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SPRING 2018





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UC SANTA CRUZ MAGAZINE SPRING 2018



UC Santa Cruz has designated 2018 as the **Year of Alumni**, a time to savor, celebrate, and promote the legacy of proud Banana Slugs who have made their mark as they've gone on to successful careers and paradigm-shifting endeavors.

This issue's articles are about alumni or written by alumni. This is our way of sharing stories of graduates whose lives were changed by UC Santa Cruz and who embody the values and qualities that represent this campus—social justice, public service, environmental stewardship, a dedication to exploring the human condition, and a determination to change the world.

We hope you're inspired by these stories. We are.

10 Preventing plastic's perils

Chemistry professor Rebecca Braslau is working to make a new kind of plastic without phthalates, which can mimic hormones and cause health problems.

13 Alumni Weekend: Come home

Alumni Weekend is April 27–29, 2018. Check out the full program of events and join fellow alumni for mingling, reminiscing, learning, and lingering.

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She sketched out a check for him from the "Cowell College Love Bank," and they went their separate ways—until 39 years later.

20 Comic relief

Alumnus Doug Bragdon employs student artists with *Santa Cruz Comics*, a new glossy magazine that takes its cue from Japanese manga comics.

24 These walls can talk

First-generation Salvadoran American Mauricio Ramirez—an alumnus and current grad student—finds voice, art, and inspiration in the murals of San Francisco's Mission District.



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About the cover: Illustration by Taylor Callery

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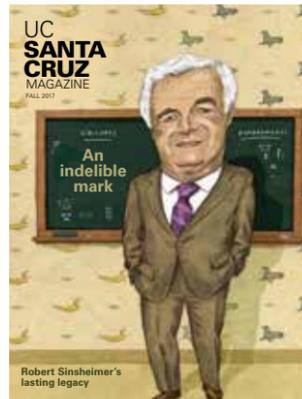
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LETTERS

Rants, raves, recommendations,
and love letters from our readers.
Write us at magazine@ucsc.edu.



ADMIRATION FOR SINSEIMER

I'd like to commend you for the insightful, well-researched, and thoughtful article on Chancellor Sinsheimer ["An indelible mark," page 21, fall '17]. I was the last vice chancellor for advancement Sinsheimer hired prior to his retirement.

You captured his lasting achievements and touched on the significant changes he made on campus. When I was there, a great number of faculty and students were fuming/protesting over his changes in the college and board of studies systems. Sinsheimer saw the future and made changes that, I

believe, propelled UC Santa Cruz into the ranks of "serious" universities, while still maintaining a sense of community in the colleges.

I solicited his friend Arthur Graham to fund the endowed chair in his honor and was delighted when Art and Carol Graham replied affirmatively.

Everyone loved Karen Sinsheimer, who managed to "humanize" Robert and open up the campus to the larger Santa Cruz community. Robert had an annoying, but funny, habit of flicking the lights at University House when a dinner with donors went too long.

Thanks for the article that brought back many memories.
—Terry Jones
Newport Beach

I worked from August 1973 through the '70s as the assistant for public affairs and planning to Chancellors McHenry, Christensen, Taylor, and Sinsheimer.

It is difficult to overstate the contribution Chancellor Sinsheimer made to the campus. Being viewed as

a "hippie school" was the least of its problems.

When I arrived on the campus, it was clear that UC Santa Cruz faced a number of major challenges—from the legislature; the community; the UC system; the campus itself; and the negative national, state, and local media coverage of the mass murders in Santa Cruz.

UC Santa Cruz—this gorgeous campus that had done so many things right—was struggling.

Only if one understands the depth of the challenge can one appreciate what Bob Sinsheimer accomplished. His appointment as chancellor was a significant lift for the campus.

What Chancellor Sinsheimer did was extraordinary. Through his exceptional intellect and integrity he not only saved the campus, but also laid the foundation for the outstanding institution UC Santa Cruz has become.

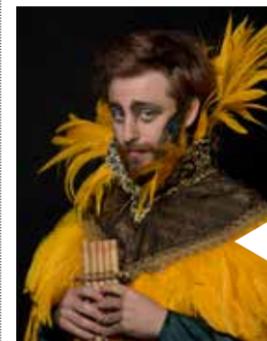
—Dan McFadden, Ph.D.

PHOTOS: MUSEUM BY CRYSTAL BIRNS; OPERA BY STEVE DIBARTOLOMEO; ISLER, COURTESY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, RYAN LASH; ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES YANG.



