

Equinox

CSUF | **Geography & the Environment**
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 1, Issue 2 | Department of Geography & the Environment | CSUF

Note from the Interim Chair

On behalf of the Department of Geography & the Environment, we are delighted to share the Spring 2024 issue of Equinox. In these pages you'll find short summaries of some of the semester's events and accolades, including All Points of the Compass, research presentations at conferences, and more. The newsletter also spotlights some of our amazing faculty, students, and alumni.

I've been honored to serve as interim department chair during Spring 2024, while Dr. Matheus has been on a well-deserved semester-long research sabbatical. My term as interim chair culminates with Commencement – in a couple of weeks we'll celebrate our newest graduate students, undergraduate majors, undergraduate minors, and recipients of our GIS and Geospatial Technologies certificates. These are special occasions for our students, their families and friends, and our faculty and staff, and we are very proud of the academic accomplishments of the Class of 2024.



Whether you graduated from CSUF several years ago or are graduating soon, we hope that each issue of Equinox strengthens the connections between you and CSUF Geography!

Warmly,
Zia Salim, PhD

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All Points of the Compass 2024

Geography students recently hosted All Points of the Compass, a one-day symposium featuring research and presentations by undergraduate students, graduate students, alumni, and faculty.

Emily A. with her research poster (below).



oriented gentrification in Los Angeles' Koreatown. Student posters presented research on agricultural landscapes in Orange County, climate patterns in Atlanta, Georgia, bibliometric analysis of Geography scholarship, invasive plants in California national parks, hydrosocial changes in Orange County's San Joaquin Marsh, and the geographic origins of talented baseball players. Geography senior Emily A. was inspired by what she saw, "I feel like I get to learn a lot about different aspects of different research people have done, and it kind of inspires me to do my own research."



Richie M. with his research poster (above).

The research that was shared showcased the impressive diversity of research conducted by CSUF geographers. Presentations were made on topics as diverse as climate change impacts in Florida, Maasai culture in Tanzania, ethnobotanical abortions in Michoacán, Mexico, and transit-

The event's keynote presentation, made by Dr. Robert Voeks, was entitled "Landscape Legacies of California's Spanish Place Names". Dr. Voeks skillfully blended geography, history, and linguistics, providing a range of fascinating examples to illustrate how geographical place names (toponyms) can provide insights into a region's cultural and environmental history.

Dr. Voeks presenting the keynote (left).

All Points of the Compass (contd.)

All Points of the Compass also included a cartography competition, in which first place was received by CSUF undergraduate student Chris T. for his map of Japanese dialects, and second place was received by CSUF graduate student Heather R. for her map of environmental changes in the San Joaquin Marsh. Support for the compass cartography competition was generously provided by emeritus professor Robert Young.



(From left to right) Dr. Carroll, Winners Heather R. and Chris T., and Dr. Robert Young.

A student panel highlighted Geography student experiences, focusing on internships, career opportunities, and study abroad, and an alumni panel highlighted careers in urban planning, demographic analysis, and sustainable agriculture. Geography junior Anna S. reflected on the breadth of experiences and advice shared by the panelists: “There's a whole world out there, literally, for geographers. There's so many different things you can do. I feel like that's the most important thing that people take away from today.”



(From right to left) Anna S., Esme C., and Delaney C. speaking of their student experiences.

All Points of the Compass (contd.)



All Points of the Compass is an annual symposium that is organized, planned, and hosted by officers and volunteers from the CSUF Geography Club, one of the most active Geography student organizations in California. Financial support was provided by ASI through the HSS Inter-Club Council and by Dr. Robert Young (emeritus).

Student interview quotes courtesy of Mia Mejia, CSUF Daily Titan

Photo credit: Mia Mejia, CSUF Daily Titan



Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Robert Voeks

Where did you grow up?

My father was a meteorologist in the navy, so my early years were spent on two-year stints in diverse locations—including Middlesex, England, the Marshall Islands, and several others. Eventually we settled in Portland, Oregon, and I most identify with Portland as my home.

