

**DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS**

- Asian American Studies
- Chicana/o Studies
- English
- Gender & Women's Studies
- Liberal Studies & Humanities Interdisciplinary Program
- Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures
- Philosophy
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- American Indian Studies
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## The College of Humanities Newsletter

### Message from Humanities Dean Elizabeth A. Say



**Elizabeth A. Say, Ph.D. Alum 1981**

This issue will celebrate some of the changes in the College of Humanities. We will introduce you to the new chairs from the departments of English and Philosophy. You will also meet the newest members of the College of Humanities faculty, who each enrich our commitment to "explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures, and languages of humanity." This same commitment will be celebrated in two upcoming events described in the newsletter: the annual CSUN Powwow in November and the Queer People of Color Conference (QPOCC) that will be held in March 2012. The Women's Research and Resource Center is entering a new era with the introduction of a full-time director; we expect to see the WRRC flourish under her leadership. And finally, in this edition, we celebrate the life and mourn the passing of one of our colleagues from the Chicana/o Studies department.

I hope you will find time to attend some of our events, meet some of our staff and colleagues, and enjoy some of the new campus opportunities during this academic year.

### Campus Powwow in November

Powwows are about much more than delicious fry bread, and since 1976 CSUN community members have gathered in the fall to observe and participate in the Native American cultural traditions that modern powwows honor. On November 26, the American Indian Studies program and the American Indian Students Association will present the 28th CSUN Powwow on the lawn by the Chicano House.

The date is deliberate, as it marks the end of Indigenous Awareness Month. Since 2001 the AIS program and AISA have observed Indigenous Awareness Month in November, during which organizers screen films, host speakers, and stage other events to educate the campus community about Native American heritage and struggles to survive eradication, both in the past and in the present. The annual powwow is the culminating event in this series.



*Photo courtesy of Christianna Triolo*

Powwows welcome Natives and non-Natives alike to meet, socialize, and experience the power of cultural and spiritual traditions. Many traditional dances and songs have ritual meaning and are performed with a high level of precision by featured guests, but spectators who have never attended a powwow won't be left guessing: The master of ceremonies will clarify the meaning of events in the itinerary as they happen, inviting audience participation wherever appropriate.

The AISA, first chartered in 1974, and the AIS program, founded in 1997 with an academic minor, will announce further details about the lineup and itinerary as the date draws near. Admission is free, so come on out for some fry bread, but stay for an unforgettable cultural experience.

— ***Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison***

## Meet the New Philosophy Chair: Dr. Tim Black

Tim Black was captivated by the field of philosophy from his first exposure, as an undergraduate at Auburn University. It was a symbolic logic course, he says, and he felt right at home with the analytical rigor of its content. On exploring the field through additional courses, he found a mentor in Professor Kelly Jolley. “[He] made a point of learning what my interests were in philosophy and of cultivating those interests,” Black says. “It was a new experience for me, having one of my instructors take the time to get to know me and to express a genuine interest in my academic development.” The Alabama native graduated Auburn with a double major in English and philosophy, then went on to earn his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.



*Photo Courtesy of Tim Black*

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“WHAT DOES IT  
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As the incoming chair of Philosophy at CSUN, where he has taught for eight years, Dr. Black sees similar strengths in his home department. “We have a faculty that is very strong in a wide range of philosophical specialties,” he says, “[so] students are sure to find someone among the faculty who shares their interests and who can help them cultivate those interests.” Black, who has served as the department’s academic advisor since 2008, believes his colleagues are unsurpassed as both teachers and mentors. “We care about our majors and minors, and we try very hard to be involved in their academic development,” he says. “It is rare, I think, to find, in an institution as large as CSUN, a department as devoted to its students as we are in Philosophy.”

Black enthusiastically recommends his discipline to potential majors and minors, especially to those with analytical bents like his own, but he also thinks non-majors searching for elective courses should look beyond the critical thinking general education requirement. He acknowledges that philosophical inquiry can seem daunting to casual students. “It’s as difficult to understand philosophy as it is to understand ourselves,” he says, “[but] in my mind, there’s no more important business, even though it’s sometimes difficult to do, than the business of understanding ourselves.”

In considering questions and problems without explicit answers, “students of philosophy learn to think critically, to read carefully, to write clearly and persuasively, and to make thoughtful, smart decisions,” Dr. Black says. These are skills that are universally applicable, and the subject matter is endlessly interesting and relevant. “Students of philosophy get to ask, talk about, and try to answer the most interesting and intriguing of all questions, in my opinion,” he says. “What does it mean to say that our actions are right or wrong, that our treatment of our fellow human beings is just or unjust? Why think that God exists? Why think that *anything* exists?”

