Reimagining the Future of Health
SPOP Spirit

Student Parent Orientation Program staffers lead incoming freshmen in a game during fall's Peer Education Fair on Ring Mall, near the Student Center.
Reimagining the Future of Health

Just What the Doctor Ordered: A $200 million shot in the arm from Susan and Henry Samueli aims to transform healthcare and UCI

Wellness Champion: Susan Samueli has been a longtime believer in integrative health

Whole-Body Experience: A look at four patients who are benefiting from UCI’s integrative healthcare

A Picture of Health: Doctors and researchers share snapshots of how healthcare – as we know it – is changing

About This Issue: In this edition of UCI Magazine, “Reimagining the Future of Health,” we focus on the announcement of a transformative $200 million gift – the largest in UCI history – by Susan and Henry Samueli to create a realigned College of Health Sciences. Our cover story, “Just What the Doctor Ordered” (page 14), explores how the gift will support a science-based integrated health approach, while “Wellness Champion” (page 24) follows Susan Samueli’s path to becoming an avid supporter of complementary care. In “A Picture of Health” (page 34), we showcase several evidence-based research efforts by UCI innovators, and finally, “Whole-Body Experience” (page 28) introduces four patients who have already benefited from UCI’s integrative healthcare practice.
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. Submissions that do not include this information cannot be published. Contact information is for verification purposes only — not for publication or commercial use. Letters should be 500 words or less and may be edited. They become the property of UCI UCI Libraries, Special Collections & Archives.
Ready, Set, Go!

Runners take off during UCI's inaugural 5K Anti-Cancer Challenge in June at Angel Stadium of Anaheim. The two-day event, in which more than 2,000 people ran, walked or cycled, raised over $600,000 to support cancer research at UCI’s Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. A concert celebrating the participants, volunteers and donors – featuring musician and cancer survivor Sheryl Crow – was scheduled for Oct. 21 at the campus’s Bren Events Center.

A Hispanic-Thriving Designation

The U.S. Department of Education has named UCI a Hispanic-serving institution for 2017-18, meaning that fully one-quarter of undergraduates identify as Latino and that half of all students receive financial aid. The designation builds on UCI’s recognition earlier this year as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution, demonstrating the university’s commitment to providing a world-class education to every qualified student. UCI’s current Latino enrollment is 25.7 percent, double what it was a decade ago. “Latino students represent some of California’s most talented and promising high school graduates, chiefly from Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties,” said Douglas Haynes, UCI vice provost for academic equity, diversity and inclusion. “This impressive growth signifies the aspirations, dedication and achievement of Latino students, families and communities. We are a Hispanic-thriving institution, first and foremost.” Besides Latinos, UCI’s student population is 38.6 percent Asian, 14.1 percent white and 2.9 percent African American. Half of all undergraduates are the first in their families to attend college.

Quarterback Jared Goff (in red jersey) leads the Los Angeles Rams during practice on Crawford Field. For the second consecutive year since relocating to Southern California, the team held its summer training camp at UCI. Fifteen practice sessions were open to the public, including a scrimmage with the renamed Los Angeles Chargers on Aug. 17 (top).

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Richard L. Hasen, Chancellor’s Professor of law & political science
Los Angeles Times
Aug. 18, 2017

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Nicholas Scurich, associate professor of psychology & social behavior and criminology, law & society
Popular Science
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“Sometimes silence is betrayal. Sometimes silence is consent. We must express ourselves.”

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, speaking at the Irvine Barclay Theatre as part of the UCI School of Law’s “Hate in a Period of Political Turmoil” series
Orange County Register
Sept. 8, 2017

Skip That DMV Line

What is that yellow machine? The first auto registration kiosk outside a California Department of Motor Vehicles office arrived at UCI earlier this year. Housed in the Transportation & Distribution Services office, above the Police Department, it processes payments and immediately provides updated registration cards and stickers to motorists. Other DMV kiosks have since been rolled out to a few supermarkets in Southern California, but according to the DMV, UCI was the first site to say yes to the pilot program.

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Drama students closed out the season performing the acerbic, Tony Award-winning coming-of-age parable “Avenue Q” to a sold-out house at the Claire Trevor Theatre in June.

Originally conceived as a television series and relying heavily on the use of puppets operated by unconcealed puppeteers, “Avenue Q” alludes to childhood classics such as “Sesame Street” and mocks the message fed to kids that everyone is “special” and able to do anything. As the characters in this world grow up, they meet life’s harsh truths one by one and realize that nobody is more “special” than anyone else.

Undergraduates Amy Tilson-Lumetta (left) and Connor Marsh (right) took on the puppet personalities for the “Bad Idea Bears,” while Eriel Brown (center) filled the role of “Gary Coleman.”

UCI senior lecturer and vice chair of drama Don Hill directed this playful and, at times, hard-hitting commentary on all of the ways in which we pass judgment on each other based on societal stereotypes and personal differences. Says Hill: “After doing a number of darker plays this season which grappled with issues such as bigotry and immigration, we’re happy to finish with a show that is lots of fun to watch while still addressing serious themes.”
Better Screening of Oral Cancer in India

Worldwide, oral cancer is the sixth-most common cancer-related cause of death, killing almost a quarter-million people each year. In low-resource nations such as India, which has the planet’s highest burden of oral cancer, the situation is more acute, primarily due to limited awareness of the issue and – for the poor – limited access to specialized care. In some parts of India, the disease kills more people than anything else. Yet survival rates are excellent if oral cancer is quickly identified.

To increase early detection, Dr. Petra Wilder-Smith of UCI’s Beckman Laser Institute has partnered with the Mazumdar Shaw Cancer Center in Bangalore, India, to develop and test a low-cost, portable screening device that fieldworkers can use. The technology is enabling people – many of whom rarely see dentists – to receive timely diagnoses and care to dramatically improve their outcomes.

Slightly larger than a shoebox, the device can create detailed laser images of oral lesions that are sent via mobile phone to the cancer center. Over the last year, UCI teams have traveled to India with a prototype to test on patients. They screened some 12,000 people, identifying 1,200 with or at high risk of imminently developing oral cancer. Wilder-Smith says these efforts are promising, and her group is gearing up for a larger campaign across the vast nation. “We’re in conversations with several foundations and government groups to explore ways of expanding this program quickly—with the goal of saving thousands of lives,” she says.
Adeline “Adey” Nyamathi

A nurse practitioner and a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, Nyamathi brings that global perspective and roll-up-your-sleeves experience to UCI as nursing education enters an important new phase, transitioning from a program to a full-fledged school. Supported by a $40 million gift from the William & Sue Gross Family Foundation, the school will more than double in size over the coming years. That’s what nursing is about really: caring for people improve their health. ”What appeals to me the most is utilizing the skills we learned to help other people improve their health.”

Q: What drew you into nursing?
Nyamathi: Many of us aspire to become nurses because we want to care and express empathy for people who are suffering from illness as well as people who need advice and counseling on keeping healthy. What appeals to me the most is utilizing the skills we learned to help other people improve their health.

Q: You’ve done many jobs, from bedside nursing to research to education. What do you enjoy most?
Nyamathi: I am most passionate about homeless individuals who live on skid row in Los Angeles. These people need help and support and are stigmatized by so many different entities, sometimes even by healthcare providers. I get much satisfaction from leading research teams that work with this vulnerable population. We have also worked with women and men who come out of jails and prisons. One of my favorite projects involves developing role models among people with histories of incarceration and homelessness. These role models are trained to be part of our team and learn the skills of conducting research. They have walked in the shoes of the participants we hope to enroll in our studies and teach our nurses and other team members about cultural sensitivity. We’ve done a lot to help them with re-entry into society.

