Still Life With Anteaters

Peter the Anteater has evolved over the years, but the likeness freshly emblazoned on UCI’s water tower by painter Paul Borne is closest to the “B.C.” comic strip character that originally inspired the offbeat mascot. In contrast, a more lifelike depiction cast in bronze by artist Billy Fitzgerald stands watch just outside the Bren Events Center. The 8½-foot-long and 430-pound sculpture is a gift from the Class of 1987 and was installed in January 1988.

About This Issue: In this edition of UCI Magazine, we explore what it means to equip students for true success – from within the classroom to beyond graduation. Our cover story, “UCI’s Promise” (page 20), highlights the campus’s evolving student body through the eyes of undergraduates in a new peer-to-peer mentorship program geared toward the growing number of in-state, first-generation and transfer students enrolled. Teachers in disciplines across campus have transformed how they engage student minds by incorporating “garage demos” and new media (page 28). And two long-standing efforts, UROP (page 14) and the School of Social Ecology’s field study program (page 34), showcase how research and real-world experiences have become hallmarks of a UCI undergraduate education and helped many participants find fulfilling career paths. As an increasing number of freshmen select UCI as their top-choice college, the university will continue to innovate, to encourage and to support its students in “reaching for the sky.”
Unconventional Instruction: Innovative teachers shake up traditional lectures by using real-world props, improv and new media to engage students and improve learning

Plus: Creating a culture of inclusion

Experience Required: School of Social Ecology’s field study program yields real-life lessons

Plus: Q&A with incoming dean Nancy Guerra
Letters to the Editor

Spring 2016: “The Brain”

Graham was a construction manager in the campus’s early days. See photo below.

Now fast-forward to 2016 — to the breakfast science lecture presented to the public at large (and with thanks to A.J. Coco, who several years ago began inviting me to these outreach events for physical sciences departments). Every time I attend, I am reminded of that meeting with Mr. Graham and his sincere efforts to provide a jump-start for my future. (I received a bachelor’s degree in 1975 from California State University, Long Beach.)

It just goes to show that we can never know what effects we will have when we offer a simple suggestion or provide a direction to others.

I recently came across the spring 2016 issue of *UCI Magazine* and enjoyed reading the comments in the Letters to the Editor and Flashback sections about the last 50 years of the campus. Seems like a long and distant journey between these seemingly isolated events … or is it?

Jeff Clemons
Mission Viejo

A short note to let you know how much we all enjoyed your spring 2016 issue of *UCI Magazine*, focusing on “The Brain.” I gave my copy to a family friend who recently suffered a stroke so that he might study it more thoroughly. Thank you.

Jerry Sanders

We Want to Hear From You

When submitting a letter to the editor, please include your full name, UCI graduation year or affiliation (if applicable), mailing address, city of residence, phone number and email address. Contact information is for verification purposes only — not for publication or commercial use. Letters should be 150 words or less and may be edited. They become the property of UCI/the UC Board of Regents and may be republished in any format.

To submit a letter via email, send to: ucimagazine@uci.edu
Include “Letters to the Editor: UCI Magazine” in the subject line

To submit a letter via U.S. mail, send to:
Letters to the Editor
UCI Magazine
UC Irvine Office of Strategic Communications
120 Theory, Ste. 100
Irvine, CA 92697-5615
Then and Now: Mesa Court

A lot has changed since 500 students moved into Mesa Court on Sept. 26, 1965. UCI’s first residence hall community is currently its largest, with three new buildings – Mesa Court Towers – opening in fall 2016, adding more than 900 spaces for a total accommodation of almost 3,000 students.

1965

► Size of housing community: 10 two-story buildings for 500 students
► Population: Freshmen and upperclassmen
► Amenities: Reading rooms with fireplaces and couches
► Quotable: “My room, 203-D, had a window that looked out onto hills being developed into the first addition to Mesa Court. ... The ritual each morning was for the construction workers to start the large scrapers, dirt haulers and water tankers.” – John McCoy ’69

2016

► Size of housing community: 29 halls that range in size from 55 to 85 beds and three new six-story buildings for nearly 3,000 students
► Population: Freshman only
► Amenities: Wi-Fi and the Cyber Lounge
► Quotable: “I love how it is filled with plants and trees. I also like how it feels like a community and how friendly the staff is.” – Anonymous
A larger-than-life statue honoring fallen lifeguard Ben Carlson ‘05 was unveiled at McFadden Square near Newport Pier in July, two years after he was killed saving a swimmer in distress. The marine-grade stainless steel memorial looks out over the shoreline at Newport Beach, where Carlson had served for 15 years, and acts as a reminder to the public about ocean safety. It is just steps away from lifeguard headquarters, renamed in Carlson’s honor in 2015. His death was the first in the line of duty in the department’s nearly 100-year history.

\[\text{Guard On}\]

$5 Million Pledged to Help Eradicate Preventable Blindness

Josephine Herbert Gleis pledged $5 million to UC Irvine Health’s Gavin Herbert Eye Institute to move current eye research forward at a faster pace and enable the pursuit of innovative new ideas for sight-saving treatments. Gleis, who turned 104 in September, has made gifts totaling $19 million to UCI over the years, changing lives in the arts and neurology, as well as ophthalmology.

In 2007, she and her son, Allergan founder Gavin Herbert, made the initial $10 million naming gift to build a state-of-the-art home for Orange County’s only academic eye center.

“Thanks to her generosity, Orange County residents have access to world-class eye care without leaving the community,” said Dr. Roger Steinert, director of the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute and Irving H. Leopold Professor of Ophthalmology. “And when we find ways to eradicate preventable blindness, we will owe her a debt of gratitude for her steadfast support of vital research.”

New UCI Advancement Chief

In August, Brian Hervey was selected as UCI’s vice chancellor for university advancement. Hervey, who had been serving in the position on an interim basis, will lead the development campaign outlined in the campus’s recently released 10-year strategic plan.

Hervey arrived at UCI in May 2015 as associate vice chancellor for health advancement. He has been managing that enterprise and all other aspects of university advancement since November. That was the same month that UCI announced it had surpassed its 10-year campaign target of $1 billion – the first nonprofit in Orange County to achieve such a goal.

“UCI has reached remarkable heights in such a short period of time,” Hervey said. “I’m excited to be part of the next phase of its evolution.”

“I thought I left college, but it seems like we’re right back at it. I guess I’ll get my textbooks and start studying for my chemistry test tomorrow.”

L.A. Rams rookie tight end Temarrick Hemingway, on moving into UCI dorms for training camp
July 26, 2016
The New York Times
A Record-Breaking Year

UCI shattered philanthropic and research funding records in 2015-16, highlighted by the largest gift in campus history.

University Advancement reported $132.5 million in gifts, more than doubling what was raised in the prior year. The greatest growth was in the area of health, which included a $40 million gift from Orange County philanthropists Sue and Bill Gross – UCI’s largest gift ever – to establish a nursing school.

At the same time, the Office of Research reported $395 million in grants and contracts, an increase of about $100 million from 2014-15. “Grant funding is the fuel that drives research and innovation,” said Pramod Khargonekar, vice chancellor of research, who joined UCI in June from the National Science Foundation. “These considerable increases in support are an indication that UCI’s growing, world-class research enterprise will continue to make a greater impact both nationally and globally.”

Alum to Lead Community Colleges

In December, Eloy Ortiz Oakley ’96, MBA ’99 will assume the helm of the California Community Colleges as the system’s 16th chancellor. Ortiz Oakley, who has led the Long Beach Community College District as its superintendent and president since 2007, will be the first Latino to head the 113-college system, which serves 2.1 million students.

Described as a “change agent,” Ortiz Oakley is a national leader in public education and recognized for his work to improve the academic outcomes of historically underrepresented students.

He himself is a community college and UCI success story. After serving four years in the U.S. Army, the first-generation college student enrolled at Golden West College before transferring to UCI, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental analysis & design and an MBA. Ortiz Oakley is also a regent of the University of California, with a term ending in 2024.

“The thing we have come to realize is a lot of the [myths about] selfies, women and narcissism have come to resemble other reactions to new technology and moral panic about radio, television, photography and even film. Every time there is a new technology, people freak out.”

Catherine Liu, professor of film & media studies
June 4, 2016
Los Angeles Times
PokéZot Paradise

The Pokémon Go craze hit UCI along with the rest of the nation when it debuted in July. Since then, the cute critters in the viral mobile app that pop up in places alongside ordinary objects have been caught all over campus, which was noted by the Orange County Register as having at least 78 PokéSpots – or PokéZots, as the paper dubbed them. Langson Library, a “lure” spot, is game and has put out a call for assistance, noting that the stacks are “infested with new and strange creatures” and “we need your help catching them so they don’t ruin the books!” Some players have mapped out 50 or so PokéZots along one loop of Ring Mall. An intrepid player found one of the most rare Pokémon of all, the elusive Dragonite, just outside the Francisco J. Ayala Science Library. Alas, the little monster got away.

