Essential Workers Program

Online Liberal Arts: Reconnects

Study Abroad Brings Back Our Students

Fresno State
Continuing and Global Education
Dean’s Corner:

Fresno State’s division of Continuing and Global Education links educational opportunity with lifelong learners throughout California’s Central Valley. This year, Access to educational programming became more challenging during the pandemic. In the following pages, you will learn about some of the challenges faced by our students, faculty and staff, and how we responded. We quickly assessed safety, reimagined changing educational need, and mobilized our experts.

We are pleased to share some of our success stories with you, including our brand new Essential Workers suite of programs that includes Spanish classes for Emergency Medical Responders as well as Digital Instruction to help K-12 Central Valley teachers develop skills needed to become successful online educators. We also introduce our campus’ new Liberal Arts Degree, offered completely online, in partnership with College of Arts and Humanities.

Our students studying abroad share their experiences of repatriation. We learn about some of the journeys they faced trying to get back to the United States at the time the global pandemic began to affect global transportation infrastructure.

We also check-in with international students Faiza Khan and Sho Akamine, both of whom were awarded the Muhareb Grant, and meet several students who benefitted from the Provost Graduate Initiative. We will meet Chase Pritt and Joseph Anderson from the Veterans Education Program as well as new Fulbright scholar Sarah Carr and Fresno State student Mistique Davis, a new Frederick Douglas scholarship awardee.

As you read the stories of our student’s success, please note how philanthropy made a difference in their lives. It is through the kindness of community benefactors, whose vision and support created the opportunities our students enjoyed.

We are grateful for the opportunities you provide to Fresno State students and we are excited to share their journeys with you in the following pages. True philanthropy stems from one’s desire to make an impact on another’s life. We thank you for being the positive influence on our students’ Access to unique experiences and quality education!

Scott D. Moore, Ph.D.

About the Cover:

Even during changing educational environments, Fresno State students continue to thrive. Students may look a little different, wearing masks to protect the campus and community. Fresno State students have risen to meet the challenges of digital education, reduced physical interaction and increased social distancing. In our cover photo, graduate student Ariel Mendez reminds us that we are all participating in the fight against COVID together, and we should “be kind” to each other. And it is the kindness of our Valley that continues to provide unique learning opportunities for our bulldog family.

SO MASK UP!
BE KIND!
AND GO DOGS!
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Fresno State students discover new truths about the world - and themselves while studying abroad in 2020.

The spreading coronavirus brought their time overseas to an abrupt end.

As students booked flights home, they juggled gratitude for experiences in distant lands with disappointment at returning early. Throughout those hectic days, Fresno State officials stood with them.

The university monitored the pandemic from its early stages in China, says Dr. Scott Moore, dean of the Division of Continuing and Global Education, which oversees study abroad programs. “With some luck, we did not have anyone studying in China, which is quite unusual,” Moore says. Students in South Korea came home first, followed by those in Italy – two countries with early outbreaks of the coronavirus. “Data showed the virus spreading quickly so we made the difficult decision to bring home all Fresno State students regardless of how the virus was being reported inside of each country.” Over about a two-week period, 30 students flew home.

Three of those students – Marbella Núñez, Victoria Monsivaiz, and Demitria Wack – shared their experiences. All three appreciated Fresno State’s help in returning home, and they remain enthusiastic about studying abroad. “I was heartbroken that my journey to becoming a new person came to an end too soon, but I feel things happen for a reason,” Núñez says. “I am definitely going back.”

Here are their stories: - - - - >
“Madrid was home for me” — Núñez

Marbella Núñez

Núñez – a senior majoring in public health and Spanish – attended Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Spain. She decided to study abroad to challenge herself. “In Fresno, I was doing what every college student is supposed to do – go to class, go to work, do community service. I wanted to venture out and find something I was passionate about,” she says.

That “something” turned out to be “somewhere” – the pulsing urban life of Madrid.

“I loved how the city is always buzzing with new things,” says Núñez, who grew up in Madera and wants to be a public health nurse.

In that new environment, she embraced new experiences. She joined a women’s rugby team with no prior playing experience. She took classes that fed new interests, such as women in Spanish cinema. Núñez lived in an apartment with three Spanish roommates and met students from many countries. “I got to live the life of a Spaniard,” she says.

Núñez had planned to return the United States in late June after nearly a year away. But as the coronavirus spread, the Madrid university closed and her study program through the California State University system was cancelled.

She flew home on March 18 – her airline ticket partially reimbursed by the CSU program. Fresno State also stepped in to help students. To ease financial strain, as well as emphasize the importance of returning to the United States, the Division of Continuing and Global Education offered to reimburse students the cost of tickets home. Making sure our students returned home safely.

Núñez’s ordeal wasn’t over when she reached Fresno. She needed to quarantine for 14 days but couldn’t go home to Madera because her father has an underlying health condition, making any exposure to the virus life threatening. Núñez had no other place to go. Then the Division of Continuing and Global Education stepped in and paid for a two-week stay in a hotel near the university. “I am so grateful to Fresno State. If it weren’t for the university, I wouldn’t have had peace of mind,” she says. Núñez became ill at the hotel but wasn’t able to get a coronavirus test. She eventually recovered with medicine from the Fresno State Health Center. After the 14 days, Núñez stayed elsewhere in Fresno before moving home to Madera in early June.

But “home” now has a different meaning. “Madrid was home for me,” Núñez says. “I felt accepted. I felt comfortable. I felt like I belonged there.”

Victoria Monsivaiz

Monsivaiz, who lives in Hanford studied at Universidad de Jaén in the city of Jaén, south of Madrid, traveling there in September 2019.

A senior majoring in English and hoping for a media career, Monsivaiz chose Spain to explore the history, culture and language of her heritage as a Latina in the United States. She gained that and much more. “I realized how small the world really is and how cultures intertwine with each other. Everything is as much similar as it is different,” she says.

To her Spanish classmates, Monsivaiz explained that her Mexican culture is part of her identity as an American and that American culture is more diverse than the stereotypes portrayed in the European media. “It was a perfect opportunity for me to give them a better understanding of the United States,” she says.