Q: What do you do on your travels to rural India?
Nyamathi: I work with a population of women who are HIV-infected and diagnosed with AIDS. We help them improve their health and quality of life, boost their nutritional status, better their parenting skills, and learn how to be sustainable. Once we’re gone, they continue to take their medication and maintain a livelihood for themselves and their families. I work with a population of women who are HIV-infected and diagnosed with AIDS. We help them improve their health and quality of life, boost their nutritional status, better their parenting skills, and learn how to be sustainable. Once we’re gone, they continue to take their medication and maintain a livelihood for themselves and their families.

Q: Do nurses today have more opportunities to do research or community nursing?
Nyamathi: There are more opportunities to do research or community nursing. We have a National Institute for Nursing Research; it’s one of the National Institutes of Health that’s solely dedicated to nursing. Many nurses receive funding to conduct their research through the NINR. Another aspect of nursing that’s often not talked about is working in the community. That’s where healthcare is going. For example, transitional care is critical today, helping people transition from the hospital and live healthy at home, without having to go back into the hospital or intensive care unit as often as they did before. Nurses do so well with that. We can really manage chronic illness well.

Q: What will nursing be like in the future?
Nyamathi: The nurse of the future will be very technologically oriented. There are all kinds of mobile technology apps. There are so many ways to keep in touch with people in our communities to remind them about healthy behaviors and monitor them from a distance. Community care and transitional care are becoming so important. The patient experience is another aspect. When people do go into the hospital, we want to ensure that their stay will be wonderful, they will be safe, and their care will be high-quality. This is very important to all of us in the fields of nursing, medicine, pharmacy and population health.

Q: What changes would you like to see in nursing?
Nyamathi: In many other states, these restrictions have been released. I am hoping that California will be one of those states in the near future. We can do much more if nurses can practice at the top of their licenses. We need to keep working on that.

Q: What will you tell nursing students about relationships with their patients?
Nyamathi: I think it’s critical to be a good listener and show compassion and empathy. Treat every patient as if that person was a family member. That’s my motto. We are all about the patient experience. Our physician colleagues may only be with patients briefly, but nurses are there 24 hours a day.

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A pre-dawn bike ride inspired part of the plan. Other elements surfaced in a firelit room lined with books by Mario Puzo and Dashiell Hammett. A few ideas even percolated inside Cleveland’s Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. For more than a year, UCI officials have been quietly hashing out a boundary-pushing proposal to reshape the campus and refashion healthcare in Orange County and beyond. It’s Western meets Eastern medicine, backed by scientific research and 21st-century technology.

The epicenter will rise on what is now a patch of weeds and rocks along the southwestern edge of campus, near the corner of Bison and California avenues. Thanks to a blockbuster $200 million gift to UCI from Broadcom co-founder Henry Samueli and his wife, Susan, a former holistic health practitioner, the parcel will soon metamorphose into a realigned College of Health Sciences. Named after the couple and anchored by schools of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and population health, the college hopes to pioneer an interdisciplinary, integrative approach to health that shifts the focus from treating ailments to averting them.

Although a number of top universities house integrative medicine units, UCI aims to be the first to have its entire health network adopt the strategy, which involves analyzing multiple aspects of a patient’s life – from genetics to emotions to environment – and then prescribing conventional as well as carefully vetted nonconventional therapies to promote wellness.

“We’re in the midst of a healthcare crisis, and out-of-the-box thinking is needed,” says Dr. Shaista Malik, a cardiologist who directs UCI’s longstanding Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine, which will reemerge at the new location as the research-centric Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute. Says U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California: “One of the root causes of our country’s healthcare challenges is our failure to focus on prevention and well-being. We need to do better at preventing diseases rather than just treating them. UC Irvine is making much-needed investments in this area, and I congratulate them on this very generous donation.”
Philanthropists Henry Samueli and his wife, Susan, a former integrative health practitioner, pledged $200 million to help UCI pioneer a holistic approach to healthcare in the U.S. "Ideally, this is a model that will spread," says Henry Samueli, shown here in the couple’s Corona del Mar office. Adds Susan Samueli: "My passion has always been to integrate conventional medicine with other methods."

One-third of that space will be occupied by the Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute, a hub for educational programs and research on unconventional and complementary treatments, such as acupuncture to relieve pain and meditation to control stress.

Most of the remaining funds are pegged for an endowment to create integrative health scholarships and fellowships and 15 faculty research chairs. The new hires must devote at least half their time to the institute and will conduct cross-disciplinary research.

Dr. Howard Fedoroff, vice chancellor for health affairs and CEO of UCI Health, says that several unconventional treatments are “poised to go mainstream” but need further study before they’re “ready for prime time.” Anecdotal evidence isn’t enough, he cautions. Citing aromatherapy as an example, he says the benefits described by patients must be confirmed by “rigorous” experiments.

Malik agrees: “The science for many of these remedies isn’t there yet, except in bits and pieces. Our mission in the next 10 years is to research not only how a method works, but how it works.” Among other things, that entails taking steps to rule out “placebo effects.”

Once a treatment’s effectiveness is scientifically validated, UCI will offer it to all patients and think about incorporating it into the curricula, Fedoroff says.

Some students are already exploring integrative topics. Last fall, for instance, UCI’s medical school debuted an elective course in “culinary medicine.” To avoid having future doctors just vaguely advise patients to eat more healthfully, Malik says, this kitchen-based class arms them with recipes and nutrition research designed to aid people with diabetes and other maladies.

For family medicine residents, UCI recently launched an optional three-year integrative track that covers acupuncture, mineral supplements, traditional Chinese medicine and similar holistic cures. About two-thirds of the department’s physician trainees enroll.

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“We can improve population health to levels never before seen.”

Susan Samueli

Gift at a Glance

Amount pledged: $200 million, the biggest gift in UCI history, to be be paid in four installments of $50 million by Dec. 31 of this year, 2020, 2023 and 2025.

Donors: Susan and Henry Samueli, whose previous contributions to the university total more than $70 million

$50 million (to be matched by UCI) toward construction of the Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, which will encompass:

- The School of Medicine
- The Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing
- The School of Pharmacy (currently the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences)
- The School of Population Health (currently the Program in Public Health)
- The Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute (currently the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine)

$5 million to outfit the institute with state-of-the-art labs and equipment

$145 million for an endowment to fund:

- 15 Samueli research chairs in integrative health
- Two dozen scholarships and fellowships for undergraduate and graduate students planning careers in integrative health
- Programming and administrative leadership costs for the institute

“We must change what we mean by healthcare and how we train all who provide care, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists and population health specialists. Today’s health science students ask about integrative health from day one; harnessing that interest is key to turning our national system in a better direction.” Susan Samueli

“A scientific Lens

Details on how the new vision will unfold are still being crafted, but a general blueprint was unveiled Sept. 18 at a special event announcing the Samuelis’ gift. Of the $200 million pledge, $50 million – a sum to be matched by UCI – is earmarked for construction of a five-story, 100,000-square-foot Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences building, projected to open by 2021.

