the SacState community as it has me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark R. Rawson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Rawson" clearly legible.

Mark Rawson

## BIOGRAPHY ADDENDUM

Recognized thought leader and expert in emerging enterprise software, AI and machine learning technologies supporting smart grid infrastructure development, and energy markets, with 20+ years of progressive leadership roles in finance, engineering, marketing, product and public affairs.

### Industry Ranking and Awards

- Navigant Research Leaderboard Report: Distributed-Scale Energy Storage Systems Integrators, Navigant Research, 2Q-2017 (*Rank: No. 3 in Top 10, Leader*)
- Navigant Research Leaderboard Report: Virtual Power Plant Software Vendors, Navigant Research, 4Q-2016 (*Rank: No. 3 in Top 10*)
- Sunverge Energy Named to Greentech Media's Grid Edge 20, The Top Companies Disrupting the US Electric Market, April 2015, Greentech Media
- Named to Global Cleantech 100 List for two consecutive years. January 2015 and 2016, Cleantech Group
- Named as Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Best Practice Award, 2016
- Named as Global Cleantech 100 "One to Watch", 2014, Cleantech Group
- 50 Most Promising Utility Technologies 2014, CIO Review

### Patent Work Initiated

- **Distributed Energy Services Management System**. Sanders. 2015. US Patent No. US9063525B2. Systems and methods for distributed energy services management are disclosed. Inventor: Dean Sanders. Assignee: Sunverge Energy.
- **Systems, apparatus, and methods of a solar energy grid integrated system with energy storage appliance**. Inventor: Dean Sanders. 2017. US Patent No. US9600045B2. Assignee: Sunverge Energy, Inc.
- **Virtual Power Plant**. Application US20170005474A1. Status: Pending. Inventor(s): Dean Sanders & Stu Statman. Assignee: Sunverge Energy, Inc.
- **Microgrid controller for distributed energy systems**. Application US20170025894A1. Status: Pending. Inventor(s): Dean Sanders & Stu Statman. Assignee: Sunverge Energy, Inc.

### Publications: Author

- It Doesn't Have To Be A Battle Between Utilities & Solar Power Providers, Clean Technica, March 2016
- Extending The Reach Of Solar Nanogrids In India With Energy Storage, Clean Technica, January 2016
- The Energy Cloud, Public Utilities Fortnightly, December 2015
- To Reach Our Energy Future, Fortnightly Spark, July 2015
- Integrated Energy Storage: An Answer to Addressing the Duck Curve? Renewable energy World, April 2015
- Storage Can Capture Benefits Across the Energy Supply Chain, Greentech Media, March 2015

### Contributions & Acknowledgements

- Jones, Kevin, Jervy Benjamin, Roche Matthew, Barnowski, Sarah *The Electric Battery: Charging Forward to a Low-Carbon Future* (2017), 113-114
- The Edison Foundation, *Thought Leaders Speak Out: Key Trends Driving Change in the Electric Power Industry, Vol. III* (December 2016), 87-89
- Seta, Fumihiko, Sen, Joy, Biswas, Arindam, *From Poverty, Inequity to Smart City - Proceedings of the National Conference of Sustainable Built Environment 2015*, (2015), 136
- Schultz, Julianne, Gleeson, Brendan, *Griffith Review 52: Imagining the Future* (2015)
- Madrigal, Marcelino, and Uluski, Robert, World Bank Group, *Defining the Smart Grid Modernization Strategy, The Case of Distribution*, (2015), 17-18
- Lovins, Amory, *Reinventing Fire*, (March 2011)

### Earned Media and Press

- [KEPCO enters US virtual power plant market](#), The Korean Times, April 2017
- [Sunverge Tests New Software Control Platform on 'World's Largest' Virtual Power Plant](#), Greentech Media, Jeff St. John, March 2017
- [Solar and Distributed Energy Resource Data Now Integrates with Utility Management System](#), Renewable Energy World, February 2017
- [A Maturing Industry: Assorted Insights From Energy Storage North America](#), Greentech Media, Julian Spector, October 2016
- [Mitsui and Sunverge Target Japan's Behind-the-Meter Battery Market](#), Jeff St. John, Greentech Media, February 2016
- [Seeking Juice in Market for Super Batteries](#), *WSJ Front Page of Print Edition*, Rebecca Smith, March 2015
- [Can Batteries Reduce the Cost of Solar?](#) Michael Kanellos, February 2011

### Speaking Events

- [EY Energy Summit, Energy Reimagined](#), Speaker/Contributor, London, England, September 2017
- Key Trends Driving the Change in the Electric Power Industry, Institute for Electric Innovation, Panelist, Washington, D.C., December 2016
- Disruption & The Energy Industry Conference, Speaker, Sydney, Australia, September 2017
- Microgrid Global Innovation Forum, Speaker & Panelist, Washington, D.C., May 2017
- Solar Power International, Las Vegas, NV, Plenary Session Speaker, 2016
- NW Demand Response Symposium, Speaker & Panelist, Seattle, WA., September 2016
- Utilities: The Uncertain Future, Public Utilities Fortnightly Conference, Speaker, Washington, D.C. April 2016
- Australia Utility Week, Presenter and Speaker, Sydney Australia, November 2016
- NWPPA Annual Conference and Membership Meeting, Keynote Speaker, May 2016
- Bloomberg New Energy Finance, The Future of Energy Summit, Presenter and Speaker, New York, 2015
- DNV-GL Utility of the Future Leadership Forum, Presenter & Panelist, 2015
- U.S. Energy Storage Summit, Speaker, San Francisco, CA, 2015
- Verge, Distributed Energy Systems, Speaker & Panelist, San Francisco, CA, October 2014

### Recent Blog Posts

- [Rebuilding Houston in the Aftermath of Hurricane Harvey](#), Sunverge, August 2017
- [Software Makes Storage Intelligent and Your Home Smarter](#), Sunverge, August 2017
- [After Paris Pullout, States Will Lead the U.S. Energy Future](#), Sunverge, June 2017

## Kenneth Munson

[ken@kennethmunson.com](mailto:ken@kennethmunson.com) | (916) 712-0596 | [www.linkedin.com/in/kennethmunson](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kennethmunson) | Boulder, CO

Energy technology executive with proven expertise in transforming organizations through strategic innovation and financial engineering. Specializing in grid-edge AI/ML solutions that bridge utility infrastructure, transportation, and clean energy transformation. Known for rapidly scaling ventures from concept to successful exit, with \$80M+ raised and multiple exits. Expert at building high-performance teams in complex technical environments.

### Skills

- Strategic Leadership (Vision, Turnaround, Global Expansion, Board Governance, People)
- Financial Acumen (Fundraising, M&A, P&L Oversight, Financial Structuring)
- Technical Innovation (AI/ML, Cloud Computing, SaaS, Grid-Edge Solutions)
- Industry Expertise (Electric Vehicle, Transportation, Utility Systems, DER/VPP Technologies)

### Professional Highlights

- Secured \$80M+ in venture capital and Debt (Seed to Series C), driving 10x valuation growth and advancing grid-edge technologies.
- Pioneered creating AI/ML-driven, cloud computing, and SaaS grid-edge technologies for the mobility and utility sectors, obtaining multiple patents and opening new market expansion opportunities.
- Assembled and led several high-performing global leadership teams, improving operational efficiency and fostering a culture of innovation that accelerated product development cycles.
- Transformed a 30-year legacy business into an industry-leading grid-edge solution provider in 3.5 years, spearheading innovation and securing growth financing to **achieve a \$15M strategic exit** in February 2022.
- Engineered a **swift \$3M strategic asset sale of a distressed company to a European utility in under 90 days, raising \$2.25M in additional equity financing** to revitalize and reposition the business for sustained growth.

### Professional Experience

#### Rhythmos.io | Founder and Chief Executive Officer | Feb 2022-Present

Rhythmos.io is a cutting-edge, utility-facing analytics platform designed to address the novel challenges of behind-the-meter (BTM) electrification. Its initial focus is on electric vehicles (EVs) and DER adoption.

- Orchestrated a rapid \$3M strategic asset sale in under 90 days while securing \$2.25M in new equity financing, transforming a failing venture-backed company into a revitalized, growth-ready enterprise.
- Directed the accelerated redevelopment and relaunch of a cloud platform and SaaS revenue model in just 6 months, positioning the company as an innovator in grid-edge mobility and distributed energy resource (DER) management.
- Redesigned the capitalization structure to achieve a 2.5x increase in MOIC for new investors while maintaining the last valuation, simultaneously optimizing debt facilities to enhance financial stability and resilience.
- Currently on track to exceed \$1M ARR and \$3.5M in Booked Revenue, reflecting a 3x ARR and 10x Bookings growth rate over 2024 through Utility partnerships.

#### Congruitive (sold: Tantalus Systems, 2022) | Chief Executive Officer | Oct 2018-Jan 2022

An enterprise software platform that reinvented utility operations with AI/ML-driven, real-time analytics for managing complex energy data across distribution networks.

- Joined as COO to revive a 28-year-old SCADA engineering firm, restoring operational and financial viability; became CEO in 100 days.
- Revamped product development around a next-gen, data-agnostic virtualization platform, enabling real-time data aggregation and driving a \$15M strategic sale within 3.5 years.

- Secured a \$4M commercial debt structure within 90 days, unlocking new cash flow for scaling restructuring and fiscal health.
- Overhauled engineering, R&D, delivery, sales, and product teams, recruiting a new leadership team, which resulted in slashing technical debt and bug-fix rates by 130%.
- Revamped the go-to-market strategy, clinching a \$35M+ three-year partnership with the world's largest smart-meter company as a private-label distribution automation provider.
- Pioneered SEP 2.0 (IEEE 2030.5) protocol support, earning first-in-industry certification and empowering utilities to integrate Distributed Energy Resources.

**Sunverge Energy (sold: Budderfly, 2024) | Co-Founder and CEO | Jan 2008–Jan 2018.** Visionary, venture-backed enterprise software and edge computing platform empowering utilities to manage distributed energy resources via VPP in real-time.

- Raised \$67M in venture capital from Seed to Series C, capturing 20%-30% market share (2014-2017) without investment banking support.
- **Expanded cloud-based DERMS and VPP across seven countries, driving \$6M+ in new revenue in 24 months and 800% growth in 7 years.**
- Led a multinational board at Sunverge Energy with Siemens, Mitsui, and Total representatives, appointing SMUD's ex-CEO as Chairman to enhance governance and industry insight.
- Envisioned and delivered California's inaugural residential micro-grid (34 homes) with SMUD in 2012, redefining grid-edge energy storage managed via the Cloud.
- Conceived and deployed pioneering Virtual Power Plants in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and Japan, including Australia's largest VPP with over 1,000 homes and New Zealand's first VPP, which generated \$2M in its first year, demonstrating visionary leadership in energy innovation and business growth.
- Named to Cleantech Group's Global Cleantech 100 List for three consecutive years. January 2015, 2016, and 2017. Ranked No. 3 by Navigant Research (Guidehouse) for ESS and VPP (2016-2017).
- Secured multiple ESS and cloud-based DER control patents (US9063525B2, US9600045B2).

#### **Kinetek, Inc. | Vice President Business Development | Oct 2001-Oct 2008**

Private equity group with nine operating companies engaged in industrial manufacturing, automation, and controls.

- Led pipeline development of buy-side M&A, joint ventures, and strategic alliances—overseeing analysis, due diligence, and integration within motion control, automation, and motor groups.
- Increased 2005-2006 sales by \$35M (10%) and EBITDA by 11%+ through new products and markets; expanded into Central Europe and China
- Generated \$9M in revenue and a \$50M global platform through China's No. 4 motion control automation acquisition.

#### **Early Career**

- Early career success in high-growth ventures led to a transition into executive leadership in energy and technology. Scaled Fortune 100 (Browning-Ferris) division from \$25M to \$450M. 1990–2001—various early-stage ventures.

#### **Advisory and Academic | Jan 2012–Present**

- Accelerator Mentor, Series B Independent Director (BoxPower), and other early-stage ventures.
- Adjunct Lecturer, University of San Francisco, Energy Industry Strategy and Management.
- Adjunct Lecturer, St. Mary's College, Entrepreneurial Finance.

#### **Education**

Master of Business Administration (MBA) | St. Mary's College, School of Economics and Business Administration, Moraga, CA.

Bachelor of Arts in Marketing | California State University, Sacramento, CA.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/4/2025 4:01:02 PM

**Nominee:** Kinzie Murphy

**Grad info:** MS 1986 (Speech Pathology and Audiology)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Please see attached letter. Kinzie is an exceptional alumna of our University. She has had exceptional professional achievements and provided exceptional services to local and international communities. Her contributions clearly bring distinction to Sacramento State and our community. Her work spans clinical, professional, and academic realms and has impacted student development, workforce development, and health and wellness across the lifespan in local and international communities. She has long been recognized by students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community professionals as a "go-to" consultant on diverse issues surrounding speech-language pathology and as a front line supporter of health and human service in a variety of communities. Her kind, compassionate, and highly competent service delivery have made her a favorite of her students, clients, and patients, particularly infants and children, who are drawn to her gentle approach.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Please see attached letter. Kinzie's sustained, outstanding contributions to the California Speech, Language, Hearing Association (CSHA), to Sacramento State, its committees, and its students, to our health and human service professions, to our community and to the international community, and the positive impact this has had on the clients we serve and their families stand out. Her contributions go far above and well beyond those expected of a professional in her field, spanning all service delivery settings, all disorder areas, with populations across the lifespan.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Please see attached letter. Kinzie's sustained, outstanding contributions to California, to the Sacramento region, including Sacramento State and its students, to our health and human service professions, to her academic community, and to our community and to the international community stand out. Further, she has conducted professional education for countless students and professionals over the years, providing them invaluable and practical, scientifically-based strategies for service delivery to clients from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds across the lifespan. The lasting and positive impact of her work on students and on the individuals served by the fields of speech-language pathology and their families is immeasurable.

**Nominator:** Robert Pieretti



SACRAMENTO  
STATE

California State University, Sacramento  
College of Health & Human Services

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February 4, 2025

Sacramento State Alumni Association  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, California 95819-6024  
Attention: 2025 DAA Nominating Committee

**RE:** Kinzie S. Murphy  
809 Cobble Cove Lane  
Sacramento, California 95831  
[kinzie.murphy@gmail.com](mailto:kinzie.murphy@gmail.com)

Dear 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write a letter of support for Kinzie S. Murphy's nomination for a Sacramento State 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award in the area of Distinguished Service.

Kinzie is an exceptional alumna of our University. In 1986 she completed her thesis (*Stop Consonant Production in Maxillectomy Speakers*), earning a Master of Science Degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology. This marked the commencement of a truly remarkable career. Along her professional journey, she has practiced as a school-based language, speech, and hearing Specialist in the Sacramento City Unified School District, as a hospital-based speech-language pathologist (SLP) for Sutter Healthcare, as a consultant in classroom oral feeding issues for the Sacramento County Office of Education and the Walton Special Education Center in the Stockton Unified School District, as a speech-language pathologist for Remedy Rehab and Helping Hands, as a State Speech Pathology Consultant for the California State Department of Health Services, as an oral feeding specialist for Easter Seals Superior California, and as an instructor and clinical instructor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Sacramento State. It goes without saying that the *breadth and depth* of her work has positively impacted our community in **all** service delivery settings in **all** disorder areas **across the lifespan**. It is no surprise that she is recognized by students, staff, faculty, and community professionals as a “go-to” consultant on diverse issues surrounding speech-language pathology. Her kind, compassionate, and highly competent service delivery have made her a favorite of her clients and patients, particularly infants and children, who are drawn to her gentle approach.

Kinzie's contributions to the community also stand out. As an example, the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CSHA) is an organization to which she has provided much volunteer service in several positions since she became a member as a new SLP in 1987. She is a former CSHA District 2 (Sacramento to Oregon Border) Director-Elect (2000-2002) and Director (2002-2004) and she served as the appointed CSHA Commissioner on Legislation from 2005-2007 and again from 2007-2009, positions that I subsequently held. I began working with her closely as Director-Elect in 2004 and was immediately impressed by her dedicated work, coupled with an innate ability to engage the District and the state as a whole, diligently representing the membership to the Board and sharing Board information with her constituencies. She was an outstanding mentor to me, allowing me to learn and grow before beginning my terms as Director-Elect, Director, and

Commissioner on Legislation. I am just one recipient of her outstanding teaching and mentorship, as you will see later in this letter. Kinzie also participated in the CSHA Director's Caucus in 2003-2004 and served on the CSHA Executive Council from 1989-1990. She has been a member of the District 2 Advisory Council many times and she has volunteered as a CSHA convention moderator and PAC volunteer countless times. It is no wonder that she was awarded the CSHA District 2 Outstanding Service Award in 2006 and was named CSHA Fellow in 2010 for her service to the organization and to the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders. **I am also pleased to report that it was recently announced that Kinzie has received 2025 Honors of the Association from CSHA. This is the highest honor given by the association and recognizes contributions to the organization and distinguished service in the areas of clinical service, research and publications, and teaching.** Further, Kinzie has provided perennial support to the Maryjane Rees Language, Speech, and Hearing Center Audiology and Speech and Language Clinics at Sacramento State, including serving as an ambassador during the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders Capital Campaign that helped equip and furnish the new donations-only clinics in Folsom Hall that provide services to over 900 community members each year without a fee for service. She was also a charter member on the Human Services/Community Cohort of the College of Health and Human Resources Center for Health Practice, Policy, and Research (CHPPR) Community Advisory Council, where she remains dedicated to impacting community health by promoting collaboration, inter-disciplinary practice, and innovation to reduce health inequities in California's capital region. Her work on the Council includes sharing professional expertise, working to connect CHPPR to local, national, and international resources, colleagues, and peers, and providing leadership in philanthropic endeavors.

Kinzie has made a lasting and positive impact on undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology. Since 1988, she has provided education and mentorship to hundreds of students completing their didactic and clinical practica in the field of speech-language pathology, helping them successfully earn their degrees and, ultimately, earn the required California state license and credential, as well as the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Certificate of Clinical Competence. I will share that I learned from Kinzie when I was a student at Sacramento State and I have continued to learn from her as a colleague. During my time as Professor and Chair in Communication Sciences and Disorders, I watched students gravitate to her naturally because she exudes competence. They quickly realize that her ability to combine academic rigor with compassion is nothing short of an art form and her peers frequently remark on her unparalleled dedication to student success in our fields. As just one example, Kinzie had decided to retire from her Clinical Instructor position at Sacramento State just before the COVID-19 pandemic. When I called her to say that we desperately needed help with clinical instruction in the Adult Neuro clinic, she didn't miss a beat. By the next morning, she had converted all of her materials to allow for tele supervision and began instruction with a keen eye on student self-care while embarking on a journey into uncharted territory. The clients and the student clinicians that spent the pandemic learning and growing with Kinzie remain forever grateful for that gift. This resonates with Kinzie's longstanding understanding of the challenges students face in their educational journeys, as further exemplified by her support of the Sacramento State Guardian Scholars Program and her establishment of the Communication Sciences and Disorders Alumni Scholarship in 1995, which has provided financial support to generations of students.

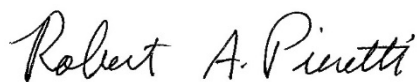
Kinzie has received recognition and professional attention both at home and abroad for her contributions and expertise in our field. A review of her resume reveals that she has presented over 30 workshops, seminars, and papers in California and internationally on a variety of topics, with a primary focus on oral feeding and swallowing disorders in infants and children. The content of the presentations is the result of years of interprofessional clinical practice, collaboration, and research in this area, which is further underscored by her 2002 co-authored publication in CSHA Magazine (*Developing a Collaborative Interagency Approach to Feeding and Swallowing Problems in School-Aged Children*). Beginning in 2005, Kinzie's unique skill set was sought by the University of Hawaii Research Corporation. She served as part of a team that travelled regularly to American

Samoa, performing culturally appropriate assessments and screenings for school-aged children with suspected speech, language, and hearing problems, performing oral feeding assessments and developing recommendations, and providing in-services and special education evaluations, while simultaneously supervising Sacramento State speech-language pathology students as part of an international learning experience. In 2007, this developed into a regular quarterly rotation with the Helping Hands Early Intervention Program. As such, Kinzie served as a consultant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program, providing critical and much-needed speech-language pathology and oral feeding services to children birth to three years of age in American Samoa for a number of years.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that Kinzie is a passionate, dedicated, and widely acclaimed clinician, teacher, and mentor in the field of Speech-Language Pathology. Her sustained, outstanding contributions to CSHA, to Sacramento State and its students, to our health and human service professions, to our community and to the international community, and the positive impact this has had on the clients we serve and their families stand out. Further, she has conducted professional education for countless students and professionals over the years, providing them invaluable and practical, scientifically-based strategies for service delivery to clients from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds across the lifespan. She is a source of pride for her alma mater, Sacramento State, and for our profession. I believe that Kinzie's distinguished achievements and contributions at home and abroad make her a most worthy recipient of a 202r Distinguished Alumni Service Award and I encourage you to consider bestowing this honor upon her.

Sincerely yours,



Robert A. Pieretti, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL  
Associate Dean for Students and Personnel  
Director, Center for Health Practice, Policy, & Research (CHPPR)

## **Kinzie S. Murphy, MS, CCC-SLP**

809 Cobble Cove Lane

Sacramento, CA 95831

Mobile: 916-296-8231

### **EXPERIENCE**

California State University, Sacramento, Communication Sciences and Disorders —

- Fall 2020 -Spring 2021: Clinical Instructor during pandemic. Remote supervision for Adult Neuro Clinic.
- 2001-2019, 1988-1992, 1997: Instructor/Clinical Supervisor/Instructor

Team taught Introduction to Clinical Methods: Delayed Language and Articulation Disorders. (1991-1992). Clinical supervisor-instructor for introductory practicum in delayed language and articulation disorders (1988-1992). Taught course in Anatomy and Physiology and Assessment Procedures (1997). Clinical supervisor for clinical practicum in central auditory processing disorders (2001). Clinical supervisor for practicum for children with multiple disorders and for assessment clinic (2002-2019). Clinical supervisor for practicum for adults with neurogenic communication disorders (2015-2019). Remote supervisor for practicum for adults with neurogenic communication disorders (Fall, 2020 and Spring, 2021).

Taught course in Anatomy and Physiology and Assessment Procedures (1997).

Sacramento City Unified School District —

- 1985-1987: Language, Speech and Hearing Specialist
- 2001-2013: Consultant for Classroom Oral Feeding and Swallowing Issues

Provided speech and language services for students from preschool age through grade twelve. Home taught Special Education students. Staff inservices.

Sacramento County Office Of Education-

- 2001-2013: Speech Language Pathologist, Consultant for Classroom Oral Feeding and Swallowing Issues

Assessment of classroom based feeding and swallowing problems.1 Development of classroom feeding plans. Staff consultation/teaching. Inservices for teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals.

Stockton Unified School District-Walton Special Center

- 2008-2010, 2018: Feeding assessments and classroom consultations for severely handicapped students.

Sutter Health, Sacramento, CA-

- 1987-2001: Speech Pathologist, Rehabilitation Services
- Fall 2006-Fall 2007: Speech Pathologist, Remedy Rehabilitation, registry services for Sutter Rehabilitation Services

Provided diagnostic assessment and treatment services for pediatric and adult patients with oral-motor, swallow/feeding, speech, language, cognitive and developmental disorders. Evaluation and therapy for feeding and developmental disorders in the Special Care Nursery (NICU) and Pediatric ICU. Participated on multidisciplinary teams in pediatric rehabilitation and for cleft palate-craniofacial conditions. Ancillary Health Service provider for Sutter Children's Center-Outpatient Services which provides multidisciplinary team care for children with chronic medical conditions. Performed and analyzed Modified Barium Swallow and Videopalate studies in hospital setting. Registry assignment was limited to outpatient Modified Barium Swallow studies.

California State Department of Health Services, Children's Medical Services Branch, Sacramento.

- 2001-2007: State Speech Pathology Consultant for EPSDT and CCS programs.

Provide assistance to CSHA members with questions on CCS and Medical billing and reimbursement. Review state EPSDT SS speech therapy requests for medical necessity. Review CCS panel applications.

University of Hawaii Research Corporation. Speech Language Pathologist for programs in American Samoa.

- August 2005 and August 2006.

Served as part of a team performing assessment screenings for school-aged children for speech, language and hearing problems. Worked with the early intervention program performing oral feeding assessments and developed recommendations for children and their families. Provided inservice on speech and language skill development for parents and staff. Supervised CSUS students working on a training project under Larry Boles, PhD.

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Helping Hands Early Intervention Program, Department of Health, American Samoa. Speech Language Pathologist

- August 2007-2013.

Consultant to IDEA Part C program providing speech, language and oral feeding services to children birth to three years of age. Quarterly visits to American Samoa. Assessment of newly referred children, development of therapy plans. Re-assessment of on-going clients to update therapy plans. Assist in transitioning children to Early Childhood Education at age three. Provide assessment services to children referred the Pediatrics department at LBJ Tropical Medicine Center in American Samoa including feeding and intervention planning, performing Modified Barium

Swallow studies, speech and language assessments. Feeding assessments for children in the Part C Helping Hands program and the Part B Special Education program. Staff training for Helping Hands staff and for NICU nurses. Consultations with Community Partners CFIDD (family resource center), EHDI-newborn hearing screening and follow-up, Disabilities Coordinator for ECE and for local private schools with Special Education students enrolled. Radio public service announcements for public education on speech and language delays and ways to facilitate development. Administrative support to Helping Hands to develop processes for interim assessment, screenings and data tracking (Child Outcomes Summary Forms).

#### Easter Seals Superior California, Early Start Developmental Services Program

- 2001-2012: Speech Language Pathologist, Oral Feeding Consultant for early intervention clients<sup>2</sup>.

Established a feeding clinic for Early Intervention children with developmental delays or for those at-risk for delays. Completed oral feeding assessments, consulted with parents/caregivers on feeding plans. Coordinated with OT, PT to facilitate treatments.

