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Teacher of the Year, Business Leaders to Address Graduates

May 14th, 2012

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For César Soto, failure is not defeat. Rather, failing is an opportunity to learn and grow. "All the obstacles I've faced have only made me better," he said.

Lunch Break: Plaza Pool

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Grab your sunscreen and your swimsuits! As the Los Angeles temperature approaches triple digits, what

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Size of grant from The California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) preparing CSUN students to work with scientists conducting groundbreaking stem cell research.

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better way to spend lunch on a hot summer day than by taking a cool and relaxing dip in the Plaza Pool?



Outstanding Graduates 2012

May 14th, 2012

In these five videos, graduating students with exceptional academic accomplishments, community involvement and extracurricular activities share their stories of achieving success, often after overcoming adversity. (Videos by Krishna Narayanamurti and Jacquil Constant.)



Dayanthie Weeraratne: Riding California's Seismic Waves

May 14th, 2012

California State University, Northridge marine seismologist and geological science professor Dayanthie Weeraratne's passion for her subject matter radiates like an earthquake's P wave traveling deep into the Earth. But it wasn't always like that. Originally a psychology student, she lost interest and settled into a job as a machinist.



Determination, Hard Work Pay Off as CSUN Students Look to Graduation and Beyond

May 14th, 2012

More than 9,200 students are expected to walk across a stage at California State University, Northridge later this month as they celebrate their graduation from the university before thousands of family members and friends.



Dancers Showcase Talent at Kinesis: Emerging Choreography

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From left, Rebecca Mieliwocki (courtesy of CCSSO) and Vincent Barabba (photo by Lee Choo).

America's 2012 Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki, Amgen executive Nicholas Timinkas, telecommunications entrepreneur Paul Jennings and business executive and former U.S. Census Bureau Director Vincent Barabba, all CSUN alumni, are among the dignitaries who will address California State University, Northridge students when they graduate later this month.

An estimated 9,263 students—about 7,174 bachelor's, 2,065 master's and 24 doctoral degree candidates in a total of 64 fields—are eligible to take part in the ceremonies scheduled to begin the evening of Monday, May 21, with the university's Honors Convocation.

"Commencement is a time when students, their friends and families, and the greater campus community join together to celebrate a significant milestone in the lives of our students," said Cal State Northridge Interim President Harry Hellenbrand. "We do so using the pomp and circumstance that are a traditional part of graduation, but the ceremonies also have plenty of spontaneity and moments of genuine emotion that reflect the unique character of the graduating class and its students."

"Given the challenges that our public universities face in one of the most difficult fiscal environments in generations, this year's commencement is particularly poignant and calls attention to the importance of higher education in our society," Hellenbrand said.

The graduation celebration begins at 6 p.m. on Monday, May 21, with the Honors Convocation on the lawn in front of the Delmar T. Oviatt Library, located in the heart of the campus at 18111 Nordhoff St. in Northridge. About 1,600 graduating students have been invited to participate. All graduation celebrations are open to the public.

This year's convocation speaker is Hellenbrand, who has served as Northridge's interim president since December, when former CSUN President Jolene Koester retired. Dianne F. Harrison, president of CSU

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Federal grant monies awarded to CSUN to improve the education of teachers who work with students with disabilities.

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Monterey Bay, will be assuming the permanent position in June.

Hellenbrand was appointed CSUN provost and vice president for academic affairs in 2004. He is the former dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where he also taught. Hellenbrand was also a professor at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and California State University, San Bernardino. He has a bachelor's degree in English and American literature from Harvard College and a doctorate in modern thought and literature from Stanford University.

Computer science alumnus Nicholas Timinskas will address the graduates during the College of Engineering and Computer Science's ceremony, which will take place at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, on Manzanita Hall lawn.

Timinskas, who earned a bachelor's degree from CSUN in 2009, is the global commercial operations information systems portfolio manager and project manager for breakawayfromcancer.com. Founded in 2005 by Amgen, breakawayfromcancer.com is a national initiative to increase awareness of important resources available to people affected by cancer—from prevention through survivorship.

Telecommunications entrepreneur Paul Jennings, who graduated from Northridge with a degree in marketing in 1985, will give the commencement address during the ceremony for the College of Business and Economics, which begins at 8 a.m. on Thursday, May 24, on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Jennings has been in the telecommunications industry since 1983. He has founded, developed and successfully built; operated; and sold various technology companies, including an industry leader in the provisioning of inmate correctional telephone services throughout the country. Concurrent to operating technology companies, in 1994 Jennings formed PCS Development, which has become an active real estate developer in Southern California. Jennings has built, managed and owned more than 4,000 multifamily units. PCS Development currently has a portfolio of land assets that are in various stages of development in Park City, Utah, as well as a planned resort community in Mexico.

Business executive and former U.S. Census Bureau Director Vincent Barabba, who received his bachelor's degree in 1962 from what was then San Fernando Valley State College, will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree during the ceremony.

Barabba has had a long career in public and private service. Most recently, he was a member of the California Citizens' Redistricting Commission and is serving as chairman of The State of the USA, a prominent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the American people assess the nation's progress based on unbiased information. He was appointed director of the U.S. Census Bureau by President Richard Nixon in 1973, by President Gerald Ford in 1974 and by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. He also has held executive positions at Xerox, Eastman Kodak and General Motors. Barabba was recognized by the university in 2003 as a distinguished alumnus.