Anteaters Shine in Rio

Eight former and current UCI students participated in the 2016 Summer Olympics – the most from a Big West school and the third-most from a UC campus (after UC Berkeley and UCLA). Among them: Middle blocker David Smith ’07 (below left, shown visiting the UCI women’s volleyball team) helped spike the U.S. men’s volleyball team to the bronze medal; sophomore Phillip Chew and Eva Lee ’13 (below center) represented well in badminton, with Chew playing on America’s first mixed doubles team; and current ‘Eaters coach and Team USA assistant coach Dan Klatt ’01 guided the women’s water polo team to its second consecutive gold (below right).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Event/Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Chew</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Men’s doubles, mixed doubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Durden ’98</td>
<td>Men’s swimming</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Assistant coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Jock ’12</td>
<td>Men’s track (athletics)</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>800 meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Klatt ’01</td>
<td>Women’s water polo</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Assistant coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva Lee ’13</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Women’s doubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Smith ’07</td>
<td>Men’s volleyball</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Indoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Tillie ’13</td>
<td>Men’s volleyball</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Indoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persis William-Mensah</td>
<td>Women’s track (athletics)</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>4x100 relay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fifty students ranging in age from 13 to 19 spent two weeks this summer in an unusually creative camp: Expressive Robotics. One of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts’ Summer Academies, the program is designed for young visual artists and hobbyists, as well as students interested in computer sciences, programming and engineering.

The camp, held at the Beall Center for Art + Technology, combines the arts with science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – principles. It stimulates innovation through imaginative thinking and artistic practice, says Catlin Moore, programs manager for the Beall Center.

This summer, a record 19 students were able to enroll in Expressive Robotics through need-based and merit scholarships sponsored by Boeing and the Henry T. Nicholas III Foundation. Here, Ben Stivi (left) and Joshua Stakhouse build a robotic dog.

There are also Summer Academies on filmmaking, painting and dance.

For more information, go to http://bit.ly/ucimag_fall2016_SummerAcademies.
International Alliance Against Alzheimer’s

The ravages of Alzheimer’s know no boundaries – and neither do the researchers who are working to conquer the disease. International collaboration stimulates discovery, and to that end, faculty from the Francisco J. Ayala School of Biological Sciences and Tel Aviv University in Israel have launched an academic partnership.

In June, UCI MIND Alzheimer’s researchers (from left) Frank LaFerla, David Cribbs, Mathew Blurton-Jones, Carl Cotman and Kim Green, as well as Victoria Jones (right), assistant vice chancellor for global engagement, attended the 24th Tel Aviv University Alzheimer’s Disease Conference.

Members of the UCI contingent study a range of topics. LaFerla and Blurton-Jones are exploring the use of stem cells to treat the disease’s hallmark brain plaques and tangles. Cotman is investigating the effects of diet and exercise. And Cribbs and Green are studying how to pit the body’s own immune system against Alzheimer’s.

In September, the Ayala School hosted Tel Aviv University’s Danny Chamovitz, dean of life sciences, and Daniel Michaelson, professor of neurobiology, for a short seminar titled “UCI MIND-Tel Aviv University: A Collaboration,” sponsored by UCI’s Institute for Memory Impairments and Neurological Disorders.
Julie Hill illustrates the adage “If you want to get something done, ask a busy person.” The chair-elect of the University of California, Irvine Foundation board is heading an effort to update the roles and responsibilities of trustees in an era when public universities are rethinking their funding models.

At the same time, she’s active on the board of directors of Anthem, the largest U.S. health insurance company by membership; and the Lord Abbett Family of Funds, a $150 billion, New York-based mutual fund management firm. She previously served on the boards of Lendlease, a $7 billion international construction, development, investment and management firm headquartered in Sydney; and Human Options, an award-winning domestic violence shelter for abused women and children.

Hill was CEO of Costain Homes and founded Hiram Hill Development, a homebuilding and land development company based in Newport Beach. And she shares her expertise, currently mentoring 14 young women and working tirelessly to counteract social forces that diminish women’s voices.

She sat down with UCI Magazine recently to talk about the university, its future and how faculty, staff and trustees can work together to foster student success. “Students,” she says, “are the reason we’re here.”
Q: How did you become interested in UCI?

Hill: I went to UCLA as an undergrad, so that’s part of my UC connection. And then I met Judy Rosener [senior lecturer emerita in The Paul Merage School of Business], who wrote “Ways Women Lead” for the Harvard Business Review. We started talking 25 years ago, and we haven’t stopped. Since then, I’ve been on the advisory boards of many of UCI’s schools; I was chair of the CEO Roundtable; and I received the Amelia Earhart Award from the UCI Women’s Opportunities Center when it was active. It was an honor to be recognized.

Q: What is the role of the UCI Foundation?

Hill: At a public university, it’s primarily fundraising. State support of the University of California does not fully fund its mission anymore. We have to start functioning more like a private institution in terms of raising money, and it’s frustrating how slowly that idea is being accepted. We’re evaluating our fundraising competitors in the public university system nationally, but we’re also looking at private universities. We’re looking at how we recruit students. We need to do things differently – and better – and we’re blessed to have invested, dynamic members among the foundation trustees who are eager to help us do this.

Q: The theme of this issue of the magazine is student success. How do you define success? And how can UCI better help students be successful?

Hill: Success is about discovering your passion. I know that sounds trite, but it’s a cliché because it’s true. When I was in high school, I went to my guidance counselor and told him I wanted to go into business, and he said: “Pretty little girls like you become bitches on wheels in business. You don’t want to go into business.” So I majored in English literature and worked for an ad agency and taught junior high school for a while, but I was off course. I realized I really did want to go into business. I went back to school and got an advanced degree and started my own company. That’s what UCI can do for students: Encourage their natural inclinations, teach them to trust their instincts, and appreciate their quirkiness. We need all the different threads, colors and textures in the tapestry of life. We need them to be their best selves.

Q: What do you enjoy doing just for yourself?

Hill: I love my friends – I have such wonderful friends. I love long walks on the beach, paddle surfing, snow skiing and reading. I love learning new things. I value breadth of thinking, people who have been tested by life and sampled different cultures and ideas, and that’s part of what appeals to me about my involvement with UCI.

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“Success is about discovering your passion. I know that sounds trite, but it’s a cliché because it’s true.”

Q: If you had to pick one accomplishment in your work reappraising the role of UCI’s foundation board, what would it be?

Hill: One of my goals is to be better partners with the faculty, the deans, staff and students. We haven’t had student representation on the board in some time. We need a broader perspective, a deeper connection, a better understanding that we’re all in this together. We’ve all lost our entitlement to full public support of higher education. We need to realize the implications of this, band together, adjust and modify our strategies in this new environment, and understand that what floats one boat floats all boats.
Life-changing undergraduate opportunity lets students explore, invent and experiment with everything from robotic coats to a video game of the human digestive tract

By Roy Rivenburg
Using tiny electrical shocks and a miniature maze, one undergraduate trained fruit flies as part of an experiment to test cinnamon’s effects on Alzheimer’s disease.

Another student converted a Kodak slide projector and a digital camera into the beginnings of what became a high-tech medical device company.

A third toiled with fellow classmates to perfect a video game in which blobs of food tumble through a cartoon intestine while players zap the morsels with enzyme guns.

These projects and thousands more are part of UCI’s innovative Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, which funnels nearly $1 million a year in grants and fellowships to about 2,500 students working on academic investigations and creative ventures under the guidance of faculty mentors.

Open to all majors, the program aims to give undergrads a taste of UCI’s research culture by showing them how to write proposals, analyze data and exhibit their results at an annual symposium.

“Founded in 1995, UROP has inspired similar efforts at other colleges. It has spawned companies, altered career paths and imparted valuable lessons. “The benefits go far beyond the knowledge gained from the projects themselves,” says UROP director Said Shokair. “The purpose of this program is to transform students, to expand their minds and to make them more competitive in whatever they decide to do in the future. Those who participate develop skills – critical analysis, problem-solving, project management, communication, etc. – that they use throughout their lives.”

They also explore a fascinating galaxy of topics.

Over the past year, UROP research has ranged from “The Psychology of Trash” to “Detection of Enamel Demineralization Using Autofluorescence Imaging.” Student projects also included a comedy festival, a waterproof orthopedic cast, invisibility stickers that mimic the camouflage abilities of squid, snakebite anti-venom and a look at how learning Italian can help singers.

**A Coat With a Brain**

In a UCI workshop filled with dangling wires and strange machinery, a team of mechanical engineering majors started off wanting to build a real-life Iron Man suit but eventually devised something more down-to-earth: a robotic jacket that could help athletes recover from shoulder and elbow injuries.
“It makes your arm feel weightless, which reduces pain and improves mobility during rehabilitation exercises,” says senior Alexander Alvara, who co-developed the coat with three classmates – Mark Jakovljevic, Elena Vazquez and Juan Lopez – under the supervision of faculty mentor David Reinkensmeyer, professor of mechanical & aerospace engineering, anatomy & neurobiology and biomedical engineering.

Alvara and his fellow team members – all transfer students from Pasadena City College – brainstormed their antigravity jacket concept in the summer of 2015. The idea was to create an affordable and lightweight home alternative to the complex rehab machines used by some physical therapy centers. Instead of gears and motors, their rubber-infused prototype employs “soft robotics” – belts, straps and thermoplastic components – to redirect weight and pressure away from injured joints.