While in Spain, Monsivaiz traveled to England and France, learning as much as she could while in those countries. “I realized I’m an eager learner, and I want to keep at it,” she says.

In early March, her CSU study program told Monsivaiz she needed to come home. Jaén was locked down, and police were stopping people to check if their trips were essential. Before flying home on March 17, Monsivaiz received an “are-you-OK?” email from Marcela Magdaleno, academic advisor in the Division of Continuing and Global Education. Then upon her return, she heard from Dr. Luis Fernando Macías, assistant professor of Chicano and Latin American Studies, who had written a recommendation letter for her study abroad application. “It was amazing to know how supportive the staff and faculty at Fresno State are. It was very comforting,” says Monsivaiz. ★
Wack had settled into life and work in South Africa after arriving in Cape Town in January. She was interning with an educational organization that provides scholarships and enrichment programs to low-income students. Concurrently, she was taking online courses at Fresno State. Wack says she chose South Africa because “it’s a very complex country” on a fascinating continent. In the summer of 2019, she visited a friend serving in the Peace Corps in the African country of Tanzania before traveling to a study abroad program in London.

“My experiences abroad have helped me appreciate how massive and beautiful the world is,” she says.

In March, as the pandemic’s spread became clear, Wack received an email and her parents received a phone call – both from Moore. His message: She needed to come home. “I had not yet understood the seriousness of COVID-19, as it had not yet hit South Africa in high numbers,” Wack says. She flew home on March 18, and Fresno State reimbursed her the cost of the ticket. “I am so grateful to have a university that cares about its students as much as Fresno State does.”

Wack, who’s from Arroyo Grande, graduated in May with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology. She was part of the Smitcamp Family Honors Program and served as Fresno State’s student president in 2018-19. Wack now plans to begin work or pursue a master’s degree, either at Cambridge University or the London School of Economics. Both schools in England have accepted her. Her career goal: work in educational policy. “Fresno State and the Fresno community have been so supportive of my desire to study abroad and all my other pursuits,” Wack says.

Other Fresno State students would typically set off to study abroad in the summer of 2020. But not this year. “At the same time we were removing our students, we made the equally difficult decision to cancel all summer study abroad programs offered through Fresno State,” Moore says. The university is committed to protecting the physical and fiscal health of Fresno State students, he adds: “We look forward to sending our students abroad to participate in this high-impact practice once it is safe to do so.”
A unique alumni-sponsored grant led a handful of international students — including Khan and Akamine — to choose Fresno State.

The Muhareb Family Grant was established in honor of Ken Muhareb, a Palestinian immigrant from Jerusalem who chose to attend Fresno State in the 1960s. Before his passing in 2016, he helped more than 100 people from the Middle East immigrate to the United States.

His son, Michael Muhareb, and Michael's wife and fellow Fresno State alum, Brittany, started the grant as a "door opener" for international students to pursue the American dream.

During Fresno State’s Day of Giving in 2018, the Muhareb family pledged to match donations from those who wanted to help recruit international students to the campus, which resulted in a total donation of more than $6,200. Michael Muhareb said he plans to continue to offer the grant annually.

“Our commitment to the cause hasn’t changed at all,” he said. “The Day of Giving just seems to be very efficient to get the word out.”

In the last two Day of Giving events held annually in November, the Muhareb family pledged $5,000 in matching donations, but exposure helped raise nearly $15,000 to recruit international students to Fresno State, said Katie Adamo Bewarder, associate director of development for the Division of Continuing and Global Education.
Faiza Khan, a political science major from Pakistan and Muhareb Family Grant recipient, maintained a 4.0 GPA at Fresno State and appreciated the support she received from the International Office.

“The campus is great, the professors are great, the school itself is great,” Khan said.

Grant recipient Sho Akamine finished his the semester from his home in Japan after school officials encouraged international students to return home due to COVID-19.

He said he appreciates the continued support from Fresno State’s International Office, even while he had trouble staying motivated to complete classes virtually.

“I have to keep away from all the distractors and motivate myself, which is really difficult for me to do, compared to just going to school physically,” he said.

The unique alumni-sponsored grant led a handful of international students — including Khan and Akamine — to choose Fresno State.

For Khan, the $1,250 grant she received last year represented recognition and assurance that Fresno State wanted her to study there.

“The grant itself was a push to convince my parents like, ‘Oh, see? They gave me a scholarship I need to go to Fresno State,” Khan said. “It gives you the feeling like you’re worthy.”

For Akamine, the grant helped with tuition so that he could focus on his studies without having to find an on-campus job.

“I could just put my whole efforts in studying linguistics,” Akamine said. “So I guess that helped me a lot to ace the classes.”

Akamine said his biggest accomplishment so far at Fresno State was writing a phonology term paper on Vietnamese semi-vowels; his professor encouraged him to submit it for publication in a linguistics journal and to the Linguistic Society of America annual conference.

Muhareb’s intention was to help international students come to the United States, specifically to Fresno State, to experience America. For the Fall 2020 semester, the International Office will strive to give international students the same Fresno State experience although most classes will be held virtually, said Dr. Sarah Lam, professor and assistant vice president of International Affairs at Fresno State.

“We still want to support the student, whether they come in person or not,” Lam said.

“The Muhareb scholarship not only will continue to support students but will attract the most competitive students to Fresno State.”

The International Office continues to support international students by providing weekly wellness check-ins, making sure students have adequate food, facemasks, and other supplies, Lam said.

Khan praises the International Office for its support and recommends the campus to prospective international students.

“They’re going to get you connected to everything so you feel more at home,” Khan said. “Being homesick is one part of being away from the family, you’re going to feel that, but then they still make you feel like you’re part of this community and you’re part of Fresno State now.” ★
Continuing and Global Education created the Provost Graduation Initiative to support the California State University, “Graduation 2025” initiative. Graduation 2025 aims to increase graduation rates while decreasing the achievement gap between groups of students.