#### EDUCATION

- California State University, Sacramento. Master of Science in Speech Pathology and Audiology. December 1986.
- University of California, San Francisco. Certificate in Medical Technology. August 1965.
- University of California, Davis. Bachelor of Arts in Microbiology. June 1964.

#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Speech-Language Hearing Association. Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. 1987 - present. Award for Continuing Education (ACE). 1992, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2008.

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- California Speech, Language and Hearing Association. 1987- present. Served on: Executive Council: 1989-1990. District 2 Advisory Council: 1997-1998. District 2 Director-elect: 2000-2002. District 2 Director: 2002-2004. Chair, Directors' Caucus: 2003-2004. Legislative Commissioner: 2006-2007, 2007-2009.
- Sacramento Speech and Hearing Association
- American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association. 1993-2008.
- State of California Speech Language Pathology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board. License #6561 from 1986-2022.

- Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Speech Pathology Services Credential with Special Class Authorization.

#### PRESENTATIONS

Presented extensively on oral feeding and swallowing disorders in infants and children and on speech therapy for children with cleft and craniofacial conditions. Invited lectures for the University of Pacific Communication Disorders program- multicultural class. And for 44California State University, Sacramento CSAD on working in the medical setting.

#### AWARDS

CSHA: Service (2008), Fellow (2010), Diversity Award (2012).

#### PUBLICATIONS

Austin, M., Garbarino, W., and Murphy, K. (2002). Developing a Collaborative Interagency Approach to Feeding and Swallowing Problems in School-Aged Children. CSHA Magazine.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/9/2025 2:37:37 PM

**Nominee:** Ashlee Onwurah

**Grad info:** BS 2004 (Criminal Justice) [Editor's Note: Very likely, but unconfirmed, student name - Ashlee Morehouse]

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Ashlee Onwurah exemplifies the very best of Sacramento State-service, leadership, and impact. Since earning her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Sac State in 2004, Ashlee has spent nearly two decades turning her education into a powerful force for justice. As a Crime Analyst in the California Department of Justice's Violent Crime Investigative Support Section, she has transformed the landscape of violent crime investigations throughout California.

What makes Ashlee truly exceptional is the direct, measurable impact of her work. She has assisted in over 150 violent crime cases, many of which involved homicides, kidnappings, sexual assaults, and cold cases. Her expertise in communication analysis, historical cell site mapping, and digital forensics has helped local law enforcement agencies identify suspects, reconstruct timelines, and-most importantly-deliver answers to families and communities searching for justice. Her work has led to breakthroughs in cases once considered unsolvable.

Ashlee's influence extends beyond her casework. She is a highly sought-after expert in her field, having testified in over 30 criminal trials as an expert witness in communications and cell site analysis. Prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement personnel rely on her clear, authoritative presentation of complex technical data to support some of the most serious prosecutions in the state.

She is also a leader and mentor, committed to lifting others as she rises. Ashlee regularly trains local law enforcement agencies across California, speaks at major investigative conferences, and peer-reviews the work of fellow analysts to ensure accuracy and integrity. Her dedication to professional development is unmatched-she has completed over 80 specialized training courses from top institutions, including the FBI, the National White Collar Crime Center, and PenLink, making her one of the most highly trained and respected crime analysts in the state.

Perhaps most inspiring is Ashlee's humility. She does this critical work quietly, never seeking the spotlight, but always showing up-with precision, compassion, and professionalism. She is the kind of public servant who makes an entire system stronger simply by being a part of it.

Ashlee is not only an exceptional Sacramento State alumna-she is a model of what a life in service to others can achieve. Her career is a beacon for students and graduates alike, and her impact is felt far beyond the walls of any one office or courtroom. She is, without question, deserving of this award.

**Question 2: What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.**

Ashlee Onwurah is deeply committed to serving her community beyond her professional duties as a Crime Analyst. She has demonstrated a consistent dedication to education, collaboration, and public safety through her speaking engagements, mentorship, and active participation in professional associations.

Ashlee has served as a guest speaker at multiple law enforcement training conferences throughout California, where she has shared her expertise in communication and cell site analysis to help improve investigative outcomes statewide. These include presentations at the Missing and Unidentified Persons Investigations Trainings in both Chico and Garden Grove, as well as speaking roles at the California Sex Offender Registry Conference and national conferences such as the National Child Protection Task Force Virtual Conference. Her willingness to volunteer her time to train, mentor, and uplift others in the field is a testament to her selfless service.

She is also a long-standing member of the Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU), an organization dedicated to fostering cooperation and professionalism among intelligence analysts and law enforcement personnel. Her ongoing involvement in this organization since 2006 reflects her commitment to professional integrity and cross-agency collaboration.

In addition to her public speaking and professional affiliations, Ashlee has participated in numerous regional and national conferences focused on criminal justice, gang prevention, organized crime, and counter-terrorism—often contributing her time and insights not because it was required, but because she believes in the value of sharing knowledge and advancing the field for the greater good.

Ashlee's community involvement is grounded in a desire to make California a safer place—not just through her casework, but by empowering the larger law enforcement and criminal justice community with the tools, training, and knowledge to pursue justice more effectively and ethically. Her work is a powerful example of public service, mentorship, and community engagement.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Ashlee Onwurah's contributions have left a profound and lasting impact on law enforcement agencies, communities across California, and countless families affected by violent crime. Over her nearly two-decade career with the California Department of Justice, Ashlee has supported over 150 violent crime investigations, often in high-stakes, emotionally charged cases. Her work in communications analysis and historical cell site mapping has provided critical leads, helped identify suspects, and supported successful prosecutions in some of California's most serious criminal cases.

Her analytical work has directly contributed to solving cold cases, including homicides that had gone unresolved for years. These breakthroughs not only deliver justice, but offer closure and healing to families who may have gone years without answers. Her ability to transform complex telecommunication data into clear, compelling courtroom presentations has repeatedly aided prosecutors in securing convictions, ensuring accountability, and enhancing public safety.

Ashlee's impact extends far beyond individual cases. She has elevated the standard of crime analysis in California by mentoring fellow analysts, peer-reviewing critical work products, and serving as a guest speaker and trainer at numerous law enforcement conferences. Agencies across the state have

benefited from her willingness to share knowledge, train colleagues, and present on cutting-edge techniques in digital evidence and communications analysis. Her efforts have helped to build a more skilled, connected, and collaborative law enforcement community-one better equipped to serve the public with precision and integrity.

Furthermore, her expert testimony in dozens of jury trials has helped educate both legal professionals and the public on the intricacies of modern investigative tools. By bridging the gap between data and justice, Ashlee has made the criminal justice system more transparent and more effective.

Ashlee's contributions have touched lives at every level-from the investigators and analysts she collaborates with, to the communities she helps protect, to the victims and families she serves with compassion and excellence. Her work ensures that the pursuit of justice is guided not only by facts, but by an unwavering commitment to service. That is the legacy she continues to build every day.

**Nominator:** Allison Law

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Award Selection Committee  
California State University, Sacramento

Dear Members of the Award Selection Committee,

It is with the utmost enthusiasm and respect that I nominate Ashlee Onwurah, a Crime Analyst with the California Department of Justice, for the Distinguished Alumni Award. A proud graduate of Sacramento State's Criminal Justice program, Ashlee has dedicated nearly two decades to public service, becoming a cornerstone of violent crime investigations throughout California.

Ashlee's expertise lies in the analysis of complex communications and historical data—including telephone records, emails, messaging apps, and social media—as well as the mapping of historical cell site locations. Her work has been instrumental in aiding some of the most challenging violent crime cases across the state. To date, she has directly supported over 150 investigations, consistently transforming raw data into actionable leads, compelling courtroom exhibits, and most importantly, justice for victims and their families.

It is truly an honor to work alongside Ashlee. Her professionalism, humility, and unwavering commitment to excellence set a gold standard in our field. She is not only a subject matter expert, but also a generous mentor and collaborator. Law enforcement professionals throughout California—from investigators and prosecutors to fellow analysts—consistently praise Ashlee for her reliability, deep knowledge base, and steady presence under pressure. Her name is known and respected in every room she enters.

What truly distinguishes Ashlee is not only her technical acumen, but also her character. She approaches every case with integrity, compassion, and a deep awareness of the human lives impacted by her work. Whether she is delivering expert testimony in high-profile trials, conducting peer reviews, or presenting at major law enforcement conferences, Ashlee brings grace, humility, and a steadfast dedication to justice.

Sacramento State can take tremendous pride in calling Ashlee Onwurah one of its own. She embodies the values of public service, intellectual rigor, and community commitment that define your institution. Her work is not only remarkable—it is transformative.

Thank you for considering this outstanding alumna for this well-deserved honor.

Sincerely,



**Allison Law**

Staff Services Manager I

Investigative Services Section

Violent Crime Information Center

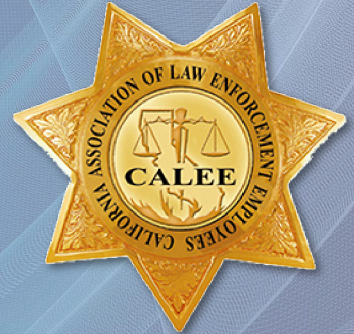
Department of Justice

(916) 210-2442 | [Allison.Law@doj.ca.gov](mailto:Allison.Law@doj.ca.gov)



California Statewide  
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION

CALEE  
**Affiliate News**



## Attorney General Awards CSLEA Members for Achievements in 2016

Posted on October 11, 2017

SACRAMENTO – On October 10, 2017, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra held an awards ceremony at the Courtyard Marriott Midtown, to thank Department of Justice employees for their excellent work and outstanding accomplishments.

Among those awarded were California Statewide Law Enforcement Association (CSLEA and California Association of Law Enforcement Employees (CALEE Members Reva Headley, Sara Morin, and Ashlee Onwurah. The three received recognition for their work on the Violent Crime Investigation Support Team.



Also awarded were CSLEA-CALEE Members Carmen Keeler, Samira Nassar, Marie Perez-Gonzalo, and Sarah Wesley for their work on the APPSHistoricalTeam.



In addition, Attorney General Becerra recognized CSLEA – Association of Criminalists-DOJ Members from Sacramento, Ripon, Fresno, Redding and Eureka for excellence in Rapid DNA Service.

“The RADS program is designed to get the most probative DNA samples in sexual assaults analyzed in 20 days or less,” said John Miller, president of AC-DOJ. “The law requires this be done in four months (120 days), but the DOJ Bureau of Forensic Science is getting this analysis done in less than three weeks. It can take up to 60 days to get DNA analysis done in a typical lab, due to heavy casework loads, but RADS is designed to get the most egregious offenders off the street as soon as possible. The program is just about a year old now.”

CSLEA – AC-DOJ members recognized by Attorney General Becerra were criminalist and senior criminalists:



CSLEA – CALEE Member David Sanchez, Department of Law Enforcement, San Diego received a Sustained Superior Accomplishment Award.

And three CSLEA – Association of Special Agents-DOJ member were awarded, one for Excellence in Supervision and two for Excellence.

“We congratulate all of our members on receiving these very special awards from Attorney General Becerra,” said CSLEA President Alan Barcelona. “Some we have not named here due to the nature of their duties, and or upon request. But each of these members deserves our praise and our thanks for jobs well done.”



**ASHLEE ONWURAH**  
CRIME ANALYST  
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**CURRICULUM VITAE**

**SUMMARY:**

Crime Analyst with over fifteen years of experience with the California Department of Justice. Since 2013, specialized in assisting state and local law enforcement agencies with their violent crime investigations. Most assistance focuses on communications analysis (telephone, email, text messaging) and historical cell site mapping. Analytical duties also include lead generation, charting, timelines, presentations, and cold case review and consolidation. Work daily with telephonic data records and have received over 80 hours of training related to the analysis and mapping of cellular records and location data.

**TRAINING:**

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE:** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST) – Rancho Cordova, CA – August 2023 (24 hours)

**MAXIMIZING YOU SOCIAL MEDIA RETURNS:** Penlink – February 2023 (1 hour)

**TikTok INVESTIGATOR TRAINING:** TikTok – January 2023 (1.5 hours)

**SNAPCHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT SUMMIT:** Snapchat – December 2022 (2 hours)

**BEING A LAW ENFORCEMENT ANALYST: CHALLENGES, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND MINDSET:** Geotime – October 2022 (1 hour)

**ALL RISE: KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT IN COURT BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT:** Geotime/FBI National Academy Associates – September 2022 (1 hour)

**COURTROOM TESTIMONY TRAINING:** CA Department of Justice – February 2022 (2 hours)

**CASE STUDY: SOLVING THE BERNHARDT DOUBLE-HOMICIDE COLD CASE:** Cold Case Foundation, GeoTime – February 2022 (1 hour)

**SNAPCHAT, TEXTNOW AND VOIPs...OH MY!:** Hawk Analytics – December 2021 (1 hour)

**IMPORTANCE OF APPLE ICLOUD HISTORICAL DATA:** PenLink – May 2021 (1 hour)

**FINDING PATTERNS IN YOUR DATA:** GeoTime – February 2021 (45 minutes)

**2020 ELECTRONIC CRIME & INVESTIGATIONS TRAINING CONFERENCE:** San Mateo County District Attorney's Office/Northern California HIDTA (presentations from Verizon, Sprint/T-Mobile, AT&T, Facebook, Google, Snap, Cellebrite / presentations on Social Media Investigations, Cal ECPA, Location Evidence) – November 2020 (20 hours)

**SOLVING HOMICIDE CRIMES USING VERIZON TDR2 RECORDS:** GeoTime – August 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER BREAKDOWN SERIES – AT&T RETURNS:** Hawk Analytics – August 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER FILES 101: HOW TO WORK WITH T-MOBILE CALL DETAIL RECORDS:** GeoTime – August 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER FILES 101: HOW TO WORK WITH AT&T CALL DETAIL RECORDS:** GeoTime – July 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER BREAKDOWN SERIES – T-MOBILE RETURNS:** Hawk Analytics – July 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER BREAKDOWN SERIES - VERIZON RETURNS:** Hawk Analytics – June 2020 (1 hour)

**UNDERSTANDING FACEBOOK SEARCH WARRANT RETURNS:** National White Collar Crime Center, U.S. Department of Justice – June 2020 (1 hour)

**CARRIER BREAKDOWN SERIES - SPRINT RETURNS:** Hawk Analytics – May 2020 (1 hour)

**CELLEBRITE FUNDAMENTALS MATTER SERIES:** Cellebrite – April 2020 (3 hours)

**EXPLOITING INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS:** PenLink – March 2020 (1.5 hour)

**GEOTIME DESKTOP:** Uncharted – March 2020 (1 hour)

**CALL DETAIL RECORDS: BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL REQUESTS:** Hawk Analytics – January 2020 (1 hour)

**OPEN SOURCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING:** Western States Information Network (WSIN) and Western Regional Counterdrug Training Center (WRCTC) – January 2020 (8 hours)

**2019 DIGITAL EVIDENCE TRAINING CONFERENCE:** San Mateo County District Attorney's Office (presentations from Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, AT&T, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Apple, Google, TikTok) – November 2019 (8 hours)

**WIRELESS CARRIER AND INTERNET PROVIDER CAPABILITIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATIONS:** Northern California HIDTA in conjunction with: Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, AT&T, NDCAC, FBI CAST, Uber, Google, and Apple – August 2019 (16 hours)

**MYTH & REALITIES OF CELL SITE COVERAGE ANALYSIS:** Hawk Analytics – July 2019 (1 hour)

**WIRELESS CARRIER CAPABILITIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Verizon Security Assistance Team (VSAT) – July 2019 (1.5 hours)

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE:** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST) – Sacramento, CA – April 2019 (20 hours)

**CELL PHONE TRAINING:** Geocell – Sacramento Sheriff’s Department – October 2018 (16 hours)

**2018 ELECTRONIC CRIMES TRAINING CONFERENCE:** San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office – October 2018 (8 hours)

- Utilizing Google Location Services to Assist in a Case: San Mateo Police Department (1 hour)
- Understanding Google’s Services: Security Counsel at Google (1 hour)

**GATHERING EVIDENCE FROM TODAY’S COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:** National Domestic Communication Assistance Center (NDCAC), U.S. Department of Justice – August 2018 (5 hours)

**INTRODUCTION TO CELLPHONE INVESTIGATIONS:** NATIONAL WHITE COLLAR CRIME CENTER – April 2018 (1 hour)

**T-MOBILE CELL SITES & DATA INTERPRETATION:** Northern Valley Crime and Intelligence Analysts Association and Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department – November 2017 (4 hours)

**COURTROOM EXPERT TESTIMONY:** California Narcotic Officers’ Association (CNOA) – August 2017 (8 hours)

**BASIC HISTORICAL CELL SITE ANALYSIS COURSE:** Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST)– Western States Information Network – June 2017 (16 hours)

**REGIONAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE CENTER (NDCAC):** NDCAC – Western States Information Network – November 2016 (8 hours)

**CELL PHONE DATA AND MAPPING:** Police Technical-Western States Information Network—October 2015 (16 hours)

**GEOTIME REGIONAL TRAINING LEVEL 2:** Oculus-Sacramento Sheriff’s Department –July 2014 (5 hours)

**POWERPOINT FOR PUBLIC SAFETY:** Police Technical-Western States Information Network—July 2014 (16 hours)

**CHASING PHONES :** California Narcotic Officers’ Association (CNOA) & High Intensity Drug trafficking Areas (HIDTA)—May 2014 (8 hours)

**INTRODUCTION TO GEO TIME SEMINAR:** Oculus – Sacramento Sheriff’s Department -November 2013 (4 hours)

**INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THINKING:** CPS Human Resource Services—February 2010 (16 hours)

**ANALYTICAL AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS WORKSHOP:** Department of Homeland Security—November 2008 (40)

**CALL ANALYSIS TRAINING SCHOOL (CATS):** Pen-Link – March 2008 (24 hours)

**i2 ANALYST NOTEBOOK VERSION 7 TRAINING :** i2 Training Facility – March 2008 (16 hours)

**INVESTIGATIVE USES OF NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER (NCIC):** U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Justice Information Center – February 2008 (4 hours)

**FOUNDATIONS OF INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS TRAINING (FIAT):** Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit and International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts – January 2007 (40 hours)

**ANALYTICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** CPS Human Resource Services – October 2006 (35 hours)

### SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

- Missing and Unidentified Persons Investigations Training – Garden Grove, CA – May 3, 2022 - Speaker
- 2020 National Child Protection Task Force – Virtual Conference – June 22-26, 2020
- Missing and Unidentified Persons Investigations Training – Chico, CA – November 7, 2018 - Speaker
- 2017 California Sex Offender Registry Conference (SOR) – Anaheim, CA February 28 – March 3, 2017 - Speaker
- IALEIA/LEIU Training Conference
  - Boston, MA April 7-11, 2008
  - Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada April 23-27, 2007
- Office of the Attorney General Department of Justice Organized Crime, Gang, Criminal Intelligence and Terrorism Training Conferences - Sacramento, CA
  - August 19-22, 2008
  - August 21-24, 2007
  - August 22-25, 2006
- California Gang Task Force Training Conference – San Diego, CA
  - November 5-7, 2007
  - November 13-15, 2006

### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP:

- Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit – Member 2006 to present

### EDUCATION:

- California State University, Sacramento, Bachelor of Science Degree, Criminal Justice (2004)

#### AWARDS:

- 2016 California Attorney General's Award – Presented to the Violent Crime Investigative Support Section for Excellence as a Team

#### PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE:

- California Department of Justice: August 2006 to Present
- Provided communication and historical cell site/location information analysis to local law enforcement agencies on over 150 cases
- Review cellular records, social media related records and device extractions approximately 4-5 days a week from multiple providers
- Regularly speak to experts in the field including fellow analysts and sworn law enforcement personnel who conduct investigations involving the analysis of telephonic data and call detail records
- Conduct peer review of similar work products completed by fellow analysts
- Receive in person and telephonic support and training from GeoTime software and Pen-Link representatives
- Review papers and findings published by my peers to keep apprised of changes in the area of communications analysis
- Speak with, present, and train the law enforcement community in the field of communication and historical cell site/location information analysis

#### COURT TESTIMONY:

- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Lee Jacob Baldon and Stephen Daniel Johnson (SP21-20289), Subpoenaed for jury trial 10/26/2023, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of Solano: People of the State of California v. Kamaria Isis Davison Strange (DA# F213794), Subpoenaed for preliminary hearing 4/27/2023, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Jermaine Hill and Larrell Gary Gregg (CR-LP22-00204), Subpoenaed for jury trial 5/18/2022, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Richard Anthony Nielson (CR-S021-11525), Subpoenaed for jury trial 5/6/2022, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Charles Walter Gregory (CR-2020-4234838), Subpoenaed for jury trial 12/9/2021, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Richard Robinson (CR-2016-4118838), Subpoenaed for jury trial 6/4/2020, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of Siskiyou: People of the State of California v. Eddie Samuel Dodge Jr. (CRF 2019-1146), Subpoenaed for jury trial 12/16/2019, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.

- Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo: People of the State of California v. Freeman Owens III (DA#: 17-SF-008057-A), Subpoenaed for jury trial 11/14/2019, provided expert testimony on cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of Placer: People of the State of California v. Jimmy Young Vang (DA#: 62-152970), Subpoenaed for jury trial 6/24/2019, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Donte Latraille Revels (DA#: CR-2016-4131430), Subpoenaed for jury trial 5/9/2019, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Antuan Jermale Stinson and Harold Miles (DA#: CR-2017-4136935), Subpoenaed for jury trial 4/11/2018, provided testimony on communication analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Willie D White Jr and Jamal Delano McKenzie (DA#: CR-2016-4132452), Subpoenaed for jury trial 2/22/2018, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Kalom McCoy and Cahauri Williams (DA#: CR-2014-4065274), Subpoenaed for jury trial 9/22/2017, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo: People of the State of California v. Warren Oleg Morrison Jr. (DA#: SF400896A), Subpoenaed for jury trial 5/2/2017, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin (DA#: GJ-2017-4141864), Subpoenaed for grand jury 4/28/2017, provided expert testimony on cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Valentin Vivero (DA#: CR-2015-4110078), Subpoenaed for jury trial 3/8/2017, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin (DA#: GJ-2016-4131446), Subpoenaed for grand jury 11/2/2016, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Valentin Vivero (DA#: CR-2015-4110078), Subpoenaed for jury trial 10/14/2016, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin (DA#: GJ-2016-4127656), Subpoenaed for grand jury 9/13/2016, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Justin William Wilson, Michael Lee Roessler and Christopher Wayne Oliver (DA#: CR-2013-4051966), Subpoenaed for jury trial 11/5/2015-11/6/2015, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Cahauri Williams (DA#: CR-2015-4100958), Subpoenaed for preliminary hearing 8/12/2015, provided testimony on communications and cell site analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. William Tyson, Dreshaujn Mitchell and Edwan Scott (DA#: CR-2012-4032620), Subpoenaed for jury trial 3/26/2015, provided testimony on communications analysis.
- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Justin William Wilson, Michael Lee Roessler and Christopher Wayne Oliver (DA#: CR-

2013-4051966), Subpoenaed for jury trial 10/16/2014, 10/17/2014, 10/22/2014, 10/29/2014, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.

- Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin: People of the State of California v. Pedro Becerra and Mario Alberto Ojeda Sandoval (DA#: CR-2014-4065115), Subpoenaed for preliminary hearing 4/17/2014, provided expert testimony on communication and cell site analysis.



**RON FREITAS**  
*District Attorney, San Joaquin County*  
**PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1850**

**April 9, 2025**

**Distinguished Service Award Committee**

**Re: Distinguished Service Awards – Ashlee Onwurah**

Dear Distinguished Service Awards Committee,

It is my distinct pleasure to nominate Ashlee Onwurah for the Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions, professional integrity, and unwavering commitment to excellence. Ashlee has consistently demonstrated remarkable intellect, professionalism, and a thoughtful approach to even the most complex legal matters.

Ashlee's work is marked by precision and poise. In an environment where every word can shift the course of justice, she approaches each task like a seasoned architect—building strong, well-reasoned arguments brick by brick, never rushing, never cutting corners. Her ability to cut through noise, focus on facts, and deliver clear, well-supported analysis is nothing short of exceptional.

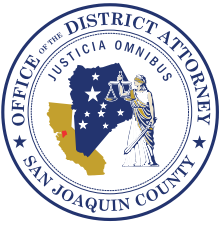
Her work has been instrumental in several high-stakes cases, where she demonstrated not only legal insight but a deep understanding of the human impact behind each file. Ashlee's recommendations are always well-reasoned and fair, informed by evidence found but also grounded in empathy and sound judgment.

What sets Ashlee apart is her quiet leadership. She listens more than she speaks, yet when she does speak, her words carry the weight of someone who has done the work, read every line, and considered every angle. She leads by example, consistently modeling the type of thoughtfulness, professionalism, and reliability that uplifts those around her.

Ashlee has proven herself a trusted colleague, a gifted analyst, and a dedicated public servant. For these reasons, and so many more, I wholeheartedly endorse her for this well-deserved honor.

Should you require any further information about her qualifications or contributions, I would be more than happy to provide it at [Elton.grau@sjcda.org](mailto:Elton.grau@sjcda.org).

Sincerely,  
Elton Grau  
San Joaquin Deputy District Attorney



**RON FREITAS**  
*District Attorney, San Joaquin County*  
**PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY FOR 175 YEARS**

**RICHARD B. PRICE**  
*Assistant District Attorney*

April 8, 2025

RE: Distinguished Service Alumni Award Nomination- Sacramento State University

For background purposes only, I have been a DDA in San Joaquin county for over 27 years. I have been working primarily in the area of Homicide prosecutions, including those that are gang related. As the years have progressed, the use of digital data has become an integral part of the prosecution of offenders using them to inculcate themselves as well as their cohorts in the commission of crimes. Hence, my introduction to the VCISS team at the Department of Justice. I have been working in collaboration with VCISS for over 15 years when technology began to become a research tool for law enforcement to identify perpetrators of crime.

