



Honorary Doctorates recognize excellence in areas that benefit humanity, CSU campuses, the state, nation or world. They are conferred by the California State University Board of Trustees jointly in the name of the California State University and Sacramento State.

The President's Medal for Distinguished Service is awarded at Spring Commencement ceremonies to recognize outstanding service to Sacramento State.

The medal is not awarded every year, and it is reserved for individuals who have made the highest, and most positive, impact on Sacramento State.

RUSS BUETTNER

Investigative Reporter, The New York Times
2024 Recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.)



Russ Buettner is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for The New York Times. He joined The Times in 2006 after working as an investigative reporter at The Daily News in New York and New York Newsday. Since 2016, his reporting has focused on the personal finances of former President Donald J. Trump, including articles exploring Trump's business records in Atlantic City, work which exposed a history of Trump overstating business revenues.

Investigative reporting by Mr. Buettner and two colleagues at The New York Times further revealed that Trump, contrary to representing himself as a self-made businessman, had received the equivalent of at least \$413 million from his father, a figure that the team's reporting showed had been greatly enhanced

by tax avoidance schemes. For their efforts, Mr. Buettner and his colleagues won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting, the highest award in journalism. A few years later, Mr. Buettner was part of a team that obtained two decades of Trump's tax returns – one of the biggest scoops in recent history.

Mr. Buettner's reporting also exposed unpaid taxes by The Rev. Al Sharpton and uncovered multiples other instances of corruption by elected and appointed officials. In 2012, he and a colleague were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for a series of articles that uncovered abuse, neglect and other deadly mistakes in New York's system meant to care for developmentally disabled people. While working at the New York Daily News, Mr. Buettner broke a story about wrongdoing by Bernard B. Kerik, a former New York City police commissioner. Kerik eventually pleaded guilty to state and federal charges and was sent to prison.

Mr. Buettner, a native of Sacramento, was Made at Sac State. He graduated in 1990 after spending a significant amount of time writing for The State Hornet, the student-run campus news publication. He generously took time to speak to State Hornet staff shortly after his Pulitzer win, offering tips and advice to aspiring young journalists.

Mr. Buettner and his wife, Stacey, have one daughter.

ROGER G. F. FONG

Sacramento County Assessor, retired, and Five Star Bank Founding Chairman of the Board
2024 Recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)



Roger Fong was born in 1933 to Chinese immigrant parents Sam and Yee Yee Fong, who overcame social and legal discrimination to become successful landowners and farmers. When not attending American or Chinese school, young Roger labored alongside his siblings and friends in his family's fields. Initially not planning to attend college, he was encouraged by childhood friend Gordon Fong to follow him to Sacramento City College to run track. After earning an associate's degree in business, he transferred to Sacramento State, where he continued competing in track and also became an award-winning member of the first boxing team. After graduating in 1956 with a degree in Business Administration,

he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he boxed competitively. After his service, Mr. Fong returned to Sacramento and launched a career in public service. After serving as a county social worker, Mr. Fong found his niche as a real estate appraiser in the County Assessor's Office. In 1986, he made history, becoming the nation's first Asian American elected County Assessor. Mr. Fong served with distinction before retiring in 1999. Lauded for modernizing and improving the office, his transformative leadership earned accolades statewide.

Beyond his professional achievements, Mr. Fong devoted himself to strengthening Sacramento's Chinese and Asian American communities. He was a founding member of the Chinese American Council of Sacramento, giving voice to underserved and underrepresented groups. He actively contributed to the Sacramento Asian Sports Foundation and the Asian Pacific Islander American Association, held board positions with KVIE, the Sacramento Symphony, St. Hope Academy, and United Way; and was a founding chairman of Five Star Bank. He stayed engaged with his alma maters, serving on committees for Sacramento High School and Sacramento State. Through lasting advocacy and philanthropy, Mr. Fong cemented his legacy as a community leader and role model.

Mr. Fong and his wife, Florence, were married for 61 years until her passing in June 2023. He is the proud father of three children—Ryan, Alisa and Rachelle Fong—and has seven grandchildren. Today, he enjoys spending time on his 50-acre Clarksburg farm, cultivating organic produce to savor and share with family and friends.

RHONDA RÍOS KRAVITZ

Dean Emerita, Sacramento City College, and alumna of Sacramento State
2024 Recipient of the President's Medal for Distinguished Service



Dr. Rhonda Ríos Kravitz is an activist dedicated to fighting for social justice, educational, political and economic equity, immigrant rights, and an end to this nation's history of erasure, exclusion, and oppression. Born in San Francisco to a Mexican mother and Jewish father, she was raised predominantly with her mother's family and self-identifies as Chicana. She earned degrees from Sacramento State, Simmons College and the University of Southern California.

In 1987, Dr. Ríos Kravitz became the Ethnic Services Consultant for the California State Library, where she worked on grant programs to support community development and advocated for library collections, services and programs that accurately and authentically reflected the cultural perspectives of diverse communities. In 1990, she joined Sacramento

State as a Library faculty member and was recognized as a leader in diversity and equity issues. From 2007 to 2014, she served as dean of the Learning Resource Center at Sacramento City College and eventually retired to pursue work on equity, diversity and immigration issues full time.