“We’re not fashion designers,” Alvara concedes, but the final product should resemble a regular jacket.

Make that a regular jacket with a brain. It’s lined with electronic sensors that monitor muscle strain and range of motion during therapy exercises, then forward the data via Bluetooth and a smartphone app to a doctor’s office. The students also wired a batting glove to track the wearer’s lifting ability.

As the patient progresses, the level of weightlessness provided by the jacket can be adjusted, Alvara notes. The coat could also someday lighten the load for workers who do a lot of hoisting, he says.

The next steps for the patent-pending jacket include adding a stylish fabric shell that hides the robotics, testing everything in clinical trials, seeking investors and – if all goes well – bringing it to market.

In May, Alvara and his colleagues unveiled their work in progress at UCI’s 23rd annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, a daylong event at which UROP participants formally present their scientific studies, artistic endeavors and inventions. Think of it as show and tell for the college set.

UCI undergraduate Katherine Chung watches a youngster test drive the “Down With Food” video game she helped develop.

“UROP and the Campuswide Honors Program helped me find a career path I didn’t expect. ... I am so grateful.”

The symposium can also serve as a springboard. Each year, several projects are selected for publication in the UCI Undergraduate Research Journal. Others spark job offers, internships or even full-blown companies.

In 2001, physics major David Cuccia and postdoc Frederic Bevilacqua – a jazz pianist and biomedical optics specialist at UCI’s Beckman Laser Institute – began tinkering with a slide projector and a digital camera to create a tool that can see beneath the surface of human skin to analyze tissue health. Nicknamed “a thousand points of light,” the technology was showcased by Cuccia at UROP’s 2002 symposium. He continued refining the concept as a graduate student at UCI and, after earning a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering, formed Modulated Imaging Inc. to market the invention. The Irvine-based firm has hired four additional UCI grads and pumped $1 million back into the campus for research programs, Cuccia says.
“UROP and the Campuswide Honors Program helped me find a career path I didn’t expect,” he says. “But I truly love it, and I am so grateful.”

Similar success stories abound.

One of UROP’s longest-running enterprises is “Down With Food,” an educational video game for kids that takes place inside the human digestive tract. Created in 2011 under the auspices of UCI’s Multidisciplinary Design Program (a joint venture of UROP and the California Institute for Telecommunications & Information Technology), it has been handed off like a relay baton to an ever-changing cast of students trained in digital arts, English, global cultures, psychology, computer science and more.

“This project creates an environment that encourages its members to become innovators,” says James Gamboa, who graduated after the game’s inaugural year and instantly parlayed his involvement into a job as a software engineer.

Two other “Down With Food” veterans presented a paper about their experience at a national learning game conference three years ago in Wisconsin. The talk was a smash hit, says faculty adviser AnneMarie Conley, an assistant professor of education: “People were standing along the walls, sitting on the floor; there was no room left…. [And] it’s almost unheard-of for undergraduates to have papers accepted at this conference.”

Some UROP students delve into topics ripped from today’s headlines, such as immigration, autism, school violence, even El Niño. Senior Belen Cairo, an Earth system science and urban studies double major, is exploring the effects of climate change and El Niño on marine phytoplankton off the coast of Newport Beach. With a red bucket tied to a rope, she collects specimens three times a week, stores them in an ice chest and then analyzes the organisms in the UCI lab of faculty mentor Katherine Mackey, Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor of Earth System Science. Cairo is scheduled to present her findings in October at the Society for Advancement of Chicanos & Native Americans in Science conference.
Another headline-related project follows up on studies showing that cinnamon may improve memory and learning. Pharmaceutical sciences major Hanh Pham is tinkering with fruit flies and a maze to narrow down which compounds in the spice might be most effective.

**National Role Model**

Thanks largely to UROP, “close to 50 percent of all students graduating from UCI in recent years have participated in independent or group research projects,” says program director Shokair.

That track record has spurred considerable admiration and attracted federal funding. “We’ve been a national model for centralized undergraduate research programs,” he says. “And we’ve consulted with and assisted four other UC campuses launching similar ventures.”

A key factor behind the success of UCI’s endeavor is Shokair himself. With his no-holds-barred style and infectious energy, UROP’s guiding light prods, chastises, praises and challenges his young charges.

Alumnus Jordan Sinclair, a software designer and developer, says Shokair’s approach was the perfect antidote to a bout of career indecision: “He asked me the right questions, the hard questions. He saw right through the BS, forcing some serious introspection.”

Born in Syria, Shokair graduated from UCI in 1990 with a degree in electrical engineering. After working as a math counselor on campus, he helped craft the proposal for what is now UROP and became its founding director.

From the beginning, he’s made it his mission to shake up how people learn. “For too long, we have taught students how to memorize, how to master standardized tests,” Shokair says. “We condition them to focus on the process, to wait to be taught.”

UROP’s goal, he says, is to shift undergraduates “from dependent learners to independent learners.”

Anna Lynn Spitzer contributed to this story.

### At a Glance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UROP 2015-16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students:</strong> 2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grants:</strong> Nearly $1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not including funding from federal agencies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty mentors:</strong> 450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research projects showcased at annual symposium:</strong> 711</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research projects since 1995 founding:</strong> 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumni:</strong> 20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Senior Belen Cairo, who’s conducting a UROP study on phytoplankton, calibrates a probe used to record temperature and salinity in the field.*

*Priya Ganguli*
Said Shokair was supposed to be a doctor. His high school test scores qualified him for medical school, which he entered at age 17 in his native Syria. But six months later, after chatting with an uncle who was a pediatric cardiologist at UCLA, he decided to move to Southern California, enrolling at UCI, where he eventually gravitated toward electrical engineering.

Several thousand UCI students and alumni have good reason to celebrate that serendipitous about-face: Shokair exposed them to an education they might not otherwise have experienced.

After graduating in 1990, Shokair began working with students at his alma mater. At first, he was a math counselor, a mentor for underrepresented students and a grant writer/curriculum developer. Then, in 1994, he helped craft the proposal that redirected his career and, possibly, the careers of myriad UCI students who learned that the best education often is found in the world outside their textbooks.

As founding director of what is now UCI’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, Shokair has spent more than two decades designing efforts that get his young charges out of the classroom and into the laboratory or field.

For students in UROP, academic silos are verboten; collaboration is key. Shokair urges them to get acquainted, become familiar with each other’s lexicons and keep their biases at bay. Practicing personal responsibility, exceeding expectations, taking the initiative and learning from failure are his mantras. “Teaching students these real-world values is extremely important,” he says.

Wherever their futures take them, Shokair believes student researchers are likely to be successful after they graduate. “This program has shortened their learning curve and helped them engage the world outside academia in a more productive way,” he says.

His role is to ensure that students have considered their options. Shokair likes to ask if they know the proper angle for launching a rocket to get maximum range. “If you launch it at 0 degrees, it will blow your foot off. If you launch it at 90 degrees, it will come down on your head,” he tells them, usually to peals of laughter. “The optimum angle is 45 degrees.

“You job is to set up the optimum launching angle for your career. If you haven’t done that already, start now.”

By Anna Lynn Spitzer

Outside the Box

Director of UCI’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program prods students to learn from the world beyond the classroom

By Anna Lynn Spitzer
UCI’s Promise

New programs guide a changing student population to success

By Janet Wilson | Photos by Steve Zylius

“Sit in the front row,” he was instructed at orientation. “Make eye contact with your professor.”

Harwood Garland grappled with that seemingly simple advice. In Iraq, he had learned to keep his back to a wall and let no one get behind him. Not until the middle of his first year at UCI did Garland begin feeling more comfortable. He realized, “I’m in Irvine now. It doesn’t get any safer.”

By his second year, he had made his way to the front row. But the culture shock continued. The students to his left and right all appeared to be the children of doctors, accountants and other degreed professionals. The son of a construction worker, Garland felt out of place.

“It seemed like they’d been told they belonged at the front their whole lives,” recalls the 29-year-old, who adapted, graduated in June with a B.A. in anthropology in the top 1 percent of his class and is now studying at UCI for a master’s in medicine, science & technology studies. Garland, a decorated U.S. Navy and Marine Corps medic, is aiming to be a doctor. From working-class Fontana, he’s the first in his family to attend college.

Garland is part of a major demographic shift on campuses. Half of UCI’s undergraduates are, like him, first-generation university students.

This fall, Garland is mentoring freshmen “who are looking to climb that mountain” – as he describes the college experience – as part of the First Generation First Quarter Challenge. The pilot peer-to-peer mentoring program is one of numerous efforts to help UCI’s largest class ever – about 9,000 new undergraduates – succeed.

Harwood Garland ’16, a decorated U.S. Navy and Marine Corps medic, is the first in his family to attend college. He is now pursuing his master’s in medicine, science & technology studies at UCI and plans on becoming a physician.
A key promise of the University of California is that if you’re bright and willing to work hard, you can get the finest education in the world, regardless of your background. UCI boosted admission of in-state freshmen by 15.6 percent for this fall and community college transfer students by 27.3 percent. The new class is the strongest ever academically too – the mean grade point average of admitted California residents was 4.10. UCI has the nation’s highest percentage of student recipients of federal Pell grants – more than the entire Ivy League – and they have a 90 percent graduation rate – even higher than the campus as a whole.