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That outlook clicked with Anaheim Ducks owners Susan and Henry Samueli, longtime champions of non-conventional medicine and generous UCI benefactors. “Susan has been passionate about this as long as I’ve known her,” says Henry Samueli during an interview with the couple at their business headquarters in Corona del Mar. At the turn of the century, after the Samuels had made a fortune through Broadcom Corp., the semiconductor giant that Henry co-founded, “we decided to focus a lot of our philanthropy on integrative health,” he says.

Shortly thereafter, they created a Washington, D.C., research institute devoted to the field and donated $5.7 million to establish UCI’s Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine. By 2016, they were raring to take the concept to the next level. So when UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman described his vision for a major expansion of the university’s health system, the Samuels were all in. “Of course, we had a vision of our own,” Henry Samueli notes. Seated in an office adorned with classic books, a glowing fireplace and a Rand McNally atlas of the body, Samueli says that he, his wife and UCI leaders spent a year hammering out a framework for the undertaking. The result, announced last month, was accompanied by the largest gift in UCI history and the seventh-biggest (tied) to a single public university nationwide, according to information compiled by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

“The Samuelis’ dedication, their vision for what is possible and their deep generosity will help UCI set a standard that, over time, other health centers can follow,” Gillman says.

Changes to UCI patient care, student instruction and research may be gradual, as the gift is set to be paid over eight years and the recruitment of 15 integrative health professors (six in medicine, three each in nursing, pharmacy and population health) figures to take a while.

To gather ideas for the program, the chancellor, Federoff, Malik and the Samuelis hit the road this summer to visit integrative health departments at the Mayo Clinic, the University of Minnesota, the Cleveland Clinic (with a side trip to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) and the University of Arizona. In addition, Federoff and Gillman plan to tour integrative centers overseas this fall. Closer to home, UCI will invite national experts on health and wellness to attend a campus workshop in the next 12 to 18 months. Last but not least, administrators hope to enlist faculty and students from computer sciences, engineering, social sciences, business and other relevant disciplines to contribute research and technology to the expanded health mission. (Officials will also convert the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the Program in Public Health to schools of pharmacy and population health, respectively.)

“UCI is the perfect young campus to take this leap into the future,” says Susan Samueli, referring to the university’s culture of innovation and collaboration.

“On the Road

That's the only way to look at the world. “Having watched one dogmatic theory after another get toppled by new discoveries, he says, “I came to believe the need for UCI’s new health paradigm during early morning runs and bike rides, says his own receptiveness to avant-garde therapies grew out of nearly 30 years as a neuroscientist. “The current generation of students is far more open-minded” than the medical establishment, Federoff notes. For that reason, it may take a decade or so for UCI’s approach to gain wide acceptance, he says.

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UCI Magazine
With new fads and approaches to health popping up at every corner of the internet and in the media, it can be hard to know what’s what. Many people use terms such as complementary, holistic and integrative interchangeably, but their varied definitions are often lost in translation. Cut through the confusing medical jargon with our glossary below.

DEFINING HEALTH

Health:  
A state of physical, social, mental, emotional and environmental well-being beyond the absence of disease, illness or injury; sometimes called optimal health

Conventional  
Mainstream, Western medicine based on scientific research most commonly practiced by doctors with an M.D. or D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree), often centered on disease treatment and prevention; sometimes called traditional

Precision  
The practice of applying a tailored, individual health plan to a patient’s specific needs based on his or her genome, environment and lifestyle

Holistic  
Healthcare focused on the whole person—mind, body and spirit—rather than just a particular illness, injury or symptom; it provides greater context to treating a patient’s ailments

Complementary  
Scientifically backed, non-mainstream health practices administered in conjunction with conventional medicine; sometimes called nonconventional

Lifestyle and Self-Care  
The practice of incorporating healthy, evidence-based behavioral and nutritional approaches to promote wellness

Integrative  
Whole-person/whole-community care that is informed by scientific evidence and consists of all appropriate prevention, therapeutic and lifestyle approaches, healthcare professionals and disciplines to promote optimal health

“When the future of health lies in an integrative approach that recognizes no two patients are alike. Our individual genomes, history, lifestyle and decisions make each of us unique and deserving of the best possible care. At UCI, doctors and allied health professionals will use scientific evidence, cutting-edge therapies and traditional medicine to pave the way for a healthier tomorrow.”

Dr. Howard Federoff  
Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and CEO of UCI Health

When you give, we all gain.
Since childhood, Shaista Malik has been surrounded by heart attacks. Four of her five aunts and uncles were felled by coronary disease. And when Malik was 10, her family was uprooted from Pakistan by a cardiac episode across the Pacific. She, her brother and their mother immigrated to Anaheim, where Malik’s grandma needed live-in care at home after bypass surgery. “In my family, everyone gets heart attacks in their 40s and 50s,” she says. “That’s a big part of why I became a cardiologist.”

But Malik – a Savanna High School valedictorian who has two bachelor’s degrees from Stanford University (biology and history), an M.D. from UCI (’00), and a master’s and Ph.D. from UCLA – soon encountered a conundrum. After watching countless heart patients resume unhealthy habits after getting stents or other procedures, “I felt like I wasn’t making a lasting difference,” she recalls.

Hoping to break the cycle, Malik launched a cardiac prevention program at UCI five years ago. Over eight 90-minute sessions, participants conferenced with a dietitian and an exercise physiologist on strategies to lose weight and restore their well-being. The results were often dramatic, she says: “I could see the power of nutrition and lifestyle adjustments to improve people’s health trajectory.”

Artichokes and Acupuncture

Before long, a waiting list developed. But Malik wasn’t entirely satisfied. She realized a key element was missing from her regimen: stress reduction.

Because her team had no expertise in that subject, she sought help from UCI’s Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine. Based in a sunlit, second-story Costa Mesa office outfitted with soothing background music, aroma sticks and a human brain poster, the clinic specializes in nonconventional therapies, including yoga and mindfulness to boost tranquility.

After noting that her cardiac group exercised more and ate better while practicing stress management techniques, Malik started exploring other treatments offered by the Samueli Center. “I had women with microvascular disease who were taking eight or nine medications but still showing symptoms,” she recalls. So Malik added acupuncture to their treatment plans and, she says, the symptoms cleared up.

Another set of patients couldn’t take anti-cholesterol statin drugs because of side effects. Malik put them on herbal supplements – such as berberine (derived from barberry), artichoke extract and citrus bergamot, alone or in combination with decreased statin doses – and again achieved positive results, she says.

Overall, she notes, the cardiac prevention program’s success rate (loosely defined as long-term weight loss, regular exercise and lower cholesterol) rose from roughly 35 percent before integrative methods to nearly 55 percent after. About 100 people have been through the program, which also includes lab tests, genomic screening and cardiac imaging to assess heart disease risks.

“The mind-body connection is a very important aspect of our health and well-being,” Malik says.

A Research Mecca

In 2015, Malik was named director of the Samueli Center, which opened in 2001 and will be elevated to an institute under UCI’s new integrative health plan. Upon moving into expanded quarters inside the future Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences building on campus, the institute will focus heavily on interdisciplinary research designed to nail down which nonconventional treatments work and why.

“Fifteen endowed professors will be hired for the endeavor, a number Malik calls unprecedented. “Most other integrative programs have only a handful of research faculty,” she says.