National Teacher of the Year for 2012, Rebecca Mieliwocki, will address the graduates during the ceremony for the Michael D. Eisner College of Education at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 24, on the Oviatt Library lawn.

Mieliwocki, who received her credential in secondary English education from Northridge in 1996, teaches English to seventh-graders at Luther Burbank Middle School in the Burbank Unified School District and was one of California's five 2012 Teachers of the Year. She was selected as the 2012 National Teacher of the Year, the nation's oldest and most prestigious teaching honor, last month and was feted at the White House by President Barack Obama.

—Carmen Ramos Chandler

CSUN Commencement Schedule

Honors Convocation

Monday, May 21, 6 p.m., Delmar T. Oviatt Library lawn
Interim President Harry Hellenbrand, speaker

Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication

Tuesday, May 22, 8 a.m., Oviatt Library lawn

College of Science and Mathematics

Tuesday, May 22, 3:30 p.m., Manzanita Hall lawn

College of Health and Human Development

Tuesday, May 22, 6:30 p.m., Oviatt Library lawn

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Wednesday, May 23, 8 a.m., Oviatt Library lawn

College of Engineering and Computer Science

Wednesday, May 23, 3:30 p.m., Manzanita Hall lawn
Global commercial operations information systems portfolio manager
and computer science alumnus Nicholas Timinskas, speaker

College of Humanities

Wednesday, May 23, 6:30 p.m., Oviatt Library lawn



College of Business and Economics

Thursday, May 24, 8 a.m., Oviatt Library lawn
Telecommunications entrepreneur and marketing alumnus Paul Jennings, speaker
Business executive, former U.S. Census Bureau Director and alumnus Vincent Barabba
receives honorary degree

Michael D. Eisner College of Education

Thursday, May 24, 6:30 p.m., Oviatt Library lawn
National Teacher of the Year for 2012 and alumnus Rebecca Mielwocki, speaker

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Cal State Northridge Interim President Harry Hellenbrand and Shanghai Normal University Dean Cong Li (both seated) sign an agreement to launch the "3+1+1" master's in music program. From left: (standing) Elizabeth Sellers, music department chair; Maureen Rubin, associate dean of the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication; Robert Bucker, dean of the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication; Mack Johnson, associate vice president of graduate studies; Katherine Baker, music professor and director of CSUN's Women's Chorale; and Justin Su, director of CSUN's China Institute and professor of Educational Leadership. Photo by Lee Choo.

Representatives from California State University, Northridge's Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication signed an agreement this week that will allow students at Shanghai Normal University (SHNU) to complete an accelerated master's degree in music.

The program, which is called "3+1+1," will begin this fall. It is exclusively for students in the Music College at SHNU who qualify for conditional enrollment in the Department of Music's graduate program.

"This kind of a partnership is very enriching for our own students and faculty," said Robert Bucker, dean of the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication. "The introduction into our community of more international students just gives our youngsters a better sense of what the competition is around the world.

"In the arts, we work in a business that's not just about the region. It's about the international community," he said.

Shanghai Normal University is one of more than 40 "sister" relationships Cal State Northridge has with Chinese universities and government entities. Shanghai Normal University has had a relationship with CSUN for more than 20 years, hosting the Women's Chorale, jazz band and theater students. Visiting scholars from SHNU have come to Cal State Northridge, and CSUN administrators and faculty have gone to China.

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The 3+1+1 program is one of several degree program agreements between CSUN and SHNU. The College of Business and Economics and the Department of Art have undergraduate programs that allow Shanghai Normal University students to earn a bachelor's degree through a combination of courses taken in China and at CSUN.

"One of the most important goals of Chinese education is to be international," said Cong Li, dean of the Music College at SHNU, through an interpreter. "Music is without borders. We are really happy to develop this relationship."

Li said Cal State Northridge has "one of the best" music programs in the United States. He said this is the second educational exchange program approved by SHNU. A year ago, they signed a 2+3 agreement with a Russian university to allow Chinese students to earn a bachelor's degree and master's in music through work in both countries.

Shanghai Normal University will begin the process of admission into the program when freshmen are accepted into the university. At that time, SHNU faculty will recruit promising students, enroll them in intensive English language classes and supervise the application process. CSUN faculty will first become involved in the audition process at the conclusion of the freshman year. Each year, a cohort of between 20 and 25 SHNU freshmen who pass the audition will be conditionally accepted into the program.



The summer before the SHNU student's senior year, the student can opt to take a summer classes at the Tseng College in "Summer English and Cultural Experience" to help them transition to the campus and Southern California culture. Students in the 3+1+1 program must pass an approved English proficiency exam prior to admission. Shanghai Normal University students are responsible for all tuition, living expenses and other costs associated with the program. The first cohort is expected to arrive at CSUN in the fall of 2014 and graduate with a master's degree in 2016.

Katherine Baker, director of CSUN's Women's Chorale and one of the music faculty traveling to China this summer to audition freshman students for the program, said this is a wonderful opportunity for students at both universities.

"This is an opportunity for them to make great friends and scholars that will be part of their network," said Baker, who has traveled to China with the Women's Choral.

—Shanté Morgan

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Wolfson Scholar Among Outstanding Seniors Recognized at Honors Convocation

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Stacia Short-Baguio. Photo by Jenny Donaire.