Ashlee Onwurah-

Ashlee bring a calmed control surrounding large amounts of data being presented to often times uneducated audiences in the court process. This will include judges and opposing defense attorneys. She has been the foundation of my learning curve in conjunction with what became a new era of technology years ago that now has become the expected evidence to be presented to a new digital world. She has been put to the test by many courts regarding this information at the beginning of this new technology and the analysis surrounding it. The demeanor she has brought to tough inquiries by courts, defense counsel and the ever growing law in this area was one of understanding, an articulate and complete analysis and knowledge to explain and describe to those who were not technologically savvy the new era of technology. She has always been available for communication, education and support as the cases proceed. I have referred her to my colleagues of the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office and other offices over the many years of our collaboration together. One of my favorite stories was when we had a multiple defendant, gang homicide case where she was 9 months pregnant with her daughter. Timing was precarious but she showed up and over the course of a day or two, she hung in there. The judge offered a name for her daughter, Department 23- the courtroom where the trial was conducted. She was graceful and gracious in giving of her time at this most significant personal time in her life and we all appeared more concerned that she was. As I understand it, her daughter came into the world but a few days later.

She brings integrity, honesty, humility, room for growth and ongoing support to us attorneys in the course of our duties. She presents with professionalism, knowledge, grace and earnestness. She is one of the best examples for the how agencies should work in conjunction with each other in the search for the truth and to ensure justice occurs. I hope to work with Ashlee for the remainder of my career and will continue to share her as a resource with our legal community.

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**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY**

**MAIN OFFICE** | 222 E. Weber Avenue, P.O. Box 990, Stockton, California 95201  
**Tel.** (209) 468-2400 | **Fax** (209) 465-0371

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OFFICE OF THE  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COUNTY OF YOLO

JEFF W. REISIG  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



JONATHAN RAVEN  
CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOHN EHRK  
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

NIKKI ABAURREA  
CHIEF FISCAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

October 10, 2022

**Staff Services Manager II Megan Eschleman**  
**CA DOJ/VCISS**  
**4949 Broadway Street, Kilgore Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**Sacramento CA, 95820**  
**RE: Letter of Commendation for VCISS Analyst Ashlee Onwurah**

I would like to recognize the hard work and contributions of Analyst Ashlee Onwurah in the Dominique Jackson case (Yolo County Superior Court Case CR2021-0619) and conviction.

On December 15, 2019 Jackson attacked a woman in the laundry room of her apartment in West Sacramento, putting a knife to her throat. Jackson began taking off the victim's clothes and she screamed and fought him. Jackson knocked her to the ground and began stomping and kicking her. The victim suffered a broken nose and skull fractures, as well as two black eyes and bruising. Her blood was left all over the laundry room. Detectives put a still image of the suspect from CCTV out to the public, and tipsters called in to identify Jackson. A few days later Jackson was arrested and charged in the December 15, 2019 attack. Further investigation revealed that on March 5, 2019, Jackson followed a woman who was walking to work in West Sacramento. Jackson grabbed the woman and put a gun to her head. The victim was able to break free and ran. Jackson fled on foot. More investigation revealed that on May 30, 2019, a woman was walking home on the La Riveria bike path in Sacramento, and as she crossed the Salmon Falls foot bridge over Route 50 Jackson grabbed her and put her in a chokehold. He then forced her to orally copulate her while holding a knife. Jackson tried to have sex with the victim, and she scratched him, at which point Jackson picked her up and slammed her onto the ground. He then raped the victim, which continued until a bicyclist passed by and the victim called for help. The victim was able to escape and Jackson fled on foot.

All three cases were consolidated and tried in Yolo County. Well over one gigabyte of electronic evidence was seized in this case, including phone, cloud and social-media based data. A DA Investigator contacted VCISS for assistance in data analysis. Analyst Ashlee Onwurah was assigned this case, and she worked her way through the massive amount of data. Analyst Onwurah was able to identify a critical link between Jackson and the crime scene in West Sacramento, all from one text message, and DA Investigators were able to follow up on this information and present extensively on it in court. Analyst Onwurah also identified dozens of photos Jackson took of women in public without their knowledge, and a DA Investigator was able to present these photos as an aggravating factor to the jury.

On October 7, 2022 Jackson was convicted by a jury of nine counts and numerous enhancements, including Forcible Rape, Assault with intent to commit Rape while armed, Sexual Battery and infliction of Great Bodily Injury.

Jackson is currently pending sentencing and is facing 19 years to Life plus an additional 20 years.

Analyst Ashlee Onwurah tackled a challenging case involving a multi-county serial rapist, and was able to identify numerous items of evidence that our office used in the prosecution of Jackson. Our office appreciates her assistance and her dedication to the mission of seeking justice for our victims.

  
Chief Investigator John Ehrk

**From:** [Henry, Alexander \[DA\]](#)  
**To:** [Allison Law](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Thanks to VCISS and Ashlee Onwurah  
**Date:** Thursday, September 5, 2024 12:47:39 PM

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**EXTERNAL EMAIL:** This message was sent from outside DOJ. Please do not click links or open attachments that appear suspicious.

Mrs. Law:

I wanted to reach out to you to express my thanks and gratitude to the Violent Crime Investigative Support Section (VCISS) with the DoJ, and specifically Ashlee Onwurah.

I am a deputy district attorney in San Joaquin County and had the pleasure of working with Ashlee Onwurah earlier this year on a particularly complex case involving a series of back-and-forth shootings. These shootings resulted in three fatalities and two others that were seriously injured. Defendants were ultimately charged with 3 counts of murder, 3 counts of attempted murder, and conspiracy to commit murder.

Mrs. Onwurah's testimony was powerful evidence that was very persuasive with the jury. It is hard to describe her performance accurately, so as to give Mrs. Onwurah the credit she deserves, but she was the very definition of an "expert" witness. She was informed, intelligent, and charismatic. She simply had the aura or presence of a subject matter expert. She was also very adept at explaining complicated issues to the jury in layman's terms, which made it easy for them to follow along. I recall one moment during her testimony when I looked up at the jury and could see multiple jurors nodding their heads and listening to her every word. Several members of my own office were also present during Mrs. Onwurah's testimony and also stated that they found her to be an excellent witness, and that her analysis was strong evidence of defendants' guilt. In short, Mrs. Onwurah's professionalism and assistance was a key factor that helped convict both defendants of multiple counts of murder and attempted murder.

I consider the VCISS unit at DoJ to be a fantastic resource that helps me to be a better prosecutor, and I am grateful for their assistance. If you have any questions about my comments or interactions with Mrs. Onwurah, please do not hesitate to email or contact me.

My thanks,

**Alexander G. Henry**

Deputy District Attorney  
San Joaquin County  
(209) 953-7732 (office)  
(209) 468-2400 (main)

## 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Nominee:** Artemio Pimentel

**Grad info:** 2002, BA Social Sciences; 2010, MA, Educational Leadership

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Art is a public servant at heart. Among his numerous achievements, he served as Sac State's student body president, mayor and city councilmember of the city of Woodland, president of Woodland Community College, and now serves as President of Folsom Lake College.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Mexican American Concilio of Yolo County, Board Member – 2018 - Present

Rotary Club of West Sacramento – 2014 - 2019

West Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, Ex-officio member – 2014 - 2019

West Sacramento Educational Foundation, Board Member – 2014 - 2018

Sacramento Cleaner Air Partnership, Chairman – 2013 - 2016

Woodland Healthcare, Community Board of Directors – 2012 - 2016

Woodland Youth Coalition, Board Member – 2004 - 2014

Yolo County Transportation District, Chairman and Board Member – 2006 - 2012

Yolo-Solano Air Board District, Chairman – 2004 - 2012

Yolo County Red Cross, Board Member – 2008 - 2010

Woodland City Council Infrastructure Sub-Committee, Member – 2005 - 2008

Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)-Vice Chair – 2004 - 2006

California State University, Sacramento – 2001 - 2002

Foundation Board of Directors

Faculty Senate Member

Council for University Planning Committee

The California State University

System-wide Budget Advisory Committee – 2002

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Art is a role model for Latino/a students who are committed to public service.

**Nominator:** Lisa Cardoza

April 15, 2024

**Selection Committee**

*Distinguished Alumni Awards*

California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J. Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

**Dear Members of the DAA Selection Committee,**

We are honored to write in strong support of Dr. Artemio (Art) Pimentel's nomination for the Distinguished Alumni Award at California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Pimentel's remarkable career in higher education and as a former elected official exemplifies the qualities and accomplishments this award seeks to recognize.

Dr. Pimentel currently serves as the President of Folsom Lake College, a position he has held since January 2023. His appointment by the Los Rios Community College District Board of Trustees was a testament to his extensive experience and exceptional leadership capabilities. Over his 17-year career in higher education, Dr. Pimentel has demonstrated a profound commitment to student success, fiscal responsibility, community engagement, and strategic planning.

Before leading Folsom Lake College, Dr. Pimentel had a robust career, primarily in his hometown, the City of Woodland. He was elected to the Woodland City Council in 2004, elected Mayor of Woodland in 2008, served on the Woodland Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees and was named as the third President of Woodland Community College in 2019. During his tenure, student retention rates increased by over 5%, and post-pandemic enrollment saw a 9% rise. He spearheaded the construction of a \$42 million performing arts and culinary services building and expanded behavioral health services through an innovative partnership with Yolo County. His leadership has and will continue to bring about various significant improvements that have a lasting impact.

Dr. Pimentel's earlier roles within the Los Rios Community College District, including serving as Dean for Sacramento City College's West Sacramento Center and Interim Director of Educational Services and Student Success, further highlight his dedication to advancing educational excellence. His efforts to develop strong relationships with K-12 districts began at Woodland, and have remained a constant in his career. During his time as the Dean, he continued building these relationships, and even helped start the early college high school with the Washington Unified School District. He strives to directly benefit students and the community in his current role as he pushes for and supports Dual Enrollment programs and K-12 partnerships within the Los Rios District. His return to Los Rios as the President of Folsom Lake College signifies his enduring commitment to the district and its mission.

Dr. Pimentel's academic credentials are equally impressive. He earned both his Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences and his Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from California State University, Sacramento, followed by a Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) from the University of California, Davis. When asked during an interview conducted by the State Hornet in 2001 what his plans were following graduation, his response was to "maybe become mayor of Woodland, or even a teacher". His academic journey at Sacramento State clearly laid a strong foundation for his subsequent professional achievements, as he went on to do just that - become the Mayor of Woodland and build a career in the world of higher education.

Dr. Pimentel remains a proud and active member of the university's alumni community. Being “Made at Sac State”, is something which resonates deeply with him as he understands just how critical his experience at Sacramento State was to his success today. He truly believes in the power of education and shares his story as a student to help empower others. It is stories like his that inspire our students each and every day to continue and complete their own educational journeys.

The impact of Dr. Pimentel's leadership extends beyond the institutions he has served; it reaches into the broader community, fostering partnerships and initiatives that enhance educational opportunities and support student success. Art has been known to use the phrase “education is the great equalizer in our society”, it could be argued that Dr. Pimentel has been and continues to be the great equalizer and trailblazer for our Hispanic/Latino(x) community. His work, passion and dedication to serving diverse populations in education has left and will leave a legacy within these communities for years to come.

Dr. Pimentel's exemplary achievements as a Sacramento State alumni, have and will continue to have a lasting impact on the Capitol region and beyond. His representation as a former Mayor and Council Member for the City of Woodland, President of Woodland Community College and now President of Folsom Lake College is a testament to what student success and perseverance can accomplish. His vision, leadership, and passion make him a truly deserving candidate for the Distinguished Alumni Award.

We wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Art Pimentel for this honor and believe that his contributions to higher education and the community embody the highest ideals of California State University, Sacramento.

Thank you for considering his nomination.

Sincerely,

**Lisa Cardoza**  
*President, American River College*

**Jenni Murphy**  
*Interim VP for Enrollment & Engagement, Sacramento State*

**Francisco Castillo**  
*Director for State Government Relations, Diageo*

**Torence Powell**  
*Superintendent/President, Napa Valley College*

**Albert Garcia**  
*President, Sacramento City College*

**Lydia Ramirez**  
*Chief Operations Officer & Chief DEI Officer, Five Star Bank*

**Michael Gutierrez**  
*President, Hartnell College*

**Mayra Vega**  
*Council Member & Former Mayor, City of Woodland, CA*

**Samuel N. Jones**  
*Director of Housing, Sacramento State*

**Whitney Yamamura**  
*Chancellor, Coast Community College District*

## Behind the Art: a Hornet profile of ASI president Artemio Pimentel



Image: Behind the Art: a Hornet profile of ASI president Artemio Pimentel: Photo by Layla Bohm/State Hornet:

Jaclyn Schultz ([https://statehornet.com/staff\\_name/jaclyn-schultz/](https://statehornet.com/staff_name/jaclyn-schultz/))

January 28, 2002

Sacramento State President Donald Gerth was conducting an important meeting in his boardroom when his secretary announced an unexpected visit from a young man and his father.

Gerth halted the meeting and invited them in. The young man was Art Pimentel, the President of Associated Students, Inc. He brought his father, a long-time migrant farm worker, to meet Gerth and visit the campus for the first time.

This was a big moment for his father- but for Art, it was even bigger.

"Art felt very proud to show the President his dad," says Professor Marcos Sanchez, the director of the College Assistance Migrant Program. "When you're a farm worker, and your son tells you he's the president of ASI, it's a concept you can't understand. What better way to help him understand than by bringing him to the campus and showing him around."

Elias Pimentel took time off work as a foreman of George Aoki Farms in Woodland that day, arriving at Sac State in his company's tomato truck.

"I go to different farms and see if they need help," he says about his job.

Elias has worked for farms in Yolo County since he and his wife came to the U.S. in the 70s. Elias was 19 and his wife was 15 when they first met at a migrant workers post in Lodi. After marrying, they returned to their families in Michoacan, Mexico. They eventually immigrated to Woodland, where they raised their three sons and now raise their young daughter.

Pimentel, growing up as the youngest son in the family, would often help his father in the fields.

"I work with him as he drives all over the place," Pimentel says. "I get to drive the trucks, talk with the workers and ask them how the tomatoes are growing."

From an early age, Pimentel had a strong interest in the political arena. He hadn't, however, held any positions in high school or early in his college years to distinguish himself as a leader.

Eric Guerra, ASI executive vice president, thought Pimentel was just an average student when he first met him. "As far as I knew, he was just a punk kid coming out of high school," he says.

Sanchez, however, saw something different in Pimentel when he first came to Sac State through CAMP. "The willingness to get involved in politics was already there. Some students, you have to encourage them, and even then they might not do anything. But he already had initiative," he says.

After receiving a couple of contacts from Sanchez, Pimentel started working at the Capitol as an intern for Assemblyman Tony Cardenas of the 39th District. His political career snowballed from there.

Pimentel, with Guerra, moved onto the campus political scene with their creation of the Political Awareness Club.

Pimentel then ran for and won the position of ASI Executive Vice President in 2000, and ASI President in 2001. Though he moved up the political ladder quickly, Pimentel was still learning the rules of the campus political arena. "He wasn't aware of the process of the university. He was a big visionary missing the steps in between," says Guerra.

"Now he's more realistic about what he can accomplish," says Sanchez. "Especially this year, since he's more responsible for managing ASI."

Since the start of the fall semester, ASI has addressed numerous controversial issues, including the Monday-Wednesday-Friday scheduling conflict. Yet Pimentel is happy with the way he and his administration have dealt with them. "ASI [in the past] wasn't in the headlines as much. Now we're taking care of student issues: housing, parking, campus life, making sure we have finances," he says.

Pimentel was recently thrown into the national limelight with his appearance on Nightline, commenting on Sacramento Bee Publisher Janis Heaphy's graduation speech last December. Despite the newfound fame and influence, Pimentel manages to stay grounded. "I've seen past ASI Presidents tend to get bigheaded," says Angela Gomez, an ASI service representative. "But I don't see that in Art at all."

In addition to his duties with ASI, Pimentel maintains his job as manager of Denny's. "I do the freezer pool, take everything out one night before. I make a chef's prep of what they need for the next day," he says. Pimentel usually stays on duty to help the workers out. "Sometimes I go back there and cook."

After this semester, Pimentel plans to pursue a Master's degree in either Political Management at George Washington University or Public Policy at Sac State, and hopes to "maybe become mayor of Woodland, or even a teacher," he says. Pimentel hopes to continue being successful doing what he loves, working in politics and with students.

"I think he wanted his dad to experience that," says Sanchez.

## About the Writer

**Jaclyn Schultz, Author**

([https://statehornet.com/staff\\_profile/jaclyn-schultz/](https://statehornet.com/staff_profile/jaclyn-schultz/))

## 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Nominee:** Peter Tateishi

**Grad info:** 2002, BA Government

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Peter Tateishi's remarkable career trajectory and extensive involvement in various leadership roles underscore his deep commitment to community service, civic engagement, and professional excellence. Here's why he is an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus and friend of the University:

1. **Leadership in Construction and Business Advocacy:** As the CEO of the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of California since 2018, which is headquartered in West Sacramento, Peter has been a prominent advocate for the construction industry, promoting economic growth, infrastructure development, and workforce training. His leadership in this vital sector contributes significantly to the state's economy and aligns with Sacramento State's focus on preparing students for impactful careers.
2. **Champion of Regional Business Development:** During his tenure as President & CEO of the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce (2015-2018), Peter played a pivotal role in driving economic development and fostering a vibrant business community in Sacramento. His strategic vision and advocacy for business-friendly policies directly benefit the city and its residents.
3. **Advocacy for the Building Industry:** As the CEO of the Sacramento Regional Builders Exchange (2013-2015), Peter demonstrated his commitment to advancing the interests of the construction and building sector. His efforts in policy development, industry collaboration, and workforce development contribute to the growth and sustainability of Sacramento's built environment.
4. **Capitol Hill Experience and Government Service:** Peter's experience as Chief of Staff to Congressman Daniel E. Lungren and his role in the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration highlight his expertise in legislative affairs, government relations, and public policy. This background enriches Sacramento State's community by providing real-world insights and opportunities for students interested in public service.
5. **Educational Achievement and Alumni Engagement:** As a graduate of Sacramento State (Bachelor of Arts in Government, 2002) and the University of Southern California (Master of Public Administration, 2004), Peter embodies the university's commitment to academic excellence and lifelong learning. His continued engagement with Sacramento State reflects a strong dedication to giving back to his alma mater and supporting future generations of students.
6. **Community and Board Service:** Peter's extensive involvement on various boards and commissions, including the Sacramento Planning Commission (2018-2024) Salvation Army (2022-2024), Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau (2015-2017), Sacramento Workforce Investment Board (2015-2018), and California Capital Airshow Board (2015-2017), and more, showcases his dedication to

community service and regional collaboration. His leadership roles in these organizations contribute to the overall well-being and prosperity of the Sacramento region.

In summary, Peter Tateishi's multifaceted career, leadership accomplishments, and active engagement in community service exemplify the qualities of an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus. His achievements align closely with the university's values of leadership, innovation, and community impact, making him a respected leader and advocate for Sacramento's economic and social advancement.

**Question 2: What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.**

Peter Tateishi's community involvement spans a diverse range of impactful affiliations, volunteer work, and activities that extend beyond his professional roles. His commitment to community service and leadership is exemplified by the following engagements:

- Nursing Program Advisory Board - California Northstate University (2023-Present): Peter contributes his expertise to support the Nursing Program at California Northstate University, providing guidance and insights to enhance educational opportunities and promote excellence in healthcare.
- Finance Council Member - Our Lady of the Assumption Parish (2022-Present): As a member of the Finance Council at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Peter plays a strategic role in stewarding financial resources to support the parish's mission and community initiatives.
- American Leadership Forum (ALF) Senior Fellow - ALF Mountain Valley Chapter (2016-Present): Peter's involvement as a Senior Fellow with the American Leadership Forum reflects his commitment to mentorship of leaders in the Sacramento region, collaborative leadership and community problem-solving, contributing to positive social change in the Sacramento region.
- Advisory Board Member - Salvation Army Del Oro District (2020-2024): Serving on the Advisory Board of the Salvation Army Del Oro District, Peter supports efforts to address homelessness, poverty, and other critical social issues through strategic planning and advocacy.
- Campaign Co-Chair - Measure G Carmichael Park Bond Campaign (2022): Peter's leadership as a Campaign Co-Chair for Measure G demonstrates his dedication to improving local parks and recreational facilities, enhancing the quality of life for Carmichael residents.
- Founder & Past Chairman - Carmichael Recreation & Park District Foundation (2009-2017): Peter's founding and chairmanship of the Carmichael Recreation & Park District Foundation highlight his long-term commitment to enhancing recreational opportunities and community wellness in Carmichael.
- Honorary Mayor of Carmichael - Carmichael Chamber of Commerce (2009 & 2010): As Honorary Mayor of Carmichael, Peter actively promoted community engagement, business development, and civic pride, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration within the local business community.

These extensive community involvements demonstrate Peter Tateishi's dedication to making a positive impact beyond his professional responsibilities. His leadership and volunteerism contribute significantly to the well-being and development of Carmichael and the broader region, reflecting a deep commitment to serving others and strengthening community bonds.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Peter Tateishi's contributions have left a lasting and profoundly positive impact on the Sacramento region, touching diverse sectors and individuals through his exemplary leadership and community

engagement. As a member of the Sacramento County Planning Commission (2018-2024), Peter has played a crucial role in shaping the region's growth and development. His expertise and decisions on land use, transportation, and environmental policies have had a direct impact on the quality of life and sustainability of communities throughout Sacramento County. Peter's acknowledgment as a "Most Admired CEO" by the Sacramento Business Journal in 2023 underscores the esteem and respect he garners from peers and colleagues in the business community. This recognition reflects not only his professional accomplishments but also his positive influence as a role model and leader. By receiving the CEO Award for being a fair and compassionate employer and mentor, Peter has positively affected countless individuals within his organizations. His commitment to creating supportive workplaces and nurturing talent has benefited employees and mentees, contributing to their professional growth and well-being.

Peter's leadership extends beyond professional accolades, encompassing active involvement in community organizations and initiatives. Through his roles on various boards and campaigns, he has influenced community development, recreational opportunities, and social welfare, leaving a tangible impact on the residents of Carmichael and beyond. Overall, Peter's contributions have touched numerous facets of the Sacramento region, from urban planning and community development to workforce empowerment, and business leadership but more importantly by lifting up and mentoring many Sacramento State graduates, myself included. His commitment to excellence, fairness, and community impact sets a benchmark for civic engagement and leadership, leaving a legacy of positive change that continues to benefit individuals and communities across Sacramento County. He cares deeply about the region and its success and he cares deeply about Sacramento State and its alumni.

**Nominator:** Juliana Almanza



**2024 EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE**

**PRESIDENT**

Steve Rule  
Turner Construction  
Company

**PRESIDENT-ELECT**

Pat Kelly  
Granite Construction  
Company

**TREASURER**

Allison Otto  
Otto Construction

**VICE PRESIDENT  
BUILDING**

Matt Seals  
Seals Construction Inc.

**VICE PRESIDENT  
HIGHWAY &  
TRANSPORTATION**

Ural Yal  
Flatiron

**VICE PRESIDENT  
UTILITY &  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Brandon Pensick  
Ferreira Construction  
Company

**VICE PRESIDENT  
SPECIALTY CONTRACTORS**

Henry Nutt III  
Southland Industries

**IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT**

Dina Kimble  
Royal Electric Company

**CEO**

Peter Tateishi  
AGC of California

**HEADQUARTERS OFFICE**

3095 Beacon Blvd.  
West Sacramento, CA 95691  
Office: 916.371.2422  
Fax: 916.371.2352  
member\_services@agc-ca.org

April 15, 2024

Juliana Almanza

1462 Dreamy Way  
Sacramento, CA 95835

[almanzaj@agc-ca.org](mailto:almanzaj@agc-ca.org)

209-917-0362

Selection Committee

Distinguished Service Award  
California State University, Sacramento

6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Dear Distinguished Alumni Awards Selection Committee,

I am writing to enthusiastically nominate Peter Tateishi for the Distinguished Service Award. As a distinguished alumna of Sacramento State, and a colleague who has witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of Peter's leadership and dedication, I am confident that he is an outstanding candidate deserving of this recognition.

Peter's career trajectory and unwavering commitment to community service align seamlessly with the values and criteria of the Distinguished Service Award. Throughout his tenure as CEO of various organizations, including the Associated General Contractors of California, and the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Peter has demonstrated exemplary leadership, innovative thinking, and a deep passion for advancing our community's economic and social well-being.

One of Peter's most striking qualities is his ability to bring diverse stakeholders together to achieve common goals. His involvement on the Sacramento County Planning Commission underscores his dedication to shaping sustainable growth and development policies that benefit residents and businesses alike.

Moreover, Peter's active engagement in numerous community organizations, such as the Salvation Army Advisory Board and the Carmichael Recreation & Park District Foundation, speaks volumes about his commitment to giving back and making a positive impact beyond his professional duties.



Notably, Peter's recognition as a "Most Admired CEO" by the Sacramento Business Journal in 2023 is a testament to his esteemed reputation and significant contributions to our region's business landscape. His leadership style, characterized by fairness, mentorship, and a genuine concern for employee welfare, sets a benchmark for corporate leadership and organizational excellence.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse Peter Tateishi for the Distinguished Service Award. His multifaceted career, remarkable achievements, and deep-rooted community involvement make him a truly exceptional nominee deserving of this prestigious honor. I am confident that Peter's continued leadership and dedication will continue to positively impact our community for years to come.

Thank you for considering Peter Tateishi for this esteemed award. Should you require any further information or supporting materials, please do not hesitate to contact me at 209-917-0362 or [almanzaj@agc-ca.org](mailto:almanzaj@agc-ca.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juliana".

