Welcome to CSUF Day

More than 9,600 people were attending the University’s annual “Welcome to CSU Fullerton Day” event. First-time freshmen and transfer students who have been admitted for the fall arrived with their family members and friends to learn more about the campus, academic programs, student life, housing and services.

They also attended presentations on such topics as “The On-Campus Student Housing Experience,” “Preparing for Your Freshman or Transfer Summer Orientation Experience” and “Getting Involved at CSUF.” Programs in Spanish, for Spanish-speaking parents, also were offered.

“It was wonderful to see so many admitted students and their family members here, many of whom were visiting the University for the first time, and interacting with faculty members, deans, staff, administrators and current students,” said Darren Bush, interim associate vice president for student affairs, who noted that the event is geared toward helping students become more familiar with the campus and what it has to offer. “We also want to provide admitted students with an opportunity to gather the information they need to make an informed decision about accepting their offer of admission for fall.

“Throughout the day, we received such positive feedback from our guests about their overall experience: how much they appreciated the welcoming environment, the opportunity to tour our beautiful campus, to get to know our facilities — including housing and the recreation center — talk personally with faculty, staff and students, shop in the bookstore, and have lunch in the Titan Student Union food court or Gastronome. That kind of feedback is what makes it all worthwhile.”

Solidarity: Breaking Down Barriers

The 11th Annual Social Justice Summit, Solidarity: Breaking Down Barriers, was held on February 21, 2015 in the Titan Student Union. The summit was organized by students who were nominated by staff and faculty to be part of Student Advocating Civic Transformation (ACT) Team and led by advisor, Alisa Kirkwood, Volunteer Service Programs Coordinator. This team was comprised of 5 students who vary in academic major, perspectives, and lived experiences; Amanda Wetrick, Berlin Edmond, Hina Ahmad, Johanna Fackeldey, and Kelli Leckie. The team met over the fall 2014 semester to conceptualize the theme and organize the event. Alisia commented about her positive experiences serving as their advisor, “Students are nothing short of amazing. They are dedicated and committed to their visions… the most gratifying experience is seeing their evolution as student leaders, thinkers and advocates.” Student organizers were also provided guidance from their Advisory Board which is comprised of CSUF faculty and staff.

There were a total of 186 attendees, a 66 person increase from the 2014 summit. An innovation this year was automating the program agenda using the internet app “Guidebook.” Students used the app to highlight the tracks of interest and create personal schedules for how they would navigate the day’s events. Sessions varied in topic and included; homelessness in OC, Islamphobia, police brutality, animal cruelty, gender inclusive language, hate crimes, technology to combat violence against women, civil disobedience, and many more. Alisia noted that when developing topic areas students constantly challenged each other to question, “what does inclusion really look like.”

A welcome was facilitated by Mary Becerra, Director of the WoMen’s and Adult Reentry Center followed by keynote speaker, Dr. A. Breeze Harper who focused on how and why people have unique relationships to food and wellness and how these relationships are impacted by race, socio-economic class, gender, sexuality and physical abilities. The CSULB Slam Team provided the Summit closing and emphasized advocacy and empowerment through spoken word.

Based on assessment results, those in attendance had positive experiences and perceptions of the overall summit, workshops, and their engagement and enhanced understanding of social justice issues and advocacy. Social Justice Summit was first established in 2003 with no funding sources.

With funding this year from CSUF Student Success Initiative Fee, Titan Shops, and the Dean of Students office, the event provided participants with a vegan lunch, a phenomenal keynote speaker, and opportunity drawing items.

Meet Dr. Vijay Pendakur

Dr. Pendakur recently joined the Titan family as the AVP for Student Affairs where he oversees the Student Retention Cluster. Prior to CSUF, Dr. Pendakur served as Director of the Office of Multicultural Student Success at DePaul University in Chicago.

Tell us about yourself.

I identify as a student affairs scholar-practitioner who is passionate about equity and justice for all college students. I also love playing acoustic guitar, going on day hikes with my wife, and sampling new single malt scotches.

How do you see your everyday work aligning to the strategic plan of our division?

I see my work connecting to the Divisional strategic plan on two levels. First, I have the wonderful opportunity to partner with the leaders and staff in the Retention Cluster and their work touches all five goals of the Divisional plan. Secondly, I get to take a leadership role with several campus-wide initiatives, like the Student Success Teams, EAB tool for academic advisors, and the HIPS Initiative, which are tied to Goal 1 and Goal 2 of our plan, Advising and Retention.

How do you define the Titan Experience?

I think the defining feature of the Titan Experience is its versatility. One of the aspects that I love most about CSUF is the incredible diversity of our student body. With this diversity, comes the need to have a “Titan Experience” that is flexible and dynamic, so that all of our students can locate themselves as Titans, no matter what their identities, goals, or challenges.

What attracted you to be a Titan?