The Samueli Center is already known for acupuncture studies. And Malik is leading a five-year, National Institutes of Health-funded analysis of using biomarkers and DNA tests to better predict heart disease. As for her own family’s genetic tilt toward cardiac trouble, Malik is doing her best to keep things in check, but pockets of resistance remain. “I had my mother on all the right supplements and medications,” she says. “But she won’t listen to me on the lifestyle part.”
Susan Samueli has been a longtime believer in integrative health

Wellness Champion

Susan Samueli has been a longtime believer in integrative health

By Janet Wilson

A UC Berkeley-educated mathematician and the mother of three girls, Samueli has for 38 years championed a full spectrum of treatment in American healthcare, from tailored exercise, stress reduction, nutrition and supplements to traditional surgery and chemotherapy. That integrated approach is taking hold in doctors’ offices and on university campuses, and she says it can’t happen soon enough.

Samueli’s dedication has now resulted in the largest gift ever to UCI, a $200 million contribution from her and her husband, Broadcom co-founder Henry Samueli, to fund the Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, which will fully incorporate integrative health in treatment, research and coursework in the fields of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and population health.

“It should be a universitywide goal that integrated medicine becomes mainstream throughout the United States,” she says. “That’s the only way we’re going to get our healthcare costs down. Preventive medicine is important to getting a healthy United States, so it’s really crucial that we do this.”

A Maverick in the Making

Samueli says her life experiences, many of them unexpected, led her to become a powerful advocate and generous donor. She grew up in the San Fernando Valley in a middle-class Jewish home, earned a B.A. in mathematics at UC Berkeley, and – a rarity then and still at many firms – became a staff programmer and systems engineer at IBM. She and her future husband met more than 35 years ago at a singles dance at Stephen S. Wise Temple in Los Angeles. He was a tall, shy engineer at TRW, and she was a tall, not-so-shy engineer who asked him to dance. He was fascinated by both her and her first-generation personal computer, Samueli jokes.

Eventually, they married, moved to a comfortable San Fernando Valley home of their own and began a family. She gave up her IBM career after 13 years. It was then that she began fully exploring her newfound passion for complementary care approaches.

“I started learning everything I could about what was then called alternative medicine,” Samueli says. “I was using a different side of my brain than I did with computer programming, and it felt great. And then my children were born.”
By now, they had three small children, and Samueli didn’t want to start a new business. Her husband decided it was important to recognize her interests in a different way. In 1999, they began funding what is now the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine. Based in Costa Mesa, it has seen a surge in patients over the past two years, as integrative health and the center’s work have received media attention.

As chair of the development and advisory board, Samueli has devoted countless hours to ensuring the success of the enterprise. “She’s amazing,” says the center’s director, Dr. Shaista Malik, a cardiologist and associate professor at UCI who practices and studies medical approaches. “She truly believes in our mission and gives her time and energy, not just her philanthropic support.”

Moving forward, the center will become an institute at the heart of UCI’s new college, more fully dedicated to research as well as treatment. “This is a blueprint for fixing what’s broken in American healthcare,” Samueli says of the integrative approach. “We want this type of care to be mainstream.”

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On a muggy afternoon, a dozen cardiology patients arrive for checkups at the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine in Costa Mesa. But this is no ordinary doctor visit. After their vital signs are taken, they sit around a big table and review what’s going on with their lives and their hearts.

“Hi, I’m Dannie. I’m good,” says Dannie Cassell, 64, softly. Then she opens up: “Well, I’ve actually been having problems. My blood pressure’s up, and I’ve been having chest pains, but I’ve been under so much extra stress, and obviously there’s a correlation.”

She’s been reliving a traumatic incident from decades ago, assisting a neighbor with a life-threatening illness and helping to care for her 94-year-old mother, who has dementia. It adds up.

UCI cardiologist and center director Dr. Shaista Malik, who’s leading the session, ascertains that Cassell’s chest pains lasted only a few seconds – not a cause for alarm – and offers some guidance. “Learning to manage stress is a lifelong process,” she says. “The more you practice at home, the more useful it will be.”

Cassell replies affirmatively: “I’m still walking. I still go to tai chi. So I’m doing all the right things.”

After everyone shares their experiences, they learn to prepare a healthy watermelon feta salad, then undergo mindfulness training. Those who need medical follow-up are pulled aside for in-depth consultations.

“We’re giving them more tools in their toolboxes to stay healthy,” Malik says. “And studies have shown behavioral changes are easier and become more ingrained if you have peers who are going through the same thing.”

After two hours, the group is energized. “It’s 100 percent fantastic,” Cassell says.

Patients across UCI’s vaunted medical system are beginning to benefit in large numbers from comprehensive wellness approaches – also known as integrative care – that not only save lives but boost long-term health. Heart attack survivors may be referred to the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine for preventive cardiology sessions on nutrition and mindfulness. Oncology patients at the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center can receive recommendations on everything from art therapy to sexual health – helping them cope with crucial but highly invasive treatments and resume their lives afterward.

A groundbreaking Live Healthy OC integrative health initiative started at UCI’s Family Health Center in Santa Ana assists low-income individuals in tackling high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, obesity, diabetes, depression and other issues. Seven non-UC clinics across north Orange County are following UC Irvine Health’s lead, incorporating wellness instruction into group sessions.

“We’re trying to address the fundamental roots of what makes underserved patients sick,” says Dr. David Kilgore, head of the integrative medicine residency track and vice chair of UCI’s Department of Family Medicine. “While we’re ordering necessary tests and putting them on medications, we’re also working to improve their diets and helping them manage stress, eat and sleep better, and be more active. The blend of both these worlds is the key.”

The approach extends to nursing, pharmacy options and population-based research. As UCI prepares to ramp up integrative medicine and education via its new Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, one facet already shines through: People who’ve experienced major suffering are finding welcome relief.

A look at four patients who are benefiting from UCI’s integrative healthcare

By Janet Wilson

WHOLE-BODY EXPERIENCE

Dannie Cassell, of Costa Mesa, chats with Dr. Shaista Malik during a visit at the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine. Says Cassell: “I think we reached a tipping point as a society about these other avenues a long time ago, and the medical profession is just now starting to fully realize it. I feel very fortunate to have an open-minded doctor.”

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A whole-body experience

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Dannie Cassell, a self-described child of the ‘60s, battled metastatic cancer in her 30s and has experienced major health repercussions since then. She’s always had a hard time reconciling herself to the surgeries, radiation and myriad medications recommended by physicians. But she’s bome most of their requests in order to stay alive, even defying the odds and giving birth to her only child—a son—at age 45.

Still, by 2014, she was a tense, achy ball of nerves and had serious weight gain, skyrocketing blood pressure and advancing small-vessel heart disease. She had no desire to start the infusion treatments doctors wanted to try. Concerned, her primary care physician referred her to Dr. Shaista Malik, a UCI cardiologist who directs the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine in Costa Mesa.

“I’ve been in preventive cardiology for three years,” Cassell says. “I’ve adopted a whole new lifestyle, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”

We’ve Got Your Back

It all began during a weekend getaway in Mammoth in 2010. Mel Shubash and a buddy were lifting a heavy cooler when he felt something sledgehammer his lower back. “It was the worst experience I’ve ever had,” he says. From then on, he was flattened by excruciating pain for days at a time, missing work, the gym and even the cooler when he felt something sledgehammer his lower back. “It was the worst experience I’ve ever had,” he says. From then on, he was flattened by excruciating pain for days at a time, missing work, the gym and even the ability to bounce out of bed. He gained weight and lost his spirit as the nerves in his back degenerated. Meanwhile, one of his best friends had spiraled into opioid addiction.