Juliana Almanza  
Chief of Staff  
AGC of California

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## Professional Experience

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**ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS (AGC) OF CALIFORNIA – WEST Sacramento, CA** Jan, 2018–Present  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Responsible for the direction, control and operations of the association to advance the construction industry in California. Oversee state and regional offices and ensure members receive the necessary services and care to ensure their success within the association. Oversee a 27-member state board; manage team of 54 staff, 4 contract lobbyists, and 3 consultants with a combined \$14.7MM budget.

- Worked with members, board, and staff to reimagine the organization including its mission statement, existing services, and resources including structure, time, and dollars.
- Rebuilt statewide team to deliver on the mission and value propositions of the organization.
- Enhanced our Construction Education Foundation, 501(c)3, to provide innovative services in workforce development including the launch of Build California, AGC Emerging Leaders, and our DEI Forums and steering committee taking what was a \$450,000 entity to a \$2.7MM entity.
- Over the first five years, launched new strategic initiatives, repositioned the organization, reimaged and prioritized existing and new services which resulted in a 130% increase on revenue from a combined \$6.5MM to \$14.7MM and grew staff from 36 to 54 total staff/team members.

**SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – Sacramento, CA** Jan, 2015–Dec, 2017  
**President & Chief Executive Officer**

Charged with developing, implementing and communicating the organization's vision, mission, philosophy and strategy. Responsible for the overall management of the organization and tasked with growing the membership and volunteer participation. Develop policy and legislative initiatives to address critical business issues such as land use, transportation, air quality, and other regional issues at the local, state, and federal levels. Oversaw an 80 member board; managed team of 20 staff and combined \$4MM budget.

- Reorganized structure and services to turn around a six-figure deficit and negative cash flow to a six-figure surplus and positive cash flow over a three-year financial overhaul.

**SACRAMENTO REGIONAL BUILDERS EXCHANGE – Sacramento, CA** Feb, 2013–Jan, 2015  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Responsible for long-term planning, administration and management of the Builders Exchange's operational activities, personnel and programs. Charged with developing and enhancing relationships with other industry groups, elected officials and various regulatory agencies. Oversaw and developed a new strategic plan designed to move the organization to a stronger position within the industry. Performed a branding strategy to increase the footprint and membership of the organization through outreach, marketing and community relations development. Oversaw a 15 member board; managed a staff of 16 and combined \$1.7MM budget.

**OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN DANIEL E. LUNGREN – Washington, DC** Feb, 2009–Sept, 2012  
**Chief of Staff**

Directed operations of both the Washington, DC and California offices serving constituents of California's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District. Shaped legislative priorities and advised the Congressman on votes. Cultivated productive relationships with organizations, constituents, federal, state, and local government and elected officials, and White House staff. Guided communications and outreach strategies with cohesive messages that built a strong brand for the Congressman and promoted passage of legislation. Managed 14 direct reports and \$1.5MM budget.

- Overcame national efforts to unseat Congressman during November 2010 election cycle by redesigning the office's communication and outreach strategy that turned around opinions of 70% of target voters. Achieved victory on Election Day despite being outspent 2-1.
- Facilitated passage of Congressman Lungren's "1099" bill by orchestrating a successful media campaign that drew national attention and by navigating the US Congress and White House.

**TATEISHI STRATEGIES – Carmichael, CA/Honolulu, HI** Oct, 2007– Feb, 2009  
**Consultant/Owner**

Propelled client goals through government relations and public relations strategies and communications. Worked primarily on Native American issues in Plymouth, CA, advising their Tribal Council on approaches to advance the Tribe's interests and plans.

**OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN DANIEL E. LUNGREN** – Gold River, CA

Jan, 2005–Oct, 2007

**Intergovernmental Affairs Director**

Steered strategy and execution for government relations and affairs activities in the Congressman’s District Office, focusing on appropriation requests, federal grant opportunities, media relations, and legislative process. Held dual role managing Native American affairs.

- Enabled the Congressman to bring over \$400 million in federal appropriated earmarks to the district. Vetted projects to ensure they met federal standards and worked with the House Committee on Appropriations over three cycles to receive request approvals.
- Secured \$100,000 federal grant from USDA-Rural Development for a nonprofit organization in Calaveras County that was exploring development of alternative jobs to lumbering in national forests.

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**Boards and Commissions**

SACRAMENTO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION	2018-2024
SACRAMENTO WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD	2015-2018
SACRAMENTO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU/VISIT SACRAMENTO BOARD	2015-2017
DOWNTOWN SACRAMENTO PARTNERSHIP BOARD	2015-2017
CALIFORNIA CAPITAL AIRSHOW BOARD	2015-2017
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WORLD TRADE CENTER BOARD	2015-2017
CARMICHAEL/OLD FOOTHILL FARMS COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMISSION	2009-2011
CARMICHAEL RECREATION & PARK DISTRICT	2000-2009
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF PARK & RECREATION COMMISSIONERS AND BOARD MEMBERS	2002-2007
SACRAMENTO COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATING COUNCIL	2003-2005
SACRAMENTO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD	2001-2005
SACRAMENTO TRANSPORTATION & AIR QUALITY COLLABORATIVE	2001-2003
SACRAMENTO COUNTY CHILDREN’S COALITION	1999-2004

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**Qualifications**

**Education**

**Master of Public Administration**, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA – Los Angeles, CA, 2004  
**Graduate Certificate in Political Management**, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA – Los Angeles, CA, 2003  
**Bachelor of Arts in Government**, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO – Sacramento, CA, 2002

**Awards & Honors**

**2023 “Most Admired CEO”** – Sacramento Business Journal  
**2022 “Built Community Impact Award”** – BuildOUT California  
**2013 Sacramento “40 Under 40”** – Sacramento Business Journal  
**2001 “Youth for Children Award”** – Child Abuse Prevention Council, Inc.

**Community Engagement**

**Nursing Program Advisory Board** – California Northstate University (2023-Present)  
**Finance Council Member** – Our Lady of the Assumption Parish (2022-Present)  
**American Leadership Forum (ALF) Senior Fellow** – ALF Mountain Valley Chapter (2016-Present)  
**Advisory Board Member** – Salvation Army Del Oro District (2020-2024)  
**Campaign Co-Chair** – Measure G Carmichael Park Bond Campaign (2022)  
**Founder & Past Chairman** – Carmichael Recreation & Park District Foundation (2009-2017)  
**Honorary Mayor of Carmichael** – Carmichael Chamber of Commerce (2009 & 2010)

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 1:35:32 PM

**Nominee:** Shelley Wetton

**Grad info:** BA 1994 (English), MA 1998 (English); AKA Shelley J. Ronan, Shelley J. Christopher

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Shelley Wetton, Five Star Bank's Senior Vice President / Chief Marketing Officer, is an exceptional alumna of Sacramento State University because of her dedication and commitment to the Sacramento community. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Arts in English, both from Sacramento State, and has proudly supported her alma mater throughout her career.

One way Shelley supports her alma mater is through Five Star Bank's partnership with the Sacramento State Business Honors (BHON) cohort. When the program was on the brink of being discontinued, Shelley advocated for the program and committed Five Star Bank as a multi-year sponsor. Shelley's commitment helped the University maintain and enhance the program to provide numerous cohorts of students the opportunity to learn more about business and diversify their knowledge and skills. This has made a positive impact on the lives of countless students, faculty, and young professionals. Through the sponsorship, Shelley introduced students to professionals from Five Star Bank who provide firsthand knowledge of what working in the banking industry was like. Shelley also personally taught multiple business marketing classes to Sacramento State students. Since Five Star Bank's sponsorship of the BHON program, Five Star Bank has hired many program graduates.

Shelley's support of Sacramento State University doesn't stop there. She is a passionate advocate and mentor for young professionals and has played a significant role in establishing Five Star Bank's Accelerated Leadership Track (ALT) program. This program hires college graduates who have little or no banking experience. The rotational training program taps into their skills and passion to place them on a meaningful career path. The ALT has evolved to become a highly sought-after program. Members of this program have performed exceptionally well in the company and have become some of the company's most admired and respected managers.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Shelley's dedication to the Greater Sacramento Region is admirable. She is a passionate advocate for non-profits that support the underserved and under-resourced and serves on (or has served on) several non-profit boards of directors to further her impact.

Shelley served on the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Board of Trustees (2017-2020) where she fundraised to help those affected by blood cancers. She currently serves on the board of directors of 3Strands Global Foundation to eradicate human trafficking through education and prevention. She also currently serves on the board of directors for the American River Parkway Foundation which inspires the

community to conserve and nurture the American River Parkway as a unique, accessible resource for everyone to enjoy. In addition, she serves as a board member for the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and helps make the Metro Chamber one of the most influential chambers in the country, enabling success in advocacy and initiatives that benefit the entire Capital Region.

Shelley's community involvement goes beyond serving on the board of directors for numerous local non-profits. Recognizing non-profits often lack marketing budgets, Shelley has created marketing campaigns/strategies that provide free exposure to non-profits through cable news production, social media, print and radio advertising, and billboards. Shelley has directed thousands of dollars of free advertising to myriad non-profits in our region, including United Way California Capital Region, Breathe California Sacramento Region, Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services, Saint John's Program for Real Change, 3Strands Global Foundation, Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps, American River Parkway Foundation - and many, many more. Please refer to the supplemental documentation provided to see examples of how Shelley amplifies the voices and missions of local non-profits that make significant impacts on our region.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Shelley has been a respected leader at Five Star Bank for almost a decade and has served in her current role as Senior Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer, since 2018. She has defined our corporate culture and brand narrative (she developed our why, purpose, core values and mission statement) and created and executed marketing strategies that are rich in depth and scope. She is a highly trusted and respected professional known for her aesthetic and attention to detail. She has rallied employees and our board of directors behind the bank's purpose-driven banking approach and defined the bank's verticals/niche markets. She also serves as a company "connector" and creates opportunities for employees to build and strengthen their professional relationships with one another. In 2022, Shelley created Five Star Bank's running team - the Five Star Flyers. With her encouragement, numerous employees have trained for and completed 5Ks, 10Ks and half marathons (with over 45 half-marathon completions to date!) Shelley's impact is felt by everyone in the company, but also by those we serve.

Every person who works with Five Star Bank feels the impact of Shelley's work. They not only see the tangible marketing she creates, including the cable news ads, billboards, social media and digital and print advertising, but they feel the difference Five Star Bank makes in the community. Five Star Bank supports clients, community partners and non-profits in every way possible, which are all efforts led by Shelley. Clients want to work with and align their brands with Five Star Bank and actively seek to be included in Five Star's marketing, which is an incredible testimony to Shelley's work and impact on the community.

Shelley is a respected mentor and community leader who is always looking to make our region a better place to work and live. In 2023, Shelley was recognized by the Sacramento Business Journal among their C-suite award winners for the depth and scope of her work and its impact on others. She would be an outstanding candidate for Sacramento State's Distinguished Service Award.

**Nominator:** Michael Rizzo

To the Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee:

Every year, Sacramento State's Distinguished Alumni Awards honor some of our region's most respected community leaders. It is always amazing to see what each individual has achieved thus far in their career. They serve as inspiration for the next generation and the honorees are always fully deserving of their awards.

Shelley Wetton, Senior Vice President / Chief Marketing Officer at Five Star Bank, is an ideal candidate for 2025's Distinguished Service Award. Her passion, dedication and commitment to Five Star Bank and our community are praiseworthy. She has established partnerships with Sacramento State to further the quality education students receive and has established programs to ensure young professionals are provided mentorship and promising careers as they graduate from local universities, including Sacramento State. She is a relentless supporter of our region's non-profits and serves on numerous boards of directors to further their reach and impact. Above all, Shelley cares about our community and making a difference in it. The impact Shelley is making at Five Star Bank and within the community can be felt by everyone who comes into contact with her.

Shelley is an outstanding individual, a trusted mentor and a respected community leader. It would be a tremendous honor for Shelley to receive the Distinguished Service Award for her accomplishments and the impact she has made throughout the Capital Region.

Sincerely,

Michael Rizzo

Executive Vice President / Chief Banking Officer

Five Star Bank

## Shelley Wetton Supplemental Documentation

### Comstock's Magazine Back Covers



“FIVE STAR BANK has been a trusted partner in **BREATHE CALIFORNIA SACRAMENTO REGION'S** life-saving work for over a decade. Five Star has been a rock, proactively seeking ways to help us streamline and access resources. With this solid foundation of support and trust, we look forward to many more productive years in the Greater Sacramento Region with Five Star Bank by our side.”

JENNIFER FINTON, CEO, BREATHE CALIFORNIA SACRAMENTO REGION

Pictured Left to Right: Elizabeth Smith, Air Quality Programs Director  
Kathleen Pearson, CFO, and Miranda Pearson, Tobacco Free Programs Director

[www.fivestarbank.com](http://www.fivestarbank.com) | (916) 626-5000



“We didn't realize what we were missing in our banking experience until we made the jump to **FIVE STAR BANK**. Their cutting-edge technology, unbeatable security, and innovative efficiencies in their banking operations are helping us as we plan for the **CALIFORNIA CAPITAL AIRSHOW'S** growth. Having them in the co-pilot's seat will take our airshow to new heights!”

DARCY BREWER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA CAPITAL AIRSHOW

Pictured Left to Right: Angela Henry, Director of Operations and Darcy Brewer, Executive Director

Celebrating 25 Years!

[www.fivestarbank.com](http://www.fivestarbank.com)  
(916) 626-5000



FIVE STAR BANK congratulates our client, **SACRAMENTO REGIONAL CONSERVATION CORPS**, on 40 years of service!

“FIVE STAR BANK isn't just our bank. They are an advocate for our organization, a participant in our work training program and a true business partner. We don't have to worry about our banking, so we can focus on providing corps members the opportunity to realize their potential and become highly-qualified employees who will contribute to our community and a sustainable future.”

Paula Birdsong, Executive Director, Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps

Pictured Left to Right: Baldev Singh, Deputy Director of Operations;  
Paula Birdsong, Executive Director; Beatrice Espinoza, Administrative Assistant

How can we help you?

[www.fivestarbank.com](http://www.fivestarbank.com) | (916) 626-5000



“For over 100 years, **UNITED WAY OF CALIFORNIA CAPITAL REGION**, has been committed to eliminating poverty by mobilizing our community to action. Working with community partners like **FIVE STAR BANK**, we are committed to lifting our region out of poverty. We are grateful for **FIVE STAR BANK'S** support and know we can trust them to provide excellent customer service and a banking experience personalized to our organization.”

Dr. Dawnté Early, President & CEO, United Way California Capital Region

Pictured Left to Right:  
Michael Howell, Chief Data Evaluation Officer  
Dr. Dawnté Early, President & CEO  
Ejoro Okoro, Senior Counsel, Public Policy & Advocacy

How can we help you?

[www.fivestarbank.com](http://www.fivestarbank.com) | (916) 626-5000



## Billboards



“ Having **FIVE STAR BANK** in the co-pilot’s seat will take us to new heights! ”

**DARCY BREWER**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CALIFORNIA CAPITAL AIRSHOW



“ **FIVE STAR BANK** cares about who we are and what we do. ”

**TARA TAYLOR**  
FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SINGLE MOM STRONG




“ **FIVE STAR BANK** helps **UNITED WAY** provide key programs to our region. ”

**DR. DAWNTÉ EARLY**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
UNITED WAY CALIFORNIA CAPITAL REGION




“ **FIVE STAR BANK** has been a trusted partner in our life-saving work for over a decade. They consistently make us feel like a valued client. ”

**JENNIFER FINTON**  
CEO  
BREATHE CALIFORNIA SACRAMENTO REGION  
**FIVE STAR BANK CLIENT SINCE 2008**



“ **FIVE STAR BANK** is committed to the conservation and restoration of the **AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY.** ”

**DIANNA POGGETTO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY FOUNDATION



## **Cable News Advertising**

**Brothers Air Support Cable News Ad:** <https://youtu.be/OUBPNW4m1ew?si=M5v9nn8SLSKJynip>

**California Capital Airshow Cable News Ad:**

<https://youtu.be/yKDPz94iA9Q?si=Jgng5yKx6-HEVC4U>

**AlphaOne Ambulance Medical Services Cable News Ad:**

<https://youtu.be/YadPkXLjscs?si=M4NMvChnttujhaFo>

## **Media Coverage**

**Sacramento Business Journal's C-Suite Award Feature:**

<https://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/news/2023/05/18/c-suite-awards-shelley-wetton-five-star-bank.html>

## 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Nominee:** Lori Wilson

**Grad info:** 2002, BS degree in Business Administration / Accountancy

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Distinguished Service Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Assemblywoman Lori Wilson goes above and beyond representing the community in the California State Legislature. Most notably, she is the first legislator in the history of California to be elected Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus as a freshman. The California Legislative Black Caucus was formed in 1967 when African American members of the California Legislature joined together to address the legislative concerns of African Americans and other citizens of color. Under her leadership, the Caucus has shattered previous records delivering hundreds of scholarships to students of color while also enjoying numerous legislative and budget wins.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Lori helps and supports military families in the community.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Assemblywoman Wilson leaves a legacy of inclusion and supporting other black women in the state of California. Her track record in the California State Assembly includes delivering policies that create good jobs, keep the community safe and improve the quality of life for her constituents and the people of California. Lori is focused on bringing state services directly to individuals, local businesses, veterans, non-profits, and local governments who need help interacting with government agencies, like the Employment Development Department.

**Nominator:** Michelle Willard

**Address:** 6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, 95819

**Email:** michelle.willard@csus.edu



# HONORARY ALUMNI AWARD NOMINATIONS

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 2:22:29 PM

**Nominee:** Brandon Gonzales

**Grad info:** not an alumnus

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Honorary Alumnus/na Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Brandon came to Sacramento State after a very successful career in Boxing to restart the historical Sacramento State Boxing team. Brandon in his 1st year is running the campus club with over 250 students enrolled, created a successful NCBA Boxing team that has so far produced an All American. Sacramento State has not had a boxing program in over 40 years.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Brandon owns Flawless Boxing in Sacramento, he runs countless Youth Boxing and Community outreach programs through his gym.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Brandon Gonzales has revived a historical Sacramento State program that was wildly successful, and in his 1st year already produced success in the NCBA National Championship. He also produced the 1st Female Competitive Boxer in Sacramento State History who is also our 1st Female All American.

**Nominator:** Hector Fajardo

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# Hector Fajardo

Director of Operations for Combat U

✉ h.fajardo@csus.edu

☎ +1 (650) 766-6960

📍 6000 Jed Smith Dr, Sacramento,  
CA

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## Dear Members of the Honorary Alumnus Award Committee:

It is with great pride and sincere admiration that I nominate Brandon Gonzales for the Sacramento State Honorary Alumnus Award. As a world-class professional boxer, devoted mentor, and dynamic leader within the Sacramento community, Mr. Gonzales has consistently demonstrated the values and mission of this University, despite not being an alumnus himself.

Mr. Gonzales has made a lasting impact at Sacramento State through his leadership in reviving the Combat U boxing program - a historic return after a 50-year absence. His coaching and mentorship have directly influenced student-athletes, including in the recent inaugural Causeway Boxing Classic, where his daughter and Sac State student, Ayahna Gonzales, earned a remarkable victory. Beyond athletic achievement, Mr. Gonzales emphasizes discipline, personal growth, and community engagement in his students, embodying the spirit of a true Hornet.

Outside of campus, Mr. Gonzales serves the greater Sacramento area through Flawless Boxing & Fitness, a gym he founded to empower at-risk youth through boxing, fitness, and life skills. His efforts help guide young people away from violence and toward purpose, leadership, and self-respect. His work is not only transformative-it's inspiring.

Mr. Gonzales's commitment to Sacramento State and the surrounding community represents the highest standards of support, leadership, and heart. For these reasons and more, I strongly recommend him for this esteemed recognition. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

*Hector Fajardo*



Brandon "Flawless" Gonzales is a former world-class professional boxer, dedicated community leader, and passionate advocate for the sport of boxing. With a distinguished amateur career that saw him ranked as the number one boxer in the United States in 2005 and earning Fighter of the Year honors from the Northern California Boxing Association, Gonzales transitioned to professional boxing, achieving a record of 18 wins, 1 loss, and 1 draw, with 10 knockouts. He fought on major platforms like HBO, ESPN, Showtime, and Sky Sport PPV, solidifying his place in the boxing world.

After retiring from the ring, Gonzales opened Flawless Boxing & Fitness in Sacramento, a gym designed to empower youth and give back to the community. Through this gym, he offers programs that focus on boxing, fitness, and life skills, mentoring the next generation and providing them with positive outlets. His efforts aim not only to teach the sport but also to steer youth away from violence and dangerous street activities.

Gonzales' commitment to the sport extends to his work with Sacramento State Combat U program, which he helped revive after a 50-year hiatus. Under his leadership, the team participated in the inaugural Causeway Boxing Classic, where Sac State's Ayahna Gonzales, his daughter, emerged victorious. This event was a testament to Gonzales' dedication to fostering athletic opportunities for students at the university and strengthening the community through boxing.

Brandon Gonzales's influence, both in the boxing world and his contributions to Sac State and the broader Sacramento area, highlights his unwavering dedication to mentorship, leadership, and giving back to his community.

<https://sacobserver.com/2024/12/sacramento-state-boxing-classic/>

<https://www.kcra.com/article/flawless-boxing-sacramento-teaches-kids-boxing-hopes-reduce-violence/39958195>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandon\\_Gonzales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandon_Gonzales)

<https://www.flawlessboxingfit.com/brandon-gonzales>

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 4:35:05 PM

**Nominee:** Susan Wheeler

**Grad info:** Susan Wheeler is a longtime friend and benefactor of Sacramento State.

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Honorary Alumnus/na Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Every organization or cause has a champion. For STEM at Sacramento State, ours is Susan Wheeler.

Susan has been a champion for science and engineering through her involvement in both ECS and NSM. In ECS, she has served as pillar of the Dean's advisory board helping recruit members, provide structure and stability and leading the way in establishing an endowment to support innovation for our students. While working for SMUD, Susan fulfilled the vital role of being a constant in the relationship between the utility, our electrical engineering department and the Dean. In NSM, Susan was inspired to support undergraduate student research for chemistry students to honor her late husband, Edward. She established the Edward L Wheeler Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Award, an endowment with a current-use counterpart to maximize impact immediately. She is eager to meet the first recipient for the 2025 SURE cohort in the near future.

Her passion for STEM extends beyond Sac State as a founding member of Sacramento Advocates for Girls' Empowerment (SAGE), Juma and as an active member of the Renaissance Society. Susan proudly refer to herself as a 'Hornet at Heart' wearing her Sacramento State attire wherever she goes and sharing the transformative work we are doing opening the doors for women in STEM.

We can think of no great honor than awarding this 'Hornet at Heart' the Honorary Alumnus Award. Thank you for your consideration.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

As a retiree, Susan has a plethora of places she can choose to spend her time and organizations she can be involved with. Every time, Susan chooses Sacramento State. Susan is more than a member of the community. She is a champion and connector for the university.

As chair of the Dean's advisory board in ECS, she has helped recruit three new board members in her first six months, structured the board to become more involved in college events and organized the board to advocate as needed to behalf of the STEM disciplines for support during tough budget times.

She has helped build bridges where there were none. Through Susan's efforts we were able to host our inaugural STEM pitch competition on campus elevating innovation and entrepreneurship among our students. She is a connector with local industry getting them to campus and out students and faculty to them.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Through Susan's efforts with community partners, she has helped secure base funding for a number of programs at Sacramento State including the Hornet Leadership and the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Programs. She has helped open the doors for students in emerging STEM fields through the establishment of the Wheeler Innovation Endowment in ECS supporting students obtaining work experience in emerging engineering and computer science fields. Susan directly supports undergraduate chemistry students by creating an opportunity for them to work with a faculty mentor on a research project over the summer. By supporting the SURE Program, Susan has created opportunities for students to focus solely on research over the summer break, which has proven to give our graduates a considerable leg up in the job market post-graduation.

**Nominator:** Thomas Whitcher



California State University, Sacramento  
College of Engineering & Computer Science  
Office of the Dean  
6000 J Street, MS 6023 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
T (916) 278-6366 • [www.ecs.csus.edu](http://www.ecs.csus.edu)

April 11, 2025

Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6029

Dear Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee:

I am writing to nominate **Susan Wheeler** for the **Sacramento State Distinguished Honorary Alumni Award**. Although Susan earned her Computer Science degree from UC Berkeley and her MBA from Columbia University, she has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to Sacramento State that justifies such recognition.

Susan currently serves as Chair of the College of Engineering and Computer Science Industry Advisory Board (IAB), where she has made notable contributions to increase membership and focus on board member engagement, which has both broadened and strengthened connections between our college and industry partners. Susan's ability to build consensus while maintaining focus on Board outcomes has been instrumental in achieving this success.

In her professional role as Workforce Outreach, Development and Education Relations leader at Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), Susan developed innovative approaches to diversifying the technical workforce. Her career experience at major corporations including AT&T, Chevron, and General Electric provides her with valuable insights that she readily shares with our institution and on our advisory board.

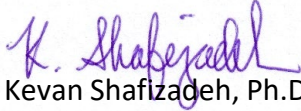
Ms. Wheeler recently made the decision to include both the College of Engineering and Computer Science (ECS) and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NSM) in her estate planning. Her planned gift will establish an endowment focused on supporting innovations in STEM education and ensuring access for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Her philanthropic commitment demonstrates a deep belief in Sacramento State's mission and will have a lasting impact on future generations of students. This generosity from someone who did not attend our university speaks volumes about her dedication to our institution.

Susan's contributions extend beyond campus. As founder of Sacramento Advocates for Girls' Empowerment (SAGE), she has created pathways to STEM careers for hundreds of young women throughout our region. For ten years, she served as Co-Director of Tech Trek at UC Davis, a residential STEM camp that introduces middle school girls to technical education opportunities. She also serves on several community boards, including Juma (supporting youth aging out of foster care) and Friends of Sacramento Arts, demonstrating her comprehensive understanding of the educational ecosystem and the various factors that influence student success.