For students interested in exploring philosophy further, he recommends a number of potential courses with broad relevance and interest: Sexual Ethics; Philosophy of Religion; Existentialism; Philosophy and Feminism; Contemporary Social and Political Issues; and, for advanced students, Philosophy of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality.

“Why are we here? Why am I here? What does it mean to live a good and a happy life? These are questions that all of us ask and that all of us, at least in certain moments, are compelled to try to answer, even if we never

enroll in a philosophy class," Black says. "Now, answering these questions is certainly a hard thing to do, but anyone who is at all willing to reflect on herself and her situation in the world can appreciate and contribute to this project, the project of asking and trying to answer these significant, fundamental human questions."

— *Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison*

## Meet the New English Chair: Dr. Jackie Stallcup



Photo Courtesy of Jackie Stallcup

The incoming chair of English, Dr. Jackie Stallcup, still can't believe she gets paid to do something she loves as much as teaching at CSUN, though her career trajectory has been anything but direct. Initially accepted to Cal State Los Angeles's business program out of high school, she notes with a laugh that she didn't actually know, beyond wearing suits to work, what it meant to be a businessperson. She soon redirected her energy toward a major in animal science at Cal Poly Pomona, but second-guessed that option when she heard that she would have to castrate a pig—perhaps, rumor had it, with her teeth.

Remarkably, it wasn't until Stallcup's junior year at Pomona that she took freshman composition — a mystery she really can't explain. There she received positive feedback on her writing and felt that perhaps she had finally found her niche. After changing her major and graduating, she worked in publishing for six years. Eventually turned off by the grind of working at a monthly magazine, she became attracted to the idea of teaching and entered a Ph.D. program in literature at UC Riverside.

It was in an 18th-century literature course at UCR that Stallcup wrote a paper on *Gulliver's Travels*, responding to the story's elements as a work of children's literature. "It was another moment of, Aha! I've finally found my place!" she says. In examining the many adaptations that have been made of Jonathan Swift's satiric work to make it more palatable to children—at least in the minds of the adults doing the adapting — became fascinated with what children's literature can tell us about popular conceptions of childhood.

Still, one last hurdle remained in her career path: her first, observed student teaching session. She recounts, "I hauled myself to the top of the stairs and stood there for a moment. Off to my left was the classroom and straight in front of me was the women's room. It was a moment of decision. I could go teach my class, or I could go puke." Happily, she chose the former; she says that her nervousness almost instantly melted away and that she's loved stepping in front of a class ever since.

Upon graduation she practically forced herself on Cal Poly Pomona, convincing their English department against the odds that they needed a children's lit specialist. "At that time children's lit was a service course that no one took seriously or wanted to teach," Dr. Stallcup says. Though scholarship in children's literature has come a long way over the past two decades, there are still professors who doubt that it bears academic scrutiny, or they simply dismiss the point of analyzing what they refer to as cute kiddie books—in which case Stallcup, to illustrate a point about academia's often frustratingly hierarchical approach to "true" literature, can sometimes be heard speaking in a sing-song tone about Walt Whitman's "fuzzy-wuzzy beard." Then she will implore anyone who will listen to look past the juvenile humor—or, more to the point, poop jokes—in Dav Pilkey's *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* to "reconsider some of the [literary] boundaries that have marked our world."

Knowing that students are often dogged by the same level of judgment

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**"I HAVE HAD SO MANY INCREDIBLY PATIENT, KIND, AND ENCOURAGING MENTORS TO HELP ME FIGURE OUT WHO I AM, WHAT I WANT TO DO, AND HOW TO DO THE THINGS THAT I WANT TO DO," SHE SAYS.**

**"CONNECTING WITH A MENTOR IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THAT I THINK ANYONE CAN DO."**

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about their academic and career choices, Dr. Stallcup is enthusiastic about mentorship. She considers it a benefit that she grew up in southeast Los Angeles and attended some of the same community colleges, shares some of the same cultural references, and faced some of the same indecision about college as many of her students. "I have had so many incredibly patient, kind, and encouraging mentors to help me figure out who I am, what I want to do, and how to do the things that I want to do," she says. "Connecting with a mentor is one of the most important things that I think anyone can do." In fact, as pleased as she is to have been elected as English chair, she's not sure how she's going to get through the next several years without teaching, perhaps in part because she feels she learns as much from her students as they learn from her.