Fresno State’s Provost Graduation Initiative was originally designed to provide access to summer classes at no cost to students who would graduate by taking a couple of summer classes. Shortly after creation, the initiative was expanded to include low-income students who might not be able to afford access to a summer class. Offering students no-cost summer courses enhances an equitable and expeditious graduation pathway.

The Division of Continuing and Global Education launched the Provost Graduation Initiative in 2016, to date, the program has awarded $1.7M in grants to 1,525 students covering the cost of over 5,000 academic units. The grants covers the cost of classes, helping students catch up on course work, get ahead in needed units, or stay on track to timely graduation. Such was the experience of Macey Aqra.

“I am entering my last year toward my bachelors in Biology with a minor in Chemistry and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies,” said Aqra. “I wish to pursue a career in medicine. With knowledge gained through my undergraduate journey, I have a great understanding of disparities within healthcare systems.

“My goal is to amplify voices who have been silenced, create a more equitable and safe future for my patients, and to inspire others to work toward a more accessible and compassionate globe.”

~Aqra

My goals seem much more tangible now as I was able to complete another course toward my degree during the summer.”

Removing the stress of finding ways to pay for summer school has impacted many Fresno State students. “Paying for my education has been a weight on my shoulders,” said senior Jose Ramos. “Given that I am a DACA student and am not eligible to receive financial aid from the government, this financial assistance has aided tremendously.”

As coordinator of the Provost Graduation Initiative, Tom Boroujeni read every application submitted. “It was eye-opening to see how this grant has impacted so many of our students,” he said. “This grant has been an incredible service to students impacted by changing family income.”
The Provost Graduation Initiative is extremely helpful. Coming from a low-income family, I have had to help with my household expenses and work full time while taking classes. My journey has not been easy and has taken me a long time to graduate. This year I was delighted to know I was taking my last set of classes, and I knew I needed to take my final course in the summer, which I did not mind paying out of pocket. But when the state was starting to shut down much business, I knew I would not be able to pay for my final class. I reached out for advice from the College of Science and Mathematics (CSM) Advising and Resources Center (ARC) of what I could do since I only needed one class. They directed me to this grant, and I was relieved that I could apply for graduation this summer. I am incredibly grateful for being a recipient of this grant, and I hope it continues to help other students that may be in the same situation as me.

~ Itzel Lopez

Sociology major Angel Cortez could not have attended summer school without the grant: “When the world seemed to come to a halt, I was laid off from work. I started to help my parents with saved earnings as my father was diagnosed with valley fever and his income dropped,” Cortez said.

“The grant allowed me to further my education and move one step closer to my goal of graduating.”

Compared to students who do not participate in the Provost Graduation Initiative, first-year grant students are nearly twice as likely to graduate in four years and two and a half times more likely to graduate in six years.

Civil Engineering student, Antonio Lemus-Lemus, who is an intern at Caltrans, said his Provost Graduation Initiative grant improved his grades by allowing him to focus on studying. And he’s already planning how he’ll give back in the future.

“After my graduation in the fall of 2021, I plan to pursue a career there as a transportation engineer.

With this, I plan to contribute not only to the engineering industry but to my Fresno community by maintaining and designing future transportation roadways. The grant paid for my Construction Engineering course, allowing me to focus on my academic pursuits. Without it, it would have been much harder to achieve the grades necessary to fulfill my professional ambitions.”

Associate dean Daniel Bernard, who oversees the initiative, said he was gratified to be able to help students into summer coursework. “I know how incredibly important education is in the Central Valley,” said Bernard. “This program is effective - there’s a strong connection between students who receive the grant and students who graduate on time. To be a part of a program that increases access and graduates our students in a timely fashion makes me extremely proud.”

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~ Itzel Lopez
“My name is Luz Elena García and I am pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. I am a first generation college student and I transferred to Fresno State in the Fall of 2018. The Provost Graduation Initiative grant gave me the opportunity to take some needed classes and for this reason I am expected to graduate Fall of 2020. After earning my degree from Fresno State I plan on applying to a Clinical Lab Scientist Program to pursue my dream job.

Further, I am very happy that I learned about this Provost Graduation Initiative grant because it has made my goals of earning my degree in the Fall of 2020 possible. During these difficult times many of us have lost our jobs due to COVID-19 and this has caused a great deal of financial instability. As a daughter of immigrants and one struggling with financial hardship, the Provost Graduation Initiative grant was a great help.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone behind the Provost Graduation Initiative grant. This grant helped me immensely in getting me a step closer to graduation and a job.”

~ Luz García

“I wanted to take the time to thank Continuing and Global Education. Thanks to this division for offering the Provost Graduation Initiative, I was able to take the course required for my major. One of my favorite things about Fresno State is that faculty and staff do everything in their power to give students the tools and resources needed in order for them to succeed. I am proud to say that I received an “A” in the course that I took during the summer intersession. I would also like to thank our professors for being very passionate about their field of study. They made it possible for me to succeed in this course. I hope to continue to be successful in all my future courses. I am extremely proud of being a Bulldog!”

~ Stephanie Valderrama
Christopher Juarez jumped at the chance to study in South Korea with help from the Study Abroad Office – one of four programs in the Division of Continuing and Global Education that benefits from the Fresno State’s annual Day of Giving.

“Studying in South Korea gave me the independence to be myself and live more authentically than at any other point in my life,” Juarez says. “I developed my personal identity, language knowledge, cultural perspective, responsibility, and courage.”

Fresno State student Jennifer Ruiz Garcia spent the 2019-20 academic year in Israel with the help of the Study Abroad Office. “I like to say I returned with a whole new set of eyes,” she says. “Everything that was once common is new again, and everything that is new I’ve come to appreciate on a whole new level.”

Stories of personal and academic growth resonate throughout the university’s Day of Giving, a one-day online fundraising event held for a 24-hour period; this year scheduled for November 17th, 2020 from midnight to midnight. Students, parents, staff, faculty, alumni, friends and community members are encouraged to donate. “The Day of Giving is not just about the money raised but sharing our impactful programs with new people,” says Katie Adamo Bewarder, associate director of development for the Division of Continuing and Global Education. In 2019 – the third year for Day of Giving – Continuing and Global Education received a record $31,000 from 120 donors. Campus wide, more than 2,000 donors gave over $500,000 in the same year.