At SMUD, Susan was a powerful advocate for increasing diversity in STEM fields, partnering with many community-based organizations to create educational and career pathways for underrepresented populations. Her leadership in this area aligns perfectly with Sacramento State's commitment to being an inclusive institution that serves all members of our diverse community. The programs she has helped establish have made a tangible difference in the lives of many students who might otherwise not have pursued a STEM education.

The Distinguished Honorary Alumni Award was created to recognize individuals who demonstrate extraordinary commitment to our institution despite not being graduates. Susan Wheeler exemplifies this category perfectly. Her leadership, advocacy, and generosity have strengthened our University in numerous ways. Susan has chosen to invest her time, expertise, and resources in Sacramento State out of genuine dedication to our mission. Her relationship with our University demonstrates that being a "Hornet at Heart" transcends traditional alumni status. I offer my respectful recommendation for Susan Wheeler for the Distinguished Honorary Alumni Award.

Thank you for your consideration,



Kevan Shafizadeh, Ph.D., P.E., T.E., PTOE, PTP

Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science

[shafizadeh@csus.edu](mailto:shafizadeh@csus.edu)

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
**SACRAMENTO**

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COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES &  
MATHEMATICS

To whom it may concern,

As dean of the College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics, I'm proud to endorse and support Susan Wheeler's nomination for Sacramento State's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2025. NSM is one of many colleges that have benefitted from Susan's generosity and support and university-wide recognition for her philanthropy and passion is long overdue.

Despite not graduating from Sacramento State, Susan coined the term "Hornet at Heart" and has embodied that sentiment since 2013, when she documented a very generous planned gift to support ASI's Women In STEM Club. But a six-figure estate gift was just the beginning of her philanthropy at Sacramento State.

Susan continues to support and benefit various areas of campus, including our planetarium, the Renaissance Society, Guardian Scholars, the College of Business, Sac State Cares, the Carlsen Center, and most recently, the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Program. Susan established an endowment in memory of her late husband, Edward L. Wheeler, to support our chemistry students and provide them with the opportunity to conduct research with a faculty mentor and present their findings to peers and the community.

Susan is also in the process of establishing a named award for the College of Engineering & Computer Science, where she has served as an industry board member for several years. When ECS & NSM co-hosted a student pitch contest in conjunction with the Carlsen Center, Susan was quick to volunteer as a judge and brought the best out in the student presenters.

It's clear that "giving back" is more than just writing a check when it comes to Susan. This Hornet at Heart is eager to connect with students, mentor, and plug into her community. Her generosity and vision continue to inspire me and my peers in academic leadership. As a fellow "Hornet at Heart," there's no one else I'd rather see receive this incredible honor.

Thank you for your consideration,



Dr. Shannon Datwyler  
Interim Dean, College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics  
California State University, Sacramento

## Susan Wheeler

swheeler\_1@yahoo.com  
www.linkedin.com/in/susan-wheeler-primo-connector

(916) 768-6297

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### Key Skills and Competencies

Excellent communicator with bias towards action. Proven results in creating a vision, leading diverse groups, building relationships and leading cross-functional, collaborative teams. Expertise in planning, implementing and measuring effectiveness of programs and leading continuous process improvement efforts. Strong customer service approach to designing and delivering innovative solutions that deliver on business strategy.

- Strategic Planning
- Market Analysis
- Process Improvement
- Budget Planning and Management
- Team Building and Mentoring
- Strategic Communications
- Program Design/Management
- New Business Opportunity Evaluation

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### Education

**Marketing Management ('97)**  
**M.B.A. ('91)**  
**B.S. Computer Science ('82)**

*Columbia University, Executive Education, NY*  
*Columbia University, New York*  
*University of California, Berkeley*

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### Professional Experience

**Center for Energy Workforce Development** **2023 – present**  
Nonprofit consortium of energy companies, associations, unions, education institutions, and government entities working to ensure a skilled energy industry workforce pipeline.

#### **Consultant**

Provide subject-matter expertise to organizations that develop training and support to individuals seeking careers in the energy sector. Projects funded by U.S. Department of Labor.

#### **SMUD**

**2011 - 2023**

Sixth largest publicly owned electric utility in the U.S. with \$1.5B revenue.

#### **Workforce Outreach, Development and Education Relations**

Led team of 4 direct reports to develop and implement innovative strategies to increase candidate pool diversity with a focus on STEM careers. Partner with nonprofits to create job readiness programs for under-represented communities. Coordinate resources across the company to ensure scalable and sustainable programs with measurable results. Implement recruitment process improvements based on feedback from broad range of stakeholders.

- ⇒ Developed strategic roadmap and implemented vision to SMUD's workforce outreach and development programs to align with sustainable community development goals.
- ⇒ Strengthened partnerships with community organizations to increase workforce outreach and development into underserved and under-resourced communities. Increased outreach by partnering with over 70 community-based organizations.
- ⇒ Developed innovative programs that increase employee engagement and expanded workforce outreach. Over 10% of SMUD employees signed up to be Career Ambassadors. Career Ambassadors conducted approximately 140 events that reached over 34,000 community members.
- ⇒ Represented SMUD on strategic workforce planning, succession planning and diversity initiatives across the U.S. Recognized in our region as SMUD's representative on workforce issues.

- ⇒ Promoted Technical careers to a broad spectrum of students through a statewide Advisory Committee.
- ⇒ Revamped and oversaw college and high school internship programs as part of SMUD's workforce pipeline efforts.
- ⇒ Designed and implemented programs that helped career-bound youth develop workplace skills and position themselves for STEM careers in the community.
- ⇒ Developed and managed programs that provided hands-on STEM-orientated learning for high school and college students.
- ⇒ Developed and managed organization's budget (\$1M). Justified additional budget when needed (e.g. added headcount, use of contractor, support for community pipeline programs). Forecasted and measured budget actuals monthly.
- ⇒ Managed vendors and contracts worth over \$1.5M.

## **Blue Shield of California**

**2009 - 2011**

Health plan provider that serves over 4M members.

### **Senior Product Manager – eBusiness**

Drove strategic vision for technology solutions supporting health insurance operations organizations.

- ⇒ Oversaw implementation of technology changes to support Affordable Care Act.
- ⇒ Implemented process improvements that identified opportunities to reduce administrative costs (savings ~\$500,000/yr.).
- ⇒ Hired and mentored 10 direct reports. Provided guidance on work prioritization and schedule.
- ⇒ Implemented Agile methodology within Business Unit. Partnered with IT to ensure adoption.

## **LEED – Linking Education and Economic Development**

**2008 – 2009**

Nonprofit organization serving the six-county Sacramento Region. This organization was a recognized leader in aligning educational resources to advance regional economic objectives.

### **Director, Educational Development**

Collaborated with business, education and government partners to identify and deliver education programs that supported regional workforce needs.

- ⇒ Established and nurtured relationships with broad spectrum of business, nonprofit, public sector organizations and government representatives in the Sacramento region. Identified common objectives and built collaborative teams that designed and implemented successful workforce development programs.
- ⇒ Developed governance model and supporting policies and procedures for nonprofit Board.
- ⇒ Increased engagement of public and private sector employers to support student success through internships and work-based learning opportunities.
- ⇒ Led strategic planning process for 30 Board members from the education and business community.
- ⇒ Developed and managed organization's budget (\$15M). Forecasted and measured budget against actuals on a monthly basis.
- ⇒ Built partnerships between business and education communities to increase student awareness of high-paying careers in the Sacramento Region.
- ⇒ Created processes to measure and track program impact on student performance.
- ⇒ Analyzed data to identify schools with greatest need for workforce programs.
- ⇒ Managed and ensured grant compliance. Developed reports to demonstrate organization fulfilled requirements.
- ⇒ Identified new business partnerships and opportunities for programmatic sponsorships.

## **Pathfinder Consulting Solutions**

**2000 - 2008**

Management consulting company that helped clients streamline processes and clarify roles.

### **Principal**

Collaborated with clients to increase profitability, employee engagement and customer satisfaction through process improvement. Created dashboards to track Key Performance Indicators. Clients included AT&T, Tyco, Caltrans, Calif. State Controller's Office, Calif. Dept. of Water Resources and Calif. Independent System Operator (CAISO).

- ⇒ Led team of 4 direct reports to deliver customized solutions for clients to decrease operational costs while also improving their customers' experience.
- ⇒ Delivered operational improvements via gap and process analysis and best practice synthesis.
- ⇒ Identified, analyzed and developed best practice models based on industry benchmarks.
- ⇒ Guided clients through process mapping that identified roadblocks and duplication of work. Outcomes for clients were streamlined processes and reduced costs.

## **Pandesic**

**1999 - 2000**

Joint venture between Intel and SAP that delivered innovative e-commerce platform to the market.

### **Director, Product Management & Product Marketing**

Led team of 15 that clearly defined market segments, quantified business opportunities and introduced targeted e-commerce products and services.

- ⇒ Prepared and managed \$3M budget
- ⇒ Set the vision, developed, implemented and managed deliverables for strategic plans related to new technology business opportunities.
- ⇒ Managed cross-functional teams and created shared goals that ensured buy-in.
- ⇒ Evaluated and selected new market opportunities to increase revenue streams.
- ⇒ Developed and implemented Project Management methodology across the company.

## **Interliant**

**1998 - 1999**

Start-up company that launched new business model to help companies conduct business online.

### **Director, Product Management**

Member of senior management team that shaped application hosting (ASP) business.

- ⇒ Developed human resource policies and procedures for this fledgling business.
- ⇒ Created and implemented new hire on-boarding process to create welcoming environment and decrease new employee time to productivity.
- ⇒ Led team to conduct primary and secondary research; developed marketing and business plans. Partnered with marketing to create targeted collateral for specific customer segments.
- ⇒ Coached team of 10, provided on-going feedback to help them achieve their potential.
- ⇒ Developed and managed \$10M budget.

## **AT&T**

**1987 - 1998**

Worldwide telecommunications company with over 228,000 employees

### **Managing Director, Customer Care Strategist, Operations Logistics Planning**

Led team of 20 direct reports that developed and deployed global Virtual Private Network telecommunications strategy and helped launch AT&T's internet service offering.

- ⇒ Partnered with Engineering Department to define new features and functions for AT&T technology solutions. Developed disaster recovery processes that minimized client impact.
- ⇒ Developed and implemented multi-year roadmaps to launch new products.
- ⇒ Implemented Customer Operations process improvements that reduced costs by 15%. Conducted pilot programs that included change management as part of program rollout.
- ⇒ Led and managed multi-organizational team of 70 employees to develop \$22B business plan; defined goals, measured results and adjusted programs to adhere to budget.

- ⇒ Chaired Business Unit budget and compensation committees for over 1,000 employees.
- ⇒ Created first Women's Employee Resource Group (ERG) that focused on encouraging women to stretch their skills/leadership competencies and identify ways to contribute to the success of the company.

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### **Other**

**Adjunct Faculty**, Community Colleges and Universities (Los Rios, Sierra, UC Davis)  
Develop and deliver curriculum for open enrollment and custom courses. Subjects include Entrepreneurship, Business Planning, Management, Communications and Marketing.

**Board Member**, Sac State College of Engineering and Computer Science Industry Advisory Board (IAB) – helped draft new strategic plan for incoming Dean that revitalized employer support for the college's programs and its students. Chair the IAB.

**Board Member**, Juma – provided community connections to help this nonprofit find supporters and businesses who are interested in hiring Juma youth who have aged out of the foster care system.

**Board Member**, Friends of Sacramento Arts – help community understand the impact of Prop 28 and bring arts education back to schools.

**Former Co-Director (for 10 years)**, Tech Trek at U.C. Davis – Manage logistics, recruit teachers, volunteers and develop programs that introduce rising 8th grade girls to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math as part of a 1-week residential camp.

**Founder**, Sacramento Advocates for Girls' Empowerment (SAGE) – Led this all-volunteer nonprofit which provided female role models in Science, Technology Engineering and Math to middle and high-school students for career exploration and mentoring. The goal was to make a difference in the lives of underserved students by increasing their awareness of choices that could help them improve their earning potential and quality of life.



# RISING STAR AWARD NOMINATIONS

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/13/2025 6:17:53 PM

**Nominee:** Duke Cooney

**Grad info:** BA 2017 (Political Science), BA 2017 (Dance)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Rising Star Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Duke Cooney is the embodiment of what Sacramento State stands for-leadership, service, and a deep commitment to community. As a first-generation college graduate, Duke used his education from Sacramento State as a launchpad to become a dedicated public servant and change maker in the Sacramento region.

Duke has dedicated his career to serving the Sacramento community through advocacy, public policy changes, and community empowerment. A proud graduate of Sacramento State University, where he founded Delta Lambda Phi - a Fraternity for Gay and progressive men, Duke went on to earn his law degree from McGeorge School of Law. While in law school, he worked full time as a Legislative Aid in the California Legislature, as a lobbyist advocating for the protection of California's natural resources, and with a non profit teaching community members to advocate for policy change that addresses childhood trauma.

From his early work in the California Legislature to his current role as a program manager, overseeing public affairs and government relations for Golden 1 Credit Union, Duke has remained deeply committed to uplifting under-served communities, advocating for civil rights, and advancing public policy. His experience includes being on the forefront of protecting the rights and liberties of Californians-most notably through his work with ACLU California Action, where he served as a legislative advocate focused on criminal justice reform, juvenile justice, and protecting the rights of the unhoused.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, he has continuously stepped up as a community leader on local boards, at schools, and non profit leadership.

Duke served as Vice Chair of Sacramento's Measure U Community Advisory Commission, where he advocated for transparency and equitable investment of city funds in under-served neighborhoods. He currently serves on the Measure M Community Oversight Committee for the Elk Grove Unified School District, ensuring responsible use of school bond funds to improve opportunities for students by upgrading educational and technical facilities.

Duke also serves on the School Site Council at his daughter's elementary school in Elk Grove Unified, where he works closely with school staff and parents to assess student needs and help allocate resources to address those needs.

His dedication to youth and families extends into the nonprofit space as well. Duke has held leadership roles on the boards of United and Guided, Inc. and Giving4Loss - organizations focused on mentoring youth, addressing trauma, and supporting community healing. He also served as President of the Cabrillo Park Neighborhood Association, where he revived the organization, expanded community outreach, and worked to build a stronger, more connected neighborhood.

Duke's leadership and service reflect the beginning of a lifelong commitment to equity, empowerment, and civic engagement-making him a standout Sacramento State alumnus and a true rising star.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Duke Cooney's contributions have created lasting, positive impacts across Sacramento-both through the policies he's helped shape and the people he's inspired along the way. His grassroots campaign for Sacramento County Supervisor in 2022 was more than a political run-it was a call to action for a more inclusive and equitable future. Though the campaign did not end in elected office, it mobilized thousands of residents, engaged underrepresented communities, and sparked important conversations about leadership, representation, and justice. Securing over 10,000 votes, Duke showed what's possible when you lead with heart, values, and a commitment to public good.

Following the campaign, Duke continued to serve the community with even greater purpose. As a leader at ACLU California Action, he championed social justice policies and civil rights protections that have improved the lives of countless Californians. Locally, his leadership as Vice Chair of the Measure U Community Advisory Commission ensured greater transparency and accountability in how public funds are used-directly impacting neighborhoods that have historically been overlooked.

But perhaps Duke's most powerful and lasting impact lies in who he inspires. As a Black man and first-generation college graduate, Duke stands as a powerful example to young people-especially youth of color-that there is a place for them at every table, including in policy, advocacy, and government leadership. Whether through mentorship, public service, or simply by showing up with integrity and purpose, Duke continues to blaze a trail for others to follow.

His efforts have reached community members, students, families, voters, and future leaders-and their lives are better because of his dedication.

**Nominator:** Jeremy Garrett

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**Jeremy Garrett**

26 Paramount Circle  
Sacramento, CA 95823  
(916) 8839132  
jeremygarrett27@gmail.com

13th April 2025

**The Sacramento State Alumni Association**

**To the Selection Committee,**

It is with great pride and personal conviction that I nominate Duke Cooney for the Rising Star Alumni Award from Sacramento State University. As a fellow Sac State alum and someone who has known Duke since he was a teenager growing up in Vallejo, I have had the unique privilege of watching his journey unfold—from a young man full of potential, to a dedicated student leader at Sacramento State, to a respected public servant and changemaker in the Sacramento region.

Duke's life and career exemplify what it means to rise—rooted in purpose, guided by values, and driven by a desire to serve. As a first-generation college graduate, Duke embraced every opportunity Sac State had to offer, including the Sacramento Semester Program, which launched his career in public policy. Since then, he has worked in both the House of the California Legislature, advocated for social justice and civil liberties at ACLU California Action, and now leads public affairs and government relations at Golden 1 Credit Union—all while staying grounded in service to others. But perhaps Duke's most powerful and lasting impact lies in who he inspires. As a Black man and first-generation college graduate, Duke stands as a powerful example to young people—especially youth of color—that there is a place for them at every table, including in policy, advocacy, and government leadership. Whether through mentorship, public service, or simply by showing up with integrity and purpose, Duke continues to blaze a trail for others to follow.

Duke Cooney is not only a proud Hornet—he is a living example of what Sac State prepares its students to become: courageous leaders, lifelong learners, and agents of positive change. I have no doubt that he will continue to rise, and I strongly urge the committee to recognize him with this well-deserved honor.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

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**Jeremy Garrett**

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 3/10/2025 10:07:47 AM

**Nominee:** Jessica Ravetti

**Grad info:** BS 2017 (Kinesiology); Member of the Sac State Women's Softball team from 2014-2017

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Rising Star Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Jessica is a Senior Account Manager in Membership Services for the Sacramento Kings. She started as an inside sales representative upon graduation from Sacramento State in 2017, rapidly moved up to an account representative, and was promoted to her current position in 2022. She accomplished all of this in less than five years due to her record of serving Kings season ticket holders, working with other departments to honor season ticket holders during Kings games, and ensuring that season ticket holders know they are appreciated. Currently, she manages 430 accounts with a revenue stream of about \$1.3 million. She proudly promotes the fact that she is a Sac State alum while making sure her accounts are updated on Kings events and services, resolving their concerns and game-day problems, and enhancing their experiences (e.g., complimentary seat upgrades, on-court opportunities). Her outstanding service to her accounts, while noting that she attended Sacramento State, brings considerable recognition and credibility to our University.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Jessica played softball for Sacramento State from 2014 through 2017 and received an honorable mention in the all-Big Sky Conference. Her passion for sports led her to be very involved in the community, serving as volunteer Board member for the Women in Sports. She also volunteers her time to run events for female staff for both the Sacramento Kings and the Sacramento River Cats. Additionally, she participates in community events such as helping pack "goodie bags" for troops at Christmas, packing backpacks with Raley's for children who need school supplies, and decorating classrooms to spread holiday cheer to young people.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

I have been a Kings season ticketholder for 38 years, and Jessica is by far the best account representative I have worked with-nobody else has been even close to her in terms of the level of service she provides, her friendliness, and her professionalism. Having been a Professor of Marketing at Sacramento State for nearly 40 years, I am very sensitive to how well our graduates represent the University in the community. She is one of the very best I have come across in all of those years. Jessica is very sensitive to making sure people have some enjoyment in their lives. For many who believe the Kings are an integral part of the fabric of the Sacramento community, she ensures that they are recognized and appreciated for their support for the Kings and the community in general. The result is that she has a very high retention level for season ticket holders. Her volunteer work that blends her

background in Sacramento State sports and her position with the Kings, is an inspiration that women can move up quickly in an organization by serving their clientele.

**Nominator:** Dennis Tootelian

***Dennis H. Tootelian, Ph.D.***  
*Emeritus Professor of Marketing*  
*College of Business, CSUS*  
*2190 Morley Way, Sacramento, California 95864*  
*(916) 712-4504; tootelian@comcast.net or tootelia@csus.edu*

March 10, 2025

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

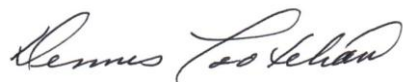
This is to nominate Jessica Ravetti for the Rising Star award. I have known Jessica for several years in her position as a Senior Account Manager for the Sacramento Kings.

As a Professor of Marketing at Sacramento State for nearly 40 years and teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have seen thousands of our students graduate and embark on their careers. While many of them became quite accomplished in their fields, few have demonstrated as high a level of commitment to helping people as has Jessica. Providing good “customer service” often is part of one’s job, but what impresses me most about Jessica is that she actively seeks to do so, is very accomplished in her efforts, and thrives on her successes. When she helps a client, she seems genuinely more excited and satisfied than the client she served. Being a Professor of Marketing, I’m keenly attuned to this mentality. Apparently, senior management of the Sacramento Kings recognized these attributes in Jessica as well, having already promoting her multiple times in her relatively young career.

Jessica played on the Sacramento State women’s softball team, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology. She is very proud of being a Sac State graduate and is quick to tell acquaintances about her educational background. In all, she is an outstanding representative of the graduates of our University.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this nomination to recognize a wonderful graduate of ours. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Dennis H. Tootelian, Ph.D.  
Emeritus Professor of Marketing  
California State University, Sacramento



Distinguished Alumni Award Committee; Nomination for the Rising Star Award

It has come to my attention that one of our former Student Athletes from Sacramento State has been nominated for this prestige's award. Being a former recipient of a Distinguished Award back in the early 80's, I know firsthand the value of such an award. On behalf of Jessica Ravetti I would like to extend my recommendation for her to be considered to receive the "Rising Star" Award, in this year's selection process for 2025.

Jessica played Softball at Sacramento State from 2014 through 2017 and was an All Big Sky Conference Honorable Mention Athlete. Jessica was an outstanding student and represented our Department in the highest regards.

Upon graduation from Sacramento State she has been very involved in several community support events and currently is the Senior Accounts Manager in Membership Services for the Sacramento Kings organization. She is well respected in the Kings Organization. In addition, she has demonstrated her love of Sacramento State and her appreciation of the excellent education she received while attending our University.

I would therefore like to enthusiastically recommend Jessica Ravetti to be considered for the 2025 "Rising Star" award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John R. Smith'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

John R. Smith  
Special Asst. to The Director of Athletics  
& Retired Head Baseball Coach  
Sacramento State



# LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINATIONS

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/8/2025 4:53:12 PM

**Nominee:** John Robert (Bob) Connelly

**Grad info:** This is a posthumous nomination. BA 1960 (History), MA 2008 (History)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

During a career spanning more than 30 years in California state government, Bob held a number of key positions. These included service as staff to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, as a consultant to both the Assembly Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committees, and as Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Forestry.

The expertise gained and contributions made in these roles led to Bob's appointment in 1987 as the Chief Administrative Officer of the California State Assembly. In this capacity, Bob was responsible for directing the statewide administration of the Assembly's complex internal operations. The job was contentious and included responsibility for proposing a comprehensive plan to implement the 38 percent budget cut required by the passage of Proposition 130 in 1990. He successfully advocated for cuts that minimized impacts to both the public and Assembly staff. Bob earned great respect from the members for his honorable and honest service in this capacity until his retirement in 1995.

Bob was known as a consummate professional in his interactions with Assembly members, other elected officials, staff, the press, and the public. At the time of Bob's retirement, former Assembly Speaker and San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr., proclaimed him "among the most widely experienced and knowledgeable persons ever to serve as legislative staff." In the attached letter, Mr. Brown emphasizes that "Bob's career achievements are certainly exceptional...Few, if any, I have known could match his career resume."

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Beyond his influential public service career, Bob was involved with the community in many meaningful ways. In Mr. Brown's endorsement, he emphasizes that Bob "was periodically tapped as a guest speaker for high school and college classes, not only because of his remarkable breadth of knowledge, but also because of his engaging personality and wonderful sense of humor." Having seen Bob's presentations from time to time, I know that he would illustrate or emphasize key points with references to history and to his own experiences. In her endorsement, Lynda Roper-Ayala describes Bob's volunteer involvement with the Sacramento Valley Conservancy, whose mission it is "to preserve the beauty, character and biodiversity of the Sacramento Valley landscape by protecting and stewarding natural and working lands, and scenic open spaces for the benefit of current and future generations."

Beyond his career success, Bob enjoyed many adventurous activities throughout his lifetime. These included parachute jumping as a young man, earning his private pilot's license, sailing, boat building and

horseback riding. In the mid-1960s, Bob and his first wife, Dorene "Dede," sailed their wooden sailboat, "Wind Wagon," from San Francisco to New Zealand and back by way of Tahiti and Hawaii. Bob often said one of the best moments of his life was watching Tahiti rise from the horizon at dawn after they had been at sea for 36 days while crossing the Pacific, using just a sextant for navigation.

Bob was proud of his accomplishments, including going on to build two sailboats, the 42-foot sloop, "Sundance," in the early 1970s, and - with second wife Deborah Domitrovich - the 48-foot cutter, "Amazing Grace," in the late 1980s. His stories from those experiences were captivating additions to his high school and collegiate presentations.

As Ms. Roper-Ayala describes in some detail, Bob - in his 70s - realized his lifelong dream of riding horses, after medical advancements allowed him to overcome his severe allergic reaction to them. Although he showed relentless enthusiasm for quickly mastering horseback riding, Bob also had his share of broken ribs. Still, Bob was undaunted and eventually became a competent rider. The sheer joy on Bob's face was undeniable whenever he galloped his horse, Dillon, exclaiming an exuberant, "yeehaw!"

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

The lasting and positive impacts of Bob's contributions are important considerations for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Brown says, "Bob's quest for knowledge never faltered. He was an avid reader, always prepared to quote from great literature or cite historical facts. He was also a talented listener, able to focus attention on others and to be with them in the moment. The innumerable people Bob mentored throughout his lifetime continue to hold a debt of gratitude, as he helped pave the way for many successful careers." Mr. O'Connell says, "Bob was personable, persuasive, and smart. He is an individual who left a legacy that we all benefit from today." Ms. Roper-Ayala notes that Bob "participated in Renaissance Society courses at CSUS when he was in his 80s. His zest for living, learning and giving back never diminished. Despite his many achievements, contributions, and brilliant mind, Bob was never boastful, preferring to speak with people about their experiences, struggles, and inspirations." David Geeting points out that Bob "was someone who would take the time to listen to reason and to lend a helping hand."