Dr. Stallcup, who has taught at CSUN since 1999, lives in Ontario, Calif., with her husband, Wade, who is an artist, as well as a menagerie of pets including five cats, one dog, and two horses. She says that caring for the horses is a soothing exercise for her. As for another therapeutic activity you may often see her engaged in: "I knit in meetings because, believe it or not, it really helps me to focus," she says. "So if I'm in a meeting with you and I'm knitting away at a hat or a pair of baby booties, you know that I'm really listening and absorbing with all my might."

That said, please don't take it personally if she doesn't knit when she's meeting with you.

— ***Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison***

## Meet Two of the Newest Members of the College

**DR. BRIAN BURKHART**, one of two new full-time College of Humanities faculty to arrive in the 2010/11 academic year, is delighted that his appointment in the American Indian Studies program has him interacting within a variety of disciplines that make full use of his academic training. Burkhart received his bachelor's degree in philosophy and Native American literature at the University of Northern Colorado, after which he earned his Ph.D. in philosophy, with a minor in religious studies, at Indiana University, Bloomington.



*Photo courtesy of Brian Burkhart*

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**"BURKHART CREDITS HIS DEGREE COMPLETION TO 'SHEER WILL.' 'I STARTED BACK AT THE LOWEST OF THE REMEDIAL CLASSES,' HE SAYS. 'BUT THAT ONLY MADE ME MORE MOTIVATED AND FOCUSED ON SUCCEEDING.'"**

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Burkhart credits his degree completion to "sheer will." An enrolled member of Oklahoma's Cherokee Nation who spent much of his life growing up on the Navajo Nation in Arizona, Burkhart notes a 50% dropout rate among Native Americans within their first year of college. Unprepared for academic challenges and not knowing where to turn for help, he dropped out in his first semester.

After completing service with the National Guard, Burkhart traveled around the country, making his living as a musician on the powwow circuit. While he has never stopped performing at powwows and related events—he is currently a member of the local Southern drum group Bearwolf—Burkhart eventually found himself drawn back to school. "I started back at the lowest of the remedial classes," he says. "But that only made me more motivated and focused on succeeding."

It was the "godfather of Native American studies," Vine Deloria, Jr., who encouraged Burkhart to pursue an academic career in the developing field. Deloria is widely credited with reviving Native American pride and activism, not least through his establishment of the nation's first master's degree program in American Indian Studies, at the University of Arizona. So when he told Burkhart that the movement needed people like him, who could teach AIS from a different perspective, Burkhart took the advice to heart. "He said we needed to create a new conversation about [Native American lives] and tell a better, more complicated philosophical story," Burkhart recalls.

In addition to teaching core courses in American Indian Studies, Burkhart and program coordinator Scott Andrews are working with the College of Humanities and the Institute for Sustainability to bring Native American perspectives on environmental justice to the new Sustainability minor. And Burkhart would like to co-create a course with the Philosophy department that would explore the intricacies and influences of Native American social, political, and existential thought. Burkhart, who previously taught for five years at Pitzer College in Claremont, Calif., particularly values his opportunities to mentor AIS students, who are often struggling with concepts of heritage, meaning, and connection—concerns that strike at the very core of the philosophy discipline. "Students come to [me] with issues of identity, trying to discover who they are and how they relate to that," Burkhart says. He can't imagine a higher purpose than helping AIS students grapple with those essential questions, fulfilling Vine Deloria's vision along the way.

— *Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison*

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## Meet Two of the Newest Members of the College continued from page 4



Photo courtesy of Suyapa Portillo

**DR. SUYAPA PORTILLO**, who also arrived in the 2010/11 academic year, is proud to make her home at CSUN, teaching in the nation's first and only Central American Studies program.

"This program is important to the entire academic community because it struggles to provide an interesting balance between the academic study of history, culture, and the current situation in Central America and the Central American community in the United States," says Portillo, who came to CSUN on the heels of earning her Ph.D. in history at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. "It really brings together international and domestic issues for the Central American community, helping students to grapple with sometimes contradictory and challenging themes within the study of migration, diaspora, history,

and memory—and the cultural, historical, and political productions that these elicit."

Born in Copán, Honduras, Portillo migrated to the United States as a child with her mother and settled in Los Angeles, home to more than half of the nation's Central American population. She grew up in the Echo Park/Highland Park area, where her mother served as chief shop steward for the Local 11 affiliate of Unite HERE. "I grew up in the union hall and around immigrant workers' struggles," Portillo says. After earning her bachelor's degree with a double major in psychology and Latin American literature at Pitzer College in Claremont, Calif., Portillo returned to Los Angeles to work as a union field organizer and as an advocate for community-based organizations. Such concerns would inform her later graduate work and career.