That was on Shubash’s mind when he visited Gottschalk Medical Plaza’s Center for Pain Management and Dr. Rakhi Dayal asked him to try a prescription nerve medication. He took one pill, hated how it made him feel and worried about his inability to focus on work. Dayal, a UCI associate clinical professor of anesthesiology & perioperative care, said they could try other options.

“With every patient who comes to us, we do a really thorough evaluation to figure out a complete treatment plan,” he says, noting that the pain center’s doctors are researchers in an array of specialties, including physical medicine, psychology and anesthesiology. “We want to return them to living as comfortable a life as possible.”

Teams explore the latest technologies—radiofrequency nerve ablation, genetic testing for efficacy of certain medications and, on the horizon, spinal cord stimulation along with complementary approaches such as yoga and acupunture, to devise customized care.

Shubash, 44, of Irvine, came to UCI’s Gottschalk facility after an acquaintance mentioned epidural treatments. Long used by women in childbirth, they’re also employed to combat chronic pain, explains Dr. Brent Yeung, a pain medicine fellow. Shubash’s lower back discomfort has been enormously relieved by four of the steroid injections over the last 16 months. But his neck and upper spine still act up.

A UCI surgeon recommended inserting two bolts and a rod in his neck, but since Shubash is still relatively young, the bolts could sink over the decades, requiring more operations. So instead, he’s scheduled for a final epidural to try to soothe his inflamed upper nerves. He’ll know three to five days afterward whether it makes a difference.

If not, Dayal and her team will continue to research other options. And Shubash is consulting a UCI physical therapist too. Now, when he feels his upper body flare up, he performs specific stretches that help the nerves settle down.

Shubash recalls how much that first epidural helped him: “I went to the gym after a few days, because I couldn’t tell if it was my mind telling me I felt better or if I really did.” He was stunned to find that he could bench-press dumbbells. He tried situps, an old favorite, and did them for the first time in six years.

“I went home and told my wife, ‘Oh, my God, it’s working.’”
A Community of Peers

For Justina Cortes, years of weight gain, insomnia and increasing anxiety after the births of each of her three children came to a head in December, when Dr. Emily Dow, her primary care physician at UCI’s Family Health Center in Santa Ana, told her that she was prediabetic. “I was very frightened,” says Cortes, 38, of Fountain Valley. Her husband was already diabetic, and she despaired that their daughter and two sons would go the same route. Shy and soft-spoken, she had followed her husband to the U.S., emigrating from Mexico nearly 15 years ago. “I think one reason for my anxiety is because we have a big family, and it’s only my sister and me here,” Cortes says, noting that she has 10 other siblings. “We don’t have a lot of support, and it’s a really big change for us.”

Poverty, isolation and mental health issues frequently affect immigrants’ well-being, says Dr. David Kilgore, director UC Irvine Health’s integrative medicine residency track. Cortes – joined by her sister – began going in January 2017. “In April, my test results came that I was no longer prediabetic,” she exults. “It’s much better for my motivation to know that there’s people with cases similar to me. It feels like a family.”

“It’s the happiest part of my day,” says Dr. Elana Craemer, who tops off days of seeing 22 individual patients by supervising the group sessions. She says having family members participate reinforces good habits like making better choices while grocery shopping. Cortes has learned to substitute tuna or grilled chicken for tacos with queso fresco and blends vegetable shakes for breakfast. “No more hot dogs for us, Mommy,” her daughter cheerfully tells her at home. She does research online and watches YouTube videos about staying healthy after the kids are put to bed. But it’s the classes that have transformed her, she says. “It’s much better for my motivation to know that there’s people with cases similar to me. It feels like a family,” says Cortes, adding that she’s finally been given the tools she needs to maintain her health. She has lost more than 20 pounds and reduced her glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol numbers to acceptable levels. Her husband is making strides too.

“A week after Lesley Ginsberg had placed first in her age category for the fifth time at the Camp Pendleton Mud Run in 2012, she noticed an unusual bloating in her abdomen. To her shock, she was diagnosed with stage 3 ovarian cancer, “a silent, awful thing,” she recalls. Ginsberg, now 70, of Newport Beach, and her husband, Phillip, swung into action. They researched ovarian oncologists worldwide and found Dr. Robert Bristow, a widely recognized specialist “in our own backyard at UCI,” she says. Bristow, director of gynecologic oncology services for UC Irvine Health, and two other other two other surgeons performed 12 hours of complicated surgery. ”It’s a big insult to the body,” Bristow says, “but the fact that she was in such good shape really helped.” After that, she endured nine months of chemotherapy. Ginsberg’s determination to get back to being healthy was invaluable, Bristow says. A patient’s mental state is critical. “Lesley is tough as nails,” he says. “She was scared, but she made up her mind that she was going to beat this.”

Bristow says he has a “huge fan” of integrative health. “For the most part, modern medicine is driven by clinical trial-based work that’s been proven and published in the New England Journal of Medicine,” he says, “but we can lose sight of other treatments that are also effective. We limit ourselves as doctors.” He advocates everything from art therapy to acupuncture – not as a substitute, but to offer relief from highly invasive traditional cancer care. Painting classes, for example, could provide a beneficial routine for cancer patients also suffering from depression – and could be vital. If people can’t get out of bed, he notes, they’re not going to make it to chemotherapy.

Running the Gantlet

For her part, Ginsberg willed herself to move day after day, taking just a few steps shortly after her surgery and eventually working back up to 5-mile jogs. She now runs every weekday morning with two close friends along the beaches of Crystal Cove in Newport Beach. “It’s great for my mind, it’s great for my body,” she says, “and it makes me start my day in the best way possible.”

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Doctors and researchers share snapshots of how communication, lifestyle, data, innovation and scientific evidence are changing healthcare as we know it

By Anna Iliff

How does one visualize something as complex as integrative health? Just look to some of the individuals who practice it.

At UCI, that includes an assistant physician who sees her patients as more than their diseases or ailments; a researcher determined to put technology to work for the greater good of human health; and a pharmacologist who longs for a day when people can live their longest, best lives free of the debilitating side effects associated with some prescription drugs.

A central component of integrative health is incorporating the best care science has to offer, whether that means using conventional medicine for diabetes or pioneering technology to help cure a rare disease. But it’s also an understanding that one size does not fit all when it comes to health and that patients sometimes need more than a traditional doctor visit can provide.

“One of the surprising things about healthcare is how much we don’t know and how much we need evidence,” says Dr. Josephine Briggs, director of the National Center for Complementary & Integrative Health, part of the National Institutes of Health. “That includes practices outside the mainstream – but also practices that are very much part of the mainstream.”

Across the UCI campus, physicians and researchers from a wide range of disciplines are investigating ways to enhance health via plants and botanicals, biomedical engineering, cardiology, mind-body practices, information and computer science, radiology and neurology. While their individual expertise varies, each has the same intent to make meaningful strides in medicine, therapies and healthcare delivery.

The Doctors Will See You Now

When you first walk into Dr. Anna Monique Halbeisen’s office, you’re greeted by a kind face and a cup of tea. Rather than sitting on a cold table in a paper gown under harsh fluorescent lights to get a quick diagnosis, you sit in a comfy chair and have an open, honest and eye-level conversation with a doctor who’s listening intently.

Halbeisen, an assistant clinical physician in UCI’s Department of Medicine with her own practice, makes an effort to get to know her patients on a deeper level. She doesn’t poke and prod and write a prescription right off the bat. She won’t even wear a white coat if she can help it.