When last I saw Bob, he was making his way through Robert Caro's monumental, multi-volume biography of LBJ, and discussed it at some length. The visit was "so Bob" I thought, always expanding his knowledge, always able to make a lasting and positive impact on each and every individual he met.

**Nominator:** Gregory Geeting

April 8, 2025

Sacramento State Alumni Association  
2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

My friend – John Robert (Bob) Connelly – was a Renaissance man. His life and career were – and continue to be – the stuff of legend. Indeed, as you make your way through this posthumous nomination, you will be asking why Bob was not nominated during his lifetime. All I can say is that he should have been, and the fact he was not is my failing, not his. He was an outstanding individual whose lifetime embraced exploit, accomplishment, and success.

Bob was my colleague in the late 1970s, when he was a consultant to the state Senate Finance Committee, then chaired by Sacramento-area Senator Albert S. Rodda. He focused on the areas of resources, transportation, and the environment. In the late 1950s, Bob was a student of my father's – Dr. Baxter M. Geeting – when attending Sacramento State. Bob was my brother's employer for a brief time (summer 1960) when Bob managed the Hertz Rent-a-Car location at what was then Sacramento's principal commercial airport, and is now Sacramento Executive Airport.

A long-time resident of Sacramento, Bob passed away on December 14, 2023, at the age of 89. Bob was born on May 6, 1934, in the Bronx, New York. He and his older sister, Joan, were raised primarily by their mother, Gladys Mullen-Connelly, who moved the three of them to Sacramento from Philadelphia in 1945 via Greyhound bus. Bob attended and – in 1953 – graduated from C. K. McClatchy High School, where he was a staff writer for the student newspaper ("The Prospector") in his junior and senior years, as well as a featured actor in the senior play ("January Thaw") in the fall of 1952. Eventually, Bob attended and graduated from Sacramento State in 1960, majoring in History. Bob is survived by his daughter, Courtney Harrison, son-in-law, Jim Harrison, and many dear friends.

The rest of this nomination details Bob's extraordinary life and achievements. Appended are two newspaper articles, as well as messages of support for the nomination from former Assembly Speaker and San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.; former Assembly Member, State Senator, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell; my brother David Geeting; and Bob's long-time colleague Lynda Roper-Ayala.

Through this information, you will meet a truly extraordinary Sacramento State alumnus!

*Gregory Geeting*

Gregory Geeting

Area 1 Trustee, Sacramento County Board of Education (2008-17)

Executive Staff, California Department of Education (2003-08)

Executive Director, California State Board of Education (1987-88, 1991-95, 2002-03)

Sacramento State, Class of 1974

WILLIE L. BROWN, JR.  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
100 THE EMBARCADERO  
PENTHOUSE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94105-1217

TELEPHONE: (415) 777-0310

FACSIMILE: (415) 777-0360

John Robert (Bob) Connelly  
Nomination for Lifetime Achievement Award

When I served as Speaker of the California Assembly, I was determined to hire the brightest, most resourceful staff in the state. In the policy areas of natural resources, transportation, and the environment, John Robert (Bob) Connelly was exactly that kind of individual – vastly knowledgeable, incredibly thoughtful, and exceedingly wise. He was among the most widely experienced and talented persons ever to serve as legislative staff. Bob was the consummate professional, always willing to share ideas, provide advice, and discuss issues. He was also an outstanding human being – patient, thoughtful, and always glad to help those in need of counsel, support, and insight.

I understand that Bob is being nominated posthumously for the Sacramento State Alumni Association's 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is to recognize "exceptional career achievements, exceptional contributions to the campus and community, and for setting high standards of excellence in their personal and professional lives." I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination.

Bob's career achievements were certainly exceptional. He was a sought-after staffer, serving the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee – then chaired by Sacramento-area Senator Albert S. Rodda – and as Chief Administrative Officer of the Assembly Rules Committee. He also served as Chief Deputy Director of Forestry for a time. Few, if any, I have known could match his career resume.

Bob's contributions to the campus and community were similarly exceptional. He was periodically tapped as a guest speaker for high school and college classes, not only because of his remarkable breadth of knowledge, but also because of his engaging personality and wonderful sense of humor. He also volunteered with community organizations, including the Sacramento Valley Conservancy, an organization committed to preserving open spaces.

As for excellence in personal and professional life, Bob was unsurpassed. He enjoyed the rush of participating in many adventurous activities over the course of his lifetime, including earning his private pilot's license, parachute jumping, boat-building, and sailing – circumnavigating the Pacific Ocean with just a sextant as his guide.

Bob's quest for knowledge never faltered. He was an avid reader, always prepared to quote from great literature or cite historical facts. He was also a talented listener, able to focus attention on others and to be with them in the moment. The innumerable people Bob mentored throughout his lifetime continue to hold a debt of gratitude, as he helped pave the way for many successful careers.

Bob was honest and resolute, truly a man of integrity. He is most deserving of the Lifetime Achievement Award as his life reflected the values this award embodies.

Sincerely,



Willie L. Brown Jr.

from:	Jack O'Connell <Jack@capitoladvisors.org> <a href="#">via</a> capadv.onmicrosoft.com
to:	Gregory Geeting <greg.geeting@gmail.com>
date:	Feb 23, 2025, 4:29 PM
subject:	Re: Bob Connelly - Nomination for Sac State Distinguished Alumni Award
signed-by:	capadv.onmicrosoft.com
security:	Standard encryption (TLS) <a href="#">Learn more</a>
:	Important because previous messages in the conversation were important.

Bob Connelly was an extraordinary individual. When we first met, he was the chief environmental consultant for Speaker Willie Brown, and I was a freshman Assemblyman. I will always remember Monday, May 14, 1984, when Bob called me to say a terrible toxic spill occurred on Highway 101 in downtown Santa Barbara, my Assembly district, and most of the city was being evacuated. Bob immediately said to me we need to be there and see what services we can organize and provide. Bob immediately flew with me, no overnight bag, clean clothing or anything. He reached out to his Sacramento contacts and additional resources were in route. Several days later, Bob put together a meeting in Santa Barbara with first responders. He listened and learned their needs. As a result of that meeting, Bob wrote legislation that I authored dealing with protocols amongst first responders clarifying and requiring folks to notify appropriate agencies of their actions. In addition, a second law Bob wrote that I also authored imposed strict liability on toxic waste haulers. Bob was personable, persuasive and smart. He is an individual who left a legacy that we all benefit from today.

Jack O'Connell  
Partner, Capitol Advisors Group  
Member of the Assembly, 1982-1994  
Member of the Senate, 1994-2002  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2002-2010

from: David B. Geeting <dbgeeting@gmail.com>  
to: Geeting Gregory <greg.geeting@gmail.com>  
date: Feb 25, 2025, 7:52 AM  
subject: Fwd: Bob Connelly Nomination for Sac State Distinguished Alum  
mailed-by: gmail.com  
security: Standard encryption (TLS) [Learn more](#)  
: Important because previous messages in the conversation were important.

I first met Bob due to my father, Dr. Baxter M. Geeting, who knew Bob as a former student. Bob asked about his ideas for summer (1960) employees at Hertz Rent-a-Car which he managed in Sacramento. Among others, Dad suggested me as I needed a summer job to help pay for my education at Stanford. I worked two weeks for Bob washing and cleaning cars between rentals. Bob appreciated my work ethic, and he asked if I wanted to become Night Manager at Hertz under his supervision. I was happy to do so for the remainder of the summer. Bob also recruited me to be the rental agent on Sundays which I gladly accepted. Bob was an excellent manager of people, and I thrived under his tutelage in all the positions. After summer was over I would occasionally see Bob in Sacramento when on school breaks, and of course, Bob eventually became a principal assistant to former Assembly Speaker Willie Brown.

Considerable time passed. I graduated from Stanford and moved into the production of television commercials in Chicago, IL. My producer role brought me back to CA for one automobile commercial, which I hoped to film on the Dumbarton Bridge (spanning part of San Francisco Bay) with some car-running shots taken near sunset. I approached the bridge administration and explained our plan, including what our crew would do to ensure safety. The answer to my request was a reflexive, resounding, and emphatic “no.” After thinking for a few minutes, I had an “Ah Ha” moment and called Bob in Sacramento. Bob listened to my pleas and chuckled, then said, “Give me a few minutes.” About five minutes later, a bridge administrator emerged from the office and assured me that our crew could proceed with the plan, given the safety measures outlined. The administrator even notified the CHP to help ensure there would be no issues with traffic control. The filming went off without a hitch...and all the commuters made it home on time!

I recall this story to illustrate not only that Bob was a wonderful friend, but also that he was someone who would take the time to listen to reason and to lend a helping hand. By the way, the crew spread the word, and I became something of a legend in the advertising agency as a person with connections. Thanks, Bob!

David B. Geeting  
Valencia, California

from: Lynda Roper <lynda.roperayala@gmail.com>  
to: Gregory Geeting <greg.geeting@gmail.com>  
date: Apr 3, 2025, 11:14 PM  
subject: Bob's CSUS Nomination Information  
mailed-by: gmail.com  
security: Standard encryption (TLS) [Learn more](#)

John Robert “Bob” Connelly  
Nomination for Lifetime Achievement Award

I am writing to lend support for the posthumous nomination of John Robert “Bob” Connelly for the Sacramento State University Alumni Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award. My association with Bob spanned over 40 years, consisting of two separate and completely distinct chapters.

I met Bob when I was a young, inexperienced, and incredibly insecure legislative staffer. Bob was then serving as the state Assembly’s Chief Administrative Officer, with responsibility for 80 elected officials, about 180 Capitol and district offices, and over 1,500 staff. Bob had a reputation for being an exacting taskmaster, who demanded hard work and expected excellence. This was true. But despite the pressures of his job, Bob was always approachable, and provided the advice and resources necessary to build alliances and solve problems.

Bob taught me that if you knew your subject matter better than anyone else in the room, you didn’t need to fear public speaking. Under his guidance and supervision, I learned skills and gained confidence I never imagined. Thanks to the foundation Bob helped build, I enjoyed a 35-year career with the Assembly before retiring as the Deputy Administrative Officer. He set a standard for me – and so many other staffers – that brought out the best in each of us.

The second stage of my relationship with Bob began years after he retired. As a lifelong asthmatic, Bob was never able to pursue his dream of horseback riding. At age 70 – thanks to a new medication – that changed. I invited him to ride my horse and, within minutes, he was smitten. In his typical, uber-enthusiastic fashion, Bob took lessons, leased a horse, and then bought one of his own. Shortly thereafter, we learned about the Sacramento Valley Conservancy’s equestrian program. The Conservancy’s mission is to help preserve open space for the benefit of current and future generations. This mission spoke to us.

Bob and I became volunteer docents, leading guest riders at Deer Creek Hills, the Conservancy’s 4,500-acre working cattle ranch in eastern Sacramento County. Bob completely embraced the role. The property’s rich history melded perfectly with his knowledge about early settlers in the area. As we learned about the indigenous people who occupied the land, Bob quickly consumed books about their history.

Bob entertained and educated many guest riders over the years he served as a docent. He could easily talk about the settlers buried in the local cemetery, hydraulic mining in the 1800s, geologic formations, and the processes used by indigenous people to render acorns using grinding stones

still found on the property. The depth of his knowledge about these matters – and so many others – was remarkable. Visitors who arrived just expecting a nice ride, left with a greater appreciation for the property, its history, and importance of the Conservancy's work.

In retirement, Bob continued to thrive and contribute in other ways. In his 70s, he returned to CSUS to earn his Master's degree in history. He took this knowledge and love of history to various senior living facilities, where he volunteered to offer lectures to residents.

Bob participated in Renaissance Society courses at CSUS when he was in his 80s. His zest for living, learning, and giving back never diminished. Despite his many achievements, contributions, and brilliant mind, Bob was never boastful, preferring to speak with people about their experiences, struggles, and inspirations.

As fellow CSUS alumni, he and I often reflected on how fortunate we were to have benefited from this affordable institute of higher learning that equipped us to be successful, curious, contributing members of society. He expressed his appreciation for the ability to expand and share his knowledge well after retirement, thanks to CSUS programs. Bob's accomplishments and the positive influence on the many lives he touched make him an excellent candidate for this prestigious recognition.

Lynda Roper-Ayala  
Deputy Administrator, California State Assembly (1981-2016)  
April 2, 2025

## Couple Will Become World Travelers In Homemade Boat

By William G. Carr  
Bee Staff Writer

Robert Connelly, is a staff consultant with the Assembly Ways And Means Committee in the capital city—a job he will soon retire from to take up residence on the "Sundance"—a fully equipped boat he built with a little help from his friends.

Connelly and his wife Dee Dee along with their 3½-year-old daughter Courtney Ann plan to leave their Clarksburg home to become world travelers while serving as hosts for passengers seeking transportation to foreign shores—"like a charter boat," Connelly says.

The Connells have previous boating experience, having sailed through the South Pacific during the mid 60's on a boat they co-owned with the friends who accompanied them.

### Returned To Life

Connelly said that he and his wife liked the life so much "we decided to return—this time without any partners."

Work on the new boat started almost four years ago and most of the interior—upholstery, lighting, etc.—is still not completed.

The Connells were not without the necessary man and woman power needed to complete the task. It is not surprising that most of the help Connelly received came from members of the Ways-Means Committee, and he added jokingly, "We had the whole State Assembly helping us."

The Sundance can accommodate up to six people and is equipped with such niceties as two baths, hot and cold running water, a deep freeze, a stove of stainless steel, and an interior done in burnished teakwood.

### Long Terms

With such emphasis on comfort it



The Connells aboard the Sundance

Bee Photo

becomes obvious that the Connells plan to spend quite a long time in their "floating home."

"It's going to be a lifetime job," Connelly said, adding "the ideas have overtones of escapism, but it's not that we want to get away from everything—it's something we just have wanted to do for quite some time."

Connelly says he has invested roughly 4,600 hours in building the boat. "During this time, my wife was essentially a widow, but if it hadn't been for her patience and help, I doubt whether I could have finished."

It was during the construction of the boat that Mrs. Connelly gave birth to Courtney Ann who later came to regard the boat being built in their barn as her "play house." Says Connelly, "we had a hard time trying to tell her that the boat would some day be on water."

### Panama First Stop

Planning on departing sometime next year, the Connells have charted a course for Panama, up to the West Indies, back through New York or Boston and across the North Atlantic to one of the Scandinavian ports—possibly Oslo, Norway.

To add to the adventure Connelly says, "We looked at the charts and it's possible to go from northern Germany through the Rhine River and the Danube River system to the Black Sea. It's also possible to go into Southern Russia provided the political climate is favorable. That would certainly have to be a first for a boat built in Clarksburg."

The hard work behind them, the Connells are eagerly awaiting 1973 when they will set sail in the Sundance—a sail that will take them to many far away places and a far cry from the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

## Golf Aide Loses Work Hours Plea

At age 42 and back in the education mill with a junior college diploma his credit and high hopes of earning a bachelor of arts degree, William "Bill" Robinson is a bit disgruntled these days.

Tomorrow Robinson will start attending Sacramento State University where he will carry a 15-unit class load from 4 to 10 p.m. each day after work at Bing Maloney Golf Course.

What Robinson, a golf course groundskeeper, is disgruntled about is that despite letters pledging cooperation and support from Solon Wisham Jr., director of city recreation and parks, Robinson was unable to get work schedule altered to permit him to take a 3 p.m. class.

Robinson, who works from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., had sought to have his hours changed to 6 a.m. to 2:30. His request was denied by both Wisham and D. Achondo, superintendent of golf, who contend that he can take an hour each day and have it credited to compensatory time off.

Robinson views this as unfair, charging that at least two employees, Haggin Oaks Golf Course, another three city-operated courses, have been permitted to change their schedules so that they can take their time to work. Wisham denies this claim.

Wisham, who, during much of his career over Robinson's educational accomplishments after his completion of Sacramento City College last spring, pledged cooperation in a congratulatory letter, said it comes down to a matter of principles. He said the principle is whether an employee

Clipped By:  
greg\_geeting  
Mar 8, 2025

A12 The Sacramento Bee · Sunday, April 17, 1983



Bee photo by Owen Brewer

Brown calls John Mockler, left, and Robert Connelly the "best brains in the state."

## The Way Things Were

### Speaker's Choices Reunite 'Old Gang'

By Jim Dufur  
Bee Capitol Bureau

There is an old saying in baseball that you never break up a winning combination.

So when San Francisco Democrat Willie Brown became Assembly speaker — the most powerful post in the state Legislature — he attempted to surround himself with the same staff that served him well when he chaired the Ways and Means Committee in the early 1970s.

They might be called the powers behind the power.

In recent weeks, Brown completed the job of reconstituting his old team by signing education specialist John B. Mockler to a \$78,000-a-year contract. Getting him back was "a little more expensive" than the others, commented Brown's chief of staff, Steve Thompson. Thompson makes \$66,000 a year and Robert Connelly \$50,000.

"I'm really proud to be getting them back . . . We desperately need the best brains in the state," said Brown, predicting that the educational legislation prepared by Mockler "will be awesome."

One former Ways and Means consultant, Elisabeth Kirsten, returned to Brown's staff two years ago but left recently to head the state Senate Office of Research.

"She got more money," Brown explained.

Two other former top Ways and Means staffers, Rudy Nothenberg and Ray Sullivan, now hold top city government posts in San Francisco. Because of "geographical reasons," Thompson said, they are not interested in returning to Sacramento.

Philip Isenberg left the Capitol to become an attorney in Sacramento. He was a city councilman and mayor and, last year, was elected to the Assembly where he now is a Brown colleague, not a staffer.

Thompson, who was Brown's health expert while on the Ways and Means staff, was one of the first of the "old Ways and Means gang" to sign up again, four months after Brown became speaker in December 1980. Thompson is again health consultant and last year helped put together landmark legislation to reform the state's Medi-Cal program.

He also is Brown's expert on the state budget. Thompson, a 41-year-old graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, served two years under former legislative analyst A. Alan Post and four years on the Assembly Health Committee staff before joining Brown's Ways and Means staff in 1971, where he worked for 3½ years.

After Brown lost the Ways and Means chairmanship in an unsuccessful attempt to become speaker in 1974, Thompson operated his own health-research business until joining the speaker's staff in 1981.

Connelly, who was Brown's environmental

expert on the Ways and Means staff, currently is working on legislation that would "significantly increase the capability of the state Public Utilities Commission," Thompson said, while Mockler is preparing "a big education package." The package, he said, will be similar to those offered by state Sen. Gary Hart, D-Santa Barbara, chairman of the Senate Education Committee, and state schools superintendent Bill Honig, except that it will provide money, Thompson said.

Connelly, 48, attended the University of Chicago and the University of California before receiving a bachelor's degree at Sacramento State University in 1960. After working 18 months for the Legislature, he moved to the San Francisco area and, in 1965-66, sailed a yacht on a 17,000-mile South Pacific voyage. For eight months, he worked on oceanographic research at the University of Hawaii before returning to Sacramento to work for the Legislature.

After serving under Brown on the Ways and Means staff from 1971-75, he joined the staffs of the Assembly Resources, Land Use and Energy Committee and the Senate Finance Committee, except for five months in 1976 on a boat off Mexico, "adjusting to middle age," he explained.

From August 1979 until going to work for Brown again, he was chief deputy director of the state Department of Forestry.

Mockler, 41, is a graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara and first went to work for the Legislature in 1965. In 1967, he was coordinator for a neighborhood project in Sacramento but in 1968 he returned to the Legislature, serving on the Ways and Means staff from 1971-74.

From 1974-77, he was on the staff of former state schools superintendent Wilson Riles and from 1977-79 he was in charge of reviewing the \$1.8 billion budget of the Los Angeles school system. From 1979 until returning to the Legislature this year he headed his own consulting firm.

Clarence Williams, 35, who also was on Brown's Ways and Means staff, remained with the committee until July 1979, when he became director of Small Business Development under former Gov. Jerry Brown. When Gov. Brown left office last January, Williams was chosen by Speaker Brown as a consultant for economic development in the Assembly Office of Research.

Michael Corbett, 39, was on the Ways and Means staff under Willie Brown for one year, then moved to the Davis campus of the University of California, where he was a lecturer and attended law school. He returned to the Legislature in 1977, and, after working for the legislative analyst's office and the Assembly Office of Research, returned to the Ways and Means Committee in 1982, where he has become one of the Legislature's top experts on retirement and collective bargaining.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 10:51:04 AM

**Nominee:** Ronald Fong

**Grad info:** BA 1983 (Psychology)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

As President and CEO of the California Grocers Association (CGA) and California Grocers Association Educational Foundation, Ronald Fong has been at the center of serving Sacramento and other California communities for decades. CGA serves as the advocate for and voice of California's grocery community, which nourishes millions of Californians and anchors neighborhoods. CGA represents the wide spectrum of the grocery industry - from one store operators to large chains. At the Association's helm, Fong has set the standard for association management, leading a merger to include independent grocers in CGA's membership, acquiring and developing property in Sacramento's downtown core, and driving CGA to become more diverse and inclusive by adding ethnic grocers to its membership base and board. This year, CGA's educational foundation, which provides for industry employees and their children to pursue higher learning goals, surpassed \$10 million in scholarships and awards. Recently, Fong was named a top CEO in the area by Sacramento Business Journal.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Fong serves on the California State University Foundation Board of Governors. He is also an active member of the Food Industry Association Executives (FIAE) and the Food Marketing Institute's Government Relations Committees.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Coming from a family of Chinese-American, independent grocers, Fong has brought a unique understanding of the grocers' experience to his role leading the California Grocers Association and its nonprofit foundation and in advocating for grocers throughout the state. Under his guidance, CGA transformed from a membership base of large chains to an association that is equally capable of representing the state's independent, diverse, and wide-ranging grocery industry and the communities it serves. One example includes board leadership, which saw female board chairs take the reins in four out of the last six years where previously only a single woman had served as board chair over the Association's century-long existence.

Fong has also proved transformative in building CGA's educational foundation. Passionate about the purpose of education pursuits, his stewardship has led to the nonprofit passing \$10 million in scholarship awards for industry employees and their children. One example of how these efforts impact

the industry includes Gelson's CEO Ryan Adams, who received a Foundation scholarship as he worked to advance his grocery career well before becoming a c-suite executive.

His experience leading the CGA Educational Foundation led to his appointment to the California State University Foundation Board of Governors, which also gives him a platform to advance his advocacy for educational attainment.

**Nominator:** Nate Rose

Nate Rose  
CGA Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs  
nrose@cagrocers.com  
916-628-8122  
April 14, 2025

Distinguished Alumni Awards Selection Committee  
California State University, Sacramento

Dear Selection Committee,

It is a privilege to nominate Ronald Fong, President and Chief Executive Officer of the California Grocers Association (CGA) and President of the CGA Educational Foundation, for the Distinguished Alumni: Lifetime Achievement Award. As a proud graduate of the California State University system, Mr. Fong exemplifies the mission and values of the CSU Sacramento through his decades of service in business, public affairs, and civic leadership.

Mr. Fong assumed leadership of California Grocers Association in 2008 and has since reshaped the organization into one of California's most respected trade associations. He oversaw a successful merger with the California Independent Grocers Association, fostered an inclusive and diverse board of directors that changed how the grocery industry communicates about and advocates for itself, and directed the purchase of a permanent headquarters in Sacramento. His ability to lead from both the boardroom and the grassroots is grounded in personal experience—having once served as president of his family's independent grocery company, United Market, Inc., in Carmichael.

Before joining CGA, Mr. Fong served 12 years with the California Credit Union League, where he directed the Sacramento office and led its state government affairs program. His bipartisan and forward-thinking leadership earned him recognition as a trusted voice in Sacramento's political arena.

In 2015, Mr. Fong received the Donald H. MacManus Award, the highest national honor for a state grocery association executive. In 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed him to the Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery, where he helped shape California's economic response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Importantly, Mr. Fong's dedication to education is just as significant as his political achievements. In 2016, he was elected to the California State University Foundation Board of Governors, where he contributes strategic insight to strengthen the Foundation's financial base and broaden access to high-quality education. He also leads the CGA Educational Foundation, which supports scholarship, workforce development, and industry research for thousands of students and professionals. In 2024, the CGA Foundation surpassed \$10 million in giving.

He is an active member of the Food Industry Association Executives (FIAE) and the Food Marketing Institute's Government Relations Committee, and in 2007, was selected to join

a California Joint Legislature Delegation to China, reflecting his standing as a global-minded business leader.

Ronald Fong embodies the CSU Sacramento spirit—grounded in community, driven by purpose, and committed to service. His impact on California’s business and education landscape is substantial and enduring, and I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nate Rose

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/11/2025 1:21:23 PM

**Nominee:** Eva Jimenez

**Grad info:** BS 1992 (Business Administration (Int. Bus.)), MBA 1997 (Marketing)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

We respectfully submit Eva Jimenez for consideration for either the Lifetime Achievement Award or the Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her extraordinary professional accomplishments, trailblazing leadership, and enduring commitment to community advancement. Eva embodies the spirit of Sacramento State: resilient, service driven, and devoted to empowering others through education and opportunity.

Eva Jimenez is a shining embodiment of Sacramento State's mission to transform lives through education, leadership, and service. As a first generation college student and proud immigrant from Mexico, Eva's path from Dunsmuir to the highest levels of community college leadership reflects not only personal perseverance but the far reaching power of a Sacramento State education. She earned her MBA from the University and has spent the past two decades turning opportunity into impact, both in the classroom and across entire communities.