Dr. Ríos Kravitz has held numerous professional leadership roles, including service as president of REFORMA, National Organization to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking, and chair of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. Her equity and social justice work has earned her many awards, including the Dolores Huerta Activist Award from the Freedom Bound Center, the Faculty Excellence Award from El Concilio Estudiantes de Sacramento, and the I Love My Librarian! 2011 Award sponsored by The Carnegie Corporation of New York and The New York Times, an award is bestowed upon outstanding nationally renowned public, school and academic librarians. She is also the recipient of Doris Matsui's Women's Appreciation Award for her work with DREAMERS. Dr. Ríos Kravitz also worked on the documentaries "We Are Not Strangers to This Land: Untold Stories of Dreamers" and "The Sacramento Chicano Movement: From Voiceless to Empowered" (2017). She was awarded the 2020 Colibri Award from the Sacramento Latino Democratic Club and the 2023 Rick Bettis Community Champion Award for her community activism in the fields of social justice and civic engagement.

VIVIAN “VICKI” PLEAU

Alumna of Sacramento State, philanthropist, advocate
2024 Recipient of the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service



Vivian “Vicki” Pleau was a fierce advocate for those who called Sacramento home. Born in Minnesota to Lyle Moore, a Canadian soldier, and Maggie O’Neil, a war bride from Scotland, her family relocated to Bakersfield when she was a child. After spending her early years in Fresno, Mrs. Pleau’s family moved to Sacramento while she was a teenager. She graduated from El Camino High School in 1964, and upon her graduation enrolled at Sacramento State. There she became a proud member of the Delta Gamma Alpha Psi sorority, an organization designed to uplift and encourage young women to strive for their goals and achieve their dreams.

In 1966 she met the love of her life, Steve Pleau, when they were both students at Sacramento State. They were married in

January 1968, the same year she graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in Sociology. Mrs. Pleau and Steve raised their two children, son Geoff Pleau and daughter Stacey Carter, in Fair Oaks, where they formed lifelong friendships in a close-knit community. Mrs. Pleau’s passion for her family showed in the values she instilled, including a sense of belonging, inclusivity and excellence. Mrs. Pleau not only embodies what it means to be a Hornet, but she instilled it in others through her generosity, compassion and persistent dedication to supporting those around her. Involvement in the community was a core value exhibited by Mrs. Pleau throughout her life, and she supported numerous organizations with her time and resources, including the Children’s Receiving Home of Sacramento, Junior Achievement of Sacramento, Sacramento State Athletics, UCP of Sacramento and Northern California, the Del Paso Foundation and First Tee of Sacramento.

Mrs. Pleau provided unwavering support to Steve in growing the Future Automotive Group, from the opening of his first dealership in Roseville in 1981 to the 14th one last spring. She was proud of Steve for expanding the organization to the largest privately owned automotive group in Northern California. Steve said many times this would not have been possible without her support and counsel.

With her commitment to supporting those around her, including her devoted husband, children, and grandchildren, it is no surprise that Mrs. Pleau was unwavering in her support to advancing society.

OTIS L. SCOTT

Dean Emeritus, Sacramento State
2024 Recipient of the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service



Dean Emeritus Dr. Otis Scott, a pioneer in the field of ethnic studies, was hired at Sacramento State to serve as a professor of its nascent Ethnic Studies program in 1974. He played a pivotal role in transforming the program into a full-fledged department, serving as its first chair for 21 years. In 2002, Dr. Scott was named associate dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (SSIS). In 2004, he became SSIS dean, serving until his retirement from the University in 2009.

Dr. Scott’s educational journey began in Ohio, where he attended Central State University before joining the Air Force. He eventually came to Sacramento State, where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Political Science. Later, he earned a doctorate from Union Graduate School in Cincinnati, where his

research focused on the political education of African Americans.

Dr. Scott was part of the team that started the Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program (CWC), one of the earliest educational equity programs focused on Black student success. Dr. Scott worked with the late Dr. David Covin and Chris Glen to create a program to develop and guide African American students to pathways for success. Along with Glen and Covin, Dr. Scott advocated for African Americans in the academic community to create culturally responsive learning environments and to act as mentors to support students in their college journeys. The program’s influence can still be felt globally, as it serves as an exemplar for other educational equity programs.

Acknowledging his teaching excellence, scholarly achievements and commitment to social justice, the John “Jack” Livingstone Faculty Committee selected Dr. Scott to deliver the 1999 Livingstone Lecture. This is the highest award that a faculty committee can bestow on one of its own.

Upon his retirement, Dr. Scott’s dedication to student success was celebrated with the establishment of the Otis. L. Scott Scholarship created by faculty members to support students who demonstrate academic excellence, leadership, and community service within SSIS.

Dr. Scott married the love of his life, Willie Scott, in 1963, and together they had three sons. Sadly, she passed away last year, just two days before their 60th wedding anniversary.