CIED Business Design Showcase

April 18
6 p.m.
Silicon Valley Campus



Night at the Museum: "Global 1968: Race and Revolution Around the World"

May 16
6 p.m.
Santa Cruz Museum of Art
& History

Right Livelihood North American Laureates Gathering

May 15-18
Various locations on
campus and in town

Spring Opera: *The Magic Flute*

Opens May 31
UC Santa Cruz

To see a full list of upcoming UC Santa Cruz events, visit events.ucsc.edu.

Founders Celebration

Fall 2018, date TBD
UC Santa Cruz

Farm to Fork

Fall 2018
Date and location TBD



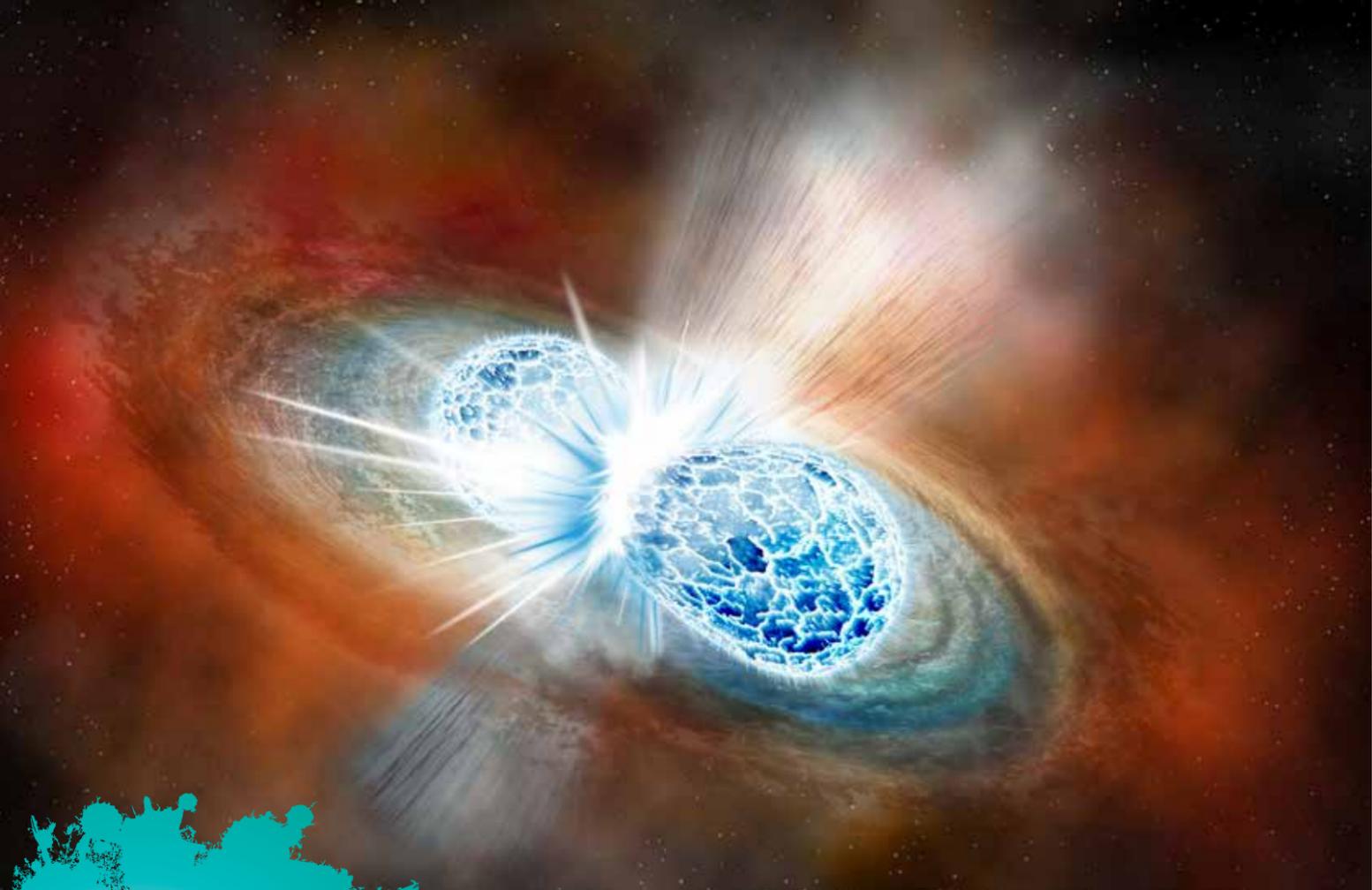
Mandel Lecture with Jedidah Isler

June 7
7:30 p.m.
Rio Theatre

Alumni Weekend

April 27-29
See page 13
for full
weekend
program





THIS IS UC SANTA CRUZ

A small team of UC Santa Cruz astronomers was the first to observe the light from the violent merger of two neutron stars.