Dr. Portillo's research interests focus on Honduras and Central America, with particular attention to labor aspects of the history of the banana export industry, marking "the intersections between labor, gender, ethnicity, and race in workers' lives." She has extensively explored plantation worker activism in the formation of labor unions and federations and campesino organizations. She continues to challenge popular stereotypes of Hondurans through her examination of the life histories of workers leading up to the general strike of 1954, during which more than 40,000 employees of the two largest banana exporters in Honduras walked off their jobs, bringing the industry to a halt and eventually winning union recognition and substantial increases in compensation.

These personal narratives "demonstrate the complex negotiations involved in creating community, organizing for survival and mutual aid, resisting company control, and adapting to conditions of the fincas [living areas] in Honduras," Portillo says. Her work has much contemporary relevance. With labor unions and immigration hyper-politicized in the United States, it's worth looking at past efforts to build community across seemingly diffuse populations. "One can no longer look at Latin America, and in this case Central America, without examining and observing the dialectical relationship of Central American immigrants in the U.S., Canada, and Spain," Portillo says.

In addition to studying the enormous contributions of labor activists, Portillo is interested in Central American immigration issues, with a special focus on movements and migrations among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer Latinas/os. She spends much of her free

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**"DR. PORTILLO'S RESEARCH INTERESTS FOCUS ON HONDURAS AND CENTRAL AMERICA, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO LABOR ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE BANANA EXPORT INDUSTRY, MARKING 'THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN LABOR, GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND RACE IN WORKERS' LIVES.'"**

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time volunteering with LGBTIQ community organizations both in Los Angeles and Honduras. "Raising awareness about the discrimination faced by the transgender community is really important to me," she says.

Settling in nicely at CSUN, Portillo notes that her favorite aspects of teaching include "getting to know students—finding out about their family history, how they ended up at CSUN, and how they chose their major."

— ***Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison***

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**"A PERMANENT CENTER COULD OFFER PEER-TO-PEER COUNSELING, TAILORED HEALTH INFORMATION AND REFERRALS, ASSISTANCE WITH DISCRIMINATION AND BULLYING, AND COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS ON SUBJECTS LIKE COMING OUT TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY."**

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## In Search of an LGBT Resource Center

Creative writing professor Martin Pousson sees a steady stream of students during his office hours, and many of them aren't even enrolled in his classes. Pousson enthusiastically welcomes the traffic; as advisor to three lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-oriented groups on campus, he often sees his office as a de facto LGBT resource center. Nevertheless, his greatest wish is that CSUN's thousands of minority-sexuality students will soon have a place to seek support beyond the relatively tight confines of his faculty office.

CSUN's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance—which will next year celebrate its 30th anniversary as a chartered student organization—meets weekly but still lacks a regular venue in which to gather. Without such designated space, the group finds it difficult to maintain a campus presence and reach out to the students who may need its support the most. In such a liminal state, LGBTA has largely functioned as a social organization in recent years, with membership typically numbering between 100 and 150. But in fall 2010 those members rose up in response to an alarming nationwide spate of suicides by gay youths. During a vigil to honor the lives of nine gay male teenagers who took their own lives in September 2010, reportedly in response to ongoing harassment and bullying by classmates, a core of LGBTA members found a sense of mission in establishing a resource center to help prevent the kinds of tragedies that drew them together that night.

Such a center would offer safe space to minority-sexuality students, not just during the two hours that LGBTA meets but all week long. A permanent center could offer peer-to-peer counseling, tailored health information and referrals, assistance with discrimination and bullying, and communication workshops on subjects like coming out to friends and family. It could also serve as a locus for the growing number of LGBT social, support, and academic groups on campus. In addition to LGBTA, the university charters a chapter of Gamma Rho Lambda, a lesbian sorority that is inclusive of transgender, bisexual, and allied straight women. Emerging groups also include LGBTQ Ambassadors, a leadership organization that advocates for the inclusion and rights of minority-sexuality campus community members; Queer Studies Students Association, composed of students minoring in the College of Humanities' Queer Studies program; and the Queer People of Color Committee, a group that grew out of a successful bid to bring the statewide QPOC Conference to CSUN in 2012.