“The word is out: UCI is a first-choice school for talented students of all backgrounds,” says Chancellor Howard Gillman, himself a first-generation college graduate who earned his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in political science at UCLA. “We have created an extraordinary incoming class.”

The UC system has long been an engine of social mobility, educating a workforce and creating critical thinkers to play key roles in a democracy, says Chicano/Latino studies professor Anita Casavantes Bradford, who began designing the new First Quarter First Generation Challenge mentoring program last year.

Casavantes Bradford, herself the daughter of a single mother on welfare, remembers nagging hunger, along with the realization by age 8 that even though no one in her family had done it, she could be a scholar.

“It’s important that students who are smart and committed but might be lacking in social and cultural capital get a chance to come to universities … to learn to make arguments, to clarify their thinking and their values,” she says. “It’s not just about making a living, but about sitting on school boards, seeking public office, and making policy and law.”

For many, the college journey still begins by packing up their car after high school graduation, kissing their parents good-bye and moving into a dorm to begin four
Help From Peers

Monica Rodriguez, 22, now a fifth-year student, has a long commute to and from campus, taking four buses daily. She crams in as many classes and other activities as she can, including studies, work and family. Rodriguez struggled her initial semester, earning her first C after a lifetime of top grades. But she didn’t let one grade discourage her and pushed forward. This fall, through the challenge program, Rodriguez is mentoring five brand-new social sciences majors who, like her, are the first in their families to attend a four-year college. Time management is critical, she says, and students need to learn to say no. She personally decided to drop out of two clubs her first year to work on bringing her grades up. Relying on her own experience, Rodriguez will help her mentees set weekly agendas and closely monitor their progress.

“I’m going to tell them the truth,” she says. “Be excited. Use all the energy and tenacity you have to confront whatever you might or might not face. You’re capable of confronting it.”

Research by the University of Wisconsin for the National Institutes of Health has shown that first-generation students in particular can face a tough time their first semester in classes like biology, with grades dipping. Feeling isolated or “different” can be a temporary bump or it can spiral into a sense of failure and lead students to drop out. Sometimes, misguided professors may advise them to not pursue “tough” science or technology paths.

Findings in the prestigious journal Science have shown, however, that quick, properly timed validation exercises for minority students can make all the difference. The first-generation challenge program has adapted those results, pairing small groups of freshmen with upper-year classmates, all the first in their families to attend college. They meet weekly for carefully designed workshops or to eat lunch and just talk.

“This is students helping students, and they can offer a very special type of wisdom and resources in a high-pressure situation,” says Davin Phoenix, assistant professor of political science and co-director of the program. “That’s what’s so exciting.”

The mentors are a microcosm of the campus: Mexican American, Middle Eastern, European American, Filipino and Brazilian Korean, a DREAM Act immigrant, a military veteran and others. They spent last year working with faculty to build a solid program based on their own experiences.

“We want to provide scaffolding, both academic and social, to ease the transition and to hopefully help students with their first-quarter grades, so there isn’t an extreme drop that requires them to spend the next year or two recovering,” says Casavantes Bradford. The pilot program for 50 freshmen and five mentors was full by midsummer, and Maurer hopes to scale it up next year.
Forging Social Bonds

Fifth-year student Freddy Cruz, 22, was overjoyed when he was admitted to UCI, his No. 1 choice. He grew up in West Los Angeles, the son of a carpenter and a nanny who worked for wealthy Brentwood families. His mother, forced to quit school in sixth grade, inspired him not only to attend college, but to study political and social movements.

After completing two years at Santa Monica community college, he felt ready for greater academic challenges. Cruz lived off campus his first quarter, biking miles to class through heat and cold. His roommates were into partying, while he “cherished” the opportunity to study. Cruz kept his grades high but felt completely alone. He wondered if he’d made a giant mistake.

But a different mentoring program geared for transfer students helped Cruz realize he belonged at UCI. He was awed by a first-generation student who successfully handled work, clubs and classes. “In my mind, I got that image that if she did it, I could do it,” he says. She told him about a live-in research boot camp that he enrolled in his second summer. Through that experience, Cruz developed tight-knit bonds with his boot camp roommates.

Now Cruz wants to help freshmen the way he was helped. “We each have social capital we can share,” he says. “Everyone brings something to the table.”

Reaching Out to Faculty

First-generation students often keep their heads down, notes Casavantes Bradford. Many learned early on to avoid trouble – and that staying after class to talk to the teacher or principal meant they’d done something wrong. A crucial part of the challenge program is teaching them about office hours.

Confidence Counselors

Coping with stress is a key topic.

Born in Brazil, Esther Kim and her family were granted permanent residency in California when she was 13. With parents from Korea, she straddles several cultures. Kim, 25, who is naturally reserved, says she suffered social anxiety when she arrived at UCI.

“I was so nervous,” Kim says. “I didn’t know how to study at a university. I didn’t know how to talk to people. It was nerve-wracking.”

“My biggest fear was that I wasn’t going to make friends,” she adds.

Academic and mental health help were critical, she says. Kim, who has won a prestigious internship in Washington, D.C., this fall, feels so strongly about the mentoring program that she is Skyping in to help. She doesn’t shy away from telling hesitant undergraduates to reach out to campus counselors.

“It’s a resource that everyone should use,” Kim says. “Our tuition actually pays for it.”

In her case, she learned from counseling that “I am not crazy; this is totally normal. Having a professional person tell you means so much more.”

She says of the freshmen, “I want to help them gain the confidence that I was able to find.”

41.6% of UCI’s admitted students are the first in their families to attend college

41.6% of UCI’s admitted students are the first in their families to attend college.
Garland, the military veteran, agrees. He advises his mentees to find the courage to talk to faculty and suggest ways to develop those relationships. For Garland, meeting UCI chemist Don Blake and trustee and eBay chairman Thomas Tierney, both military veterans, was a big boost. Networking can lead to opportunities – he completed five paid research internships as an undergraduate. It’s also at the heart of the ancient Socratic educational experience – professors working with small groups of students.

He explains how, despite jitters, he approached renowned physicist Roger McWilliams.

“I went up to him after class, and, man, he looked the part. He had on a tweed jacket and a tie, and I thought, ‘Yes, I have arrived at UCI! This is a real professor!’” Garland recalls.

“I said, ‘Good afternoon, professor. This is my first class at a university.’”

When McWilliams looked at him “kind of weirdly,” Garland says he thought, “I’m an idiot. He’s taught thousands of kids. He doesn’t have time for me.”

Instead, McWilliams said, “Well, welcome” and became an early support system. Garland was impressed by how McWilliams used Shakespearean sonnets to illustrate the eloquence of physics equations. Garland, who’d spent more time cleaning pools as a teen to earn money than reading, bought the shortest book of sonnets he could find and began diagramming them himself. He now devours books. One recent read: Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*.

Garland also asked McWilliams if he should join a fraternity.

“He didn’t tell me what to do,” Garland relates. “He just said, ‘As long as you join the fraternity of the curious and the hardworking, you’ll be fine. I live by those words.’”

“67.6% of students in the 2013 class graduated within four years, compared to a national average of 33.3% for public four-year colleges.”

“I’m going to tell them the truth. Be excited. Use all the energy and tenacity you have to confront whatever you might or might not face. You’re capable of confronting it.”
Richard Arum sees his new role as dean of UCI’s School of Education as “an incredibly powerful opportunity” during a time when teachers – from preschool through university-level – are serving increasingly diverse populations who need a college degree like never before.

“Folks here are creating a 21st-century school of education that has extraordinary expertise and capacity,” he says. “It isn’t on the periphery of the modern university. It’s at the center ... because the university is itself grappling with the question of how best to meet students’ needs.”

Arum grew up in 1960s and ’70s New York exposed to the civil rights community. His father, a Harvard-educated lawyer who worked for U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, went on to represent Muhammad Ali when he refused to fight in Vietnam, then to promote him and other boxing greats. Arum knew from an early age what he wanted to do. He began his career as a teacher at Castlemont High School in poverty-challenged East Oakland, earned a doctorate at UC Berkeley, and taught at the University of Arizona and New York University. All five of his children attended New York City public schools.
“My whole adult life I’ve been an educator because I want to make a difference in the world,” Arum says. “My research is also on education, so I’m doubly blessed, able not only to teach students, but also to inform policy and practice at a system level.”

He believes that science-based research is the bedrock of the best educational strategies. Considered one of the nation’s leading sociologists, Arum has conducted in-depth studies on which curricula excel at helping college students succeed. A former senior fellow with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, he most recently chaired New York University’s sociology department and is senior academic adviser on education at the Social Science Research Council. Here, Arum shares some views on strengthening education.

Q: How do you define student success?

Arum: First there’s the issue of timely completion. Many institutions have high attrition rates and a very long time to degree. We need to make sure students are progressing through in timely ways.

The second important element is student learning – focusing on individuals not just moving through, but also getting something meaningful out of it. An incredible amount of resources are being invested in students’ education, and they are investing years of their lives. We owe it to them that they get something out of that in terms of their future. Our society is also dependent on college graduates being able to make contributions to the economy and engage in responsible citizenship.