Stacia Short-Baguio thought she was done with education when she dropped out of high school at 17. She had always been a bright student, but the chaos in her life was hectic. Her single, teenage mom had a hard time keeping a roof over their heads and provided little support. She needed stability and a job.

Short-Baguio left high school five units short of her diploma. She began working in the garment district in downtown Los Angeles. Her talent was recognized, and she was recruited to work in sales at a retail apparel boutique. She quickly moved up the ladder, overseeing a network of 23 stores across six districts. But she was keeping a secret and knew something was missing.

"The shame of not graduating high school continued to torment me," Short-Baguio said. "I kept it a secret."

At 39, Short-Baguio had a child and decided it was time to "reinvent" herself. She enrolled at Pierce College and finished her two remaining high school classes to earn her diploma. In the spring of 2009, she had hopes of transferring to UCLA, but tragedy struck. Her husband was hospitalized, and she had to reduce her class load. She didn't have enough units to transfer.

"I was distraught," Short-Baguio said. However, after some research, she found out she was eligible to transfer to California State University, Northridge.

Today, the 44-year-old communications studies major said coming to Cal State Northridge was the best decision. Inspired by her professors, Short-Baguio immersed herself in campus life, both academically and through activism, serving as vice president of the Gender and Women's Studies Student Association and volunteering at the Women's Resource and Research Center. She also served as a production intern for the "Dr. Phil" show. Her paper on Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign was accepted for the 2011 Undergraduate Scholars Conference. She was one of only 30 undergraduates chosen to participate in that conference. These accomplishments are the reason Short-Baguio has been selected the 2012 Wolfson Scholar.

"I connected with the instructors and developed relationships," Short-Baguio said. "I feel that I got recognition that has propelled my success."

Short-Baguio will be among approximately 1600 students recognized during the university's Honors Convocation ceremony at 6 p.m. on Monday, May 21. She is one of CSUN's outstanding graduating seniors. The award is presented each year in memory of Cal State Northridge's first vice president, Leo Wolfson. Not only must the student have an exceptional academic record, but he or she must also have made significant contributions to CSUN or to the community through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

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5 to 110 Enrollment jump in the five short years since CSUN's construction management technology program was founded, in 2005.

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Short-Baguio has a 3.93 GPA.

She graduated Summa Cum Laude in December 2011 with a degree in communication studies and a minor in gender and women's studies. The resident of Woodland Hills credits CSUN professors for helping her "embrace" and appreciate the good qualities about being an older and returning student. She said they also helped her find her passion.

"My life experience allowed me to mentor younger people and advocate for social change," Short-Baguio said. She said as a peer educator at Joint Advocates for Disordered Eating (JADE), she was able to arm college students with valuable knowledge about eating disorders, media literacy and body image.

"She is at the top of the list of intelligent, engaged and well-rounded human beings with whom I have had the privilege to work, learn and teach," wrote communication studies professor Kathryn Sorrells, in her assessment of Short-Baguio.

In addition to being the mother of an 8-year-old, Short-Baguio said she is busy researching graduate school options.

"I am a first-generation college graduate, and I'm proud of that," Short-Baguio said. "It's never too late to pursue a dream."

Other 2012 Outstanding Graduating Senior Award Winners:

Alicia Ana Ayala, of Venice, is the recipient of the Karen, Leon, and Rita Goldstein-Saulter Memorial Award. She is a psychology and child and adolescent development double major who has maintained a 3.40 GPA. Ayala, a recipient of the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Scholarship and the National Institute of Mental Health Undergraduate Honors Fellow, is a well-rounded student who maintained a rigorous and advanced course load. She was a research assistant under Gabriela Chavira, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology, and a member of the student organization "Hermanas Unidas." Ayala has been committed to volunteering with community organizations such as Relay for Life, AIDS Walk, Day of the Child, Meeting Each Need with Dignity (MEND) and Adelante Hombres Youth Summit. After overcoming countless adversities and disparities, Ayala aspires to be a developmental psychologist who aims to enhance the health and well-being of individuals within the community. "(My) motivation stems from past experiences as well as future capabilities," she said. In the fall, Ayala will pursue a master's degree in human development and social intervention at New York University.

Marissa Colangelo, of Northridge, is the recipient of the CSUN Foundation Award. She is a child and adolescent development major who has attained a 3.56 GPA. Colangelo, who has been accepted to both Columbia University and the University of Southern California masters of social work programs, has a love for volunteer and social work. She has successfully managed to balance a 35-hour work schedule while maintaining involvement as a peer mentor in the Professional Pathways, Careers in Child and Adolescent Development class; Monday Night Missions; and the Middle School Diversity Project (MSDP). In addition, Colangelo presented research at the 11th Annual Psi Chi Whittier Undergraduate Research Conference and the 21st Annual UCLA Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference. Despite her achievements, Colangelo has overcome adversity by becoming the first person in her family to attend a four-year university. She has decided to attend Columbia. Her career goal is to become a licensed clinical social worker working with students with special needs.