The QPOC Committee could particularly use organizing space now, as its members go about the hard work of planning and financing their conference, slated for the weekend of March 30–April 1. Organizers estimate that they'll need to raise \$25,000 to fund accommodations and services for the event's workshops, forums, presentations, and other activities. A partner in spirit, the Gender and Women's Studies Student Association has offered logistical support as well as a pledge to kick off fundraising for the conference. Additional support has come from LGBTA and the University Student Union, but the financial goal remains distant. Visit the event homepage at [qpocc2012.org](http://qpocc2012.org) to track fundraising entertainment events or to donate.

Fundraising is also at issue in the establishment of a resource center. Following LGBTA's resolution at the fall 2010 vigil, a consortium led by the LGBTQ Ambassadors appeared before a presidential board to secure space for a resource center in the University Student Union. That commitment is encouraging, but the allocation could be lost without additional funding: Currently, the consortium has enough to finance the buildout of the

available space but nothing left over for ongoing considerations. While volunteers stand eager to staff the space, operating funds must be available to ensure its viability. Nevertheless, Pousson remains ever optimistic. "The center is coming along," he says, "just much more slowly than any of us would like."

In the meantime, Pousson notes that LGBT initiatives and events continue to flourish at CSUN. Lt. Dan Choi, an Arabic linguist whose dismissal under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" helped draw national attention to the law's negative impact on military readiness, addressed the campus during National Coming Out Week; November 14–18 marks Trans Awareness Week, featuring a Transgiving Film Festival November 17; LGBTA will schedule its second High School Resource Fair in early March, offering peer workshops and support to teens; late March brings the QPOC Conference to CSUN; LGBT students and allies will observe the National Day of Silence on April 15, followed by LGBTA's annual Gay Prom; and in May, LGBTA will host CSUN's third annual Rainbow Graduation, open to all; last year's event proved so popular that a larger facility became necessary to accommodate everyone. In short, Pousson promises, "This will be the unofficial Year of the Queer at CSUN!"

— Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison

## Women's Research and Resource Center

The 2011/12 academic year brings many changes to the CSUN campus, and the Women's Research and Resource Center continues to evolve along with it. The most significant change at the WRRC is the installation of a full-time director to oversee daily operations and ongoing programming. As the first full-time staff director, I foresee great things on the horizon.

Well into our 37th year, there are plenty of lessons we've learned, both about what has made us great and what has held us back. As a part-time director, I was able to maintain our usual goings-on: a space for students to use daily; thoughtful and empowering programming; and collaboration with various departments and student organizations. That said, our limited resources allowed us to maintain only these core services. As full-time director I hope to create change—visualizing, developing, and actualizing innovative programming to bring greater awareness of the WRRC and women's issues to our campus and the surrounding community.

But just as the Women's Center is evolving, so are our students, presenting a great challenge with which I'm hoping faculty and staff can help. Our momentum is hampered by a two-year cycle of engaged student activists. We capture their attention and energy, they show up, they participate, they organize, and they inspire. And then, just as we begin to see the fruits of all their labor, they graduate.

Of course, this is what we want: graduating students! However, the downside of this is that student organizations and centers like ours must work arduously and continuously to captivate the next generation of student activists. We engage in aggressive outreach: classroom announcements, tabling on the quad, and frequent messaging that maximizes use of social networking outlets. This year, we are going a step further. This year, we are going to make phone calls to anyone who signs up on our interest sheets. This year, we are going to call each and every one of our Gender and Women's Studies majors and minors. This year, we are pulling out all the stops to engage students in our mission.

Nevertheless, we recognize that there's only so much we are capable of doing on our own, and that's where you come in. Have you talked to your students about the importance of campus involvement? Have you encouraged them to take part in on-campus extracurricular activities? Have you shared the benefits of joining a student group? Have you considered offering extra credit for volunteer work? Certainly, students are here because of CSUN's academic reputation, but the social and developmental components of student life can be equally rewarding.

I often hear it said that "CSUN is a commuter school," but that implies its students have no sense of community. Ask any Women's Center volunteer if they see CSUN as a commuter school and s/he will emphatically attest that the WRRC serves to create a cohesive community, one where students want to "stick around" long after class lets out. Most have limited time to volunteer, but for students who manage to squeeze in even an hour at the WRRC, CSUN starts to feel a little less like a sprawling campus and a little more like a good friend's living room where good things happen!