For example, an initiative headed by Michael Dennin, vice provost for teaching and learning, seeks to improve undergraduate instruction to better foster 21st-century skills. Eighty faculty have been hired to both teach and conduct research on teaching in their fields. If you’re a physicist, you teach physics and you research the best ways to teach it.

Q: What are some obstacles to student success?

Arum: Many students come in not sufficiently prepared, some from challenging family backgrounds, and institutions are failing them. Colleges and universities have often not been adequately intentional about designing programs and curricula. Students are left to figure out for themselves pathways through higher education. It can be bewildering to many of them.

Q: Half of UCI’s student body is now made up of first-generation students. What’s the significance of this demographic?

Arum: It’s one of the things I was most attracted to. The population we’re serving is extraordinary in terms of the proportion that are first-generation students and Pell grant [federal financial aid] recipients. UCI alone has more Pell grant recipients than the entire Ivy League combined. If you’re an educator who’s interested in helping students realize their individual ambitions and contribute to society, there’s no better population to engage.

Q: Do professors need to teach today’s students differently because of shorter attention spans? What’s the right curriculum?

Arum: I just finished a project where we brought together expert panels of faculty to define 21st-century learning outcomes – what students should master in biology, business, economics, sociology, communications and history.

Today we can all find facts on our smartphones. What we need are skills that give us ways of theoretically understanding the world and phenomena: critical thinking, quantitative analysis, interpretation of data and so on. These are the types of competencies we need to develop in our students. Instead of preparing them narrowly for occupations that may not exist a decade from now, we need to prepare them in deeper ways that will help them through life.

Q: What do you think of techniques such as online learning and “flipped” classrooms?

Arum: UCI has established itself as a leader in digital learning, both in providing it and in conducting research on hybrid programs, online courseware and other tools. Online curricula can connect students to peer and mentor communities that have a shared interest in a particular topic. It’s extraordinarily promising.

Q: What are your immediate goals for this first year?

Arum: One is to better integrate our research into teacher education, community engagement and UCI students’ education. Another is to focus on building out our capacity to conduct cutting-edge research on educational technology and digital learning.

— J.W.
A rmed with bottles of bubble liquid, wands and video cameras, Catherine Loudon’s class gathers at a grassy area outside Steinhaus Hall. Their assignment: Cast bubbles to the wind.

It’s not playtime. Loudon, a UCI lecturer in ecology & evolutionary biology, is showing her biology students an important concept: flow visualization. They will try to understand otherwise invisible air and water movements.

Complicated words in a stuffy classroom instead become a vivid lesson in how insects follow pheromone plumes.

Loudon is just one example of UCI instructors going beyond the traditional lecture. The focus now is on active learning, interacting with students and helping them develop problem-solving skills.

“The bubbles show how the wind shifts, dies down, starts again,” says Loudon, who has taught at UCI for a decade. “It’s not easy to follow. But it’s important because this is how insects and many other creatures communicate.”

Later, students will analyze the data they collect, comparing the differences between following visual and chemical cues in the environment.

“Learning is not just a set of facts to memorize,” Loudon says. “It’s thinking creatively, learning how to deal with new situations.”

She also teaches a freshman seminar on biomimetic design through the Division of Undergraduate Education in which small groups of students are broken out for special projects. A similar program through the Francisco J. Ayala School of Biological Sciences that will include all freshman biology majors is scheduled to start in fall 2017.
“It’s giving students a chance to be exposed to research with a faculty member, which they otherwise might not experience until their junior or senior year,” Loudon says, adding that UCI’s emphasis on innovative teaching and learning techniques has always been strong, “but in recent years, it has really stepped up.”

Ngoctran Tran, a junior biology major, agrees. She says her professors have become more inventive, citing quizzes on which Loudon encourages student collaboration.

“Solving problems in class gets me more engaged, instead of just listening to the professor and only remembering so much,” Tran says.

Garage Demos

When Diane O’Dowd wants to improve her teaching, she heads for the garage. That’s where the UCI professor of developmental & cell biology finds the raw materials for explaining the mysterious world inside a cell.

Tennis balls, soccer socks, Styrofoam, old Halloween costumes – anything is fair game when you’ve got to show a lecture hall of 440 students something they can’t see: tiny, complex processes that make life possible.

O’Dowd calls her creations “garage demos,” large props that student volunteers manipulate in class to drive a point home. A garbage bag, for example, depicts how a proteasome (a cell’s “garbage disposal”) breaks down a damaged protein, ejecting peptides (sliced-up pipe insulation) that are recycled to build new proteins.

Her teaching transformation began in the early 2000s, as O’Dowd’s own two children were starting college. She had the uncomfortable feeling that her kids “wouldn’t enjoy my classes very much.”

So she experimented with new methods, interacting more with her students. She handed out colored cards to hoist as answers to questions she tossed out during lectures. The answers helped her to gauge their understanding. Cards later gave way to clickers, which project an instant tabulation on the screen.

A grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute led to her garage demos. “I would think, ‘Here’s a problem my students are having, and how do I explain it?’” O’Dowd says.

Not only do her students understand the material better, but she enjoys the more interactive style of teaching too, calling it “more intellectually challenging” than just giving lectures.

She has spread the gospel of garage demos to other UCI professors, many of them happy to discard the old ways. The demos are recorded and uploaded to YouTube so students can review them later. O’Dowd also offers tips that other professors can use to enhance their presentations, such as starting with a PowerPoint lecture to get students acquainted with the basics before the demo gives a visual explanation.

In addition, she started “flipping classes” long before it was called that. The idea: Students watch video lectures online at home, learning the new material at their own pace. In class, they work on related exercises, the teacher scanning the room for students needing help. O’Dowd says she only “partially flipped,” because she still occasionally used in-class lectures.

There’s another reason professors are updating their methods. Students in biology and other STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs too often
quit and switch to less rigorous majors. O’Dowd and other UCI instructors believe that their techniques lead to better student understanding, resulting in higher grades and providing the confidence that they chose the right majors.

O’Dowd, who has also served as vice provost for academic personnel for the past two years, continues to push her ideas on active learning, making sure that faculty evaluations take commitment to teaching into account.

Plus, she says, many professors are realizing that teaching can be more closely aligned with their research. “They aren’t mutually exclusive,” O’Dowd says. “Faculty find this to be a much more interesting way of teaching.”

Mixing Up Media

Keith Murphy, UCI associate professor of anthropology, revels in bringing an unorthodox approach to his courses, adapting to how the younger generation works. “Students often switch between different media as they study,” he says. “They sit down, read a PDF and, in another window, watch Netflix. They process information very differently than we do, using a lot of videos from YouTube. Rarely do I use academic media; I use commercials and news stories. I try to reach them through stuff they can relate to.”

Instead of PowerPoint, Murphy prefers Apple’s Keynote because, he says, it makes it easier to embed videos into his lectures, which he often does.

“Learning is not just a set of facts to memorize. It’s thinking creatively, learning how to deal with new situations.”
“Students say they really like the way I present information,” says Murphy, whose innovative teaching techniques were a major factor in his selection as UCI’s 2016 Professor of the Year. “It’s not just slides and lists.”

He even takes it a step further, incorporating improv into a class on how people communicate.

“The rules for improv are really social theories,” says Murphy, who wrote, performed and directed improv while an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, before the demands of academia forced him to give it up.

As his students practice scenes and learn the rules of improv, they understand better how humans communicate – and become better communicators themselves.

Digital Learning

Mark Warschauer taught his first class shortly after Jimmy Carter was elected president.

“It was 1977, so you do the math,” jokes Warschauer, who was originally a bilingual math and ESL instructor in San Francisco. His journey as a teacher, researcher and administrator took him to Hawaii, Moscow, Prague, Japan and Egypt before he arrived at UCI in 2001, becoming a professor of education and informatics, interim dean of the School of Education and founder of the Digital Learning Lab.

Warschauer and his colleagues are pursuing a broad range of all studies on digital learning. UCI teachers use many of the strategies: student interaction, problem-solving, flipped classrooms. Research is confirming their effectiveness, especially with first-generation college students.

High-tech initiatives include ALEKS, an online tutoring and assessment system developed at UCI in the 1990s. It provides automated help in precalculus, algebra and other subjects.

“Students are getting better results than they did before,” Warschauer says.

Still, online classes – in which students rarely or never meet the professor or their classmates – often are plagued by high dropout rates and low scores. “They demand a lot of self-regulation by the student,” Warschauer cautions, adding that a new summer program is sending students periodic emails nudging them to schedule homework and other tasks.

“It’s one of several studies we’re working on,” he says. “We’re trying to find patterns – what is working and what is not.”

Massive open online courses have proven helpful for biology students who need a boost before they start at UCI. Offered in the summers of 2013 and 2014 thanks to grant funding, the MOOCs “covered basic information about biology that
Douglas Haynes began his career at UC Irvine 24 years ago as a history professor, after earning a doctorate at UC Berkeley. For the past two years, he has served as UCI’s vice provost for academic equity, diversity & inclusion, working from the Office of Inclusive Excellence.

He also directs UCI ADVANCE, which began in 2001 as an effort to hire more female faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It expanded over the years into the Office of Inclusive Excellence, which coordinates campuswide efforts to diversify faculty, graduate students and undergraduates.