What post-secondary institutions did you attend?

I got my BS and MS in Geography at Portland State University (PSU). I took a few years off to work in the Endangered Species Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and then went back to UC Berkeley for my PhD in Geography.

Was there a particular faculty member that impacted you at those institutions?

At PSU, my mentor was Dr. Larry Price. His specialty was periglacial geomorphology, and we spent a lot of class time in the local mountains. I sort of assumed I would eventually pursue an advance degree in alpine biogeography, but that changed quite suddenly. While working for the FWS out of Sacramento, I was sent to the first national conference on biodiversity (a new term at the time). Several of the speakers presented their field research on the astounding species diversity and ecological interactions in tropical rainforests.



Dr. Voeks with pitcher plant, Mount Kinabalu, Borneo (1994).

At the same time, they reported with dismay that the rainforests were being rapidly destroyed to produce cattle and plantation crops. This was at the very beginning of the fight to save the world's tropical rainforests. I decided that day that I was going to do geographical research in a tropical forest region, with the aim of "saving the rainforest." It all seems a bit naïve in retrospect. In any case, I decided to do my research in Brazil, knowing almost nothing about the country or its people, except that it harbored the world's greatest rainforests.



Dr. Voeks with Nkulu village chief, southern Mozambique (2013).

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Robert Voeks (continued)

What inspired you to pursue a career in geography and academia?

To be honest, the idea of going to graduate school had never occurred to me while I was an undergrad. My parents had not attended university, and everything beyond graduation all seemed pretty abstract. But, I attended a 1-month summer field class with Dr. Price in the mountains of Oregon and Washington. And included among the participants were people from various universities, including UC Berkeley. I got inspired by the other students who participated (and I'm still friends with several of them), and I discovered that I really found my calling in field research. And what's not to like?...developing a hypothesis in the field (Carl Sauer said to walk slowly while in the field, stopping frequently at the question marks), cooking up some verifiable methods to investigate the question that interests you, and then pursuing the topic in a mostly natural landscape—first temperate, later tropical landscapes. Somewhere along the way I discovered that as a university professor, you could do all of this for a career. I was sold.

When did you join CSUF? What were your first impressions and how have they changed?

I joined the CSUF Geography Department (now Geography & the Environment) in 1987, just out of grad school. Coming from a pretty rabidly environmentalist background in Oregon and later grad school in Berkeley, I found the adjustment to SoCal a bit challenging at first. Too many fast food joints, too many cars, etc. But, I adjusted by preconceptions over time, discovering the many cultural and environmental riches of the region, making lifetime friendships with many of my colleagues, and being able to ride my bike to campus year-round was like heaven. Of course, the campus has grown dramatically since I arrived. But, there was never a parking problem for bikes!

How would you explain what you do to someone unfamiliar with your work and field?

I usually just explain that I became interested first in the geography of plants, and that over time that led me to an interest in how people and plants interact—ethnobotany.

Are there any awards or honors that you would like to highlight?

I have been lucky to receive a number of research awards during my career, including from the National Geographic Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and others. I was awarded Fulbright Fellowships to spend a year in Brazil and in Mozambique. Two of my books have received book awards. I recently received the President's Award from the Society for Ethnobotany, and I was awarded the Distinguished Faculty Award from H&SS in 2019.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Robert Voeks (continued)

What are some of your most unique experiences in Geography as a CSUF professor?

This is a really long question to answer, so I'll limit myself to a couple of examples. While doing my PhD research on the biogeography of a palm species in the Atlantic rainforest of Brazil (I later had a palm tree species named after me—*Attalea voeksii*)—I discovered that the descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil had managed to continue their West African belief system (known as Candomble) and that much of the ritual and ceremony of the group was revolved around plant use. I went to a couple of ceremonies, and began to wonder how it was that the descendants of enslaved people, who certainly could not have carried useful plants from Africa with them, were able to reinvent the plant traditions of their homeland in an alien floristic landscape? So, after starting my job at CSU Fullerton, I applied for a National Geographic Society grant to study this question, and was successful. I had imagined that I would solve the question in a summer, and move on to a new project. In fact, although I've written a couple of books and many articles on the subject, I am actually still investigating it. I will be giving a presentation in Brazil this coming September, and I plan to continue working on the topic—now more focused on the sacred foods of the religion.