Swapna Pawar, of Northridge, is the recipient of the CSUN Foundation Award. She is an electrical engineering major who has maintained a 3.92 GPA. A student of academic distinction, Pawar has consecutively been on the dean's list since 2007. She is the recipient of several scholarships, including the Nirmal Mishra Engineering Annual Scholarship (2007–2012), the Solid State Microwave Engineering Annual Scholarship (2010–2011), the Pradip and Rekha Choksi Endowment in Engineering and Computer Science Scholarship (2011–2012), and the Northridge Scholars Program Recipient (2010–2012). Pawar has successively demonstrated academic excellence throughout her undergraduate career. In addition to maintaining high academic standards, she has maintained a successful career as a collegiate athlete. She was a member of CSUN's women's tennis team and a nationally ranked lawn tennis player in India. Pawar tutored students in the Department of Mathematics as well as participated in other extracurricular activities, including her participation with the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers HKN Eta Kappa Nu Chapter. During her senior year, Pawar obtained an internship at the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, along with other extracurricular activities. Upon graduation, Pawar plans to work as an engineer and eventually return to school to earn an MBA.

Zachary Roof, of Northridge, is the recipient of the Karen, Leon, and Rita Goldstein-Saulter Memorial Award. He is an economics major who has maintained a 3.75 GPA. He credits both the University Student Union and the Department of Economics for helping him achieve success. During most of his

time at Cal State Northridge, Roof has been actively involved at the University Student Union. He started as a member of the Finance Committee, has served on the USU Board of Directors and was elected in 2011 as vice-chair of the USU Board of Directors. He was a member of the Business Honors Association in the College of Business and Economics. Through the association, he has tutored numerous students and developed himself professionally. Roof said he "credits" CSUN for giving him an opportunity to challenge himself. He has been accepted into Johns Hopkins University's nursing program. He is considering a career either as a psychiatric or anesthesia nurse and plans to pursue a doctorate in nursing.

Outstanding Graduating Veteran Award Winner:

Marco Antonio Duarte, of Northridge, is a cinema and television arts major, with an emphasis in multimedia, who has achieved a 3.42 GPA. After high school, Duarte joined the U.S. Marines Corps. He was meritoriously promoted three times. Determined to get a college education, Duarte would take satellite college courses when he had a spare moment. Upon his honorable discharge from the Marines, Duarte continued to pursue his education, eventually earning an associate's degree from a community college before transferring to Northridge in 2009. While at CSUN, he often served as a mentor to fellow students. He completed his studies last fall and within a month landed a job in the film industry.

—Shanté Morgan

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English Major Among Top Graduate Student Award Winners and Others Recognized

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César Soto. Photo by Lee Choo.

For César Soto, failure is not defeat. Rather, failing is an opportunity to learn and grow. "All the obstacles I've faced have only made me better," he said.

Soto, 32, grew up as one of eight children in a working-class family in Pacoima, where the kind of hard work you do with your hands was valued. An avid reader, Soto said he felt "different." When he dropped out of school in the 10th grade and took on a series of menial jobs, Soto continued to read on the sly, concerned that his passion for literature wasn't "macho" enough.

"Where I grew up, what it meant to be a male did not include the love of reading," he said, adding that his parents, who obtained a grade-school education and were concerned about their family's survival, didn't know how to support their son's passion.

Soto recognized that manual work was not what he wanted to do all his life and applied to Valley College, but he ended up failing his classes and dropping out.

"I just wasn't ready yet, but I knew that college was something I wanted to do," he said.

After a couple of years, he returned to Valley College. This time, he aced his classes and set his sights on a four-year university: Cal State Northridge. He reached out to CSUN's Educational Opportunities Program director, Jose Luis Vargas, who exchanged emails with Soto, offering him advice and encouragement.

"You know, I think I only met the man once, but his support and encouragement in those emails made all the difference," Soto said.

Soto transferred to Northridge with the goal of becoming a doctor. But after struggling in a couple of biology classes, he realized that medicine was not for him. It was while fulfilling an English major core requirement, Literary Theory, that Soto found his "calling."

"I did really well, and I realized this is what I loved," he said.

Soto switched his major to Honors English, and his grades took off. He earned his bachelor's degrees in English and Chicana/o Studies from Cal State Northridge in 2007 and remained at CSUN to earn his master's in English, which he is receiving this year. His emphasis is British Romanticism.

Soto is this year's Nathan O. Freedman Outstanding Graduate Student award recipient. He will be among several students recognized during the university's Honors Convocation ceremony at 6 p.m. on Monday, May 21. The award is presented to a CSUN graduate student who shows the best record of

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96% Jump in bachelor's degrees in engineering earned at Cal State

Northridge between 2005 and 2008, placing CSUN at the top of the ten fastest-growing engineering schools in the U.S.

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distinguished scholarship, has a minimum GPA of 3.5 and has made significant contributions to their field of study.

Soto has a grade point average of 3.81.

Soto's time at CSUN has not been entirely immersed in books. He spent three years as a residential advisor, four years as a tutor in the Chicana/o Studies Writing Center and the past two years as a teaching associate in the English department, a privilege awarded few graduate students.

For the past few weeks, Soto had been weighing offers from all seven schools to which he applied for doctoral studies. He chose the University of Notre Dame, where his doctoral research will focus on the similarities between the revolutionary aspects of the works by British Romantic authors and Chicana/o literature of the 1960s and 1970s.

He has also been awarded a Ford Foundation Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, which includes an annual stipend of \$20,000 for three years of doctoral work. Of the more than 1,300 people who applied, only 60 received fellowships.