Students directly benefit from that support, “When I chose to leave the Navy, I didn’t know how hard it was to get back and enroll in college,” says Raveena Navani, who joined the Veterans Education Program in 2019-20, Navani continues:

“Thank you for supporting small veterans like me with big dreams.” (Navani proudly stands 5 feet 1 inch tall.)
Joseph Anderson, a Marine Corps veteran, agrees: “It means a lot to know there are people out there who will do what they can to help us succeed.” A fellow Marine Corps veteran, Joseph Greene, says support for the Veterans Education Program is “something I take to heart.” He adds that without the program – a two-semester transition into Fresno State for veterans and active duty personnel – he might have lost the chance to pursue a college degree and become “a better provider for my family.”

Day of Giving gifts also assist the International Office of Continuing and Global Education, providing assistance for international foreign students to attend Fresno State. The support represents “the goodwill of Americans to value and welcome students from overseas,” says Dr. Sarah K. Lam, assistant vice president of international affairs. One such student is Faiza Khan from Pakistan. “Me being here is proof that it is not impossible for girls around the world to follow their dreams. Difficult, yes, but not impossible.”

Students of all ages can benefit from Day of Giving donations. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Fresno State offers short-term courses to people aged 50 and over.

“**As a donor . . . you make lifelong education possible, the university greater, and our community stronger,**” says executive director Jill Wagner.

Gifts to the Division of Continuing and Global Education make educational opportunities for our students to study abroad, to transition our veterans into higher education, and to provide unique course offerings for lifelong learners in our community. ★

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**Change a Student’s Life!**
Contact Katie Adamo Bewarder at katieadamo@csufresno.edu or visit fresnostate.edu/givenow
McSherry is not fluent in Spanish, but he understood enough to exchange vital information with his patient. That was possible thanks to a language class offered through the Division of Continuing and Global Education during the coronavirus pandemic.

"Because of the Spanish class, I understood why the man had fallen, and I put him on a cardiac monitor and started an IV as opposed to just worrying about his head injury," McSherry says. "And once we got him to the hospital, I was able to steer his care in a better direction."

The Division of Continuing and Global Education offered Functional Spanish for Emergency Medical Responders – and two other classes – for free. All three short courses were conducted online, with total instruction time ranging from eight to 20 hours over several weeks.

Fresno State joined other campuses in the California State University system in a coordinated effort to serve first responders and other essential workers as the pandemic upended normal life and sent millions into lockdown.

“Our dean [Dr. Scott Moore] felt we could provide something for essential workers,” says Susan Hawksworth, a program and marketing specialist in the Division of Continuing and Global Education.

“It’s what we’re all about – finding a need we can fill and providing an educational opportunity to someone who’s not a traditional college student.” says Hawksworth

The other two courses offered for Essential Workers were “Online Teaching: From Surviving to Thriving” and “Project Management for the Workplace.” Instructors from Fresno taught all three courses. “I’m really proud we were able to teach with our local talent,” says Daniel Bernard, associate dean in the Division of Continuing and Global Education.

Instructors were eager to participate. “We felt the Spanish course would benefit the community in so many ways,” says Dr. Jaydene Elvin, assistant professor of linguistics at Fresno State. “We really focused on language that emergency medical responders would need to communicate with patients at the scene.” Elvin developed the course with Cheryl Chan through the university’s newly-established Hub for Language Teaching and Learning.
The Online Teaching: From Surviving to Thriving was a timely subject to offer. “Instruction around the world had to swiftly move online due to COVID-19, which left many gaps for students and instructors alike,” says Lejla Tricic, who taught the course. She is a lecturer in the English Department and serves as a quality assurance training facilitator on campus. The curriculum covered course design, time management strategies, and other related subjects.

“In my opinion, digital learning is here to stay, and there is no going back,” Tricic says.

Paul Sanchez, an adjunct instructor at Fresno City College, took Tricic’s course because he agrees with her assessment: online instruction will only grow in importance. Sanchez – who teaches English – provided an example of what he learned. “For a lot of us, literature helps us to understand ourselves and have more compassion and empathy while giving us hope. The class helped me understand there are teaching principles to communicate that in an online class.”

“I was considered ‘essential’ so I could relate to my students, and I wanted to help them out,” Smith says. “It was great the class was offered to essential workers to show appreciation to them during the pandemic.”

Robert Goddard – a civilian employee of the U.S. Navy at Lemoore Naval Air Station – took the course. His job in public works involves him with Navy personnel as well as senior managers and construction workers in civilian organizations. “Mr. Smith did a good job of covering the importance of communicating effectively,” Goddard says. “That’s important from the beginning of a project and is the key to success.”

McSherry, the paramedic, shares that sentiment. As he helped the man on the bathroom floor, their ability to communicate reassured the patient. “That helped the whole process,” McSherry says. He also could reassure the man’s wife, who was stressed by her husband’s collapse. “I was able to let her know I knew a little Spanish, and it would help if she talked a little slower. I was able to give her a bit of reassurance that I was there to help.”

For more information, visit: fresnostate.edu/cge/professional/essential
Though she just completed her freshman year at Fresno State this spring, Mistique Davis, 19, has already established a scholarship at her former high school in Stockton. Her aunt, who advised her to perform random acts of kindness, was her inspiration.

Toward that goal, the scholarship doesn’t require straight “A’s” or a college focus. Instead, she asks applicants to describe random acts of kindness in their lives, and to write themselves a letter that she will mail back to them at a future date.

Such creativity, determination and a “Let’s do this” attitude have carried Davis from the California foster child care system, which she entered at age four, through an accomplished high school career. Next up for Davis? A stint in Cape Town, South Africa as one of just 10 Frederick Douglas Global Fellowship recipients in the country.

The Fellowship is funded by the Council for International Education Exchange which serves to increase minority student access to study abroad opportunities. Roughly 700 students applied for the 10 awards.