Here, Haynes describes the program and its progress.

Q: How successful has UCI ADVANCE been in recruiting female faculty?

Haynes: We’ve seen steady improvement each year. Overall, 35 percent of faculty members are now women. It was 28 percent when I started. We’re raising awareness in our advertisements for open positions, engaging with professional organizations and making the recruitment process more transparent.

Q: How do you promote diversity and inclusion throughout the campus?

Haynes: Every step along the application process, we work to avoid many common recruitment errors. One mistake is defining the position very narrowly, reducing the chance of getting a large applicant pool.

Equity advisers are key. Housed within each school on campus, they advise admissions committees and deans. They help search committees generate diverse candidate pools that approximate national availability. Nearly 100 faculty members have served as advisers.

Q: Is the program succeeding with underrepresented minorities?

Haynes: Each year, we make progress. This year, we hired the first African American faculty members in The Paul Merage School of Business and the first African American woman in the physics department. She’s the only African American physicist in the University of California system. We’ve also boosted the number of Chicano/Latino and American Indian faculty.

Overall, 10 percent to 20 percent of our annual hires are underrepresented minorities. We always try to meet or exceed the previous year’s percentage. Female hires account for 40 percent to 50 percent annually. The campus has become a national leader, and several other UC campuses have adopted our equity adviser model.

Q: Does a diverse faculty help attract a more diverse student body?

Haynes: Yes, and we’re making significant headway. We have the highest number of African American students entering UCI as undergraduates this fall in 10 years. We’re very proud of that. In February, the U.S. Department of Education designated UCI as an Asian American- and Native American/Pacific Islander-serving institution. Also, we’re close to becoming a designated Hispanic-serving institution, which requires 25 percent of undergraduate enrollments to be Latino/a students. We’re at 24.8 percent.

It takes all hands on deck to create a culture of inclusion.

— J.W.
When dedication and inspiration cross paths, you create a technology that powers a generation.

University of California, Irvine chemistry student Mya Le Thai had a hunch that coating gold nanowires in a thin gel would make batteries more efficient, and she pursued it. The resulting technology could develop into a battery that potentially lasts forever. While still in its early phases, this discovery may have a major impact on Earth’s energy consumption. Breakthroughs like this are proof that when each of us has the courage to follow our own convictions, together we can make a world of difference. That’s the Power of I

See the full story at uci.edu/innovation
Experience Required

School of Social Ecology field study program yields real-life lessons

By Rosemary McClure
Their stories are wrenching, but told matter-of-factly. Wayne lives in the moment, he says, not because he wants to, but because a motocross accident injured his brain, causing seizures and robbing him of the ability to remember what happened yesterday, or even 20 minutes ago.

David, who also traces his brain injuries to a motocross accident, is troubled by aphasia, a condition that deprives its victims of their communication skills. “You know what you want to say, but you can’t say it,” he explains.

Today the two men – and several other members of Coastline Community College’s Acquired Brain Injury Program – are talking about the drastic ways their lives were altered when their accidents occurred. They’re also talking about Brooke Herd, a UCI student who spent months working with their class as part of the School of Social Ecology’s distinguished field study program.

“Everyone here would agree we wouldn’t be able to make it without Brooke and the other students and aides,” says one.

Herd, who received the Dean’s Award for Excellence in Field Study, is among more than 900 students involved in the field study program, which partners with 233 community organizations, including Coastline Community College. The alliance offers students the opportunity to develop real-world, hands-on skills and gives organizations a chance to tap into UCI’s energetic talent pool.

The result? Annually, UCI students contribute over 106,000 community service hours in such diverse areas as corrections and law enforcement, teaching, mentoring, urban planning and civic affairs. Performance ratings put 84 percent of the students at the “exceeds expectations” level or higher.

At Coastline’s Newport Beach campus, field study participants like Herd help provide cognitive retraining for adults who have suffered a brain injury, either from a traumatic cause, such as an accident, or a nontraumatic cause, such as a stroke, tumor or infection.

Herd graduated from UCI this year, but today she’s back to visit her old friends in the ABI Program, who welcome her warmly.

She’s modest when asked to describe her duties: “I tried to help. I sat with students, and I took notes.”

A student quickly adds: “You did a lot more than that. You reminded me what I have to do next. I never remember that.”

The comment draws laughs from the class.

Another says, “She’s right, though. Notes were part of it. When I couldn’t remember how to write, she took notes for me.”
Coastline counselor Kim Peterson joins the conversation. "Brooke was very patient," she says. "There was a woman in her 80s in the class who had had a severe stroke and could never remember how to log in to her computer. Brooke wrote out instructions for her and repeated the concept dozens of times. But every day, she would have to help her log in. Then the next day, she’d do it all over again."

Peterson and UCI professor Mona Lynch were Herd’s mentors in the field study program, which is set up to provide students with input from both a community partner and a university instructor. Peterson particularly lauded a paper Herd wrote about her field study, calling it “a perceptive and sensitive portrayal of how clients at her field site developed coping strategies for their often-significant limitations following brain injuries.”

Developed in 1970, the field study program is a requirement for social ecology undergrads. Over the years, countless UCI students have not only benefited from the program academically, but also been able to use it as a springboard to enter various professional fields. Among its success stories is Irvine Police Chief Mike Hamel, who says it “was instrumental in shaping my career.”

That’s an important outgrowth of field study, says Ashley Vikander, program director. But “the aim is to provide an opportunity to practice and apply scholarship in the field, to study and address issues where they occur.”

Originally launched as a single three-quarters-long program, it has evolved into three distinct programs: traditional, advanced and immersive.

The traditional one, in which Herd enrolled, requires 100 hours of participation during a single quarter; the advanced course requires a three-quarters commitment. Recent advanced projects have paired students with community organizations focused on youth shelters, affordable housing, gang diversion, low-income housing and food distribution.

“Only by fully immersing yourself into the culture could you understand the everyday struggles of the less fortunate.”
in the ongoing activities of an organization. In many cases, the experience helps students decide on a career path and eventually land a job.

One of the program’s role models, Chief Hamel, is a 20-year veteran of the Irvine Police Department who did field study there in 1992 while he was a senior at UCI. When Hamel began college in 1988, he had vague plans to become a computer programmer, he says, but changed his major as a sophomore to social ecology, with an emphasis on criminology, law & society. At the same time, Hamel scored a job at the campus police department as a community service officer.

“I loved my time at UC Irvine,” he says. “It was the most memorable period of my life. ”

Then came the field study gig with the Irvine Police Department, where he worked in the crime analysis unit. It “gave me real-world experience and strengthened my desire to become a police officer,” he says, calling the program “very rewarding.”

Building leaders like Hamel is an important goal of field study.

“The greatest benefit of the program to both students and the community is empowerment,” says Geoff Ward, Ph.D., who served as faculty chair of the field study advisory board for two years. “For students, this comes in many forms, including strategies for professional development.”

But perhaps more importantly, he adds, “field study reveals to these engaged students the importance and potential power of their voice in community and organizational life, inspiring their dedication and leadership.”

Mike Hamel ’92, chief of the Irvine Police Department, credits the social ecology field study program for strengthening his interest in law enforcement.
Ward, an associate professor of criminology, law & society and sociology, says the program empowers participating organizations “by bolstering their ability to achieve their missions, serve diverse constituencies and innovate.”

In the short term, he says, it benefits them via the ideas, outlook and energy that social ecology students bring; in the long run, it helps them cultivate young professionals and future leaders.

Herd, like many UCI field study veterans, would like to continue her association with the organization in which she served. This fall, she’ll begin pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology at Azusa Pacific University.

“I hope to be able to work with the ABI Program again as part of my graduate program,” she says. “Eventually, I hope to become a geriatric neuropsychologist and would love to work in Coastline’s ABI Program or something similar.”

During her recent return to the community college, Herd thanks the class for their time together. “I’m so grateful,” she says. “It means more to me than you’ll ever know.”

**Solving Society’s Most Pressing Problems**

When Nancy Guerra interviewed at UCI for the position of dean of the School of Social Ecology, she didn’t mince words about her devotion to the subject. “I am social ecology,” she recalls saying. “Using an interdisciplinary approach to understand important social problems – and then working toward solving those problems – has been a central part of my whole career.”

Most recently a professor of psychological and brain sciences and associate provost for international programs at the University of Delaware, Guerra stepped into the role of dean on June 1. She’s new to UCI but not to the University of California, where she has been both a student and a professor. She earned a B.A. in psychology at UCLA and an M.A. in educational psychology at UC Santa Barbara before receiving a doctorate in human development and psychology at Harvard University.

Guerra was a faculty member at UC Riverside and also held a number of administrative posts, such as associate director of the Robert Presley Center for Crime & Justice Studies.

She’s an internationally known expert on youth development and violence prevention, including antibullying programs, and has been principal investigator for a National Academic Center of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention, funded by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. In addition, she has worked with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, USAID and other international agencies on community-based program development and evaluation in several countries, among them Jamaica, Barbados, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela.
Q: How did you become involved in the field of social ecology?