Eva is a trailblazer in every sense of the word. She became the first Latina Academic Dean at Shasta College, later ascending to Assistant Superintendent and Vice President of Economic and Workforce Development while also serving as Executive Director of the Shasta College Foundation. Her leadership led to the creation of bold, equity driven programs such as STEP UP, which supports formerly incarcerated students and has inspired similar efforts statewide. She has shaped workforce development policy across California and opened doors for countless students who might not have otherwise seen a path forward.

Beyond her titles and accomplishments, Eva leads with empathy, integrity, and unshakable resolve. Her personal victory over breast cancer is a testament to the resilience that defines her life and work. Every role she has taken: educator, executive, advocate, mentor, and has been anchored by a deep commitment to lifting others.

Eva's story is not only one of achievement but of transformation. She represents the best of Sacramento State and serves as a powerful example of what is possible when education meets purpose. Her legacy continues to grow, and her work reflects the University's highest aspirations. Eva Jimenez does not just carry the spirit of Sacramento State, she extends it into every life she touches.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Eva's contributions extend well beyond her formal roles. Her community involvement is deeply rooted in service, and her affiliations reflect a lifelong commitment to building bridges between education, industry, and underserved communities. Her engagements include:

1. McConnell Foundation Board of Directors, advancing philanthropic investments in education, equity, and community vitality.
2. Founder and Executive Director of SHIELD, a public safety training consortium of 19 local and state agencies improving regional emergency preparedness and cross-agency collaboration.
3. Founder of the North State Chapter of the Latina Leadership Network, later serving as State President and advancing leadership and empowerment for Latinas across California.
4. President of the California Community College Association for Occupational Education, leading statewide efforts in career and workforce education policy.
5. Redding Rotary Club, active member supporting community service and leadership.
6. Redding Chamber of Commerce, civic involvement promoting local economic development.
7. Dignity Health's North State Advisory Board, advising health equity strategies in underserved communities.
8. Community Corrections Partnership Board, supporting restorative justice, reintegration, and rehabilitation policies.

Additionally, Eva is a sought-after speaker on positivity, resilience, and advocacy. She frequently addresses students, nonprofit leaders, and civic groups across the state.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Eva Jimenez's legacy is measured in lives changed, communities uplifted, and systems transformed. From creating access points for women in trades to leading economic recovery strategies following natural disasters to championing restorative justice through education, Eva has forged pathways where none previously existed.

Her work has positively impacted:

1. Formerly incarcerated students through the STEP UP program, which is now a model across California and helped inspire the expansion of Project Rebound across CSU campuses.
2. Young Latinas and first-generation students who see in Eva a reflection of themselves and a future filled with possibility.
3. Faculty, peers, and institutional leaders who continue to be inspired by her servant leadership, collaborative vision, and tireless advocacy for student equity.
4. Entire regions such as the North State, which have benefited from her strategic coalitions like SHIELD and her board service with the McConnell Foundation, aligning philanthropy with high-impact community transformation.

Even after advancing into executive leadership, Eva returned to the classroom in 2023, underscoring her belief that direct student engagement remains central to meaningful change. Her leadership has

influenced state policy, inspired future educators, and redefined how education intersects with community vitality.

In the words of former students and colleagues, Eva is one in a million, a change agent, a mentor for life, and a true force for good. Her legacy is not only what she has built but who she has lifted thousands of students, colleagues, and communities throughout California.

Stingers Up!

**Nominator:** Dr. Kate Mahar



April 10, 2025

Dear Alumni Service Award Committee:

As a dear friend and long-time colleague, it is my honor to write this letter of support for Eva Jimenez to outline her distinguished career at Shasta College. My reflections are further reinforced by a selection of heartfelt testimonials from peers, leaders, colleagues, and former students—all of whom were eager to contribute their voices in support of this recommendation letter.

Eva started her distinguished career at Shasta College in 2003. As a faculty member, she was renowned for her passion and recognized with accolades for her excellence in teaching.

In 2010, Eva made history as the first Latina to serve as an Academic Dean at Shasta College, leading the Career Technical Education and Economic Workforce Departments. Following her departure, the responsibilities she once held now require two deans to manage. In this role, Eva spearheaded the creation of several new programs, including the NEW program (Non-Traditional Employment for Women), which is now in its 11th year. The brochure for this year is attached. She also established the North State Chapter of the Latina Leadership Network (LLN) and later became the state president of the organization.

In 2019, Eva advanced to Vice President of Economic and Workforce Development while also serving as the Executive Director of the Shasta College Foundation. In this capacity, she developed regional strategies for employer partnerships and economic development, which have since become statewide models. She also founded and championed the STEP-UP program, designed to support students transitioning from incarceration—an initiative that been scaled throughout the state. Additionally, Eva served as the statewide president for the California Community College Association for Occupational Education (CCCAOE).

Following the devastating fires in the North State, Eva worked to establish and lead SHIELD, a consortium dedicated to enhancing training opportunities and communication across public safety organizations. This initiative brings together 19 public service partners from state and local municipalities, working collaboratively to improve safety across the region. Eva accomplished all of this while actively serving on three community boards and dedicating significant time to community service.

In 2023, Eva returned to the classroom to reignite her passion for teaching and student engagement. This shift also enabled her to deepen her commitment to community service, particularly through her involvement with the McConnell Foundation, where she continues to make a profound impact on the region and beyond.

But don't just take my word for it. Here are a selection of comments from other people that have been impacted by Eva and her service.

**Dr. Joe Wyse (President of Shasta College from 2013-2023):** *Eva is one in a million- she has the rare talent combination of creativity with the ability to get things done. She involves others and demonstrates true care for those with whom she comes in contact. Shasta College has been changed for the better because of Eva.*

**Dr. Kevin O'Rourke (Associate Superintendent, Shasta College):** *Fun, driven, creative, thoughtful, inspiring, prominent, energetic, change agent, limitless and distinguished...those are just a few of the words I think about when describing Eva Jimenez.*

**Darren Gurney, former student:** *During my first year at Shasta College, I had the privilege of having Eva Jimenez as my teacher. She was inspiring, full of energy, and incredibly kind. Over the years, we kept in touch, and she continued to support my educational goal of earning an MBA. Eventually, Eva became my supervisor in economic and workforce development, where she remained a steadfast believer in me. She invested her time and energy into my goals, helping me achieve the dream of becoming a full-time instructor at the very college where I had once been her student.*

*Though Eva's roles and titles have evolved over the years, the core of who she is has never changed. She is intelligent, driven, hardworking, empathetic, and outgoing—a truly remarkable leader and as genuine as they come. Looking back on the 20 years that Eva has been a part of my life, I am beyond grateful. Not only did I have the honor of meeting her, but I am fortunate to call her one of my closest friends and greatest mentors. Having Eva in your corner is one of the highest compliments a person could receive. If she believes in you, there is no doubt you'll believe in yourself.*

**Jay Davis, former student:** *Eva was my dean when I first started teaching. At the time, I was still a student and she recognized and cultivated a talent in me I didn't even realize existed...teaching. Eva is a firm leader who expects professionalism and excellence, but she balances that with genuine encouragement and support for her faculty.*

*Eva earns fierce loyalty because of her character—she leads with integrity and consistently fights for what's right for students. She continues to mentor me to this day. I know I can always count on her, and she knows I'll be there for her no matter what.*

**Chelsea Hendershot, faculty peer:** *Eva is innovative in her approach. She is consistently thinking outside of the box to ensure whatever she is tasked with is successful. She follows*

*through and is someone you can count on to stick by her word. She brings energy and passion to every room. Numerous times she has told me how grateful she has been for every opportunity she has had at Shasta College.*

*She is a convener of people and resources. Numerous projects she has worked on over the years have been successful not only because of her drive and determination, but because she is skilled at bringing together diverse individuals, stakeholders, and resources to address a specific issue, problem, or opportunity.*

**Mark Montgomery, faculty peer and partner with SHIELD:** *The only thing that commands a room more than Eva's hair and infectious smile is her energy and her desire to make everything around her better. Everyone should be so fortunate to work with Eva and experience her leadership and zeal for life.*


**Heather Wylie, faculty peer:** *Eva is a transformational leader both on campus and in the community. She had led groundbreaking initiatives that have reshaped our college culture, elevated the college's national profile over decades of dedicated service (e.g. Step Up). As a leader in the community, she has brought people and organizations together in ways that continue to positively impact those here in the North State and beyond (e.g. McConnell Foundation, SHEILD).*

*In the classroom, Eva's innovative approach to teaching has inspired generations of students to grow in ways that benefit not only them and their goals but our community as a whole. As such, she has served as an inspiration and mentor to so many, especially young Latinas who see a role model in Eva's dedication to others. Eva's work both in and outside of the classroom will have an enduring impact on our community and beyond. Her unwavering commitment to higher education and community advancement have created a legacy that will continue to shape the future of the college for generations*

As you can see from her testimonials, Eva is an inspiration to all. She loves to support those around her and gets joy from the successes of others. She frequently speaks to community groups about the power of positivity and the importance of advocating for one's beliefs. Her achievements are extraordinary, and I am honored to call her my colleague and friend.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kate Mahar, Ed.D  
Associate Vice President of Innovation, Shasta College  
530-356-6003



April 2, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Eva Jimenez for an Alumni Service Award

Dear Alumni Awards Committee,

It is with immense pleasure and without reservation that I recommend Eva Jimenez for an Alumni Service Award at California State University Sacramento. I have known Eva for many years through various professional and community engagements, and I have consistently been impressed by her unwavering dedication to service and her remarkable personal qualities.

My firsthand experience with Eva's leadership capabilities stems from our time together in Redding, California. During my tenure as President and CEO of the Redding Chamber of Commerce, Eva served with distinction on the Chamber's Board of Directors. Her strategic insights, collaborative spirit, and commitment to the economic vitality of our community were invaluable. She consistently went above and beyond to support the Chamber's mission and initiatives.

I have also witnessed Eva's commitment to service through her involvement in the Rotary Club of Redding, her time in leadership at Shasta College, and her contributions to The McConnell Foundation Board. In each of these roles, she has demonstrated a passion for making a positive impact and a remarkable ability to bring people together to achieve common goals.

Furthermore, I must commend Eva's extraordinary courage and resilience in her battle against cancer. Her strength, determination, and positive attitude in the face of adversity have been truly inspiring, which is why our organization featured her as part of our current regional cancer center project. She has faced this personal challenge with grace and dignity, continuing to serve her community even during difficult times.

I believe Eva Jimenez embodies the spirit of service and exemplifies the values that California State University Sacramento seeks to honor with its Alumni Service Awards. Her leadership, dedication, and personal attributes make her an exceptional candidate for recognition.

I am confident that Eva will continue to make significant contributions to our community and serve as an inspiration to others. I wholeheartedly endorse her nomination and urge you to give her your strongest consideration.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read "Jake Mangas", is written over a light blue wavy background graphic.

Jake Mangas  
President  
Mercy Foundation North



## The McConnell Foundation

*Helping Build Better Communities Through Philanthropy*

April 7, 2025

Dear Alumni Service Awards Selection Committee:

I have the honor and pleasure of knowing Eva Jimenez. She is The McConnell Foundation's Board Chair and is in her fourth year serving on our Board of Directors. As a director, Eva is respected by the Board and is appreciated because she listens well, is thoughtful, poses good questions, is a quick study, shows up, and does not shy away from challenging or celebrating work. Staff feel inspired and encouraged by her leadership. She expresses interest in the Foundation's work, gives feedback readily, remembers special occasions, and attends grant-related activities and community events. Her warm and witty ways bring joy to a room. One of Eva's *Clifton Strengths* is WOO (Winning Others Over).

In November of 2023, Eva traveled for three weeks with McConnell's International Programs staff, another director, and me. It was a full itinerary, with 11 flights, visiting the countries of Nepal, Laos, and Thailand. During this trip, she also kept up with her teaching schedule during our sleeping hours.

Eva is a devoted daughter, wife, and mother. When her parents' home burned down in Redding's Carr Fire, she moved them into her home. Eva and her husband, Kris, recently bought a home around the corner from her parents to continue to be present in their lives and help with their needs. As a breast cancer survivor, Eva makes it a priority to support other local women who are affected by the disease. Both of Eva's daughters are college graduates. For much of their upbringing, she was a single working mom.

Eva's energy and vitality are recognized in the community. She has been selected as the 2026 Crustacean Queen for the One SAFE Place (OSP) Crab Feed. This event sells over 1,000 tickets for Domestic Violence Prevention Programs. Eva has also been nominated to dance in OSP's *Dancing with the Stars* in October 2025. Eva is active in Rotary and recently hosted Global Students Exchange (GSE) students from India and Africa for a week in her home. She coordinated a hosted welcome dinner for all of the participants.

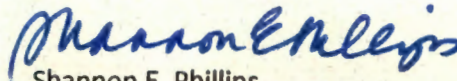
For The McConnell Foundation's Scholars Program, Eva is a role model to our first-generation female Hispanic students. She meets with students and shares her cultural experiences as a Latina woman. Eva has also participated in the Scholars Program by giving students line dancing and Salsa lessons at the Annual Conference. Her energy is contagious.

As The McConnell Foundation's Chief Operating Officer, I regularly interface with our Board and I manage our Program Services staff. From this middle vantage point, I can tell you it takes a special person to lead and be a peer. Eva is that person. Through her passion for service and community, she inspires people to be their best selves – despite hardship.

Alumni Service Awards Selection Committee  
April 7, 2025  
Page 2

Eva is a proud Sac State Alum who practices service above self daily in her work and play. I enthusiastically nominate her for a Distinguished Service Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon E. Phillips".

Shannon E. Phillips  
Chief Operating Officer

/sep

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# Local Education Leader to Join McConnell board 1

Posted on January 5, 2021 by [Press Release](#)



Eva Valdivia Jimenez will become a McConnell Foundation director during its annual meeting in February. She is assistant superintendent/vice president of Economic and Workforce Development and the executive director of the Shasta College Foundation. As an administrator for the past decade, her focus has been on leveraging her private-industry management experience to forge new community business partnerships.

Eva is active in her community — belonging to Redding Rotary and the Redding Chamber of Commerce, as well as serving on Dignity Health's North State Advisory Board and the Community Corrections Partnership Board. In her professional capacity, she is president of the California Community College Association for Occupational Education; she is founder of the STEP-UP Program; and is a key player in the creation of SHIELD, a partnership of public service agencies.

"Eva is a welcome addition to the McConnell board at this time with regard to the Foundation's priorities. Education is the focus of three Foundation programs. Community Vitality is the core of our work in downtown Redding's revitalization. The Foundation recognizes a healthy community depends upon strong public, private and nonprofit sectors," said Lee Salter, board chair. "Eva has experience and passion in all of these disciplines."

"We are confident Eva will immediately bring value, and a fresh perspective, to our work. Our five member board and staff work closely together and Eva's reputation for working strategically and collaboratively precedes her," added President & CEO John Mancasola.

Jimenez immigrated from Mexico to Dunsmuir, California, at the age of six. She attended College of the Siskiyous in Weed, then transferred to Sacramento State University where she earned her MBA. She moved to Redding in 2001 to be near her parents, who live in Redding. Jimenez is married to Kris Koeberer, and is the proud mother of two daughters and three stepchildren. She describes her most accomplished success as beating breast cancer in 2018.

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[Community Announcements](#) [Eva Jimenez, McConnell Foundation](#)



Eva Jimenez with  
husband Kris  
Koeberer

“

It would have been wonderful to only  
drive 10-15 minutes to my chemo,  
come home, and get right to bed.

Eva Jimenez

”



## Eva's Story

“‘It looks like you have cancer,’ my doctor said, and I knew it was serious when she added, ‘You have an appointment for later this afternoon.’” This is a day Eva Jimenez will never forget – April 14, 2017, the day she learned she had breast cancer.

When Eva’s husband Kris Koeberer heard the news, he said, “It felt like the air got sucked out of the room. I couldn’t really process it.”

Eva acknowledging that sensation added, “I think the hardest part for me was having to hit pause. I wasn’t able to attend my daughter’s high school graduation. There were days when I couldn’t get out of bed or could only make it to the mailbox. Cancer is a difficult enough journey as it is without adding the complication of having to travel.”

Kris drove Eva to Stanford regularly for her care due to the urgency of the situation and the availability of oncologists, but she was being treated in Stanford, not Redding. “My daughters wanted to be there. My parents wanted to be there,” Eva said. “It was tough.”

When asked about the new Regional Cancer Center, Eva’s face lit up. “It is going to do amazing things for our community. The amenities of the new Center will help in recruiting oncologists who have the background in treating different variants of cancer.”

“For me,” Eva shared, “it is about changing lives and giving hope. That is why I am supporting the Regional Cancer Center.”



Eva



Eva & Kris



Eva's daughters  
Bella & Gigi Elizarraras

# A TOAST TO EQUITY PRESS RELEASE

## REDDING RANCHERIA

REDDING, CA (January 27, 2024) – On Friday, January 26th, United Way of Northern California (UWNC) hosted its 2nd annual A Toast to Equity; Share Love Spark Change fundraiser and community event at Win-River Resort & Casino. More than 300 guests gathered to celebrate the work of businesses, community groups, nonprofits, and individuals who have advanced the causes of equity and social justice in Northern California.

Redding Rancheria won the top business recognition for its commitment to equity and diversity through its policies, practices, and workplace environment.

The top community group, The Sikh Centre, was recognized for its dedication to the community as a hub for outreach, inclusivity, and service. Rayna Nolta received the top individual award for her work as the President of the Hispanic Resource Council of Northern California and her achievements in organizing the “Dia Del Campesino” in Glenn County.

Oroville Southside Community Improvement Association received the top non-profit award for its service as a “Haven of Hope” for humanity, enhancing communities through its programs and services built around education, employment, and economic development.

The top Public Service award was given to Eva Jimenez, a Shasta College administrator and instructor whose innovative programs have helped convicts turn their lives around through education. Jimenez also has promoted collaboration among local law enforcement agencies through her role as Executive Director of SHIELD.



Tribal Council with United Way of Northern California



## United Way of Northern California 2024 Toast to Equity Awards

### From the Booklet:

#### **Eva Jimenez: Championing Equity Through Education and Community Building**

Eva Jimenez juggles roles as the Executive Director of SHIELD and a Business Instructor at Shasta College. Recognizing the need for a holistic approach, Eva co-founded SHIELD, a regional training center fostering collaboration between law enforcement, fire, and other public safety agencies to enhance critical incident response and strengthen community bonds. As an administrator at Shasta College, she implemented the Step Up program, a restorative justice initiative that has impacted countless lives and inspired restorative justice programs across California.

### From UWNC Press Release:

The top Public Service award was given to **Eva Jimenez**, a Shasta College administrator and instructor whose innovative programs have helped convicts turn their lives around through education. Jimenez also has promoted collaboration among local law enforcement agencies through her role as Executive Director of SHIELD.



## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/2/2025 2:36:08 PM

**Nominee:** Ronald Locicero

**Grad info:** BA 1964 (Recreation Management)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Honor Roll 5 Semesters

Starter 2 years 62-63 Football Team

Football Team Captain 2years

All Conference First Team 2 years Senior Year Unanimous Selection

Northern California Player of the Week Small Colleges 1963

Homecoming MVP 1963

Honorable Mention Small College All-American

MS Cal Poly SLO 1969

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Co-Founder Magical Bridge Playground Morgan Hill Playground Opened in June 2022

Morgan Hill Philanthropist of the Year 2018

Morgan Hill Man of the Year 2020

Morgan Hill Volunteer of the Year 2022

Monterey Peninsula College Football Hall of Fame 2023

Morgan Hill Legacy Award Winner 2025

Morgan Hill Grand Marshall 4th of July Parade 2025

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Recreation Supervisor City of Monterey 64-69

Teacher East Side Union High School District 41 years

Teacher/Coach San Jose City College 8 years

**Nominator:** Ronald Locicero

Ron Locicero

16285 Jackson Oaks Drive | Morgan Hill, California 95037 | 408.710.0570

[|ronlocicero@hotmail.com](mailto:ronlocicero@hotmail.com)

April 2, 2025

California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819  
Lifetime Achievement Award

Dear Selection Committee,

My name is Ron Locicero and I'm excited to submit an application for the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ron Locicero



# MAGICAL BRIDGE<sup>®</sup>

## MORGAN HILL, CA

### Magical Bridge Morgan Hill

Ron and Shirlee Locicero are the Co-Founders of the Magical Bridge Inclusive Playground in Morgan Hill. Through partnerships with the County of Santa Clara and multiple community organizations, Magical Bridge Morgan Hill welcomes people of all ages and abilities. It is the first inclusive playground in the area between San Jose and Salinas, which is a point of pride for the South County Community.

Most playgrounds today are meant to be accessible for all children, but for children with special needs resulting from physical and emotional disabilities, their designs and features often do not provide meaningful play opportunities for all children. Consequently, special needs children most often sit by the wayside and watch their siblings and others play without them. By contrast, an "inclusive playground that is universally accessible" will allow children of all abilities to climb, to swing and spin, and to play side by side with their siblings and friends. Our community is growing and in need of creative and engaging places where families can play together, learn from each other, and grow in community together. What better way to grow in community, than through the gift of play.

Magical Bridge Park is intentionally designed to be socially inclusive, providing a safe and accessible outdoor play space for all, including the 1-in-4 of us living with physical and cognitive disabilities, autism, visual and hearing impairments, as well as for the medically fragile and our aging population.

Ron has utilized his training and experience from Sacramento State in networking and fundraising to enormous success! Ron and his wife Shirlee personally brought in over \$100,000 in donations to the Magical Bridge Park in Morgan Hill. Rona and his Team helped bring in over \$6 Million dollars to build the park over a seven year period. Ron also works on writing additional grants which are going to be used for enhancements to the park including additional shade and adding a teeter totter, carousel, balance beam and a zip line. Magical Bridge Playground in Morgan Hill is free and open to the public from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. With thousands of guests visiting the all-inclusive playground monthly.

In its first year, Magical Bridge Morgan Hill was voted #1 park. It received the 2023 Best of Morgan Hill Award. Ron also helps coordinate and organize the free monthly community events with the city that are held at the park. Each event has between 300-500 people in attendance and they offer a variety of activities for guests which include balloon art, face painting and art

projects. They also have special guests including Santa visit on his Magic Ship at Christmas and the Easter Bunny visit during Easter.

School bands, dance teams, musicians, singers, and performance art groups and entertainers are also welcome to showcase their talent at the Magical Bridge Playground Playhouse stage. The outdoor classroom is also a unique addition to the park. Any classroom in Santa Clara County can come to the park and teachers can teach an outdoor lesson at no charge. After the lesson the kids can have lunch and play and enjoy the park afterwards. It is also open to free for any non-profit in Santa Clara County to use.

This park was the vision of Ron and his wife Shirlee, as it was the project they worked on during their retirement. Ron's wife passed away unexpectedly in March of 2023 and it is important for Ron to continue the work they started. Ron continues to fundraise for enhancements to the park while maintaining the free community events for all families to enjoy. The Locicero family would love for Magical Bridge Playground in Morgan Hill to be enjoyed by children for generations to come and for the park to be a lasting legacy for the Morgan Hill Community.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/11/2025 4:05:02 PM

**Nominee:** Kenneth Munson

**Grad info:** BA 1988 (Communication Studies)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Ken Munson is an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus whose remarkable career exemplifies the transformative potential of a SacState education. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in Communications, Ken cultivated a versatile skill set that he later augmented with an MBA from St. Mary's College, propelling him into leadership roles across finance, engineering, marketing, and public affairs in the energy and technology sectors. His journey from SacState to becoming a visionary CEO driving innovations in cloud-based demand-side management, AI, and grid-edge energy solutions showcases the adaptability and foundation provided by his alma mater. Ken's professional achievements are extraordinary: he has raised over \$80 million in venture capital, secured multiple patents, and led companies like Sunverge Energy and Congruitive to global prominence. Notably, Sunverge was named to the Global Cleantech 100 list for three consecutive years (2015-2017), ranked No. 3 in Navigant Research's Leaderboard Reports for Virtual Power Plant Software (4Q-2016) and Distributed-Scale Energy Storage Systems Integrators (2Q-2017), and received the Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Best Practice Award in 2016. These accolades, combined with his role as an adjunct lecturer at St. Mary's College and the University of San Francisco, where he teaches Entrepreneurial Finance and Managing Technology Innovation, position Ken as a true ambassador for SacState's mission of fostering innovative, impactful leaders.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Ken Munson's community involvement is extensive, reflecting his commitment to education, sustainability, and advancing the energy sector beyond his professional responsibilities. He serves on the Board of Directors for Box Power, delivering clean energy solutions to rural communities, and mentors emerging technology companies through Launch Alaska and Early Stage Montana, guiding startups in energy and renewables. Ken's dedication to education shines through his role as an adjunct lecturer at St. Mary's College and the University of San Francisco, where he teaches courses like Entrepreneurial Finance and Managing Technology Innovation. As a thought leader, he has authored influential publications, including "It Doesn't Have To Be A Battle Between Utilities & Solar Power Providers" (Clean Technica, March 2016) and "The Energy Cloud" (Public Utilities Fortnightly, December 2015), and has spoken at high-profile events such as the EY Energy Summit in London (September 2017), Solar Power International in Las Vegas (2016), and the Microgrid Global Innovation Forum in Washington, D.C. (May 2017). These efforts-spanning board service, mentorship, teaching, publishing, and public speaking-demonstrate Ken's profound commitment to sharing knowledge and empowering others, far exceeding the scope of his role as a CEO.

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Ken Munson's contributions have had a profound and lasting impact on the energy sector, environmental sustainability, and the broader community. As a pioneer in grid-edge technologies, AI, and cloud-based energy management, Ken has driven the adoption of clean energy solutions through his leadership at Sunverge Energy and Congruitive. His innovations, including virtual power plants and AI-driven analytics platforms, have optimized energy distribution and reduced carbon emissions. Ken shepherded the development of multiple patents, such as US Patent No. US9063525B2 (Distributed Energy Services Management System) and US Patent No. US9600045B2 (Solar Energy Grid Integrated System with Energy Storage Appliance), which have shaped the future of energy storage and management. His work on projects like California's first residential solar power and storage microgrid at 2500 R Street in Sacramento and Australia's largest virtual power plant has created jobs, spurred economic growth, and enabled utilities and consumers worldwide to transition to renewables. Additionally, Ken's mentorship through Launch Alaska and Early Stage Montana, along with his teaching, has influenced the next generation of entrepreneurs and leaders. His legacy of innovation and empowerment benefits utilities, consumers, students, startups, and underserved communities, ensuring a sustainable impact for years to come.