Soto is among several graduate students who received prestigious awards this year. Four graduate students have been selected to receive the Association of Retired Faculty Memorial Award. The award recognizes and provides financial support to graduate students for excellent scholarship and creative activity. The award will support a project that is part of a master's program. The determining factors for the award are based on a record of GPA of 3.5 and contributions to the field.

Following are the 2012 ARF Memorial Award recipients.

Andres Aguilar, of Valley Glen, is a linguistics major who has a GPA of 4.0. His project, "A Phonological Analysis of Contemporary Nahuatl," focuses on a modern dialect of Nahuatl, an indigenous language from Mexico. His project will document and describe the phonology, or sound system, of a contemporary variety of Nahuatl. To do so, he will work with speakers of the language and audio record data for analysis.

Aguilar's faculty supervisor is Tineke (Christina) Scholten. In her letter of recommendation, she said Aguilar has the potential to become an "outstanding scholar in the field who is willing to give back." Aguilar expects to graduate with his master's degree in linguistics in the spring of 2013 and plans to pursue a doctorate with the ultimate goal of teaching at a college or university.

Olga Kramarova, of Tarzana, is a psychology major who has a GPA of 3.92. Her project, "Cognition and Kinesiology: A Dual-Strategy Approach to Learning Dance Choreography," explores the efficiency of dance video games and suggests ways to improve their efficiency. Kramarova's project investigates dance video game manufacturers' claims that buyers can "learn real-life dance moves," and then introduces several professional dance choreography techniques that she believes might improve the quality of dance video games. The first part of the experiment introduces and tests the effects of a strategic tutorial, which was created based on findings from previous dance-education research. The strategy focuses on the techniques of organization and counting. Kramarova's faculty supervisor is Scott Plunkett. In his letter of recommendation, he called Kramarova an "intelligent, creative, personable and friendly person." Kramarova is graduating and plans to pursue a career in the industry of human factors and continue doing research and improving the use of technology products.

Michael Schram, of Simi Valley, is a biology major who has a GPA of 4.0. His project, "The Effects of Size-Selective Harvesting on an Unexploited Protogynous Temperate Reef Fish, *Rhinogobiops nicholsii*," will investigate the direct effects of size-selective harvesting on protogynous species of fish. Controlled, manipulative studies on the effects of harvesting on protogynous hermaphrodites have not been conducted. Manipulative studies on most harvested species are difficult because of those species' large size, mobility and late maturity. Schram's faculty supervisor is Mark Steele. In his letter of recommendation, Steele said Schram is a good student who has proposed an "interesting and valuable study." Schram expects to graduate in 2014. He would like to apply to a doctoral program and continue his research in marine fish ecology.

Veronica Valadez, of Ventura, is a Chicana/o Studies major who has a GPA of 4.0. Her project, "Dancing Codices: Danza Azteca and Mesoamerican Body Art," explores and illustrates present-day manifestations of the Aztec dance tradition and Mesoamerican body art, and their connection to the development of Chicanos' indigenous identities through written research and a creative project composed of photography and paintings. This research will reflect the aesthetics and powerful visions of indigenous resistance evident in the Aztec dance tradition displayed in an exhibition of artwork. Valadez's faculty supervisor is Yrenia Cervantez. In her letter of recommendation, Cervantez said Valadez is one of the most motivated individuals she knows. She described Valadez as "energetic,

focused and hardworking." Valadez is graduating and plans to publish her thesis. In addition, she would like to pursue a doctorate or Master of Fine Arts and teach Chicana/o Studies at a college or university.

—Carmen Ramos Chandler and Shanté Morgan

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Lunch Break: Plaza Pool

May 14th, 2012 | [Lunch Break Stories](#)

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Photo by Lee Choo.

Grab your sunscreen and your swimsuits! As the Los Angeles temperature approaches triple digits, what better way to spend lunch on a hot summer day than by taking a cool and relaxing dip in the Plaza Pool?

The Plaza Pool will be open this summer, a convenience for faculty, staff, alumni, students and the public. Individuals who have a membership to the Student Recreation Center can enjoy the Plaza Pool for free. The Plaza Pool is an alternative to the Rec Pool at the new SRC.

For those without a membership to the SRC, you can purchase a day pass to the Plaza Pool for \$2 or 10 passes for \$18. Faculty, staff and alumni have the added choice of purchasing a summer membership to the SRC for \$98, which includes access to the center and the Rec Pool. The discounted rate is good from May 28 through Aug. 25 and is prorated by the day.

The Plaza Pool's summer hours are Monday through Friday from 7–9 a.m. and 4–7 p.m., May 26 through Aug. 26. The pool is closed weekends, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Aug. 20–24.

The Plaza Pool is located on the east side of campus in the University Student Union next to the PUB Sports Grill.

Lunch Break is an occasional series about activities on campus that faculty and staff can do during a one-hour timeframe to improve health and wellness.