“I’ve always felt the need to understand people,” Davis said, explaining her interest in the program. “The why. And to fight for them. Not everybody has the voice I have.”

The opportunity to participate in a cultural exchange - to network, experience the world, and learn from the other fellows – is a tremendous opportunity, Davis said. She heard about study abroad programs after arriving at Fresno State, couldn’t afford them, but started saving money just in case. When she learned of the Frederick Douglas fellowship and saw she qualified, she went for it. English teacher Bradley Samore – “an awesome individual” - helped her craft an application letter and personal statement. “I go to office hours so my professors know me!” she said.

The coronavirus pandemic has delayed the group’s travel until 2021, but next summer, Davis and nine other fellows will spend a month in London and South Africa, receiving three course credits for work enhancing their leadership and intercultural skills.

Davis is laser-focused on her future career plans; majoring in kinesiology, her goal is to work as a physical therapist for the NFL. She envisions caring for athletes’ physical as well as mental health, and helping guide those who don’t get drafted with backup plans for their lives. A former athlete who excelled at cheerleading, stunt and track, Davis believes mental health isn’t always given the attention it deserves in athletics.

There is no doubt Davis is headed straight toward the future she’s planning; goals are something she simply makes happen. Consider Davis in eighth-grade: Weary of bullying and student conflict at her school, she wrote a contract for students to sign pledging that anyone fighting could not attend the school rally. But the school didn’t actually have a rally, so she created one. She met with her principal, lobbied teachers, and the rally was born.

Davis found her “forever home” when she was five years old, and believes the family she was placed with “is a really big factor in who I am today.”

“My mom always said to reach for the stars so if you fall on the moon you’ll be ok,” she said. “But I’ll keep going and going till I get to the stars.”
Sarah Carr, now 27 years old and a master's student in social work at Fresno State, was living in Michigan in 2015 when she watched “Stop This Traffic,” a short film about human trafficking in that state. It changed what she knew about her country, and called her to action.

“I had always thought that human trafficking was something that happened elsewhere, not in the United States,” she said. “That really had an impact on me. These youth need people to look out for them.”

A Visalia native, Carr was working at a domestic violence shelter in Kalamazoo. Driven to alleviate some of the suffering she saw depicted in the video, she began educating others on that horrific topic, and decided to pursue a master’s in social work.

Her drive to make a difference in the lives of young victims took a thrilling turn this spring, when she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship. A highly prestigious and extremely competitive award, the scholarship will enable her to expand her research on human trafficking in Sri Lanka.

“Fulbright will change the trajectory of my life,” she said. “Fulbright scholars are global leaders and catalyze social change in our society. I am honored to join the lineage of Fulbright scholars who have made profound contributions to research.” ~Carr

Rishad Gandhi, Coordinator of the Study Abroad Office for Fresno State’s Division of Continuing and Global Education, cheered Carr’s tremendous achievement.

“It’s incredible - it’s something she will have for the rest of her life,” Gandhi said. “I’m very proud of her.”

Carr and her husband will travel to Sri Lanka next spring. Exact dates and length of their stay will depend on Coronavirus pandemic developments. While there, Carr will research Sri Lanka’s strengths, needs, gaps and challenges in the country’s efforts and services to combat human trafficking, gaining a crucial global perspective.

Though her area of research is a tragic aspect of life, Carr will also have time to avail herself of uplifting parts of a new culture. An avid runner and singer (her undergraduate degree is in music from Olivet in Illinois), she has already discovered local Sri Lankan groups she can join to pursue those hobbies there.

“I’m looking forward to immersing myself in the culture, getting to know my neighbors, making friends,” she said. “The longer I could be there the better. To see the world from another corner will shift our perspectives and increase our creativity, empathy, and understanding about how people live in other parts of the world.”

Carr chose Sri Lanka largely because her mentor, Dheeshana Jayasundara, associate professor in the Department of Social Work Education at Fresno State, is Sri Lankan, and helped Carr make the connection.

“She was there every step of the way pushing me and encouraging me,” Carr said. “She really helped me see my potential. I honestly don’t know that I could have done it without her.”

Carr’s future plans include pursuing a Ph.D. in social work, teaching, becoming a licensed therapist and continuing her music – goals certain to be enhanced by the connections and career opportunities that accompany a Fulbright.

“Human trafficking is happening right in front of us, in every city and town,” Carr said.

“I encourage readers to become educated on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and do their part to prevent it. There is a pressing urgency to collaboratively care for the vulnerable members of society.” ~Carr

For information on how to recognize or report human trafficking, visit www.polarisproject.org

~Sarah Carr
Jim Johnson calls students in Fresno State’s Veterans Education Program “the heart of America.” Johnson – a Navy veteran who served during the Vietnam War – says: “I did my duty, I’d do it again, and I know the men and women in the Veterans Education Program would, too.”

He believes so strongly in them that he’s left money in his will to the program. “I’m an old veteran, and I want to help these young veterans,” says Johnson, 78.

Planned giving such as Johnson’s can help secure funding across the Division of Continuing and Global Education. “Programs that our donors love will continue into the future because of these gifts,” says Katie Adamo Bewarder, associate director of development for the division.

Planned giving works this way: a donor bequeaths money, real estate, stock, or life insurance to a college, division or program at Fresno State. The California State University, Fresno Foundation then invests the gifts to generate income in an endowment fund. In some instances, donors convey gifts while still living, and “they can see the impact of the gift and interact with students affected by it,” Bewarder says.

The Division of Continuing and Global Education hopes to soon establish an endowment for the Veterans Education Program with a five-figure gift from a supporter’s estate. The gift in Johnson’s will would eventually be added to that endowment, and in the meantime, he makes yearly donations to the Veterans Education Program.
“The thing I like the most about the program is that it’s small and efficient, and there’s no government money involved,” Johnson says. The two-semester program – consisting of classes in English, Math, Communication, Critical Thinking and University Skills – gives veterans and active duty military personnel an admission route to Fresno State. It is the only program of its kind in the 23-campus California State University system.