“That’s how you really earn your patients’ trust,” she explains. “You have to get to the heart of the problem. You can’t just hope they miraculously respect you and open up to you.

“Every person is unique, and they all come in with different mindsets of what they think will work for them. I try to be open and receptive to that.”

Halbeisen practices neuromusculoskeletal...
Individuals practice their yoga in a class at the UCI Family Health Center in Santa Ana. “Food is medicine, exercise is medicine, mind-body balance is medicine,” says Kilgore, UCI clinical professor and vice chair of family medicine. “These have real effects in reducing complications in chronic disease.” The clinic offers free yoga and cooking classes, manages a healthy food pantry and hosts wellness workshops. The aim is to teach healthy behaviors and instill a sense of community, decreasing isolation and stress and the problems that accompany them.

“Integrative health addresses some of the fundamental needs of patients living in our underserved communities,” Kilgore says. “It is not fluffy add-on therapy but powerful, evidence-based medicine that is critical in disease prevention.”

Rebooting Health

Ramesh Jain, Donald Bren Professor of Information & Computer Sciences and director of the UCI Institute for Computer Sciences and director of the UCI Institute for Future Health, sees fertile ground when it comes to making advances in human health and healthcare delivery. With the advent of smartphones and wearable devices, he’s working on developing a one-of-a-kind technology to make health monitoring as common as checking your email.

“We should be focused on health 24/7,” Jain says. “Current healthcare evolved in days when we did not have technology. It evolved in a time when infectious diseases were predominant. Those two things have changed. When you start dealing with chronic diseases, you have to rethink the healthcare system completely.”

That’s why he and his students are creating Health Butler, a mobile application that can measure and collect data on a variety of health markers, make real-time recommendations and provide assistance in times of distress. Just as a thermostat works to keep a room at a comfortable 72 degrees, Health Butler constantly monitors a person and his or her external environment to maintain optimal health. The technology is based on cybernetics, the science of communications and automatic control systems in both machines and animals.

“Human bodies have very well-designed cybernetic systems,” Jain says. “It’s what we commonly call homeostasis.” He envisions a world in which he could order from a menu and the Health Butler would digitally communicate with restaurant staff to prepare the correct portion, ensuring that he’s sated but doesn’t overindulge. Jain also sees the application as a repository of health data – including blood pressure, heart rate, insulin and hormone levels, and sleep quantity and quality – that has the potential to alert a person to an impending heart attack so he or she can call for help.

“As the technology advances, we can change healthcare.”

To accomplish this feat, he says, society must be willing to embrace technology and its capabilities to revolutionize life as we know it. “Technology is important, but we have been poor about adopting it or using it,” Jain says. “Technology can change healthcare.”

Matters of the Heart

UCI’s Dr. John Longhurst was skeptical when he first began investigating acupuncture more than 25 years ago. On a trip to China in 1992, he met with traditional Chinese medicine practitioners who seemed concerned with the lack of scientific evidence to back up the observed healing powers of the ancient treatment. “They would say, ‘We don’t really need to worry about that. It’s been around for so long. We just know it works.’ Well, that’s not how I practice medicine,” Longhurst says. It wasn’t until he collaborated with Dr. Peng Li of Shanghai Medical University that the cardiologist had a change of heart. Li, now a project scientist at UCI, had published acupuncture-affirming findings in reputable scientific journals. Decades of research later, Longhurst and his team have discovered that electroacupuncture – in which a weak electrical current is passed through the needles – can lower blood pressure in patients with mild to moderate hypertension.
Recently, their clinical study of 65 hypertensive patients found that 70 percent of those who had received electroacupuncture at particular spots on their inner wrists and below each knee experienced a drop in their blood pressure.

Now the lab is examining auricular acupuncture, which stimulates different points of the ear, to determine its effects on pain and hypertension. The team also is looking into how electroacupuncture might benefit menopausal women.

“Acupuncture is just one of many forms of therapy that activate our body’s own ability to heal itself,” Longhurst says. “It triggers endorphins, epinephalins and dynorphins — opiates that we produce naturally. We can demonstrate how acupuncture works down to the cellular level. When we do that, it changes people’s notions about it.”

Procedures With Precision

In the 1980s, before Joyce Keyak finished her Ph.D. and became a professor of radiological sciences at UCI, her cousin was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had to undergo radiation targeting tumors that had grown in the bone of her spine. The stakes were high. If something went wrong and the adjacent spinal cord received too much radiation, she risked nerve damage and even paralysis.

In 2007, while studying the strengthening capabilities of bone cement in the hip and femur, she and Harry Skinner, now-retired chair of orthopedics at UCI, had a breakthrough. Mixing radioisotopes with bone cement and injecting it into a patient’s bone could precisely treat cancerous tumors while fortifying weakened or fractured bones.

“You can have this procedure and be done with it,” Keyak says. “And you can do it when the tumors are smaller and it’s easier to prevent bone damage.”

Theoretically, she says, the method wouldn’t have the same side effects as traditional radiation therapy. Because the injection directly targets the tumor, radiation doesn’t pass through other organs, such as the intestines or stomach, which is what causes the uncomfortable aftermath. Research on bone cement without radiation has also revealed that it can immediately reduce pain in the spine, potentially getting patients off strong opioid medications that could carry further side effects, Keyak says.

The Flowers of Youth

Mahtab Jafari, UCI professor, Chancellor’s Fellow and vice chair of pharmaceutical sciences, may have found the elusive flowers of youth.

Her inquiry into how to extend lifespan and improve overall health led to an unbiased screening of pharmacueticals, botanicals and additional natural products to see which could reduce mortality without negatively affecting important biological systems in fruit flies — a species that shares 75 percent of disease genes with humans.

The results? Two spices — cinnamon and curcumin (found in turmeric) – plus a beautiful rose species and Rhodiola rosea outperformed all other supplements, including pharmaceuticals.

“Fruit flies don’t lie,” Jafari says. “The plants did better.”

Rhodiola rosea, a golden flowering plant that grows in the Arctic and subject of her research for over a decade, extended the lifespan of fruit flies by nearly 25 percent. She hopes to eventually run clinical trials on humans to be open-minded to their patients’ needs, whether they desire to use natural remedies, conventional medication, medication or a combination of all three.

“If you have pneumonia, I’m not going to say, ‘Let’s go meditate and hope that your infection will go away’ – you could die. If you have pneumonia, I’m going to recommend antibiotics, but maybe you can meditate to get through it,” Jafari says.

Brain and Brawn

At the UCI Institute for Memory Impairments and Neurological Disorders, a clinical trial launched in February is investigating whether exercise can slow the progression of cognitive impairment in seniors. The local effort, led by UCI MIND’s Dr. Aimee Pierce, is part of the

In February, national EXERT Study. Previous observational research has found that older adults who engage in aerobic exercise have a lower chance of developing Alzheimer’s dementia, the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. But the EXERT Study is the first large-scale, randomized clinical trial of its kind.

The EXERT Study is the result of research conducted by Carl Cotman, UCI professor of neurology, who discovered that aerobic exercise triggers the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, a protein that shields brain cells from injury or death and improves learning and memory.

Currently, there are no effective medications for mild cognitive impairment, Pierce notes. But exercise holds promise due to its multifaceted ability to stimulate insulin sensitivity, reduce endorphins, reduce inflammation, increase production of BDNF and protect against the development of diabetes.