—Lauren Glazer

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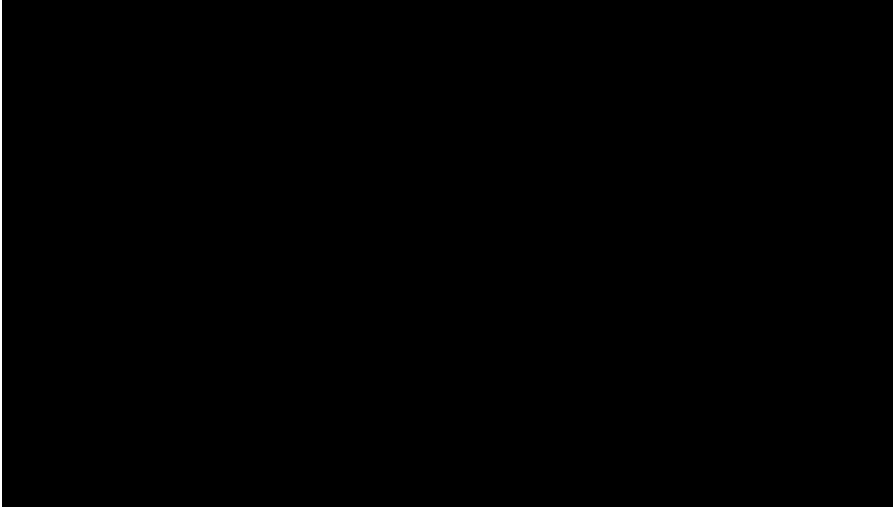
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Outstanding Graduates 2012

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In these five videos, graduating students with exceptional academic accomplishments, community involvement and extracurricular activities share their stories of achieving success, often after overcoming adversity. (Videos by Krishna Narayanamurti and Jacquil Constant.)

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Dayanthie Weeraratne: Riding California's Seismic Waves

May 14th, 2012 | [Profiles](#)

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Dayanthie Weeraratne

California State University, Northridge marine seismologist and geological science professor Dayanthie Weeraratne's passion for her subject matter radiates like an earthquake's P wave traveling deep into the Earth. But it wasn't always like that. Originally a psychology student, she lost interest and settled into a job as a machinist.

Her passion for geological sciences erupted unexpectedly during a pleasure hike up Mount St. Helens. In 1980, a 5.1 magnitude earthquake had launched the largest landslide in recorded history and a volcanic eruption equal in power to 500 atom bombs.

"It's the only major volcano in the continental U.S., and to see the devastation. ... Miles of old-growth forest; trees as big around as my office ... and they were blown over like match sticks by the pyroclastic flow," said Weeraratne. "They were lying down and had been incinerated. All I could think was, 'Where does the energy for a volcano

come from?' I wanted to know more about the interior of the earth."

She entered a geology and geophysics program at the University of Oregon, and her entire academic outlook changed.

"I was excited about school... raising my hand in class, sitting in the front row, laughing at the teacher's jokes. And I love it that much today ... 20 years later," she said.

She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at University of Oregon and her Ph.D. from Brown University, and she completed post-doctorate work at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Department of Terrestrial Magnetism. Her ongoing research uses interdisciplinary techniques in surface wave tomography, shear wave splitting and physical fluid dynamics to study various geophysical problems.

As a professor, she said application of her work as a researcher within the classroom helps instill a similar passion in her students.

"One of the most inspiring classes I've had was when I left class to be on a research cruise," she said. "While I was there, I talked to students via satellite. They really got a feeling for how excited I was about what I do. If I had stayed in class and just told them about seismology for 16 weeks, they wouldn't have gotten as excited as they did watching me."

Learning about Weeraratne's fieldwork also makes the career seem more attainable to students, especially minority students. Weeraratne says geological sciences have an especially low diversity rate. Her most recent research, funded by a CAREER grant from the National Science Foundation, includes an educational program (Geological Experience for Minority Students) designed to increase the number

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Rank among the all-time most-cited papers in the Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom, a co-authored paper by CSUN marine biologist Janet Kubler.

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of underrepresented students within the discipline.

"When I tell students stories and explain geological concepts, I can put up pictures of myself and then they can relate to a real person—it's not an arbitrary white male in a lab coat—they can see somebody they know, and they can visualize themselves doing it. It hits home."

In the past two years at CSUN, she's set sail on four research cruises, and has taken CSUN students with her each time.

"I always take students," said Weeraratne. "It's the reason to go ... to inspire our future scientists. On a cruise, you learn everything firsthand. It's nice to see them get excited about discovering how the Earth works. Everyone says this, but when a student asks you a question, and through their own curiosity and exploration, discover the answer ... there's nothing like seeing that light bulb go off. That's what you live for as a teacher.

It's just training for the day when they make a real discovery and move the field of science forward in a single leap."

—Stephanie Colman

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Determination, Hard Work Pay Off as CSUN Students Look to Graduation and Beyond

May 14th, 2012 | [News](#)

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More than 9,200 students are expected to walk across the stage at California State University, Northridge later this month as they celebrate their graduation from the university before thousands of family members and friends.

Each student has a personal story of hard work, perseverance and success. Below are examples of just some of those truly unique stories.



Jose Escobar Castro. Photo by Lee Choo.

Jose Escobar Castro, B.A., Cinema and Television Arts and Central American Studies

Jose Escobar Castro, 21, of Westlake in Los Angeles, isn't used to having the spotlight thrown on him. He is usually the one behind the camera.

