



Art Alliance members at the student recognition scholarship luncheon at CSUF on April 30th, 2025



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Art Alliance Helps Fund CSUF Visual Arts

With historical roots in Fullerton, the Art Alliance, a volunteer community group, has been helping visual artists since the late '60s. Over the years, the philanthropic foundation has supported university art students' educational journeys while simultaneously sponsoring gallery exhibits and additions to the Cal State Fullerton's sculpture collection. As a photo graduate student at CSUF, I applied and was lucky enough to receive one of the Art Alliance's Tribute Fund Graduate Grants last year. This spring, I had a chance to interview Art Alliance President Joann Driggers to discuss the charitable organization's connections to the city's past, and how it transitioned to focusing on arts at the university level to help students fund their college education.

"We seek to promote excellence and enjoyment of the arts, and to encourage and enlarge art experiences within the University and the community," said Driggers.

Meeting Driggers outside the University's newly renovated College of the Arts Galleries, I asked her how she became involved with the Art Alliance. She explained that she had a Fullerton neighbor five doors down from where she lived who had invited her to one of the organization's events. "It was a fundraiser for the scholarships, and was a wonderful evening in her garden," said Driggers. "My husband and I attended, and she talked me into joining. I joined the next year, and eventually, I was newsletter editor, I was membership chair, and then I became President."

She explained that the Art Alliance has its roots in the Fullerton Art League, a small informal group formed in 1965. The League's goal was to raise the quality of art being exhibited in public spaces of the city. She said that members would arrange for exhibitions with art borrowed from Los Angeles galleries. The group hung artworks in the old public library building, which is now the Fullerton Museum Center, and the Hunt Library. Art League members eventually explored the idea of becoming a support group for CSUF's Art Department.

"After working for a couple of years in the community and putting up exhibitions of art from L.A. galleries," Driggers said, "the organization decided that wasn't very sustainable. They had a connection to someone here at the University, and they decided that that would be a better partnership. After determining that the partnership would allow our group to still be independent, the Art Alliance was formed in 1967."

She explained that the early Art Alliance worked very closely with then-CSUF Art Department Chair Jerry Samuelson and Gallery Director Dextra Frankel, mostly in gallery matters, but also with fundraising events, such as auctions and parties, and schol-



Art Alliance President Joann Driggers

arships. According to Driggers, the Art Alliance had an office in the middle of the old art building. Members staffed the gallery (including on Sundays) and provided docent tours. There was an active lecture and training program for members, including tours of other collections.

"In 1983-84, after much discussion, the Art Alliance Board of Directors established an endowment for scholarships. Fundraising activities included galas such as the Black and White Ball and the Great Mustache Ball, two art chalk festivals, and several trips out of town (San Francisco, Santa Fe, Napa). 'Art of Dining' fundraisers began in 1996, with a bus trip to the Empress Pavilion for Cantonese cuisine, followed by a viewing of the Carroll Street Victorian homes," Driggers wrote via email.

With a current total of 75 members, the Art Alliance still hosts gallery receptions on CSUF's campus today and raises funds through the "Art of Dining" fundraiser, which is sometimes combined with artist studio tours. Apparently, the Alliance's docent program has evolved into what is referred to on their website as Enrichment Programs, which include a guest lecture series, and art field trips for Art Alliance members to museums

and art installations.

Currently, there are five endowments for student scholarships and one for the CSUF Exhibition Program and the Begovich Gallery. "Each one was established by a donor who was connected to the arts program or to the University. But every program eventually is included in all of those [endowments]," said Driggers. "We're contributing to the success of the students."

According to an email from the Alliance's Board of Directors, "the partnership between the CSUF Art Department and Art Alliance members has yielded endowments of more than \$330,000. Funds raised are used to support CSUF gallery exhibitions, exhibit catalogs, opening receptions, scholarships for art students, and sculpture acquisitions."

Driggers explained that the Alliance has contributed funds to the installation and restoration of CSUF sculptures.

"We always share the scholarship event in May with the CSUF Visual Arts Department," said Driggers. "So, I come with Art Alliance members, and we all have a little bite to eat right before noon. Then the program begins, and we award scholarships [to the students]. Our organization gives anywhere between \$11,000 and \$12,000 a year and then there are other wonderful scholarships that the Visual Arts Department gives, so we put on that event together."

To learn more about the Art Alliance, visit www.arts.fullerton.edu/aa/.

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