Some years after starting my Candomble research, I saw a documentary about a hunting and gathering group of people living in northern Borneo—the Penan. By then, I was thoroughly specialized on the study of ethnobotany, that is, the relations between plants and people. I discovered that very little research had been carried out on the plant traditions of this particular group, and by total serendipity, I saw an announcement a week later advertising for a visiting professor at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, in northern Borneo, exactly where a group of the Penan resided. I applied for the position, was successful, took a leave of absence from CSUF, and took my family on a three-year research and teaching expedition to northern Borneo. I was able to carry out several years of ethnobotanical research with the Penan as well as a slash-and-burn cultivating group—the Dusun. Both were amazing experiences.

Having worked many years in the tropical forests of Brazil and SE Asia, I always imagined myself at some point carrying out research in sub-Saharan Africa, the last of the major tropical forest landscapes. Finally, in 2012, I received a Fulbright Fellowship, and I took my family to Mozambique for year of teaching and research. It was a challenging year, in many respects, but I was able to work with some very bright African students on important medicinal plant projects. And I will never forget my time in the field with local African people.

My research over the past couple of years has finally focused on some California questions. Specifically, I have been exploring the origin of the place-names of our state, particularly those that refer to animals or plants. It really was not a topic I'd ever thought about, until one of our graduate students, Guadalupe Maldonado, noted in her thesis that the Indigenous craftspeople around Lake Patzcuaro in Michoacan, Mexico use a local wetland plant known as 'tule.' Here in California, we not only also call a certain wetland species tule, but we also have lots of place-names with tule, or the plural form tulare, in them. This simple observation started me on a new quest—to explore the historical geography of plant and animal place names in California.



Dr. Voeks with researchers in Brazil (1986).

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Robert Voeks (continued)

What kinds of courses have you taught? What's your favorite course to teach and why?

Most of my coursework has been in the area of the physical and biological environment—physical geography, natural vegetation, tropical rainforests, and others. I teach Latin America because that is where much of my research has been carried out. I think my favorite course to teach in recent years has been Global Cuisines. I have always been a proponent of experiential education, especially in geography, and this class allowed me to get students into the field on their own—to farmer's markets and to an 'ethnic' restaurant. We were also able to do some experiential things in class, such as celebrating 'pi' day, when students are encouraged to make a pie for class, and ethnic food day, when students are asked to prepare a meal associated with some dimension of their ethnicity, and share it with students. Foods represent profound cultural markers, and these sorts of exercises encourage students to appreciate and respect the diversity of our region's cultures and foodways.

The other highlight of my teaching experience has been leading study abroad trips with students. In 2011 and 2012, I took CSUF students to Costa Rica; and in 2013 and 2014, we went to Brazil. For many of the participants, this was their first international experience. In the morning, we would talk about one or another subject, and in the afternoon, we would go for a hike and experience it. It's hard to imagine a more fulfilling way to present geography to students.

Is there any professional service that you would like to highlight?

The primary service that I have provided over the years is journal and book editing. I have been the co-editor of the book series *Ethnobiology* through Springer Publishers for over 10 years. After some years as an associate editor for the journal *Economic Botany*, in 2008 I was asked to become the journal's editor-in-chief. Although this was a huge and time-consuming responsibility, it gave me insights into people-plant relations that I never would have gained otherwise. And, it gave me the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and graduate students from around the world. I retired from this position after 14 years. But this past January, I agreed to become the editor of the *California Geographer*, the flagship journal of the state's California Geographical Society.

“My two pieces of advice are—be curious about what is around you, and don't be afraid to take chances.”

Dr. Voeks with tule (Schoenoplectus californicus), Oso Flaco Lake (2023).