Explosive discovery

On August 17, the Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) notified astronomers around the world of the possible detection of gravitational waves from the merger of two neutron stars.

From that moment, the race was on to detect a visible counterpart, because unlike the colliding black holes responsible for LIGO's four previous detections of gravitational waves, this event was expected to produce a brilliant explosion of visible light and other types of radiation.

A small team led by Ryan Foley, assistant professor of astronomy and astrophysics, was the first to find the source of the gravitational waves, located in a galaxy 130 million light-years away. "This is a huge discovery," Foley said. "We're finally connecting these two different ways of looking at the universe, observing the same thing in light and gravitational waves, and for that alone this is a landmark event."

Among other things, the results could resolve a hotly debated question about the origins of gold and other heavy elements in the universe.

A horse is a horse, of course—or is it?

Researchers discovered a previously unrecognized genus of extinct horses that roamed North America during the last ice age.

The new findings are based on an analysis of ancient DNA from fossils of the "New World stilt-legged horse."

Prior to this study, these thin-limbed, lightly built horses were thought to be related to the Asiatic wild ass or

Opposite page: Illustration depicting a family of stilt-legged horses (*Haringtonhippus francisci*) in Yukon, Canada, during the last ice age.

onager, or simply a separate species within the genus *Equus*, which includes living horses, asses, and zebras.

The new results, however, reveal that these horses, now named *Haringtonhippus francisci*, were not closely related to any living population of horses.

"The horse family, thanks to its rich and deep fossil record, has been a model system for understanding and teaching evolution. Now ancient DNA has rewritten the evolutionary history of this iconic group," said Peter Heintzman, who led the study as a postdoctoral researcher at UC Santa Cruz.

At the end of the last ice age, both *Equus* and *Haringtonhippus francisci* became extinct in North America, along with other large animals like woolly mammoths

and saber-toothed cats. *Equus* survived in Eurasia, eventually leading to domestic horses.

Taking on poverty

Among the greatest challenges facing the Golden State is that one in five Californians live in poverty.

Students at UC Santa Cruz are focused on the problem, gaining hands-on experience in community-engaged research with an eye toward reducing poverty and promoting economic justice.

Each year, student scholars of the Blum Center on Poverty, Social Enterprise, and Participatory Governance dive into a range of issues related to fiscal equity, affordable housing, and food insecurity as they build the skills they'll need to help create a more equitable society.

"We are training the next generation of scholars and advocates in the ongoing war on poverty," said Heather Bullock, a professor of psychology and the director of the UC Santa Cruz Blum Center, which recently received a \$500,000 gift to deepen and expand its reach.

Planned activities include the creation of a new micro-lending program for low-income students and an initiative to bolster food security among students.

Schooling the education system

As a professor of education, Rod Ogawa spent 30 years studying public schools, trying to figure out how to improve student performance. In retirement, Ogawa is getting high marks for a new approach.

The answer lies in sharing information, said Ogawa, now a research professor at UC Santa Cruz and the higher-education leader of the Silicon Valley Regional Data Trust (SVRDT), a major new data-sharing initiative.

The data trust will link school districts and offices of education in Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and San Mateo counties with health and human services agencies, enabling teachers, principals, social workers, and others to share information in real time about students and the services they're receiving.