As a cinema and television arts major with an emphasis in multimedia, Escobar Castro has used what he has learned in the classroom to tell the stories he has discovered while a student. One video he created is about Central American studies professor Beatriz Cortez, who has returned to her love of painting and is capturing the images of Cal State Northridge's physical plant management staff on canvas. [Watch the video.](#)

"That's what I'd like to do," Escobar Castro said. "Take what I've learned at CSUN and find a way to tell the stories of people most people don't hear about, like those in the Central American community."

Escobar Castro's parents are Central American immigrants who received only an elementary school education and instilled in their children the belief that getting a college education was the key to success. The family lives near MacArthur Park, but his parents leapt at the chance to send Escobar Castro to schools in the San Fernando Valley when overcrowding left little space for him at the neighborhood school. He would get up every day at 5 a.m. to catch a bus that would take him first to Parkman Middle School and then Taft High School in Woodland Hills.

Escobar Castro, who has a license but does not drive and lives in Westlake with his family, still gets up at 5 a.m. to catch the bus to school, but this time to CSUN. He uses his time on the bus and subway to do homework and read. He said he applied to the University of Southern California but found that Northridge was a "better fit."

"It had everything I was looking for," he said, including the opportunity to learn more about the countries his parents came from, Guatemala and El Salvador, and the rest of Central America.

"Now I know more about Central America than they do, but they have the life experience of living there," he said.

Being the first in his family to attend college, Escobar Castro admitted there has been a lot of pressure on him to serve as a role model for his extended family. His sister, Leslie, attends CSUN, and his family hopes his cousins in Florida will follow in Escobar Castro's footsteps.

Escobar Castro will receive his cinema and television arts degree during the Mike Curb College of Arts,

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Media, and Communication's ceremony scheduled for 8 a.m. on Tuesday, May 22, on the lawn in front of Delmar T. Oviatt Library. He will receive his Central American studies degree during the College of Humanities' ceremony at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, on the Oviatt Library lawn.



Bonnie Cheeseman. Photo by Lee

Choo.

Bonnie Cheeseman, Master's in Education Administration

Bonnie Cheeseman, 54, of Simi Valley, once lived a life that most people would envy. She had worked her way up from an administrative assistant position at 20th Century Fox to become a Madison Avenue marketing executive. She regularly flew from New York to Los Angeles and Las Vegas for business, staying in high-end hotels. Limousines would whisk her to meetings, often waiting until the wee hours of the morning while she finished her work. But she was miserable.

These days, the limos and luxury business accommodations are gone. But Cheeseman cannot wait to go to work every morning.

"I am one of those lucky people who just loves what they do," she said. Cheeseman is an English-as-a-second-language teacher at

Pasadena City College and UCLA, specializing in workplace English. She has spent the past couple of years in Cal State Northridge's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies so she can use her passion for helping others master the English language and American culture more effectively as an education administrator, perhaps as a counselor.

"I love to teach, but I want to do more as an educator," she said. "I have learned so much while I've been here. I have so much respect for the faculty members. They have challenged us and treated us with respect. They understood that those of us in the program were professionals, and they treated us like professionals and created an environment where we learned from them and from each other. It was a fabulous experience."

Cheeseman admitted that when she graduated from UCLA in 1982 with a bachelor's in English and American studies she wasn't quite sure what she wanted to do with her life. She still wasn't sure a decade later when she quit her job as a marketing executive until she saw an ad for a part-time position as an English-as-a-second-language teacher.

"I really wanted to make a difference in people's lives, to feel that I was making a contribution to the world," she said.

Cheeseman said once she stepped foot in a classroom, she never looked back.

For several years, Cheeseman also worked as a comedienne. She was successful enough to serve as a master of ceremonies at Los Angeles' legendary The Comedy Store, working with such talents as Damon Wayans. She was scheduled to introduce Wayans one evening when she realized that while she enjoyed stand-up, it wasn't her true calling. She invited a young comedian to take her place and decided to devote herself to teaching.

"The thing is, I love teaching," she said.

Not too long ago, Cheeseman discovered that her great-grandfather ran a teachers' college in Maine in the late 1800s and was an important figure in his community. Despite all his accomplishments, he told a reporter that all he ever wanted to be known as was "an educator."

Cheeseman agrees.

"It's the best thing around that you can do," she said.

Cheeseman will be taking part in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education's commencement ceremony scheduled to take place at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 24, on the lawn of the Oviatt Library.

Pablo Corá, B.S. in Accounting

Pablo Corá, 39, of Los Angeles, had his "come to Jesus moment" about six years ago, when a doctor found a growth on his vocal cords and recommended surgery. A high tenor, Corá had a successful singing career. He was a founding member of the award-winning Concord Ensemble, a member of the Grammy Award-winning Los Angeles Chamber Singers & Cappella and a member of the internationally acclaimed Los Angeles Master



Pablo Corá. Photo by Lee Choo.

Chorale. He has performed on stages around the world, including at Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl.

The surgery was successful and Corá was able to continue his singing career. But the incident forced him to think about his future.

"If I couldn't sing, what would I be doing?" Corá asked himself. "I realized that I was happiest when I was learning, and now it was time for me to learn something completely different."

He settled on accounting because he felt it was a field that would allow him to draw on his experiences in the arts, and perhaps some day lead to the directorship of an arts or cultural program. Corá said he did research, talked to people in the field and found out that Cal State Northridge had one of the most respected accounting programs in the state.

"It really is considered one of the best," he said.