Student Spotlight:

Lauren Heyden



My name is Lauren, and I am currently finishing up my junior year in Geography at CSUF. I was lucky enough to be chosen to represent CSUF and Global Partners for Development (GPDF) as one of three fellows in Tanzania, Africa. How I found out about this opportunity was through social media, [@csufenvironmental_studies](#). Instagram had posted about a Tanzania Fellowship Program that would take place over winter break and would account for 3 units. The overall objective of this immersive trip was to meet with people in different villages and tribes, see different projects that have been funded by GPDF, and listen to the current challenges that each individual group of people are facing.

Lauren with a group of women that are part of the PWC (above).

The first part of the trip we spent visiting different villages around Arusha where GPDF have funded many projects that included, water projects that help provide clean water to many different villages, infrastructure that has been built at schools, and dispensaries (small local hospital). Although these projects have helped a great deal, the people in these villages are still face many challenges.

After spending time in Arusha, we went and spent time with Alias (an elder in his village and an educated man) and his family. We lived with him on his boma (homestead) and learned about the culture of the Maasai people and the many current challenges they face. The Maasai people are nomadic pastoralists that depend on local resources and large amount of land for survival.



Lauren with children in a village outside of Arusha posing in front of a water project that GPDF funded and now provides clean water to many different villages (above).

Student Spotlight:

Lauren Heyden (contd.)

Alias has started the Arkaria Impact Centre with a mission to create proactive approaches towards community empowerment, climate change resilience, and strengthening pastoralist voices. After our time with Alias, we then went to a very remote part of Tanzania, Loliondo. The drive cuts through Ngorongoro crater (largest intact caldera in the world) and the Serengeti where we got to see a large variety of wild animals. In the Loliondo area we spent our time with the Pastoralist Women's Council (PWC) and met with many different groups of women in different villages that are helping empower young girls, rescue them from arranged marriages, and help provide them with the opportunities of getting an education and more.

“I have traveled quite a bit, and every trip changes you in a way, but this experience was powerful.”



Lauren with a group of women that are part of the PWC (above).

When I applied for the fellowship, I didn't think I had a chance in being chosen but when I saw that post on Instagram, I thought it would be stupid not to try. This experience was fully funded, 3 units towards my degree, and you get to have the most authentic immersive learning experience. I have traveled quite a bit, and every trip changes you in a way, but this experience was powerful. When spending time with Alias and varying groups in the PWC they welcomed us with open arms, danced with us, and provided gifts despite what little they had. I wish that everyone could experience what myself, Domonique and Ainsly got lucky enough to. This fellowship changed my perspective on life and frankly was kind of difficult to come back into our society filled with constant stimulation and over consumption. I know that I put the work in when applying for this fellowship, but I feel so grateful to have gotten chosen and to be this different version of myself because of it. I hope that whoever gets chosen in the future gets as much out of this experience as I did and is as motivated as I am to create something that can benefit the people that welcomed us with open arms.

Alumni Spotlight: Roland Pacheco



Roland Pacheco (above).

What is your current job title, and what exactly do you do day-to-day?

Since my work is tribal related, I should include that I'm Gabrielino Tongva and Acjachemen. I am the Ending Extractive Industries in the Homelands Program Director at Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples. Day-to-day we work towards helping build the capacity of the Tribal Nations in Southern California, one example that comes to mind is our Indigenous Land Rematriation Fellowship in which is an intergenerational fellowship in which we aim to educate our Fellows on Landback efforts across the world since more of our Tribal Nations are starting to get Landback in Southern California.

What is one of your favorite parts of what you do? What are some of the things you like most about your job?

It's incredibly fulfilling working on efforts to support tribal communities. One of my favorite parts of the job is seeing the intergenerational aspects of my community.

What are some skills that have served you well through your career?

I would say my GIS skills, while they could use some practice, have been useful in certain aspects of my work. Most of all though, I think skills of practicing patience and listening have been particularly useful.

What has your career path been like? How did you end up where you are?