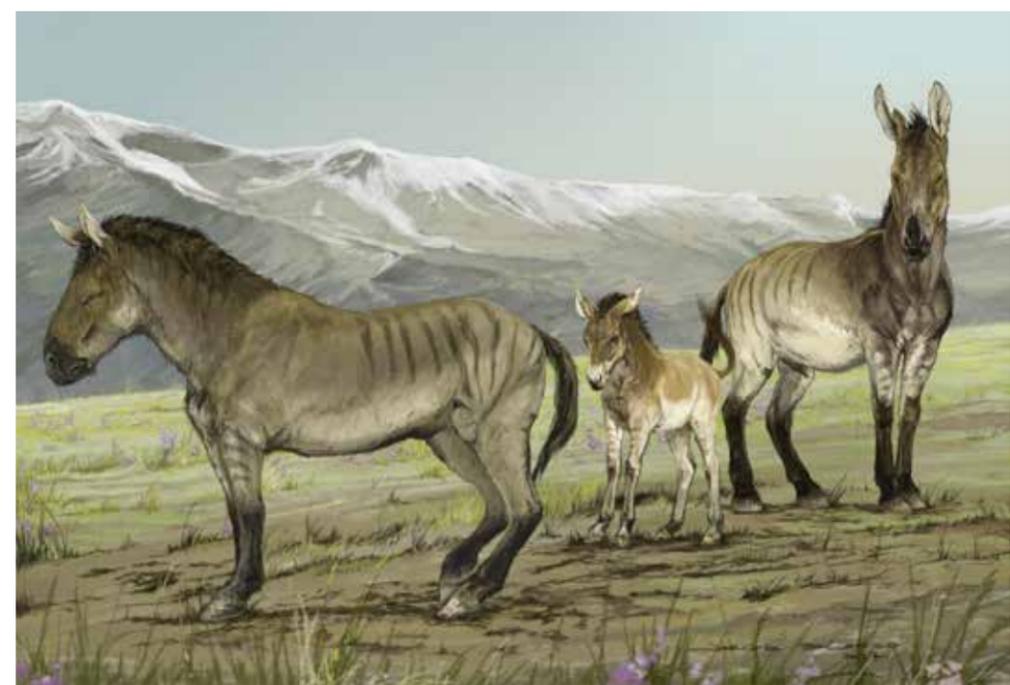
In the current system, separate agency "data silos" make it labor intensive and time consuming to try to get an accurate, timely picture of how a child is doing.

"The thing that was always missing was information," said Ogawa. "This isn't working within organizations to help them improve. This is changing the ground on which they're standing."

Research engine

In the latest analysis of the world's top universities published by *Times Higher Education (THE)*, UC Santa Cruz ranked third in research influence as measured by the number of times its faculty's published work is cited by scholars around the world.

The analysis measured overall research influence based on the average number of citations per paper, using a database of almost 62 million citations to more than 12.4 million research publications published over five years, from 2012 to 2016.



ILLUSTRATIONS: NEUTRON STARS BY ROBIN DIENEL, COURTESY OF THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTION FOR SCIENCE; STILT-LEGGED HORSES © JORGE BLANCO



Left: After their release, narwhals made a series of deep dives, swimming hard to escape, while their heart rates dropped to shockingly low levels (three to four beats per minute). Lower left: Scientists studied narwhals in Scoresby Sound on the east coast of Greenland after releasing them from nets set by native hunters.

With a citation score of 99.9, UC Santa Cruz tied for third place with Stanford University. St. George's University of London and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology tied for first. UC Berkeley ranked just behind UC Santa Cruz and Stanford with a citation score of 99.8.

The *THE* website explains that the citations show whose research has stood out, has been picked up and built on by other scholars, and has been shared around the global scholarly community to expand the boundaries of our understanding.

Whale worries

Heart monitors on narwhals that were released after entanglement in nets showed the animals did a series of deep dives, swimming hard to escape, while their heart rates dropped to unexpectedly low levels of three to four beats per minute.

This combination of hard exercise and low heart rate while not breathing underwater is costly and could make it difficult for the deep-diving whales to get enough oxygen to the brain and other critical organs, according to a new study.

"These are deep-diving marine mammals, but we were not seeing normal dives during the escape period," said Terrie Williams, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology.

Narwhals live year-round in Arctic waters. They have been relatively isolated from human disturbances until recently, when declines in Arctic sea ice have made the region more accessible to shipping, oil exploration, and other human activities.

"The implications of this study are cautionary, showing that the biology of these animals makes them especially vulnerable to disturbance,"

Williams said. "The question is, what are we going to do about it?"

Defusing death

Alumna Morgan Brown's life changed drastically shortly after she graduated.

Her mother was killed by a commercial truck driver on meth, who swerved into her mother's lane and hit her car in a head-on collision.

Devastated, Brown (Kresge '12, history) began traveling to escape. Over a six-month period, she visited nearly two dozen countries.

"The highlight of the trip was in Iceland, where I realized I didn't have to be 'Morgan, whose Mom died'—I could just be someone who is traveling," she recalled.

Brown returned to campus to display her latest project, "Conversations I Wish I Had." She spent an afternoon in the Humanities courtyard, alongside a custom-made, collapsible wooden phone booth.

The idea was for people to enter the phone booth and have a conversation with a lost loved one.

If the participants agreed, some of their conversations were recorded for a podcast.

Brown spent several months going up the West Coast on a mini tour, doing a variety of pop-up events like this. It's all part of her ongoing mission to make death and dying less taboo.

Below: Alumna Morgan Brown with her phone booth in the Humanities courtyard.