Guerra: I've always been interested in real-world problems and feasible solutions. I never really planned on becoming an academic. I was drawn to adolescent development, and I wanted to be out running a children’s program. It’s something I’ve always been passionate about.

Q: Did you pursue that goal?

Guerra: I started my career running a youth service system in Santa Barbara County and wound up doing a lot of work with youth who were in trouble with the law. And I saw firsthand that a lack of parental guidance and lack of role models are often evident. You hear youth tell stories: “My brother’s in prison. My other brother’s dead. Whose footsteps can I follow?” And then I wondered, “How is it that some young people do well even in bad situations?” There are children who grow up in circumstances that are just terrible, but still they thrive. That led me to become interested in not just running a program but using research to develop and test solutions designed to improve lives.

Q: At this point, did your career begin to change course?

Guerra: My thought was, “What does the research say?” I was intrigued by what used to be called applied programs and now are called translational: science driven by the “end use” for policy and practice.

Q: What brought you to UCI’s School of Social Ecology?

Guerra: For me, social ecology has been front and center in everything I do, so when the opportunity came up to lead the school, it just seemed like the perfect fit. In some sense, it’s what I prepared for my whole career: to lead a school whose mission is to really make a difference and to solve pressing social and environmental problems.

Q: What is your goal for the school?

Guerra: We have an amazing faculty, very accomplished and dedicated. My chief goal is that we refocus a bit on specific problems that we can solve and try to orient our work toward science-driven solutions. We want to use research and science to tackle important social and environmental problems – areas such as social justice, human rights, crime and violence, healthy development, well-being, poverty alleviation and sustainable cities. Then we want to take these broad areas and identify smaller pieces that we can actually address.

Q: Can you give an example?

Guerra: We want to identify issues that have local, regional, state, national and global significance and build scientific teams to tackle these issues. For example, as urbanization increases around the world, we must look for the best ways to create sustainable cities. Here in Orange County, the Metropolitan Futures Initiative, housed in the UCI School of Social Ecology, brings together an interdisciplinary research team to leverage big data in order to build communities that are economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable and socially just.

Q: Will other schools or outsiders be part of this?

Guerra: My goal is to make sure that we have the capacity and collaboration to be able to address the problems our faculty have identified. Not everybody will come from the School of Social Ecology. We need to bring in faculty from other schools and campuses. One of the great things about being in the UC system is that we have 10 campuses, so we can collaborate. We need to identify issues that we know we can work together on and come up with strategies and solutions that can actually be implemented and will impact policy and practice.

Q: On another subject, you have experience with Southern California’s juvenile justice systems. What’s your greatest concern?

Guerra: My overriding concern is that we take kids who have been traumatized, who grew up in harsh conditions, who often have mental health problems, and put them in an even harsher environment and expect them to go back to their homes and communities and be productive citizens. We greatly need affordable and accessible mental healthcare, trauma recovery programs, life skills training and educational opportunities that can help youth get jobs. And we also need to treat youth with respect and dignity, even if they have broken the law. Of course, if someone does something wrong and commits a crime, that person needs to be sanctioned for it. But there are ways to sanction juveniles that would still honor them as human beings and increase, rather than decrease, their chance of success in adulthood.

— R.M.
Heads Up

UCI midfielder Alex Karlowitsch positions herself under the ball during the women’s soccer opener Aug. 19 in Anteater Stadium. The ‘Eaters won the game against Fairfield 4-2. The four goals in a nonconference match were the most since 2010, when the UCI women dropped six on Gonzaga. It was also the first win in a season opener since 2011. The team closed out August with a strong 4-0 record.
In my mind, success often begins with a dream, an aspiration for something more, an expectation that future generations will take advantage of the groundwork laid by parents, extended family, elders and the ancestors who came before them. Such is certainly the case in my life.

By many measures, my arrival at the places and spaces I now occupy as vice chancellor for student affairs and an adjunct faculty member at UCI would not have been predicted. Coming from a home with parents who never went to college didn’t bode well for a legacy of academic success. And after they separated and my mother moved four children under the age of 7 from New York to Los Angeles, life in a single-parent household would be very different.

These kinds of “statistical strikes” suggest a very muted trajectory for many students of color, especially black children, and even first-generation college students. When you add to that mix the reality of growing up poor, you do not get a promising recipe for success, be it academic achievement, college eligibility, employment prospects, or even the motivation to rise above one’s circumstances. Yet that’s precisely what my sister, two brothers and I were able to do.

My parents would be proud looking down from heaven: All four children went to college; two earned doctorates; and a third received a bachelor’s and completed many hours of graduate work. That none are high school dropouts, gang members, on drugs or in jail is quite an accomplishment in itself.
Even though times were different then, we still managed to escape the ravages of the streets relatively unscathed by the predators who wore blue or red – and the ones in uniform who rode in black-and-white cars with the words “to protect and serve” emblazoned on them.

How does that happen? People come from circumstances but are not defined by them. Translation: College and university enrollment specialists must look beyond the so-called objective markers of grades and test scores in order to see a student’s true potential.

The journey begins with a strong head of household whose vision of possibilities for his or her children has never been derailed by societal stereotypes, educational alligators or economic circumstances. My mother’s vision was translated into specific behaviors that reinforced the intellectual, emotional and spiritual lessons my siblings and I were taught. Belief in God and keeping the faith was one cornerstone. Indoctrination of strong values and discipline was another. There was a clear expectation communicated in my home about the need to excel in school (even though I didn’t always meet the standard until my college and graduate school years), and that expectation was also shared with teachers. Extracurricular activities (sports, student council, social events, parties, etc.) were privileges one earned with the appropriate completion of all academic work, and if the work was not done, privileges were restricted.

But a parent’s love and vision can only take you so far. Indeed, a book should be written about things parents cannot teach first-generation college students simply because they’ve never been exposed to the higher education culture their children experience. For me, that direction came from my mentors, faculty, staff and student peers, who were a tremendous source of support and guidance. The UCI experience was special, and I had mentors such as Professor Joseph White and others too numerous to list.

I often think about what I needed as a student to successfully navigate this place [Irvine] that we affectionately called “the Vine.” I needed an orientation to the campus and its wealth of resources. I needed a place to call home away from home that afforded me both safety and comfort in the midst of a new environment. I needed to make authentic connections with faculty and staff, who provided academic advising, support, encouragement, nurturance and an introduction to this thing called research. I needed career advice. I needed some financial assistance and a part-time job to cover my educational fees. I needed outlets for student involvement; organizations I felt I could contribute to; cultural entities, such as the Black Student Union and gospel choir, where I could see myself reflected within the fabric of the institution as they helped to engage my spirit and ignite my passions and cultural consciousness; healthcare for those few times I came down with a cold or the flu; an experiential internship to supplement my didactic classroom learning; and opportunities for fun to help balance the rigors of academic life at UCI.

“I was able to access each of these here, and it’s this recognition of what I needed to succeed that drives me to ensure that current generations of UCI students have access to similar resources. Brother Malcolm X was right in declaring that education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. For some, success is about the attainment of admission into the university. For others, it’s about performance marked by recognition, honors, position, wealth and even privilege. Still others judge success on career accomplishment and whether the investment in higher education paid off.

In my mind, success is not just an outcome but also involves a process. It is not simply the achievement one realizes but the contextual factors that one must navigate along the way that involve perseverance, commitment, determination and faith. These are the lessons, many of which are taught outside the formal classroom, that will sustain our students throughout their lives.

Parham has been vice chancellor for student affairs since 2011. He earned a bachelor’s in social ecology from UCI, a master’s in counseling psychology from the University of Washington in St. Louis and a doctorate in counseling psychology from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Ill.
Skipper School

Students learn the ropes, er, lines, during a beginner’s sailing class in Newport Harbor. Operated by UCI Campus Recreation out of Newport Peninsula’s Marina Park, year-round programs with a fleet that includes 34 new boats are open to everyone and offer varied levels of instruction. Kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding classes are also available, as are sailing lessons for parents and children. For more information, go to http://bit.ly/ucimag_fall2016_Sailing.
Giving New Meaning to ’Eater Nation

Southern California’s gourmet food truck scene includes at least six UCI alumni entrepreneurs

By Roy Rivenburg

It’s by no means a culinary school, but the University of California, Irvine seems to have a knack for producing talented chefs and restaurateurs. At least half a dozen Anteater alumni now ply the highways of Southern California in gourmet food trucks.

Dishing up everything from Belgian waffles to sirloin steak, the wheeled bistros have attracted throngs of fans, as well as appearances on national food shows. Some of the trucks also operate brick-and-mortar establishments.

Earlier this year, UCI hosted six of the roving restaurants during homecoming festivities:

BARCELONA ON THE GO

Spain meets Latin America aboard this mobile kitchen. A pioneer in Orange County’s luxe food truck scene, BOTG has won accolades from KABC-TV, The Orange County Register and OC Weekly – and is popular with the lunch crowd at Cal State Fullerton.

Alumni connection: Jennifer Norton ’00, a dance major turned chef who was hired to cook on the truck and wound up marrying the owner. The couple now also owns Spudrunners, a potato-centric food wagon.