Johnson served in the Navy reserves while attending Fresno State in the 1960s, and he went on active duty for four years after graduation. His dedication to the U.S. military continues today, and he’s crafted 15 historic exhibits with memorabilia and photos depicting wars, battles and specialty units that he gladly displays for veterans groups and others.

Johnson believes the students in the Veterans Education Program bring a needed perspective about the United States to Fresno State. “They’re seasoned. They’ve seen life – maybe in a hard way – and they add a different element of reality to the university,” he says. Johnson is satisfied that part of his estate will help provide greater financial stability to the Veterans Education Program. “It’s a great cause.”

THREE OTHER PROGRAMS IN CONTINUING AND GLOBAL EDUCATION BENEFIT FROM PLANNED GIVING:

Study Abroad Office – a planned gift established the Weise Family Grant, provides $3,500 to Fresno State students who need extra help affording to study abroad. Rishad Gandhi, coordinator of the office, says the grant “helps lower the primary barrier to travel” for students.

International Office – a past planned gift provides scholarships for international students who otherwise couldn’t attend Fresno State. “They are students with strong motivation for success and are great role models for the student body at Fresno State,” says Dr. Sarah K. Lam, assistant vice president of international affairs.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Fresno State, which provides short-term courses for people 50 and older. (Courses are online during the pandemic.) There are no entrance requirements, tests, grades or papers. “Member and donor support helps us continue to inspire a community of learners who are dedicated to thriving in life’s second half and giving back to the community,” says OLLI executive director Jill Wagner. Study Abroad: add to travel after barrier

Courses are online during the pandemic: fresnostate.edu/cge/olli
Chase Pritt held his iPhone with one hand and steered his car down Highway 99 with the other. All the while, he was giving a speech on Zoom (a video conferencing application) for a class in the Veterans Education Program.

“Not the best decision,” Pritt says of his four-wheel oratory in March 2020. It was prompted when the coronavirus pandemic forced instruction at Fresno to go online.

Luckily, he didn’t have to do it again while commuting from his home in Turlock to a part-time job at the university. When Dr. Scott Moore, dean of the Division of Continuing and Global Education, learned of the Highway 99 speech, he rented a hotel room in Fresno for Pritt on the day of his next speech.

“Our students should not be choosing between school work, jobs or driving with both hands,” says Moore.

“The Veterans Education Program is comprised of a small army of donors, who have generously given resources so we can make a difference in our student-veteran’s academic career. In this case, having Chase spend the night near his work meant he could give his speech from the safety of his hotel room and get to his job on time.”

Says Pritt: “Dr. Moore went out of his way so I could be safe and give a speech to the best of my ability. The fact that he did something like that for one of his students speaks volumes about his character and the family aspect of the Veterans Education Program.”

The two-semester program – consisting of classes in English, Math, Communication, Critical Thinking and University skills – gives veterans and active duty military personnel an alternative admission route to Fresno State. Nearly forty men and women have completed the program to date, which began in 2012.

Pritt – a 20-year-old intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army Reserves – was admitted to Fresno State in the fall as a criminology major. His goal: work for a federal law enforcement agency. Because of the Veterans Education Program, he now has greater confidence in his academic ability. “The professors really helped me dig deeper into concepts of reading and writing, and how to display my thoughts on paper so I attract readers and hold their attention,” Pritt says.

He also enjoyed the camaraderie of other students in his cohort. “In the military, they really believe in no soldier gets left behind, and in the cohort I felt that same energy. Nobody is going to let you fall, and if you do fall, we’re going to be right there to pick you up,” Pritt says.

Fresno State offered support in another way, too. The dairy unit in the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology hired Pritt as a milker. “I threw myself into the job and ran with it. I love it,” he says. The dairy unit also has hired two other students from the Veterans Education Program, Phillip Lancaster and Calvin Boswell. Fresno State’s dairy herd has Jersey and Holstein cows, and milking occurs at 2 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Students who work in the dairy unit must be dependable, says Dr. Kyle Thompson, assistant professor of dairy science and coordinator of the Dairy Science Program. “Students who are veterans are hands down some of the most assiduous, trustworthy, and respectful employees on the dairy. They are a perfect example of what I look for in employees. Many young adults can learn from their example.”
Joseph Anderson heard stories as a boy about his Navajo family’s military service to the United States.

That tradition spanned generations across World War II and wars in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. “Their service was the reason I enlisted when I got older – to continue a tradition of our ‘warrior’ mentality,” he says. Anderson joined the Marine Corps at 18 on a life’s journey that eventually led him to the Veterans Education Program at Fresno State. He completed the program last spring and is now a full-time student at the university.

Anderson, 45, has experienced tragedy, fought addiction, and dealt with legal problems. The Veterans Education Program gave him something important as he worked to make a better life for his wife and three children.

“I found the bond and camaraderie that I had in the military,” Anderson says.

“I now have someone I can call, someone who understands the different ways I feel as a veteran. That bond helped revive me.” The two-semester Veterans Education Program offers veterans and active-duty personnel courses to prepare them to matriculate as Fresno State students.

Anderson’s parents – both Navajo – divorced when he was young, and he split his time between the two. Life with his father on the Navajo reservation in Arizona and New Mexico lacked modern conveniences. They had no electricity or running water, and they used an old-fashioned icebox with a block of ice. Anderson roamed the land hunting rabbits and ground squirrels, and, he says, “I had no cares in the world – just me and the animals out there.” He also heard family stories of valor from his family’s military service – service to a nation that had treated his people badly for more than 200 years. “We’re Native Americans, and the United States did our people wrong. But this is still our land regardless of who’s on it now, and we need to protect it. It’s an ideology of love your country, not necessarily your government,” he says.

When Anderson was 8, his father was killed by a drunk driver, and he went to live full time with his mother and stepfather in Los Angeles. He describes the transition as “culture shock.” Traffic was constant, noise swept over the city, and everyone was rushing somewhere. After high school, he began his four-year enlistment – becoming a fuel specialist servicing planes and helicopters, and also training Marines and sailors to use rifles and pistols.