Following my time in the Department of Geography & the Environment I went to work in city government for a few years in the Public Works & Engineering Department, from then I went into the private sector of Environmental Sustainability. Then during the pandemic I shifted to an environmental nonprofit as a tribal engagement coordinator which led me to working at an Indigenous led organization where we work in indigenous efforts.

“Enjoy the department,
there's a lot of really
special people here that
are a wealth of
knowledge and great
people.”

Alumni Spotlight: Roland Pacheco (contd.)

How does your Geography degree help you in your career?

I think my Geography degree and education helped me in my career with extending my understanding of a lot of environmental concerns in my own community, albeit sometimes in a more Settler lense. I grew up involved in my community and share a lot of the concerns of my people and the land that we are the original stewards of.

What was your overall CSUF experience like? What did it teach you?

It was really good. Many of the department's faculty were really supportive and understanding. It taught me to open up a bit more. It also taught me that it is important to only put time in things you actually enjoy. Not necessarily in a "this is fun" sense, but in something that brings you fulfillment.

Do you have any general fond CSUF memories you'd like to share?

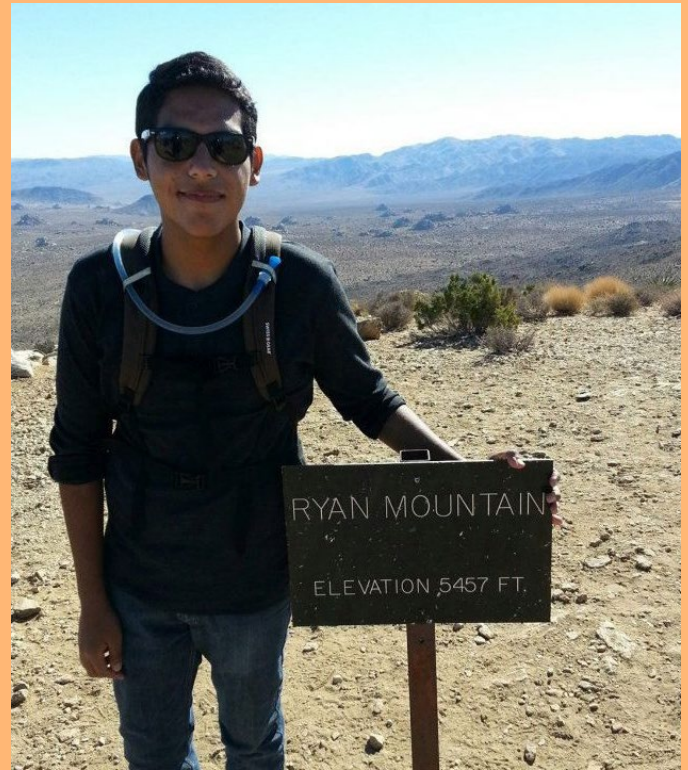
I have fond memories from the clubs I was involved with as well as a lot of my classmates. A fond memory is attending the South Africa study abroad program in Cape Town.

What person, course, or experience most influenced you while at CSUF? How?

Without getting too cheesy it's hard to choose one person, course or experience, but I will say Dr. Drayse, Dr. Salim, Professor Brennan Wallace and alumni Tamara Wallace mean a lot to me.

Did you participate in any clubs or activities at CSUF when you were a student?

I had a leadership role in both the Geography Club and Craft Beer and Homebrew Advocacy Club.



Roland Pacheco at Ryan Mountain (above).

What are your proudest accomplishments after graduating from CSUF in which your education played a role?

Getting to work for the city where my family has lived since before the city was established. Being able to be a small part of all work currently that helps my tribal community.