**Nominator:** Mark Rawson

Support materials for Kenneth Munson  
can be found on pages 51-55.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/4/2025 3:51:19 PM

**Nominee:** Kinzie Murphy

**Grad info:** MS 1986 (Speech Pathology and Audiology)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** No

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Please see attached letter. Kinzie is an exceptional alumna of our University. She has had exceptional career achievements, made exceptional contributions to the campus and the community, and maintained consistently high standards of excellence in her personal and professional life. Her work spans clinical, professional, and academic realms and has impacted student development, workforce development, and health and wellness across the lifespan in local and international communities. She has long been recognized by students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community professionals as a "go-to" consultant on diverse issues surrounding speech-language pathology and as a front line supporter of health and human service in a variety of communities. Her kind, compassionate, and highly competent service delivery have made her a favorite of her students, clients, and patients, particularly infants and children, who are drawn to her gentle approach.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Please see attached letter. Kinzie's sustained, outstanding contributions to the California Speech, Language, Hearing Association (CSHA), to Sacramento State and its students, to our health and human service professions, to our community and to the international community, and the positive impact this has had on the clients we serve and their families stand out. Her contributions go far above and well beyond those expected of a professional in her field, spanning all service delivery settings, all disorder areas, with populations across the lifespan.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

Please see attached letter. Kinzie's sustained, outstanding contributions to California, to the Sacramento region, including Sacramento State and its students, to our health and human service professions, to her academic community, and to our community and to the international community stand out. Further, she has conducted professional education for countless students and professionals over the years, providing them invaluable and practical, scientifically-based strategies for service delivery to clients from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds across the lifespan. The lasting and positive impact of her work on students and on the individuals served by the fields of speech-language pathology and their families is immeasurable.

**Nominator:** Robert Pieretti

Support materials for Kinzie Murphy can be found on pages 57-63.

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/13/2025 9:10:18 PM

**Nominee:** Willie Owens

**Grad info:** BS 1987 (Business Administration, Human Resources) [Editor's Note: degree information is unverified]

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Will Owens is the Chief Human Resources Officer, at CommonSpirit/Dignity Health - California Region

When Will E. Owens Jr. worked at Macy's during college, his smiling face caught the attention of managers. They soon assigned him to training employees, handling time cards and collecting job applications. That was the start of Owens' career in human resources - or "personnel," as they called it at the time.

Owens is now chief human resources officer for the California region of CommonSpirit Health, which was formed in 2019 through the merger of Dignity Health and Catholic Health Initiatives. Owens leads HR operations across California, where CommonSpirit has 29 hospitals, including five in the Sacramento area.

Before joining Dignity Health in 2014, Owens worked in Human Resources, Compliance and Underwriting at Allstate for 26 years. At Dignity/CommonSpirit, Owens said he's been able to introduce some of the more advanced HR processes that he used at Allstate. One challenge of the job is that because CommonSpirit provides a substantial amount of charity care, employee pay is not as high as it might be elsewhere, Owens said.

Still, employee engagement figures are strong, he said, with a high number of workers saying they're satisfied or very satisfied. The first year retention rate for benefited employees is 77.5% which exceeds the current target of 75%. Owens credited effective onboarding for the result.

Owens said his HR philosophy is to "never believe anyone is a lost cause." He cites an example of how he got a second chance early in his career. While he was an HR representative at Allstate, his "issues in terms of polish" and timeliness prompted a manager to tell him to become an insurance agent or leave the company. When he refused either option, a manager listened to him, assigned a mentor and provided additional training. "My career turned around," Owens said. "Just because one person sat, talked and believed in me."

Will is currently age 61 years old, He has been with CommonSpirit Health for 11 years now. As for family life: Will married, Min Lynn Brown - Owens (1988 communications studies graduate from CSUS). He is the father of three adult daughters and grandfather of six grandchildren between the ages of 19 and 2 As for his education: He holds a Bachelor's degree from Cal State University of Sacramento, in business with an HR Concentration. I also hold an MBA from Lake Forest Graduate School of Management in Lake Forest Illinois. Focus area Organizational Behavior."

His hobbies include: "Working on maintaining and restoring my classic cars which include a 1964 Ford Thunderbird and a 1979 Toyota Cressida."

What would people be surprised to know about me? "I love to swim and cold weather is not an excuse. During winter months I don a wetsuit to get my laps in."

**Question 2: What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.**

Will has been on the board of the Greater Sacramento Urban League. He is currently the GSUL Board Secretary and is a part of the Executive Board. He has been affiliated with the GSUL for over 12 years. Because of Will's HR background and expertise, the GSUL often asks Will to provide his expertise to staff related issues.

Will is also the immediate past president of the National Association of Health Services Executives. He was instrumental in establishing the Northern California Chapter. N.A.H.S.E. This organization brings industry executives of color together to provide networking and educational opportunities. This affiliation began in 2017,

**Question 3: What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?**

Because of Will's concern for individuals who experience obstacles at work - many employees and those he comes across in the community have improved redirected and improved in their careers based on his coaching and mentorships.

**Nominator:** Willie Owens



April 14, 2025

California State University Sacramento Alumni Association  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Dear Alumni Association:

I am writing in support of the nomination for distinguished lifetime achievement alumni award for Will E. Owens, Jr. Will and I have worked together for many years. Will was the Chief Human Resources Officer during the time I served as president for the Northern California Division of Commonspirit Health. Will is a collaborative and visionary leader who brings integrity and wisdom to guide us in leading our most precious asset, human capital. Under Will's guidance we achieved many goals including the lowest first year turnover, onboarding excellence and guidance with people and talent management.

This continued as we merged the two California divisions into one mega region for the state that encompasses 29 acute care hospitals, 125 ambulatory care sites, over 39,400 dedicated employees, and 8,500 aligned physicians. Will continues to lead our human resources with excellence.

I consider Will a close confidant and colleague and friend. He leads in professional and personal relationships with the utmost integrity and kindness. I am proud to have him in my close circle.

Sincerely,  
*Shelly Schorer*  
Shelly Schorer  
Chief Financial Officer  
California Division, CommonSpirit Health

## C Suite Awards: Here are some of the area's most respected executives

<https://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/c/c-suite-awards-2024-honorees/25751/will-e-owens-jr.html>



Image: Sacramento Business Journal

IMAGE CREDIT: ROBIN DOUGLAS | CONTRIBUTOR

## **Will E. Owens Jr.**

**Chief Human Resources Officer, CommonSpirit/Dignity Health — California Region**

When Will E. Owens Jr. worked at Macy's during college, his smiling face caught the attention of managers. They soon assigned him to training employees, handling time cards and collecting job applications.

That was the start of Owens' career in human relations — or "personnel," as they called it at the time.

Owens is now chief human resources officer for the California region of CommonSpirit Health, which was formed in 2019 through the merger of Dignity Health and Catholic Health Initiatives. Owens leads HR operations across California, where CommonSpirit has 29 hospitals, including five in the Sacramento area.

Before joining Dignity Health in 2014, Owens worked in human resources at Allstate for **26 years**. At Dignity/CommonSpirit, Owens said he's been able to introduce some of the more advanced HR processes that he used at Allstate.

One challenge of the job is that because CommonSpirit provides a substantial amount of charity care, employee pay is not as high as it might be elsewhere, Owens said.

Still, employee engagement figures are strong, he said, with a high number of workers saying they're satisfied or very satisfied.

The first year retention rate for benefited employees is 74.5% and nearing the target of 76.5%. Owens credited effective onboarding for the result.

Owens said his HR philosophy is to "never believe anyone is a lost cause."

He cites an example of how he got a second chance early in his career. While he was an HR manager at Allstate, his "issues in terms of polish" and timeliness prompted a manager to tell him to become an insurance agent or leave the company.

When he refused either option, a manager listened to him, assigned a mentor and provided additional training.

"My career turned around," Owens said. "Just because one person sat and talked to me."

— *Elaine Goodman, contributor*

## **The Essentials**

Age: 60

Time with company: 10 years

Family life: Married, father of three adult daughters and grandfather of six grandchildren between the ages of 18 and 2

Education: "Hold a Bachelor's degree from Cal State University of Sacramento, in business with an HR Concentration. I also hold an MBA from Lake Forest Graduate School of Management in Lake Forest Illinois. Focus area Organizational Behavior."

Hobbies: "Working on maintaining and restoring my classic cars which include a 1964 Ford Thunderbird and a 1979 Toyota Cressida."

What would people be surprised to know about you? "I love to swim and cold weather is not an excuse. During winter months I don a wetsuit to get my laps in."

## 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Nomination

**Date submitted:** 4/14/2025 10:35:17 AM

**Nominee:** Mahmud Sharif

**Grad info:** BS 1984 (Mechanical Engineering)

**Is the nominee aware of the nomination?** Yes

**Nominated for:** Lifetime Achievement Award

**Question 1:** What makes your nominee an exceptional Sacramento State alumnus/na or friend of the University?

Mahmud Sharif has been engaged with Sacramento State for over forty-five years. During that time, he has demonstrated his commitment not only to the campus, but also to the greater Sacramento community. He is an outstanding individual who gives his time, resources, and support broadly and graciously to a wide range of causes. While Mahmud is a successful businessman, community leader, and philanthropist, he is also a family man and a fixture at the campus. In fact, he and his family have been featured on the "Made at Sac State" website. Throughout his entire time in Sacramento, his support for the campus has been unwavering and unconditional. He clearly is an engaged and proud Sacramento State alumnus and an exemplary member of the Sacramento alumni.

**Question 2:** What is your nominee's community involvement? Please list affiliations, volunteer work and activities beyond the normal scope of his or her work.

Sharif's involvement in the community is extensive. While there are too many organizations and projects to list here, highlighting some of them demonstrates a diverse set of organizations as well as philanthropic activities. For example, he has supported youth sports, law enforcement, various food distribution efforts including the Sacramento Food Bank, the Make a Wish Foundation, Shriners Hospital, WEAVE, the Sacramento Unity Council, American Leadership Forum, the Council of Arab Islamic Relations, and Habitat for Humanity. In addition, he has supported the various refugee and ethnic communities including the Latino, Asian, Russian, and Ukrainian communities as well as recent Middle Eastern immigrants who have relocated to the area. In fact, more recently, he has been involved in setting up a Middle Eastern operations network that is immigrant-based that provides everything from food, furniture and money to help immigrants from war-torn areas. Clearly, his help and philanthropy are broad and far-reaching.

**Question 3:** What is the lasting and positive impact of your nominee's contributions and who has been affected by his or her efforts?

The impact Sharif has had on the campus and the community is enormous and will be felt for years to come. At Sac State the students, faculty and families are the beneficiaries of his involvement. He is a fixture on campus and has been instrumental in the development of programs and assistance to students and faculty. For example, this year he has committed to support one student from Gaza to attend Sac State and he will pay all fees and expenses, including housing. That's in addition to the support he provides to the International Program and its students. In the community numerous organizations, both nonprofit and business related will benefit from his leadership and philanthropy. Notably, the greater Islamic community will utilize the SALAM Islamic Center while the Interfaith Council

will continue to fulfil his goals of bringing all peoples of the Sacramento region together for a positive and peaceful future. Clearly, his legacy will continue with his children who are also committed to Sac State and the community.

**Nominator:** Alexander Gonzalez

**Nomination of Mahmud Sharif for the  
Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni  
Lifetime Achievement Award**

Selection Committee  
Sacramento State Alumni  
Distinguished Service Award

I would like to nominate Mahmud Sharif to receive the Sacramento State Distinguished Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award. I believe Mahmud represents the values, traditions and aspirations of Sacramento State and its alumni. Over the past forty-five years he has demonstrated that he is a proud Sac State alumnus and Sacramentan not only in spirit but also through his community involvement and support of the university.

Over the years, I've been fortunate to have interacted with Sharif (as most people call him) and have seen the many ways he has engaged with the campus and the larger Sacramento communities. In my view he has had a tremendous impact on the campus and its students, as well as the families and people of the greater Sacramento region. He has been selfless in donating his time, effort and resources in service to Sac State and Sacramento. In my view, Mahmud Sharif exemplifies what it means to be a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. But what motivated me to nominate him is more than just his record of service, but his indefatigable spirit, faith and goodwill toward everyone. No matter the obstacles, or how busy, he is always gracious and willing to lend a hand to whoever is in need. He has maintained a positive outlook in everything he does and as a result, people respond positively to his leadership and infectious personality.

In many ways Sharif was not the typical Sac State student. A native of Palestine, he came to Sacramento in 1979 to attend Sac State to study engineering. As an international student however, faced with the need for resources, he and his brother, who was also a Sac State student, opened a jewelry store in 1980 on Howe Avenue. This was in keeping with a family tradition of jewelers that began several decades earlier in his native country. While engaged in the daunting process of starting a business, he continued to work his way through school and graduated in 1983 with a BSc in Mechanical Engineering. While at Sac State, he was also involved with the Art Department and earned a minor in addition to his degree in Engineering. Starting a business and earning a college degree at the same time is no mean feat. Yet Mahmud accomplished both and achieved his goals. In fact, his interest in art and engineering are reflected in his work as a jeweler.

After obtaining his degree, he decided to continue with the business. Since the first Sharif Jewelers had done well, he was invested in building it further. It was during those early days that he was everywhere in the community, going to swap meets, working with people and becoming a fixture in the Sacramento business community. Fast forward to today and his success is evident. The first store he opened is now part of the Sharif Plaza at the same location. In addition, there are five other Sharif Jewelers in the great Sacramento region. And, in keeping

with the family tradition, his children and nieces and nephews are also part of the Sharif company of fine jewelers. As a business, it has been very successful and is recognized throughout the Sacramento Region. In fact, Sharif Jewelers is the official sponsor/jeweler of the Sacramento Kings Basketball organization. There is no denying that he has been a success in business.

Sharif's involvement in the community provides another perspective of this man's dedication and commitment. While there are too many organizations and projects that Sharif has been involved with over the years to list here, highlighting some of them demonstrates a diverse set of organizations as well as philanthropic activities. For example, he has supported youth sports, law enforcement, various food distribution efforts including the Sacramento Food Bank, the Make a Wish Foundation, Shriners Hospital, WEAVE, the Sacramento Unity Council, American Leadership Forum, the Council of Arab Islamic Relations, and Habitat for Humanity. In addition, he has supported the various refugee and ethnic communities including the Latino, Asian, Russian, and Ukrainian communities as well as recent Middle Eastern immigrants who have relocated to the area. In fact, more recently, he has been involved in setting up a Middle Eastern operations network that is immigrant-based that provides everything from food, furniture and money to help immigrants from war-torn areas. Clearly, his help and philanthropy are broad and far-reaching.

But perhaps just as important is the fact that he has provided the leadership and resources to establish some very essential organizations, programs and on-going activities in the community. For example, after 9/11 he was instrumental in establishing the Interfaith Council. That year, over 300 people participated, including the Sheriff of Sacramento County and the Mayor of Elk Grove. It has continued and last year, the event was held at Sac State. This year it was held at UC Davis; the first time both universities participated together. Clearly, over the years, the Interfaith Council has played an important role in uniting the peoples and faiths of the region.

Sharif's vision, commitment and leadership are also reflected in the establishment of the SALAM (Islamic) Center of Sacramento. The Center was established as a place where people can come together as a community and celebrate while observing their traditions and religious beliefs. It is an important venue in Sacramento and has served the community well. It took years of planning and working together with other community members to make it a reality. Today it is an integral part of Sacramento and is recognized as a valuable resource as well as pride. As part of the Center, Sharif also established the Sharif Community Library where those who are interested can utilize the facility to explore and study at a higher level. In addition, classes are held for children and there are lectures and events for adults. More important however, is that the SALAM Center provides a place for faith and worship for the Muslim community in Sacramento.

Very much like his role in the community, Sharif's involvement with the university spans decades. While he has fond memories of his time as a student, he did not stop his affiliation with the campus once he graduated. He has been a fixture on campus and at Sac State events for years. He has been, and is currently, a member of the President's Circle and often is asked

for his advice. For example, he recently assisted Dr. Wood in further developing the international center on campus so that more international students can enroll at Sac State. In fact, this year he committed to support one international student to attend Sac State full time, which includes all expenses. Sharif attends Alumni events and supports the university in innumerable ways. In fact, he was featured on the Sac State website as a “Made at Sac State” profile. He is very proud of the fact that all five of his children are also alumni of Sacramento State. There is no doubt that he is a proud Hornet and doesn’t hesitate to proclaim his great debt and affection he has for Sacramento State.

As a testament to his involvement in the community, he has been recognized by a wide range of organizations over the years. For example, he has been acknowledged as a hero for first responders for his support of law enforcement and by the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office. The Sacramento UNITY Council has recognized him with the “Force for Good Award”. The Russian community of Sacramento as well as the Middle Eastern community have praised him for his humanitarian work, especially with women and children. With this group his focus has been to help refugees get a good education, find jobs and get what they need and know where to find it. Finally, he has also been recognized by the California State Assembly for his outstanding contributions to the region and state. Clearly, what emerges from all this is that he is a businessman who is aware, involved and dedicated to his community.

But let me shift the focus to his role as a businessman. He is the founder and president of the Arab American Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Carmichael Chamber of Commerce and many others. Recently he was honored by the Iranian community as the Businessman of the Year for 2024 at an event put on by BADAD Radio. Below are what some of the speakers had to say about Sharif.

*“He is someone who is special in many different ways”. Kais Menoufy*

*“He is a family man. He cares about his family more than anything”. Sheriff Jim Cooper*

*“He’s very passionate. Very caring, loving for his community.” Ali Sharif*

*“He’s someone that I look at as a source of bringing people together and supports people.”  
Usama Khalil*

*“He basically puts his money where his mouth is by donating large sums of money to good causes from education to needy families, whatever cause there is.” Mohammad Arnuiti*

*“The more I know him, the more I socialize with him, the more he becomes the ideal that I look up to. Familywise, businesswise, community wise, a big heart. I love just to be around him.”*

*“He’s kind, he’s generous, he donates his time to the campus. His family is heavily involved with the campus in different ways as proud alums of the institution. He’s been present, he’s been a thought partner on how we can create the kind of environment we want to create for our*

*students so that every one of our students who come to Sacramento State experiences dignity. I consider him a friend personally, a friend of Sacramento State, and one of the best parts of Sacramento.” Dr. Luke Wood, President, Sacramento State.*

*“Great man...he is the best, a role model for newcomers, immigrants, for anybody. And, you don’t have to be rich and famous to be his friend. I love him”. Moe Gohshani*

For me, the picture that emerges is one of a successful businessman, member of the community, philanthropist, husband, father and engaged Sac State Alumnus.

I would like to emphasize the one descriptor for Mahmud Sharif that emerges from all sectors and individuals who know him. Above all, he is a family man. To know him is to understand the importance of family, not merely in the biological sense, but in a much broader and meaningful way. To Sharif the people of Sacramento are his family. For every person he helps, for every act of support and kindness, he is helping family. That applies to Sac State, his friends, and everyone in the community. It’s a wonderful way to be considered by others. When you are around him, you can’t help but feel the positivity and inclusion of being part of his “family”. Especially during these difficult times, he is a role model to be emulated.

Given Sharif’s history of service and his continued involvement with the campus, I feel that he is a great candidate to receive the Sac State Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award. To me, he represents the best example of someone who comes to Sacramento for a specific purpose but instead remains and becomes an outstanding member and integral part of the community and, more important, stays connected to his alma mater. He is always positive and rarely turns down a request for his involvement and assistance. As the former President of Sacramento State and someone who has always supported and treasured the alumni, it gives me great pleasure to nominate Mahmud Sharif for this award and the recognition it brings. I know he would be honored and would cherish the recognition by continuing to be involved and contributing significantly to the campus.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexander Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

Alexander Gonzalez  
President Emeritus  
California State University Sacramento

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April 11, 2025

Distinguished Service Award committee.

Letter of Recommendation for Mr. Mahmud Sharif

I highly recommend Mr. Sharif be considered for this years DSA award. I have been fortunate to have worked with Mrs. Sharif the last 20 years participating in many events associated with CSUS and our Sacramento community. He has not only been a financial contributor but present at the events while also being a great role model for his children that follow his leadership.

Mr. Sharif and I are members of the America Leadership Forum, and this organization has paved the way for us to be able to help many different organizations and communities in Sacramento and the surrounding cities.

He has grown a very successful family business and employes CSUS students and graduates.

If we had more individuals like Mr. Sharif our community would be a much better place.

A blue ink signature of Marco A. Rodriguez, featuring a stylized 'M' and 'R' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Marco A. Rodriguez

Past recipient of DSA

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## **Letter of Recommendation for Mr. Mahmoud Sharif**

Dear Award Nomination Committee:

It is with great pride and deep respect that I write this letter of recommendation for Mr. Mahmoud Sharif.

Since the late 1970s, Mr. Sharif has called Sacramento, California home. His journey began as a student at California State University, Sacramento (Sac State), where he first developed a deep sense of belonging and commitment to the Sacramento region. From those early days, Mr. Sharif has exemplified the American Dream—through hard work, perseverance, and unwavering dedication to the community.

Following his graduation, Mr. Sharif became a tireless supporter of social, religious, and business causes throughout the Sacramento region. His entrepreneurial success with Sharif Jewelers turned the brand into a household name across Northern California—not only for its excellence in quality and service, but also for the values it represents.

Mr. Sharif's leadership, generosity, and consistent financial support have touched nearly every segment of our community.

A proud alumnus of Sac State, he has inspired generations of his family—and many others—to attend his alma mater, laying a foundation for their future success.

His contributions to the community are far too numerous to list, but his courage, humility, and deep faith stand as powerful examples to all. In an era when it is often difficult to stand firm in one's beliefs, Mr. Sharif has remained proudly rooted in his Palestinian heritage and Muslim faith. His grace and dignity in the face of adversity make him a true ambassador for ethical business, higher education, cultural pride, and social justice.

Mr. Sharif's legacy is one of integrity, service, and vision.

It is with the highest confidence and heartfelt admiration and pride, that I nominate him for this prestigious award.

Very respectfully,

**Sam Hassoun**

President & CEO

Global Leadership Alliance



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(916) 801-2031  
[www.MCCNC.org](http://www.MCCNC.org)

Sacramento, California April 9, 2025

### Letter of Support for Mahmud Sharif

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support for Mr. Mahmud Sharif as a nominee for the Sacramento State 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award.

As the Vice-President of the Mexican Cultural Center of Northern California and a former Director of Community Empowerment at Univision Chanel 19, I have had the pleasure of knowing Mahmud for over thirty-five years.

Throughout all these years, Mahmud has demonstrated his commitment and leadership in our community. He has a genuine passion and gives from his heart. He is bright, articulate, yet humble. He is a very positive person, always seeking solutions to problems and achieving excellent results.

As a non-profit organization, we depend on the support and donations from the community. Mahmud's generosity is unparalleled. Every single time that we have requested his support, his immediate response has been *"I will be more than happy to support your organization"*.

Mahmud is an individual with great family values that continues to make a difference in our community and so deserving of the Sacramento State 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award!! Should you require additional information or if I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolina Rojas-Gore  
Vice-President of the Mexican Cultural Center of Northern California  
Former Director of Community Empowerment, Univision 19  
[carolinagore@comcast.net](mailto:carolinagore@comcast.net)  
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ALEJANDRO CABRERA

To whom may concern:

I am writing to nominate Mahmud Sharif for recognition as a Distinguished Alumni of Sacramento State University. Mahmud's contributions to the community and his continued commitment to both Sacramento State and his family's legacy make him an exemplary candidate for this honor.

I have known Mahmud since he was a student pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering in 1979. I got to know him when he took my class. He was an excellent student who actively participated, asked relevant questions, and scored the highest in that class. During his time at the university, Mahmud demonstrated a dedication to his studies and extracurricular activities, cultivating lifelong friendships and a strong sense of belonging within the university community.

As a friend, I observed Mahmud's growth from humble beginnings to becoming one of the most distinguished entrepreneurs in Sacramento. He founded Sharif Jewelers, continuing his family's tradition—a business that has now become a staple in Sacramento with six locations. His work in the jewelry industry is rooted in his passion for both engineering and art, a combination he skillfully applied in designing high-quality jewelry. He was later joined by his two brothers, and the successful business has now been passed down to the next generation, with several of his children following in his footsteps and attending Sacramento State. The Sharif family's multi-generational bond with Sacramento State is a testament to Mahmud's belief in the importance of education and community involvement.

It is clear that Mahmud Sharif's contributions extend far beyond the jewelry business. His philanthropy spans multiple communities, including the Arab American, Iranian American, Turkish American, Chinese American, Filipino American, Japanese American, and many other communities in the Sacramento area. He hosts and supports social, political, and religious events, and donates to academic institutions, including Sacramento State. For example, in the political arena, he supports politicians regardless of their affiliations to help preserve democratic principles.

His philanthropy also extends beyond our shores, as he contributes to humanitarian causes. He remains ready to help those in need and works tirelessly to find solutions to their problems. Currently, he is sponsoring two international students from Gaza, covering their housing, tuition, and living expenses for four years at Sacramento State.

Mahmud has made an indelible mark on the Sacramento community and embodies the spirit of excellence that Sacramento State University fosters. His career, family legacy, and deep connection to the university make him a highly deserving candidate for recognition as a Distinguished Alumnus of Sacramento State University.

Thank you for considering this nomination. I would be happy to provide any further information or assist in any way to support this process.

Sincerely yours

Ayad Al-Qazzaz

Professor of sociology