He found security in military regimen, but later struggled with sobriety after he left the Marines, and he was in and out of jail many times. “It was a giant struggle to get back into the world,” Anderson says. “I coped by drinking to numb myself out.”

Living in the Bay Area as the new millennium began, Anderson was working at manual labor jobs when his wife, Valerie, suggested he go back to school. He started attending a community college, which he enjoyed. “There was structure there, and that’s how my brain functions best. I don’t do well in chaos, even though most of the time I was in chaos.”

When Anderson and his family moved to Fresno in 2003, he attended Fresno City College. But his grades slipped, and his goal of transferring to Fresno State seemed to fade further away. Then his wife learned about the Veterans Education Program. Anderson’s history presented challenges that others in the program did not have, but he faced that head on, says program coordinator Nick Carabajal. “He never asked for special treatment or accommodations. He dug in and worked diligently to complete the program,"
“I’m really looking forward to pushing myself to take on other challenges and getting through those challenges,” - Anderson

while always supporting the members of his VEP cohort,” Carbajal says. Associate Dean, Daniel Bernard, who oversees the program added, "Joseph’s story is unique to him - and at the same time - is a story of struggle shared by many of his fellow veterans. His journey to success exemplifies both the passion and dedication of our student veterans as well as the role the Veterans Education Program can play in transitioning our student veterans into higher education.” At one Veterans Education Program event, Anderson literally wore the symbols of his family’s military service. His vest had woven into its design replicas of service ribbons awarded in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the war in Iraq. An aunt who served in the U.S. Army for 26 years and was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan had the vest made for him.

Anderson is proud of what he has accomplished since joining the Veterans Education Program. "And I’m really looking forward to pushing myself to take on other challenges and getting through those challenges,” he says.

“I don’t think I’d have been able to accomplish that without going through the program.”

Anderson is majoring in geology with a goal of joining the U.S. Forest Service or some other agency that has him work in a forest - a connection to nature he forged while living on the Navajo reservation. As he says: “I want to walk among the trees and keep them safe.”

CHALLENGE Coins

In the military and other government agencies, challenge coins are often given to members of a particular organization or for participation in a specific event. Challenge coins are a way of recognizing the support a person has given to a unique division. As such, challenge coins typically include the organization’s seal, motto, emblem, or other designated insignia. The Veterans Education Program Challenge Coin was designed by the 2019-2020 student cohort and includes several distinct features: On the front of the coin, the program’s seal is surrounded by words that define the spirit of students who participate – Opportunity, Dedication, and Comradery, and is encased in a Bulldog paw print highlighted by the American flag. On the back of the coin, all 5 branches of the US military are set as gears, representing the interconnectedness shared among service members.
When Makoto Saito moved to Fresno in 2012 from Japan, he struggled to order a sandwich because he couldn’t find the words for the ingredients he wanted.

“I actually studied English in Japan, but my English was still poor,” he recalled. “I had trouble even in the supermarket. I couldn’t really understand what they were saying.”

But after one semester at American English Institute, an English as a Second Language (ESL) program on the Fresno State campus, Makoto could hold a conversation — and comfortably order food — in English.

American English Institute, or AEI, is a non-credit intensive English program run out of Fresno State’s Division of Continuing and Global Education. AEI has helped thousands of students and community members learn English since its creation in 1972.

AEI helps international students prepare for study at an American university by enhancing their English reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar skills.

The program also helps these students pass tests required for admittance to college, including the iTEP (International Test of English Proficiency), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

In some cases, AEI students can bypass these tests and still matriculate to a university, said Oliver Merson, AEI’s Academic Development Specialist.

“If they pass our advanced level successfully, meaning straight A’s after eight weeks or a 3.5 GPA after 16 weeks, we can recommend them,” he explained. “And that recommendation usually satisfies the English proficiency requirements.”

Saito was able to pass the TOEFL after one semester in AEI, but said his experience was more valuable than just learning the language.

“I had just arrived to the US and I had to learn the lifestyle,” Saito said. “It also makes it so much easier to enroll in Fresno State because (AEI) was on the Fresno State campus. I had a chance to meet friends at Fresno State and learn what the university is like.”
Saito ended up graduating from Fresno State in 2016 with a B.S. in Business Administration - Entrepreneurship, and returned to Japan where he now works as an IT consultant.

Saito highly recommends international students to study for a semester at AEI before enrolling in an American university.

“A lot of students try to go to university directly from their country, but studying in their home country about English and studying in the US is very different because you’re not surrounded by English,” he said. “You pretty much learn how to take the test in their home country. It’s better to learn it in the US.”

It’s especially helpful if students are interested in studying at Fresno State, Saito said.

“It’s like a joint between your home country and the university. A lot of Fresno State students are helping AEI. It’s good to make those connections. University students love helping international students.”

One way AEI enhances the American experience for international students is by offering free or low-cost classes to permanent residents through the Community Exchange Opportunity program. This diversifies the classroom, said Alyssa Tobar, AEI’s Admissions and Advising Specialist.

AEI partners with Fresno State’s Department of Recreation Administration to teach students how to play classic American games and host activities and events.

“They run little programs for our students, which usually involves bringing them outside for various activities and games,” Merson said. “Sometimes it’s inside with Jenga blocks or different games, but that’s another way we get our students out there and out of the classroom, interacting with Americans and practicing English.”

Saito said he enjoyed these cultural experience classes, especially when they watched classic movies.

“We did a potluck and shared the food from different countries since we had Saudi students, Korean students, and Chinese students. That was a rich experience that I will always remember,” Saito said.

Students carved pumpkins around Halloween and crafted hearts with English messages around Valentine’s Day, Tobar said.

“It seems a little silly but they really enjoy it, and they like to be able to talk to each other. Events like this allow us to mix students studying at different proficiency levels,” she said. “During those parties, they’re able to talk with teachers, other classmates, faculty, and invite people they’ve met in the community.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, AEI students spent 20 hours per week in classrooms on Fresno State’s campus in the lab school, Tobar said. Additionally, AEI offered special trips to San Francisco, Cayucos, and other nearby getaways to offer the students a fun way to practice English and get to know one another.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the California State University’s statewide suspension of in-person instruction, AEI moved its program online in the middle of the late spring session, Merson said.
“That was hectic, but we pulled it off and students were able to finish their session and get their studies done. Some of them have come back for the summer,” he said.