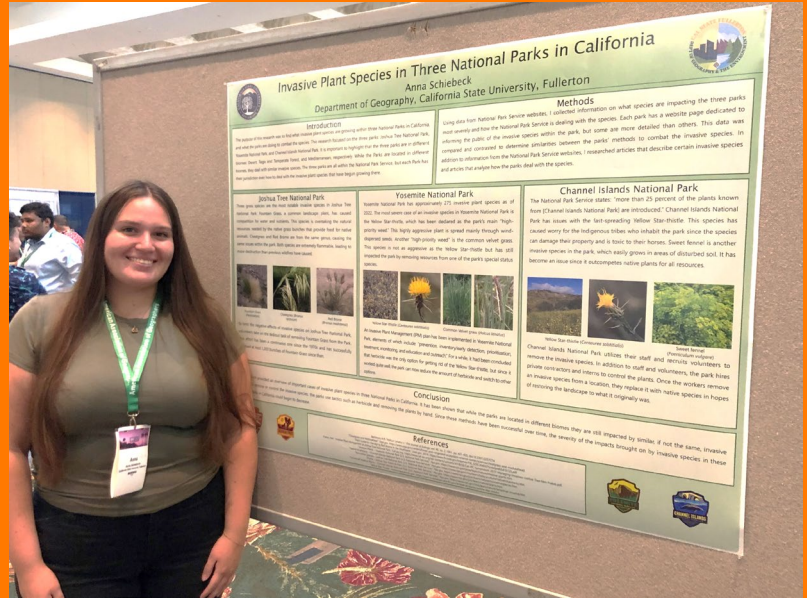
What advice do you have for students who are in geography?

When transitioning to finding a career path consider what brings you fulfillment, because your time and presence are two of the most valuable things you have and you should offer those things to a workplace that values you as well as brings you fulfillment.

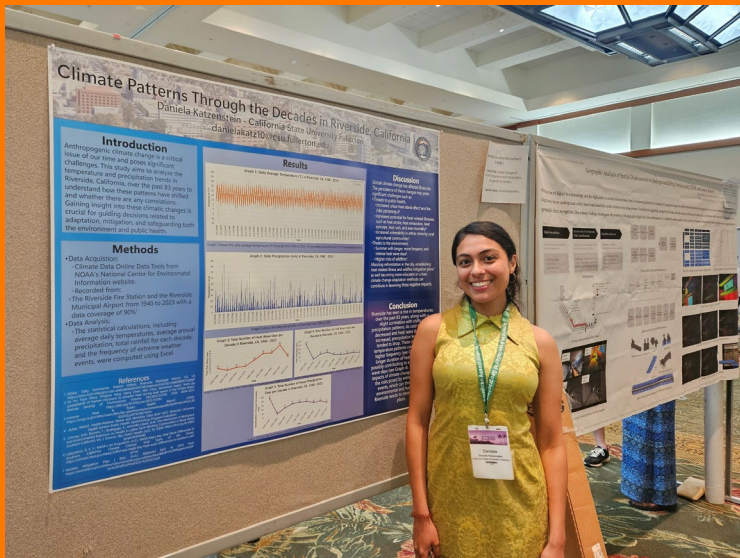
Spring 2024 Research Presentations

In addition to All Points of the Compass, CSUF Geography students and faculty shared their research in a wide variety of professional conferences and presentations this semester.

Nine members of the department attended the annual conference of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), held in Honolulu, Hawaii. Undergraduates Anna S. and Daniela K. and graduate student Richie M. presented posters, while undergraduate Delaney C., graduate student Heather R., and Dr. Zia Salim presented papers and Dr. Dydia DeLyser, who serves as the secretary of the AAG, co-presented a paper. Graduate student Kaitlyn M. and Professor Vienne Vu also attended the AAG conference.



Anna S. with her poster (above).



Daniela K. with her poster (left).

Student Heather R. presented a paper at the annual conference of the California Geographical Society (CGS), held at Shasta College. Dr. Bob Voeks, who serves as the editor of the CGS's flagship journal, *The California Geographer*, also attended the conference. Heather received the CGS's Geosystems award for her MA thesis research presentation, which was entitled "Evidence of the Hydrosocial Cycle in Urban Environments." Heather also presented her research at CSUF's HSS Student Research Symposium.



Heather R. receiving her Geosystems Award from CGS President (and CSUF Alumna) Tiffany Seeley (above).

Spring 2024 Research Presentations (contd.)