PHOTOS: NARWHAL BY TERRIE WILLIAMS; WHALE MEASURING BY MADS PETER HEIDE-JORGENSEN; BROWN BY BLANCA RODRIGUEZ; GREENHOUSE PHOTO BY ELENA ZHUKOVA

Hey, Mr. Librarian Man

Alumnus Mark Davidson has an interesting job title: "Bob Dylan librarian and collections manager."

Last year, Davidson (M.A. '09; Ph.D. '15, music) became the head archivist and librarian of the Bob Dylan Archive, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The Dylan Archive includes 6,000 mostly unseen items from Dylan's personal collection. According to the *New York Times*, it was acquired by the George Kaiser Family Foundation for a reported \$15 million–\$20 million.

The Kaiser Foundation also owns and administers the Woody Guthrie Archives and the Woody Guthrie Center.

The Bob Dylan Archive is not open to the public—it's instead a research collection that is designed to become a resource for academic study—but tourists shouldn't despair. The Kaiser Foundation is sorting through bids to create a Bob Dylan Center in Tulsa, which, like the Guthrie Center, will be the public face of the collection.

Highlights of the Dylan collection include hundreds of original tape reels, unseen concert films, lyric sheets, and personal correspondence.

Campus in demand

In a promising step toward increased transfer enrollment, UC Santa Cruz marked nearly a 12 percent increase in the number of applicants from California community colleges.

More than 9,800 California students applied to transfer to UC Santa Cruz for fall 2018.

"Smart" greenhouses hold great promise for both farming and renewable electricity production.



The campus received 11,282 transfer applications, a 12.8 percent increase over last year.

"Our admissions office has been working up and down the state to be sure that community college students are aware of the welcoming opportunities and distinct learning environment available at UC Santa Cruz," said Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Richard Hughey.

California high school seniors also applied to UC Santa Cruz in record numbers, with the campus receiving 45,737 applications—a 7.1 percent increase over last year.

More than 56,000 students—a new record—applied to be new first-year students for fall 2018 quarter, a 6.9 percent increase over the previous year.

Really green greenhouses (that are magenta)

Tomatoes and cucumbers grown inside electricity-generating solar greenhouses were as healthy as those raised in conventional greenhouses, signaling that "smart" greenhouses hold great promise for dual-use farming and renewable electricity production.

"We have demonstrated that 'smart greenhouses' can capture solar energy for electricity without reducing plant growth," said Michael Loik, professor of environmental studies.

These greenhouses are outfitted with transparent roof panels embedded with a bright magenta dye that absorbs light and transfers

energy to photovoltaic strips, where electricity is produced. The systems absorb some of the blue and green wavelengths of light but let the rest through, allowing the plants to grow.

The technology was developed by Sue Carter and Glenn Alers, both professors of physics, who founded Soliculture in 2012 to bring the technology to market.

Reducing the energy consumed by greenhouses has become a priority as the global use of greenhouses for food production has increased six-fold over the past 20 years to more than 9 million acres today—roughly twice the size of New Jersey.



Above: Thanks to a U.S. Energy Department grant, alumna and physics grad student Katie Hellier is doing research into new solar cell materials that may one day be able to generate high-voltage energy.

Megawatt researcher

Katie Hellier answers a question about why she loves physics by talking about shoes.

A stiletto heel will exert great pressure on the ground while a flat shoe will apply much less, and physics can illuminate why that is, says the UC Santa Cruz alumna (Porter '14, applied physics) and current grad student, who also has a degree from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in San Francisco.

Thanks to a U.S. Energy Department grant, Hellier is doing research into new solar cell materials that may one day be able to generate high-voltage energy instead of the low voltage delivered now.

It was at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg, Calif., that Hellier took her first physics class and "fell in love."

Transferring to UC Santa Cruz in 2011, she met physics professor Sue Carter and asked Carter for a spot in her lab.

Eventually she worked on projects that ranged from using algae for biofuels to researching luminescent solar concentrators, which use fluorescent dye to absorb light and make solar cells more efficient. (See "Really green greenhouses," page 7.)

Posting up

Alumnus Michael Scherer (Oakes '98, creative writing) in September joined the *Washington Post* as a national political reporter.

Scherer had been *Time* magazine's Washington bureau chief since 2013. He first joined *Time* in 2007 and was named the magazine's White House correspondent following the 2008 presidential campaign, traveling to more than a dozen countries with President Barack Obama.

One of the first students in the Creative Writing Program led by literature professors Micah Perks and Karen Yamashita, Scherer went on to graduate from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

The author of more than 20 *Time* cover stories, Scherer won the National Press Club's Lee Walczak Award for Political Analysis for his articles on the 2012 Obama re-election effort. He also received the 2014 New York Press Club Award for Political Coverage for a cover story about the 2013 government shutdown.