This campus is involved in a process of transformation that is extremely bold AND intensely focused on connecting our historic commitment to student access with the imperative for equitable student outcomes. That’s a project that inspires me every day.

If you had to choose, what is one quote that you live by?

“People will remember none of what you say, half of what you do, and all of how you make them feel.”
Titans Reach Higher at HACU Conference

For the past eight years, CSUF, a Hispanic Serving Institution, has recruited students to attend the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) annual conference. In October 2014, Vice President Eanes, Victor Rojas, and ten CSUF-HACU Student Ambassadors headed to Denver, Colorado to learn about CSUF’s role in supporting Hispanic students. This year’s student learning outcomes followed the themes of leadership and networking skills. Students also gained knowledge about issues that impact Latinas/os in higher education. An ambassador reflected:

“One thing that I really took away from the conference was the areas of research that must continue to be dissected in terms of Hispanic higher education. I sometimes felt as if all the research has been concluded and there is nothing left to be done. I really look forward to, in the future, conducting research on the Latina/o educational pipeline and finding other issues that may be contributing to the low numbers of Hispanic representation at four-year universities.”

Additionally, this year, a college visit to University of Colorado-Boulder was implemented to encourage CSUF students to “Reach Higher” by beginning to explore the possibility of attending graduate school. The pilot component of the program was introduced because a majority of HACU ambassadors are from backgrounds that have not historically attended graduate school or have seen graduate school as an option; and/or historically most students have not had the opportunity to visit colleges and university outside of California. Notably, out of the seven students who attended the trip to the University of Colorado, five have decided to apply to graduate school – four of whom had not planned on applying- and three will begin graduate school in fall 2015. A student ambassador commented:

“Attending the University of Colorado made me think about the possibility of going out of state. The campus was just gorgeous and it made me think about how universities are not all copies of the CSUF campus and that it is important to visit college campus’ as I am walking through this graduate school process.”

ASI Titan Recreation Building T.R.U.S.T

Talk about a workout! ASI Titan Recreation staffs are used to handling the daily tasks of running one of the coolest and most heavily used facilities on campus. From lifting weights, climbing ropes, or swimming laps, to logging miles on treadmills and cycles -- Titans do it all, thanks to the support of our great Titan Rec team. But for 156 staff and student assistants, the real workout came in January, when the new TRUST training program launched. On January 16, ASI Titan Recreation staff, including 126 student assistants, attended a day long training known as T.R.U.S.T. (Titan Recreation Unified Staff Training). TRUST is a new day-long interactive training program that focuses on safety and professional development topics while unifying staff and student team members who have few other chances to learn and interact together.

In the morning, campus community partners spoke about the work being done at Titan Recreation and how it contributes to the mission and goals of the university. Safety training was conducted to review CPR under stress and active shooter situations. During the second half of the day, professional staff facilitated sessions on critical thinking, professionalism, confidentiality, customer service, and risk management.

And the training is already paying off: participants indicated that the day strengthened their sense of connectedness and feelings of being valued after completing the workshops. Plans are already underway to expand to a three-day training series in August in preparation for the fall semester. Titan Recreation looks forward to future implementation of T.R.U.S.T., as training, development, and team building are critical to the success of students engaged in on-campus employment opportunities.
Track Participates in "McFarland USA" Movie Premiere

Marco Zaragoza and Arianna Fuentes, members of the Cal State Fullerton Track and Field program, had the opportunity to participate in Disney's "McFarland USA" movie premiere on Feb. 18 at the Downtown Disney AMC Theatre.

Zaragoza and Fuentes spoke to approximately 80 middle school students from three Santa Ana Unified middle schools about their life experiences and their paths to the Cal State Fullerton Track and Field program.

The event was hosted by RunStrong, a cross-country team that is supported by the Kevin Armstrong MD Foundation. The foundation encourages and enables low-income students in the Santa Ana Unified School District to participate in sports.

Zaragoza, a junior, is on both the men's cross-country and outdoor track and field teams at Cal State Fullerton. As a very successful high school runner he ran the 1600-meter in 4:20 seconds. He has two younger sisters who also are runners.

Fuentes is a sophomore on the Fullerton women's indoor and outdoor track and field squads, and participates primarily in the distance running events. An Antioch (CA) native, Fuentes still holds her high school record in the 800m run with a time of 5:08.00.

"It was a real treat for Arianna and Marco to have the opportunity to talk with the junior high kids at the movie screening," said head coach John Elders. "They enjoyed sharing about their running experiences and how that helped them get to college. I really appreciate their willingness to represent our program at this event."

Titan Student Union Expansion Project Approved by the CSU Board of Trustees

In less than two years from now, students will be exploring all the new fun features of the overhauled Titan Student Union. The new design features greatly expanded open spaces that bring the outdoors into the inside spaces.