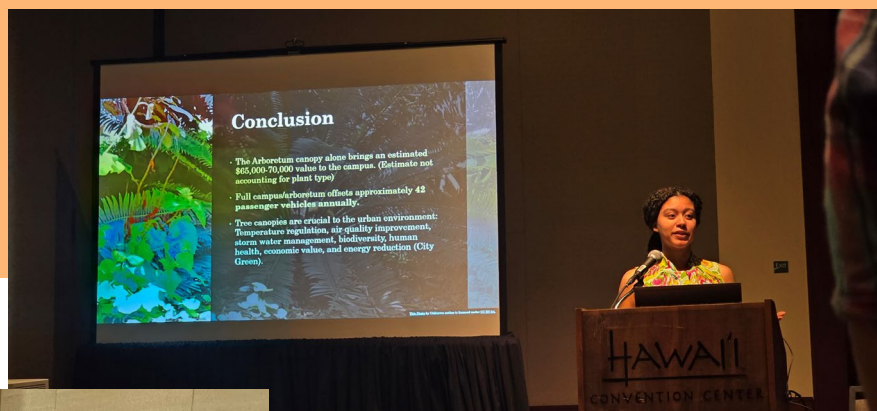
In addition, faculty members presented their research in several other venues. Dr. Dydia DeLyser, with Celeste Hong and Paul Greenstein, led a tour and presentation entitled, “Shining a Light on New Chinatown” for the Museum of Neon Art. Also, Dr. DeLyser presented “Ramona Memories” for the Huntington Westerners, a local historical society.

AAG Honorary Geographer Nainoa Thompson and CSUF Professor Dr. Dydia DeLyser (left). Photo by Sophia Zaragocin (Universidad de San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador).

Delaney C. presenting her research on the Fullerton Arboretum at the AAG Conference (below).

Dr. Jindong Wu presented “Remote Sensing and Environmental Monitoring: Case Studies” as part of the CSUF Department of Geological Sciences seminar series.

Dr. Zia Salim presented “Dreams and



CSUF students Daniela K. and Richie M. took part in the AAG’s World Geography Bowl, as part of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers’ team (above)

Disasters: Imagining Ecology and Environment in L.A. Literature”, with co-author Dr. Nicole Seymour of the CSUF Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics, as part of the CSUF Pollak Library’s Noontime Talks lecture series.

Spring 2024 Outreach and Visibility

In Spring 2024, our students, staff, and faculty took part in many events to promote awareness of Geography and to share Geography with a range of audiences. These outreach and visibility events included the following:

- To the CSUF community: The Geography Club tabled at CSUF's Discoverfest club event (*pictured, top*).
- To community college students: Dr. Trevis Matheus' presented on his research and teaching at Irvine Valley College (*pictured, right center*), Saddleback College, and Santiago Canyon College, and Dr. Mark Drayse gave a guest lecture on economic geography for an Irvine Valley College geography field course (*pictured, lower right*).
- To the wider community: Dr. John Carroll, Professor Vanessa Engstrom, and Professor Olivia Hinton took part in a Community Science Night event for 2000 Orange Unified School District and the Placentia Yorba Linda Unified School District students and family members – our Augmented Reality Sandbox (*pictured, left*) is always a hit!



CSUF Geography alumni: We would love to know what you've been up to! Send us an email at zsalm@fullerton.edu

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<https://geography.fullerton.edu/>

Department of Geography & the Environment
California State University, Fullerton
800 N. State College Blvd.
Fullerton, CA 92834-6846

Department Office: Humanities 420A
Department Hours: Monday-Friday,
8:00am-5:00pm
Fax: (657) 278-5223
Email: csuf_10122@fullerton.edu



Cover Image: During the Spring 2024 semester, Professor Lei Xu organized a field trip to visit the Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights for students in GEOG 160 (Human Geography), GEOG 340 (Asia), and GEOG 345 (China). The cover image shows Professor Xu and her students in front of the Buddhist temple during the Lunar New Year event.