Seal story steals hearts

As field scientists in Antarctica, Roxanne Beltran

Below: Weddell seals "don't have land predators so they don't see humans as a threat. You can just walk up to them," says alumna Roxanne Beltran, coauthor with alumnus Patrick Robinson of the children's book *A Seal Named Patches*. NMFS Permit #17411



and Patrick Robinson have enough stories to fill a book.

So, when a third-grader at an Alaskan elementary school asked Beltran if she would write a book about her work so the child's father could read it to her every night, Beltran said, "Why not?"

The result is a 48-page children's book titled *A Seal Named Patches*, which sold out half its 2,000-volume printing within two weeks of its release. In November, it received the 2017 DeBary Outstanding Children's Science Book award.

Robinson (Rachel Carson '03, marine biology) is director of the UC Natural Reserve at Año Nuevo. Beltran (Stevenson '13, marine biology) is a visiting researcher at UC Santa Cruz and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The two are engaged to be married.

Their book centers on scientists' hunt for a seal named Patches that had been tracked since birth but seemed to have disappeared.

A Seal Named Patches is available at the Seymour Marine Discovery Center, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Amazon, Target, and Walmart.

Rugby going strong at 50

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, the East Field rumbles with 40 or 50 pairs of running, cleated feet and echoes with the thuds of

Right: The 2017 Pacific Rim Music Festival opened with "From the Root," a performance featuring traditional court music, folk music, and dance performed by the Creative Traditional Orchestra of the Korean National Gugak Center.



by a donation from former player George Kraw (Cowell '71, history/Russian literature), enable more hours of practice in the evenings.

Work with an expert coach is improving training, and they've begun a fundraiser they hope will ensure ongoing wins.

The season will culminate March 24 with a homecoming match against Stanford University and the annual Slug rugby reunion, where all current and former players are invited to celebrate the 50th anniversary.

For information, visit www.ucscrugby.com. To hear a companion audio piece on this story, visit soundcloud.com/ucsantacruz/sets/storycruz.

Music bridges cultures

The 2017 Pacific Rim Music Festival, held at the Music Center Recital Hall in October, included a dazzling array of traditional and contemporary Korean music.

The festival offered five free public concerts of traditional music and 40 world premieres, featuring the 55-member Creative Traditional Orchestra of the Korean National Gugak Center, the center's Chamber

Ensemble, the Borromeo String Quartet, the New York New Music Ensemble, and Festival Ensemble Korea.

It also featured a special collaboration between the UC Santa Cruz Music Department and the Creative Traditional Orchestra of the National Gugak Center of Korea (NGC). The word "gugak" translates as "national music," and the NGC orchestra is responsible for preserving ancient musical traditions, as well as developing contemporary works for performance.

"The idea was conceived in 2014 when I resided in Korea as a Fulbright scholar," noted Hi Kyung Kim, UC Santa Cruz professor of music and artistic director of the festival.

Left: The Slugs duke it out in a 2017 match against Chico State on the East Field.



PHOTOS: HELLIER BY MARSHAL GREEN; SEAL BY PATRICK ROBINSON; RUGBY BY LORRAINE CORRISASO; ORCHESTRA COURTESY OF KOREA NATIONAL GUGAK CENTER.

MAGAZINE.UCSC.EDU

PREVENTING PLASTIC'S PERILS

Chemistry professor Rebecca Braslau is working to develop an alternative plastic without the problematic molecules phthalates, which can mimic hormones and cause health problems

Chemistry professor Rebecca Braslau in her lab with graduate student Chad Higa.



There is a toxin lurking in every household in America, and one chemist is racing to find a remedy.

Chemistry professor Rebecca Braslau, an organic chemist, has made it her mission to protect people and the environment from the problematic molecules called phthalates, which leach from aging plastic. This chemical can mimic hormones and cause health problems for people, especially

children and particularly infant boys.

The daughter of an aerospace engineer father, Braslau was brought up in an upper-class neighborhood in Palos Verdes surrounded by science-minded people, but her personality as a child didn't give any indication that she could hack it as a chemist. As a little girl, she often hid behind her mother's leg. When her parents asked Braslau what color she wanted to paint her room, her answer was

"black." Concerned, they wondered if she needed therapy.

To Braslau, black was the majestic color of the stallions in the books she loved. When she was 13, Braslau's parents wanted to do something special for her, so they bought her a young horse. Braslau says the gift brought about an important shift in her life.