AEI instructors use Zoom video calls and a learning management system to interact with students, Merson said.

“We’re always watching webinars or reading journals about how to effectively teach ESL online,” he said. “It’s a work in progress.”

Merson and Tobar are working on a self-paced program as well.

“We’re just exploring the online realm and adapting to the realities,” Merson said.

AEI will continue to offer several 8-week sessions throughout the year, including early spring, late spring, summer, early fall, and late fall. Students typically enroll in an entire semester, but some complete just one 8-week session if they are at a higher level of English already, Merson said.

Offering several sessions better accommodates international students, Tobar added.

“It allows us to open our program up to countries that have school years that don’t exactly align with US school years,” she explained. “So they might not be able to start in January, but they can start in March. It allows us to make that a little bit easier for students if they want to come here to study.”

Prospective ESL teachers log instruction and observation hours at AEI and are guided in student teaching by a mentor teacher, Merson explained.

“I especially have a soft spot for our linguistics program and our teacher training because that’s how I got into AEI,” Tobar said. “I was a linguistics major. I did my practicum there. Then I was a conversation partner, then they hired me as a teacher and then I ended up becoming co-director (of AEI). I think it’s a great program and I am proud to be a part of the Continuing and Global Education family.”

Because of the small class sizes -- typically 20 to 25 students -- and the many hours spent together each week, AEI students and staff become a close-knit family, Merson and Tobar said.

“We try very hard to make sure the students know that we support them, and we’ll help, even if it’s just a chat,” Tobar said. “I don’t know how many times we had students who would just come in and chat with us during their break… It’s really special, the unique relationship we have with them.”

AEI is proud of teaching English to international students and community members, as well as training ESL teachers through a partnership with Fresno State’s Department of Linguistics.

“Teaching English is our first primary mission, but second is to train the next generation of English teachers,” Merson said.

“Secondary Mission

AEI is proud of teaching English to international students and community members, as well as training ESL teachers through a partnership with Fresno State’s Department of Linguistics.

“Teaching English is our first primary mission, but second is to train the next generation of English teachers,” Merson said.

“We are very proud of that program. A lot of those students and upcoming teachers love coming here to start their careers in ESL or elsewhere. They always speak highly of their experience in the practicum.” ~ Merson

For more information on AEI’s programs, session dates, and application deadlines: fresnostate.edu/cge/aei

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Natalia Frias
Guy Barnes, 30, was one class away from earning his Bachelor's degree in voice performance in 2013 when a dream job opportunity arose: Move to Washington D.C. to play in a military band for heads of state and elected officials around the world. He jumped at the chance.

Andrew Dodderer, 32, was 19 units away from graduating when his number came up on a wait list for the Fire Academy in 2011. The wait had been two years, and the academy was a long-held dream; he couldn’t pass it up.

Edith Magallon, 35, was alone in the US, her mother and five younger siblings were in Mexico, where her uncle was helping the family since her father’s death in 2004. In 2017, her uncle died, and she put her education dream on hold to go take care of her family.
Barnes, Dodderer and Magallon all left Fresno State before finishing their degrees – and are now returning as part of an inaugural cohort of 15 students who will complete a Liberal Arts degree.

The new Liberal Arts degree, nicknamed, “Reconnect,” launched in August through the Division of Continuing and Global Education. The initial grant for the program was awarded in 2015 from the CSU Commission of the Extended University to support the development of flexible class offerings to improve student success, engagement, and learning in an online modality. Working through the campus and CSU system consultative processes, including accreditation from the Western Association of Schools, this program offers working professionals a second chance to complete their degree, regardless of the major they were originally pursuing.

“As a young woman in another country with no one to support me and no financial support, of course if this happens to you, you go down,” said Magallon, who has repeatedly tried to finish her degree even while progressing in her career as an advertising and marketing account executive for a broadcasting company.

With Reconnect, Fresno State offers former students a path to graduation that is flexible enough for adults with careers and families, and offers incredible value, a sense of place and personal relevance; it reconnects students back to the campus to finish the baccalaureate degree. “Our goal is to increase access to higher education in the Central Valley,” said Daniel Bernard, associate dean Daniel Bernard. “We’re creating programs that deliver education beyond the traditional boundaries of the campus.”

The new Liberal Arts degree allows students who have completed at least 70 units and their lower division general education requirements to take classes in intensive eight-week sessions taught by Fresno State faculty.

Faculty coordinator Alison Mandaville said the coursework for the new degree is interdisciplinary and grounded in regional applications that will enhance students’ careers. Classes will delve into California politics, literature and public health, and a Capstone course will center on a project or research to address a community problem.

“This feels very unique,” Professor Mandaville said. “I don’t see it anywhere else, and I’m really proud of that.”

Barnes said he once thought it would be easy to finish his degree, but red tape and the cross-country distance proved to be a barrier, even as he was enjoying his new role, performing for two presidents and countless other officials.

A degree will expand his abilities and options for a career post-military band, he said, but researching his options at other schools he found many credits wouldn’t transfer, and repeating coursework would drain both time and resources.

“I was like, ‘thank heavens,’ I’ve been waiting for something like this,” Barnes said. “I was running out of options.”

Dodderer works as a fire prevention inspector for the Fresno Fire Department and said finishing his degree is a crucial piece of the plans he and his wife have crafted. “Going back to Fresno State as a mature adult, I have a specific goal in mind and a purpose in why I’m doing it. It’s something I need and want to further my career,” he said.

Mandaville emphasized that the Liberal Arts degree will benefit the Central Valley by increasing college degrees in the workforce and community. “I care about being able to empower the students in the Central Valley through this option,” she said. “Our hope is we can help people who already live here and want to live here gain the education they need to become our innovators, entrepreneurs and social changers.”