— **Submitted by Shira Brown**

For more information about the Women's Research and Resource Center:

Call us at: 818-677-2780

E-mail us at: [wrrc@csun.edu](mailto:wrrc@csun.edu)

Like us at: <http://www.facebook.com/csunwrrc>

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**"THIS YEAR, WE ARE GOING TO MAKE PHONE CALLS TO ANYONE WHO SIGNS UP ON OUR INTEREST SHEETS. THIS YEAR, WE ARE GOING TO CALL EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJORS AND MINORS. THIS YEAR, WE ARE PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN OUR MISSION."**

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## In Memoriam: Annette Cardona

Annette Cardona, who died August 3 at age 63, may be best remembered internationally for her role in *Grease* — credited as “Annette Charles”— as bad girl Charlene “Cha Cha” DiGregorio, the self-proclaimed “best dancer at St. Bernadette’s,” who crashes the Rydell High dance-off, bumping and grinding her way to a win with Danny Zuko while a humiliated Sandy



*Photo courtesy of Cardona family*

leaves the gym in a pouty huff. The audience was meant to side with the sweet and innocent Sandy in the scene, but Cardona gave Cha Cha’s character a magnetism that brought out the self-assured bad girl in all of us. Such was her scene-stealing allure that Mattel fashioned a Barbie doll after her, releasing the “Grease Dance-off Cha Cha” in 2008 to mark the film’s 30th anniversary.

That kind of notoriety is hard to beat. Nevertheless, the Cal State Northridge campus community remembers Cardona best as the supportive and enthusiastic advocate who helped students find their voice as an instructor of speech communication and public speaking in the Chicana and Chicano Studies department, where she had taught since 2002. To the classroom she brought her experience in performing arts as well as her training as a mental health clinician, having returned to school following her decades-long career in theater, TV, and film to earn a bachelor’s degree in psychology and theater at Antioch University Los Angeles and a master’s in social work at New York University.

“True actors are open, patient people—their skill set is not unlike that of a good therapist,” Cardona told the campus faculty-staff newspaper *@CSUN* in a January 2011 profile. “For me, speech communication is about finding your voice and using it to enrich your life.”

Elyssa Berger, a former student who acknowledges she had initially dreaded fulfilling her general education oral communication requirement, told the student newspaper the *Daily Sundial* that Cardona’s class was “transforming” for her as well as for other students. “I saw these big tough guys doing theater exercises,” she told the *Sundial*. “They dropped their egos at the door.” Another former CSUN student of Cardona’s was moved by an online obituary to write, anonymously, “Her selfless work in the community as well as her compassion for her students are things that I will always remember. She pushed her students to not only do their best in school, but to be the best human beings they could be.”

Cardona reached out to younger students, too, merging her training in adolescent psychology with her performance experience to co-write and co-

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**“HER SELFLESS WORK IN THE COMMUNITY AS WELL AS HER COMPASSION FOR HER STUDENTS ARE THINGS THAT I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER. SHE PUSHED HER STUDENTS TO NOT ONLY DO THEIR BEST IN SCHOOL, BUT TO BE THE BEST HUMAN BEINGS THEY COULD BE.”**

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direct the musical theater production *Second Chance*, which dealt with the impact of issues such as substance abuse, pregnancy, gang violence, and suicidal thoughts among teens. When the show toured secondary schools in the early 1990s, Cardona and her creative partners were often asked to soften aspects that some adults found too controversial, but they always insisted on staying true to the production as written, finding little point in pulling punches when they were trying to deliver a message of hope to youths. Lynne Heffley wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1992 that, following performances of *Second Chance*, school site coordinators routinely reported upticks in “the number of students who refer themselves for help because of drug dependency, gang involvement, and other at-risk behavior.”

Highlights of the native Angeleno's 25 years in entertainment include having worked with choreographers Bob Fosse and Michael Bennett, actors Anthony Quinn and Katharine Hepburn, and playwright Tennessee Williams. She also performed at the White House for Ronald and Nancy Reagan with musical theater star Mary Martin and master violinist Itzhak Perlman. With that kind of résumé, how could Cardona have guessed that her relatively small role in *Grease* would bring her worldwide fame?

“I almost said no [to the role],” she told the *Daily Sundial*. “I was working really hard to become an actress and didn't want to be thought of as just a dancer.” The richness of Cardona's experiences and the magnitude of her influence on her students, clients, and community ensure that she'll be remembered for so much more.

Cardona was hospitalized with pneumonia at USC University Hospital in June, at which time she was diagnosed with stage-four nonsmokers lung cancer. She died just six weeks later.

— Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison



## The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;

Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;

Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and

Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.

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