The Titan Student Union opened in 1976 and was last renovated in 1992. The upcoming expansion will create a new entrance and will add 26,500 square feet to the facility to accommodate CSUF's increasing student body. All funds for this project were allocated through existing Titan Student Centers and Associated Students reserves that were accrued over time from pledged student fee revenue, with no CA general fund dollars, no new bond debt, and no new student fees required to fund the project.

On March 24 and March 25, the Titan Student Union expansion project was brought before the California State University Board of Trustees for review and approval. The CSU Committee for Campus Planning and Grounds reviewed the plan on March 24 and approved the schematic design. The committee’s recommendation was presented to the full board on Wednesday, March 25, where CSU trustees approved the $20 million overhaul of the Titan Student Union. With no bond financing associated with the project, no additional system-wide approvals are required and the project will continue to move forward.

So, circle spring 2017 on your calendar and get ready to experience an entirely new TSU!
Dr. Joy Hoffman is the inaugural Director of Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers (DIRC). In her previous role she served as the Director of The Cultural Center at Whittier College.

How do you see your everyday work aligning to the strategic plan of our division?
I’m in the engagement sub-division, which is a great place to be because of the work we do in the centers to engage and educate students. My sincere hope is that through programs, initiatives, workshops, trainings, support, and resources, we (DIRC) can contribute to the overall Titan Experience (Strategic Goal #5). Although we are not officially housed in the retention sub-division, the work we do through our centers and department intends to support efforts within Dr. Pendakur’s sub-division. I would hope that as we grow the department and our centers, we will promote student persistence and play an active role in narrowing the achievement gap of underrepresented students so that they not only remain enrolled, but are successful (Strategic Goal #2). We have also developed relationships with various departments within the Transition sub-division through outreach efforts, and just last year played a role in planning the Fall in Love with CSUF Day, which was a yield event geared toward our African American students and families. So while we are housed in the engagement sub-division, I think our work can (and should) overlap with and support other sub-divisions.

We don’t want students to simply attend Cal State Fullerton. We want them to feel like they matter, symbolically and literally. We want them to feel like they belong here.

How do you define the Titan Experience?
I think the Titan Experience looks different for everyone and students will define their experiences in various ways. I think when we talk about the ‘Titan Experience’ we are talking about what unique experiences are at Cal State Fullerton that make you proud to be a Titan. I hope that students would have descriptors such as inclusion, scholarship, involvement, feeling like they mattered, mentoring, relationships, and connections... not just “I went to class.” I think as a commuter campus, this presents us with a wonderful but difficult challenge.

Being that you are fairly new to CSUF, what attracted you to be a Titan?
My first connection to CSUF was through the MSHE program because I was a fieldwork supervisor for so many students in my previous role. As I got to know MSHE students through their graduate assistantships and fieldwork, there was something about them that I liked. I also heard about the changes occurring on campus, like establishing the Titan Dreamers Resource Center and developing Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers. It was exciting to hear about the direction that CSUF was going in in terms of relationship building, true collaboration, and serving underrepresented students. I wanted to be a part of it. I thrive in environments that value relationship building, collaboration, and synergy. I kept hearing from people that not only is collaboration embraced at CSUF; it is expected. CSUF really shattered my assumptions of large state schools. Beyond that I like the idea of building new things, so I love having the opportunity to develop DIRC as a new department. I’ve worked at 4 institutions now, and every job has required me to build a department. I love it.

What are your strengths?
I think I am good at relationship building and collaboration—not just considering who is at the table, but who is missing. I am also strong in facilitating difficult conversations around diversity topics and issues.

I embrace new ideas and adapt to change easily. If something doesn’t work or it could potentially be better, I listen to feedback and suggestions. Even if something is working, I don’t think it means we have to do it the exact same way every time. I believe in the talents of others and want others to provide their expertise and contribute to maximizing our capacity. I am not afraid of constructive criticism. I learn and grow from it. It doesn’t mean it’s easy to hear, but I’d like to think that people give me feedback because they care about me as a person. I think feedback usually comes from a good place; at least I’d like to believe it does.

What is one interesting or fun fact that you’d like to share with the CSUF community?
One of the things I love sharing with students because it helps me connect with various communities is that I’m adopted. I was adopted and raised by White parents so I’ve had this weird experience of as identifying as a person of color but being more connected to dominant culture. My whole life - my family, schools, and neighborhood did not look like me. White communities influenced my lived experiences and world lens. It wasn’t until I was 30, in my master’s degree program learning about identity, that I had an identity crisis. I always tell students they are so much further along in their identity journey because we didn’t really talk about it in college and I did not knowingly think about it until I was 30. So when I am facilitating a workshop with 200 students and it is identity based, I tell them, “You are thinking about your identity and your values while in college. I did not do that in college. We didn’t talk about race, or sexual orientation, or gender. You’re further along in your education than I was at your age!” I think it breaks the ice a little and makes me human. Diversity is already a difficult topic to discuss for many students – I think sharing my own story helps students realize we all have a journey to engage in, and it is okay to be on that journey for a lifetime.