Signature dish: Sliced top sirloin on fries with chimichurri sauce

Website: www.barcelonaontheego.com

THE BURNT TRUCK

Gourmet sliders are this rig’s raison d’etre. Founded by a trio of childhood friends, two of whom worked at top Orange County restaurants, this traveling eatery has been featured on the Cooking Channel, in the Los Angeles Times and by other media outlets. Last year, The Burnt Truck joined forces with another Anteater-owned vehicle, Dogzilla, to open a sit-down diner in Irvine called Burntzilla.

Alumni connection: Minh Pham ’03, a former banker who majored in international studies

Best-selling items: Fried chicken slider, cheeseburger slider

Website: www.theburnttruck.com
**FALASOPHY**

Fancy falafel and hummus dominate this truck’s all-vegetarian lineup. A relative newcomer to Orange County’s mobile food universe, Falasophy has won attention from OC Weekly, Orange Coast magazine, The Orange County Register and The Desert Sun.


Top sellers: Banh mi falafel pita sandwich and spicy garlic fries

Website: www.falasophy.com

**DOGZILLA**

Hot dogs with an Asian twist are the specialty here. Operating from a Godzilla-green truck sporting a city skyline silhouette, this nomadic cafe has been featured on KCBS-TV, the Cooking Channel and Buzzfeed.

Alumni connection: Martin Tse ’01, an international studies grad who worked in finance but turned his cubicle into a mini-kitchen equipped with a spice drawer, toaster ovens and a waffle iron. “I would cook bacon at my desk and declare unofficial national food holidays based on what was in my pantry,” he recalls.

Most popular item: Dogzilla dog (a beef frank slathered with caramelized onions, avocado, bacon bits, and Japanese sauces and seasonings)

Website: www.dogzillahotdogs.com

**DOS CHINOS**

Vietnamese, Mexican and Thai flavors merge on this truck’s menu. Media appearances have included The New York Times, the Food Network, A&E and NBC’s “Food Fighters.” Dos Chinos also has a storefront in Santa Ana’s 4th Street Market.

Alumni connection: Hop Phan ’08, an English major and former nail salon manager whose Vietnamese immigrant father started a chain of pho restaurants in the 1980s. Dos Chinos was born in 2010, after Phan’s car was totaled by a drunk driver and he used the insurance settlement to rent a food truck.

Most popular dish: Stoner papas (shoestring fries doused with carne asada, roast pork belly, chorizo fried rice, a fried egg, salsa verde, onions and cilantro)

Website: www.doschinos.com

“I would cook bacon at my desk and declare unofficial national food holidays based on what was in my pantry.”

**WAFFLES DE LIEGE**

Belgian waffles served with Fosselman’s ice cream and assorted toppings headline this dessert truck. Waffles de Liege also has a shop in Old Town Pasadena.

Alumni connection: George Wu ’09, a biological sciences major who planned to be a doctor before detouring into the waffle business with a friend. Originally from Shanghai, Wu currently directs the business from Arizona, where he’s studying medicine.

Most popular items: Ice cream waffle special and speculoos special (Speculoos is a gingerbread-flavored spread from Belgium that some are heralding as “the new Nutella.”)

Website: www.wafflesdeliege.com
Rachel Fine ’94, music

When a panoply of painted pianos popped up in public places across Los Angeles four years ago, Rachel Fine was the primary planner. Ditto for a 2014 fiddle festival that featured eight Stradivarius violins worth a combined $40 million. For nearly a decade, Fine has toiled behind the scenes of Southern California’s arts world, shepherding events and raising funds, mostly through executive posts with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the L.A. Children’s Chorus, where she also helped create an ensemble for boys with changing voices. A onetime competitive pianist whose professional aspirations were derailed by a repetitive strain injury, Fine redirected her musical ambitions toward “helping performing arts organizations thrive.” Last November, the Berkeley native took over as managing director of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, an eclectic entertainment hub in Beverly Hills that presents theater, dance, opera, classical music and children’s programs.

Vishaal Melwani ’07, international studies

He came to UCI against his will. Vishaal Melwani’s mom thought he was hanging out with “the wrong crowd,” so she packed him off to Orange County from the family home in Las Vegas. It proved to be a turning point, helping transform Melwani from a third-generation tailor who had been sewing since age 7 into an up-and-coming men’s clothing magnate whose online company – Combatant Gentlemen – has been featured in Forbes, TechCrunch and other media outlets. Aimed at millennials, the firm is primarily known for its smartphone sizing app and $160 suits (originally made with fabric derived from company-owned sheep in Italy and cotton fields in India). The clothier recently expanded its product line to include shoes, shirts, belts, ties and wedding gear. It also started opening brick-and-mortar stores – outfitted with bars and barbers – including a shop at Combatant’s Irvine headquarters.

Shannon (Sumner) Ingram ’74, history

A dead president, brain research and the opening credits of television’s “Bonanza” are among the strands that connect Shannon Ingram to UCI. At age 12, while watching Lyndon B. Johnson dedicate the future campus, she decided to one day attend the university. After keeping that vow, Ingram married a yacht captain to the stars and sailed to Hawaii, where she edited a tourist magazine. She later returned to the mainland, working as a marketing manager for the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim and a Colorado tech firm before dropping everything to care for her aging parents. She published a memoir – The Heart Way – about assisting her folks and helped raise thousands of dollars for mind research at UCI, earning her recognition as an Alumna Honoree Against Alzheimer’s. That led to marketing gigs for dementia care companies. Ingram is also exercising her history skills, writing a book on Southern California’s Garner Ranch, which has appeared in television shows and movies and been in her stepfather’s family since 1905, when – according to her research – it was won in a poker game.

Jen Karetnick, M.F.A. ’92, poetry

An albino alligator that can talk and write poetry is the central character in Jen Karetnick’s new play, "SWAMP!,” which will be staged in the Florida Everglades next spring as part of a National Park Service artists-in-residence program. It’s the latest in a string of offbeat projects by the UCI alumna, a freelance journalist who also performs in a four-person flute orchestra and recently published a collection of climate change poems and a mango cookbook. Married to a neurologist, Karetnick teaches creative writing at a Miami charter arts school and lives in a renovated cottage on the last remaining acre of a 1930s mango plantation in Miami Shores. “It sounds romantic,” she says of the tree-dotted property. “It’s not. Every summer, we harvest thousands of pieces of fruit – and clean up thousands more pieces of bad fruit. It’s hard labor in 100-degree heat and humidity. But I’m never leaving it.”

Vishaal Melwani ’07, international studies

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Chris Austin ’13, public health policy

He sells a line of hats and hoodies, gives motivational talks to youth, and hangs out in Finland and Greece, leaping skyward to smack around a leather ball. At UCI, Chris Austin was a volleyball sensation, the first African American setter to start for an NCAA championship team. Born in Dallas and raised near Las Vegas, the 6-foot-3 star helped lead the Anteaters to two national titles (in 2012 and 2013) after transferring in from Long Beach City College. Since then, Austin has stayed with the sport, both as a player (competing professionally in Europe and beach tournaments) and coach (via National Champ Volleyball, a training academy he founded). More recently, he published a book, The Way, about a championship volleyball club team from Hawaii. Austin says the paperback uses the sport as a metaphor for life, showing readers how to achieve success in any endeavor.

Misha Euceph ’15, philosophy

“Dates & Other Mistakes,” a KUCI radio show started by Misha Euceph, helped pave the way to a 2016 black-tie soiree at which she hobnobbed with President Barack Obama, first lady Michelle Obama, actor Morgan Freeman, actress Emma Watson and singer Aretha Franklin. Her radio program – along with literary journalism classes and writing for the New U – stoked the Pakistani native’s interest in audio newscasts and led her to a master’s program at Northwestern University. There, Euceph’s multimedia journalism pieces garnered a White House Correspondents’ Association scholarship – and entree to the group’s celebrity-studded annual banquet. Her work also opened the door to a summer internship at WNYC, New York’s flagship public radio outlet. “Radio offers a kind of intimacy, simplicity and challenge that I love,” Euceph says. “The human voice is the most powerful conveyor of emotion. Radio also requires empathizing with the listener in the absence of images.”

Daniel Seo ’11, economics

On the path from professional yo-yo champ to Catholic priest, Daniel Seo has taken a number of detours. He threw pottery, climbed mountains on three continents, dabbled in baking and filmed music videos that grew into minor YouTube sensations. He also launched a competitive snowboard team and broke both wrists while zooming the slopes, leaving him in dual arm casts his entire freshman year at UCI. In the middle of this activity, Seo sensed a calling – “almost a whisper” – from God. And so, a year after earning an economics degree, the La Palma resident enrolled at St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo, abandoning his hopes of becoming a cinematographer and dad to study for the priesthood. Over the summer, he took Korean lessons in Seoul, traveled to Poland for a Catholic youth summit and began interning at Santa Clara de Asis parish in Yorba Linda.
Rams Touch Down at UCI

Football at UCI? Yes, indeed. More than 50,000 fans turned out to watch the Los Angeles Rams practice on the campus’s Microsemi Field this summer. In a three-year arrangement, the NFL team will hold its training camp here through 2018 while a permanent stadium is built in Inglewood. For video highlights and fun facts and to learn about the physics of football, go to http://bit.ly/ucimag_fall2016_Rams.
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