Ultimately, the study aims to equip doctors to make the right recommendations for their patients, with a focus on prevention and intervention.

“Prevention is crucial,” Pierce says. “It’s not enough to just vaguely say, ‘You should exercise.’ We want to be able to prescribe a specific type of exercise delivered at the right dose.”

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Pathway to Wellness

So how does one become the picture of health? While our individual paths to wellness may differ, it’s clear that research and innovation will pave the way. “Scientific curiosity is often a very good reason to do research,” says Briggs, of the NIH center. “Sometimes the practical applications are farther down the road, but just learning about ourselves as humans can lead to new ways of solving some of the worst health problems.”

The key, she says, is integration.
Bat Man

Anteater Keston Hiura, whose .442 batting average led the nation at the end of the 2017 baseball season and broke a 46-year UCI record, was snapped up by the Milwaukee Brewers as the ninth overall draft pick – the highest MLB selection in UCI history.
While my upbringing allowed me to see new methods and approaches absent from mainstream discussions on innovation, the public library introduced me to a diverse array of thinkers, disrupters and problem-solvers. My library card offered a guarantee of discoveries and information, but going to college was dependent on earning a full scholarship. I typed countless scholarship essays, including one for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, in the school library—often while my mom patiently waited in her car. When I learned that I had been selected as a GMS scholar, I could barely wrap my head around the blessing of spending four more years committed to the pursuit of knowledge.

Even today, as a professor whose research focuses on college access for marginalized populations, I don’t worry about whether my work can be categorized as innovative by others. I do, however, spend a great deal of time crafting and investigating research questions that position underrepresented people as experts on their own experiences, with insights necessary for addressing educational inequities.

And yet, somehow, the question of whether I personally see myself as an innovator continued to follow me. In a recent conversation with a scholar I greatly admire, she unexpectedly said: “What I love about you, Constance, is that you treat academia like Burger King: You are going to have it your way. … You continue to reinvent what it means to be an engaged scholar.” I thanked her for the affirmation, still uncertain about what to do with it.

Soon after that exchange, I was inundated with buzz surrounding September’s launch of singer Rihanna’s new beauty line. As both an interdisciplinary education scholar and an anthropologist, I am always eager to learn about distinctive business cultures and how certain companies cater to specific populations. Many of the articles on Rihanna’s cosmetics discussed the novelty of its 40 foundation shades, including a rare selection of darker shades that stores could not keep in stock. I thought to myself: “Of course people across a variety of skin tones—especially those historically not given many options—want to see their complexion represented in a high-quality makeup line.”

These were the same sort of thoughts I experience after publicly discussing my research and receiving questions that indicate some people are genuinely surprised that underserved and underrepresented communities desire high-quality, welcoming and transformative educational spaces too.

In considering the excitement surrounding Fenty Beauty, which was called “gloriously inclusive” in the press, I realized the discussion was parallel to my reluctance to see myself as an innovator and the urgency of doing so. Many of us don’t see ourselves represented in the limited shades the word “innovator” is packaged in. And there aren’t enough conversations that shine light on innovators hidden in plain sight. In the end, many institutions are unable to reach their full potential because they do not reflect a robust spectrum of innovators. While these biases remain, one small solution is fearlessly letting the world know my shade exists.

Iloh is an assistant professor in the UCI School of Education. In 2016, she was named to the Forbes “30 Under 30” list.

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Elias Villegas, 5, of Ponderosa Elementary School in Anaheim undergoes a comprehensive eye dilation exam, one of more than 1,025 administered by the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute’s Eye Mobile for Children since it began rolling out to schools across Orange County last year. Affectionately dubbed “Seymour,” the UCI institute’s traveling unit has also provided over 4,860 screenings and 730 pairs of glasses to 3- to 6-year-olds – all free of charge.

To learn more, visit http://bit.ly/UCIMag_Fall2017_EyeMobile.
From Missiles to Mountains

Business school alum changes careers but finds military defense command and ski resorts have much in common

By Alan Wechsler

When Greg Dallas was hired two years ago to run the Sugar Bowl resort in California’s Lake Tahoe region, he brought a background unique to the ski business. The former Air Force commander used to oversee the dot-com era, and some of the classes were spent trying to figure out how companies with no revenue could sell so much stock, Dallas recalls. Then the market crashed, and they found out. “They all went belly-up,” he says. “But it was so fun to be in school and exploring the early days of e-commerce.”

After receiving his MBA and taking positions in computer consulting and finance, Dallas was offered a management position at Mammoth Mountain in California’s eastern Sierra Nevada. Mammoth – with 3,000 employees – is one of the biggest ski resorts in the nation. He worked there for 14 years, eventually becoming one of the top executives. When Sugar Bowl called, he jumped at the opportunity. “These types of jobs don’t come up very often,” Dallas says. “It was the right time.”

His first year at Sugar Bowl went smoothly, but he would soon face a trial – not by fire, but by snow. The winter of 2016-17 brought a record 26 feet of snow in January alone. Big dumps continued throughout the season – the most snow Tahoe had received in a century. It required a nonstop work to control avalanches, dig out ski equipment and groom slopes through the winter and early spring. “Unbelievably challenging,” Dallas says.

With that winter finally behind him, he is now leading efforts to grow Sugar Bowl skier visits and turn the region into a year-round attraction. The resort is near the Pacific Crest Trail, one of the most scenic pathways in the country, and Donner Summit, named for trapped pioneers who had to resort to cannibalism to stay alive during the winter of 1846-47. Yet the area had not, in Dallas’ opinion, taken advantage of its storied history and potential for recreational activities.

“Because I was in a transition from the military to the business world and wanted to focus on IT and medium-sized businesses, these connections were very attractive,” he says.

Dallas grew up in Pasadena and excelled at a sport not usually associated with Southern California: ice hockey. In ninth grade, he moved to Michigan to live with an uncle so he could compete on an American Junior A hockey team, the St. Clair Shores Falcons. Dallas played 80 games a year against some of the best teenage players in the country, taking high school classes independently so he could compete across Canada and the U.S.

He was recruited by the New York Rangers while still in high school, but Dallas had another ambition. His uncle had been a B-24 bomber pilot during World War II and spent time in a German prisoner-of-war camp before being liberated by soldiers under the command of Gen. George S. Patton. Dallas grew up enthralled by his uncle’s tales and enrolled at the Air Force Academy. His original plan was to become a pilot, but that didn’t work out.

“After I signed my life away, my eyes went bad,” he says. “So I focused on engineering.”


His work, top-secret at the time, involved controlling satellite orbits and looking for signs of missile launches around the world, as well as overseeing satellite launches via the Titan IV-B rocket and the Space Shuttle. Dallas provided defense support during the first Gulf War and managed defense contracts worth up to $100 million.

After leaving the Air Force, he looked for a university that offered combined study in business and computer science. He found The Paul Merage School of Business at UCI, where he earned an MBA in information technology and accounting in 1999. Dallas was drawn to the campus’s strong ties to the local business community, which gave him access to industry leaders and entrepreneurs in IT, biomedical and healthcare companies.

“Because I was in a transition from the military to the business world and wanted to focus on IT and medium-sized businesses, these connections were very attractive,” he says.

Another appeal was the way courses incorporated technology and its use in business. It was the dawn of the dot-com era, and some of the classes were spent trying to figure out how companies with no revenue could sell so much stock, Dallas recalls. Then the market crashed, and they found out. “They all went belly-up,” he says. “But it was so fun to be in school and exploring the early days of e-commerce.”