"More than anything else, that is what changed me," she says, a tear forming in the corner of her eye. Braslau went from being nearly bucked off the horse to riding bareback. Her personality changed from painfully shy to the confident person she is today.

"If I were still as shy, I couldn't be a chemist," she says, "I wouldn't be able to collaborate, present my work, or teach classes."

Phthalates, which leach from aging plastic, can mimic hormones and cause health problems for people, especially children and particularly infant boys.

PHOTO BY C. LAGATTUTA

Speaking in chemistry

Braslau describes her mother as a polished woman who wanted the same for her daughter. She persuaded Braslau to get her ears pierced and gave her a pair of braided gold hoops, as well as encouraged her to take care of her appearance. Her mother didn't want Braslau to become too nerdy when she went off to college, so the daughter agreed to take arts classes as well as science.

Braslau was taking her first college organic chemistry class when she became aware an earring was missing. But she noticed something interesting about the loss—she didn't particularly care. And that's when Braslau realized she had changed.

Phthalates are of a similar size and shape as some hormones, and can fool the endocrine-signaling pathways in the body.

"I just didn't have time anymore for drying my hair, putting in earrings, or wearing clothes that necessarily matched," Braslau said with a laugh.

Braslau's long, wild hair and comfortable duds testify to her continued love affair with chemistry. Starting in that class, she was bewitched by the riddles she saw in compounds, complex molecules, and reactions. "It's like cartoons. People are drawing arrows and electrons are flying all over, but it made sense to me. They were speaking my language. I could think that way," she says.

Mentor to young scientists

Braslau calls herself a workaholic. She spends long hours in her UC Santa Cruz office writing exams, preparing

lesson plans, or catching up on the latest research. Braslau's commitment to mentoring young scientists is evident on the walls of her office. Lining her bookshelves are photos of smiling students proudly holding diplomas, getting married, or working in the lab. Students drop in anytime, and Braslau holds extra study sessions on Saturday for those who need some help.

"I've never seen any other professor care as much as she does," says Chad Higa, a graduate student who has been in Braslau's group since 2013. "If I ever become a professor, I hope I'm like her."

Annette Gardner, Braslau's friend of more than three decades, says this dedication has characterized Braslau for her entire life. "In college, she was always looking after those of us who were scrambling," says Gardner.

Braslau isn't all work and no play. She recently took a scuba diving trip in Cuba. She is a regular attendee of Burning Man, where she makes elaborate full-body puppets out of glowing wire. Pictures in Braslau's office show her wearing a dragon puppet that stretches the entire length of her outstretched arms, from head to tail.

Danger of phthalates

Many years ago Braslau stumbled on a question that confused her. She was working in a lab in Australia, studying marine natural products. As a chemist, Braslau was used to mixing things together to cause a chemical reaction, which forms new molecules. She then isolates the newly formed molecules to identify what they are.

While trying to isolate a molecule from a sea sponge, some of her experimental mixture accidentally splashed a piece of plastic lab tubing. So, unaware that the splash had contaminated her mixture, Braslau spent the next three days isolating a molecule from it and trying to identify a molecule she mistakenly thought came from the sponge. When she finally figured out that it was phthalate, she knew it had come from the

plastic tubing. Her chance mistake would happen two more times in the following years. As a result, Braslau learned to easily identify phthalate. When it started becoming relevant in the literature she was reading, she was already familiar with the molecule.

As a polymer chemist, Braslau is a plastic-enthusiast of sorts. She keeps up on the literature regarding plastic, not only in the scientific sense, but also the social, cultural, and economic sense. Braslau regularly gives a talk titled "More Than One Word on Plastics" to audiences at Burning Man, conservation groups, or universities. The talk is about plastics in American culture. It explains what they are, how they changed the markets, and how our culture evolved around the rise of plastics.

In the 1920s, the fusion of phthalate ester-plasticizer with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) launched the boom of the plastics industry. Phthalates can turn PVC, a hard and brittle material, into a supple and flexible plastic. The more phthalates are used, the more flexible the material becomes. Now phthalates are found in PVC worldwide. They are responsible for bendy garden hoses, hospital IV bags, and that new-car smell. Nearly everything labeled with "vinyl" or the #3 recycling symbol contains phthalates. While PVC is the most common use for phthalates, they can also be found in other things like cosmetics, fragrances, and adhesives.