He applied and had to convince a skeptical department chair that he was serious about studying a field that seemed so antithetical to his career in the performing arts. He assured her that he was willing to "start from scratch," despite having earned a bachelor's in music from Ithaca College and a master's in voice performance from Indiana University, Bloomington.

Corá, a native of Argentina, threw himself into his classes and discovered he had a passion for accounting. He soon became a member of the College of Business and Economics' Honors Program and drew the attention of officials with the international accounting firm KPMG, who chose him to serve as their campus ambassador. Last year, KPMG officials offered him a job. Upon his graduation, he will begin working in the company's Los Angeles audit practice.

In addition to his classes and work with KPMG, Corá volunteered for several community-service projects with such organizations as Habitat for Humanity and the Alzheimer's Association, as well as with an animal-rescue organization. All the while, he continues to sing.

Though he will serve as a liaison between the campus and KPMG, Corá admitted he is going to miss the day-to-day routine of being a CSUN student. In particular, he said he will miss the faculty, who "demonstrated a passion and dedication to their work."

"They not only cared about what we were learning at the time, but they cared about what's out there for us when we graduate," he said. "They are inspiring, and I hope that I approach my own professional career with that kind of commitment."

Corá will take part in the College of Business and Economics' commencement ceremony scheduled for 8 a.m. on Thursday, May 24, on the lawn of the Oviatt Library. He has been invited to sing the national anthem during the ceremony.



La Ronda Jones. Photo by Lee Choo.

La Ronda Jones, B.S. in Health Administration

La Ronda Jones, 32, of Reseda, has big dreams. She hopes some day to hold a position where she can help set healthcare policy for the nation.

"That's what I want to do, and with what I have learned here at CSUN it may just be possible," she said. "CSUN has certainly given me the tools to achieve my dreams."

Fifteen years ago, Jones was a teenager in South Los Angeles with a newborn son. Determined to succeed, she made arrangements for his care and walked the two miles to her high school to ensure she graduated on time, becoming the first in her family to earn a high school diploma.

After spending a few years in the workforce, Jones enrolled at Pierce College with the plan of becoming a nurse. But after a couple of classes, she realized that what she truly wanted to do was become an administrator who ensured that patients received the best care possible. As someone with hepatitis C and hyperthyroidism, and who lost her parents early due to health problems, Jones said she understands the importance of access to quality healthcare.

Jones transferred to Cal State Northridge in fall of 2010 to pursue a degree in health administration and immediately felt at home.

"I knew this was where I belonged," she said.

She loved her classes. She said she was challenged and engaged by faculty who set high goals for her yet understood the demands she faced as a working mother with now two children and health issues.

A workshop by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health Resource Center for preconception peer educators led to her founding and then serving as president of the CSUN Preconception Peer Educators. The group has been recognized by the federal government to hold its own workshops to train certified peer educators on the issues surrounding preconception health and sexually transmitted infections.

Her work as a peer educator led to an invitation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health Resource Center to speak in Washington, D.C., Chicago and San Francisco to lecture on preconception health. The March of Dimes in Washington, D.C. also extended her an invitation to speak. A staff referral from CSUN's Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) led her to a program called INROADS, which led to an internship at Kaiser Permanente in Panorama City. She now works part time at Kaiser as an advocate for patients and their needs. Jones credited Cal State Northridge's EOP, College of Health and Human Development and Student Health Professionals Pre-Entry Program for making all she accomplished, and hopes to accomplish, possible.

"These programs truly molded me into who and what I have become," she said.



Jones' illnesses have been in remission for most of her time at Northridge. Three months ago, her doctor told her they were back. She convinced him to hold off treatment, which is very similar to chemotherapy and includes similar side effects, until after commencement.

"I wanted to graduate first," she said.

Jones will take part in the College of Health and Human Development's commencement ceremony scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 22, on the lawn in front of the Oviatt Library. She plans to start graduate school at Cal State Northridge this fall and eventually get her doctorate in health policy and administration.

—Carmen Ramos Chandler

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Dancers Showcase Talent at Kinesis: Emerging Choreography

May 14th, 2012 | [Photo Essay](#)

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California State University, Northridge student dancers and choreographers demonstrate their talents at the annual "Kinesis: Emerging Choreography" performance at the Plaza del Sol Performance Hall. There were 13 dances ranging in a variety of styles at the April 23 and 24 event. On April 24, the dancers paid tribute to Jerry Luedders, associate director of the Valley Performing Arts Center, and Marilyn Filbeck, associate dean in the College of Health and Human Development, who are both retiring. In the photo (from left to right) are dancers Ilana Torres, Rowena Garcia, Liezel De Guzman, Mariko Iwabuchi and Eddie Yang performing "But I fell ...". Photo by Lee Choo.



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Hilary Gereaux and professional classical Indian dancer Tharini Shanmugarajah (facing forward, from left to right), and Darrell Hardaway, Rebecca Daly and Cheyenne Spencer (with their backs to audience, from left to right) perform "Tala." Photo by Lee Choo.





Jesse Ricaldi, Christian Vidaure and Darrell Hardaway (in the air, from left to right), and Cheyenne Spencer, Jocelyn Zelaya, Sara Adler and Arianna Douglas (on the ground, from left to right) perform "Leithian (Isaiah 61:1)." Photo by Lee Choo.



Dancers perform "Who We Are." Photo by Lee Choo.

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