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Using his business acumen, he is collaborating with local leaders to build opportunities for visitors to learn about its history, hike or otherwise enjoy recreational access to Donner Summit during the summer months. At the same time, he has brought San Francisco chefs to the mountain to revamp the food, is growing the summer wedding business, and hopes to host events attracting athletes from the urban centers on the California coast. That includes reviving the Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Resort, which Sugar Bowl also owns, and making cross-country skiing appeal to a broader audience.

The slopes still draw Dallas, who learned to ski at age 3 at Mammoth and keeps a pair of super-wide powder skis in the corner of his office. But he insists: “I don’t ski as much as I’d like,” he confesses. “There’s always something to be done.”

Drumming up new ideas for Sugar Bowl is just one of Dallas’ duties. He also seeks to diversify Sugar Bowl’s customer base, which has been primarily recreational, while creating a more business-friendly atmosphere. He is looking at ways to accommodate day skiers who could come to Sugar Bowl from as far as two hours away. It’s all part of his effort to “grow the business, get more revenue and start making money.”
Paul Brenton '69, anthropology

From peddling potato chips to toiling on the frontiers of animal medicine, Paul Brenton has followed a hopscotch career path. Part of UCI's first freshman class, he originally considered the ministry but instead joined the Army after graduation, then sold Frito-Lay snacks, earned an MBA, and worked at a primate research lab before joining UC Davis as administrator of its renowned veterinary hospital. After everything from island to farms. During his 26-year tenure at the center, he says, animal medicine’s focus shifted from farm critters to cats and canines. So part of Brenton’s job involved securing funding to purchase human medical equipment that could be adapted to perform MRI, chemotherapy, dialysis, heart surgery and hip replacements on household pets. “It was a remarkable array of capabilities,” he says. Now retired, Brenton enjoys camping, kayaking, mentoring church youth and tending the orchard at his 3-acre home.

Edith Gelles, Ph.D. ’79, colonial American history

Planted in front of a microfilm reader in the early 1970s, Edith Gelles became transfixed by a collection of letters written by church youth and tending the orchard at his 3-acre home.

Ed Hernandez ’91, electrical & computer engineering

Motorized shoes, an electric tricycle and a prosthetic hand are a few of the objects built by teens in Ed Hernandez’s Tustin High School engineering classes. The hands-on lessons began in 2004, when Hernandez left the semiconductor industry to become a teacher. Disenchanted with corporate life, he wanted to make a difference by guiding future generations. In addition to demonstrating practical applications for dry math and science concepts, he advises students on how to avoid the pitfalls he encountered in college. Born in Mexico and the first in his family to finish high school, Hernandez came to UCI utterly unprepared for the university’s “academic cauldron. “Almost immediately, he was put on academic probation. But he buckled down, surrounded himself with smart classmates and saw his grades steadily improve. Today the self-described nerd makes his own golf clubs and electric guitars at home and racks up statewide teaching awards at work.

Ivan Williams, Executive MBA ’96

A demon from Hades and a middle-aged strip-tease artist are two of the characters this former oilman has brought history to life. After 31 years in the petroleum industry – with internships as a Navy Reserve intelligence officer during Operation Desert Shield and as a grad student at UCI – Ivan Williams detoured into moviemaking. He and his wife joined a pool of investors who finance films and Broadway plays. So far, their production credits include three movies (“Knights of Badassdom,” “Big Stone Gap” and “M.F.A.”) and a musical (“First Date”). They also helped lancet a web television series, “Be Here Nowish.” Last fall, Williams left his job with an Australian energy engineering firm to dedicate himself to Hollywood. The projects in his queue include an animated Noah’s Ark film and a possible “Caddyshack” sequel. “We have to make sure we have the goffers,” he says of the latter.

Negin Singh ’08, chrome

Brokeshka, a chiaspatic alternative to Coachella’s famous music fair, is one of Negin Singh’s brainchilds. (It’s now called Brokesh. LA.) So is the No Budget Film Festival, which screens made-on-a-shoestring movies, and the Living Room Tour, which stages plays in people’s homes. These and other projects are produced by CARTNIE: Collaborative Arts L.A., a multimedia event company that Singh began at UCI. Originally called the Ahimsa Collective, it sponsored experimental shows on campus. Singh, a Chicago native and Irvine High School alumnus whose Iranian dad and Indian mom launched the first Pirson American beauty pageant, remixed and expanded Ahimsa after graduating and moving to Los Angeles. The results have won plaudits from local media outlets and a White House blog. The company’s newest endeavor entails creating “unconventional experiences and events” to help corporations and nonprofits promote their brands.

Jessica Lin ’10, economics and anthropology

As a San Diego Chargers cheerleader, Jessica Lin danced before legions of football fans, volunteered at charity events and posed alongside an F-150 Voodoo jet fighter for a calendar photo shoot. Nowadays, the Carlsbad-bred Chicago native and Irvine High School alum whose Iranian parents namend her at UCI's Anthill Pub & Grille for Tuesday night trivia contests. In her spare time, Lin practices yoga, runs a summer dance camp, produces one-man shows, and is a board member of the Carlsbad-based Infinium Spirits, she has a hand in marketing imported tequila, while her mom and a middle-aged spinster are two of the characters this former oilman has brought to life. After 31 years in the petroleum industry – with internships as a Navy Reserve intelligence officer during Operation Desert Shield and as a grad student at UCI – Ivan Williams detoured into moviemaking. He and his wife joined a pool of investors who finance films and Broadway plays. So far, their production credits include three movies (“Knights of Badassdom,” “Big Stone Gap” and “M.F.A.”) and a musical (“First Date”). They also helped lancet a web television series, “Be Here Nowish.” Last fall, Williams left his job with an Australian energy engineering firm to dedicate himself to Hollywood. The projects in his queue include an animated Noah’s Ark film and a possible “Caddyshack” sequel. “We have to make sure we have the goffers,” he says of the latter.

Roger F. Steinert, director of the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute and professor of ophthalmology

Dr. Roger Steinert, an international authority on corneal and refractive surgery, died June 6, after a nearly year battle with glio- blastoma. He was 66. Steinert, who came to UCI in 2004 and was founding director of the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, remained professionally active during his illness and at the time of his death was the Irving H. Leopold Chair in Ophthalmology and a professor of ophthalmology and biomedical engineering, as well as director of the institute. As a young ophthalmologist in the 1980s, Steinert became convinced that lasers then being developed to cut and reshape eye tissue could revolutionize vision surgery. However, nobody had systematically explored how to use them safely or advance their potential. Steinert made it his mission to unlock the power of those lasers. Over nearly four decades, he paved the way for their use in ophthalmology and pioneered new laser surgery techniques that allow patients to see more clearly and retain greater eyeight and stave off blindness. His early work while on the faculty at Harvard Medical School helped lay the foundation for LASIK refractive surgery. Later, at UCI, he improved corneal transplantation by replacing the existing hand-held surgical blade with the Intralase Femtosecond las
Eyes on the Skies
Students wearing protective glasses gather in Aldrich Park on Aug. 21 to watch the moon partially cover the sun during the “Great American Eclipse.”
What we do at FivePoint isn’t actually magic, but we use design and engineering and imagination to create the places for magic to happen. We deliver on the promise of what great places can be.

Emile Haddad
FivePoint Chairman & CEO