The problem with phthalates wasn't initially recognized. As plastic ages, the phthalates leach out. Even brand-new plastic is leaching phthalates. It turns out phthalates are of a similar size and shape as some hormones, and can fool the endocrine-signaling pathways in the body. Phthalates are often called hormone mimickers or endocrine disruptors because they interfere with the endocrine system. Their ability to stand in for hormones can cause health problems, especially in young boys or pregnant women. For example, they can lower sperm count or cause birth defects in the male reproductive system. They've

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES YANG



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YEAR OF
ALUMNI

UC SANTA CRUZ ALUMNI WEEKEND 2018

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Alumni Weekend Schedule

FRIDAY, APRIL 27

Graduate Student Alumni Career Paths Panel

10–11:15 a.m./Stevenson Fireside Lounge
Graduate student alumni honorees discuss their career paths after receiving their degree. Current and alumni graduate students encouraged to attend!

KZSC Alumni Airchecks & Open House

10 a.m.–6 p.m./KZSC Radio 88.1 FM
Student radio at UC Santa Cruz started in 1967—we're 50 years old now! All KZSC alumni programmers are invited back to spin classics and share reflections about their days on the air. Contact Maelin at alumni@kzsc.org to schedule your slot.

Physics Open House

1–6 p.m./Physics Department
Visit faculty from 1–2 p.m.; colloquium 2–3:20 p.m.; lab tours 3:20–5 p.m.; mingling 5–6 p.m. in the ISB courtyard.

Graduate Research Symposium

1:30–4 p.m./McHenry Library Information Commons South and adjoining classrooms
Free and open to the public. Current and alumni graduate students encouraged to attend!

UC Santa Cruz Greenhouse Rooftop Tour

2–3:30 p.m./\$5/Thimann rooftop
Greenhouse tour with light refreshments.

Graduate Research Symposium Award Reception

4–6 p.m./McHenry Library south terrace and lawn
Free and open to the public. Current and alumni graduate students encouraged to attend!

Social Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award

4–6 p.m./La Feliz Room, Seymour Center at Long Marine Lab
Presented annually to a graduate whose career is characterized by sustained and exemplary contributions to society through research, practice, education, policy, or service.

Alumni Weekend Kickoff

5–7 p.m. /\$15/Aloha Terrace at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk
Get Alumni Weekend started off right by joining fellow alumni for refreshments and mingling the night before the main festivities.

Crown STEAM Reception

5–7 p.m./Crown College Provost House
Join Crown College Provost Manel Camps for an evening showcasing the artistic STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) accomplishments of current Crown students. Appetizers.

Astronomy on Tap

6:30–8 p.m. / \$12 (includes two beers and swag)/Cruzio (877 Cedar St. #150, Santa Cruz)
Enjoy two short public talks on the latest from the Astronomy Dept., along with bar-type games.

Silicon Valley Game Night

7–9 p.m./Silicon Valley Campus, 3175 Bowers Ave., Santa Clara
Join us for a fun presentation from our games and playable media faculty. Includes reception; interactive demonstrations of virtual reality and games and playable media, led by Games and Playable Media Director Michael John and selected faculty; and a Q&A and mixer.

Second Annual Slug Soirée

7 p.m.–midnight/Crown Senior Commons, Crown College
Crown Senior Commons will be transformed into the boho den of pioneer Crownie memory. Drop in, rekindle old friendships, meet new alumni friends, and enjoy dinner and drinks. Crown alumni only.

Shahnameh and Beyond in Iran, India, and Diasporas

7:30–9 p.m./Porter Quad/Hitchcock Lounge
Dance theater performance of *Shahnameh*, the great epic of the Muslim world, as the opening to a Theater Arts conference/workshop that will lead to a campus version of the story.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28

Campus 5k Fun Run

8–10 a.m. /OPERS East Field House
\$15—student with valid ID
\$30—alumni/individual
\$50—two-person combo
\$90—four-person bundle
Lace up your running shoes for a scenic run in support of student scholarships. Afterward, you can use the gym facilities to shower and get ready for the day. Refreshments and commemorative gifts for all racers.

IBSC Stem Cell Faculty Lectures and Lab Tour

9–10:30 a.m./Biomedical Sciences Building
Join us for a faculty lecture and private tour of the Institute for the Biology of Stem Cells. Light refreshments.

UC Santa Cruz Bioblitz Younger Lagoon Bioblitz

9 a.m.–12 p.m. /• Arboretum Horticulture 2 Classroom (UC Santa Cruz Bioblitz)
• Ocean Health Building, Room 118 (Younger Lagoon Reserve Bioblitz)
Join the UC Santa Cruz Natural Reserves for our third annual community-building bioblitz event and help inventory the biodiversity of the UC Santa Cruz campus and Younger Lagoon Reserve. The events will run concurrently and are open to everyone. Light refreshments.

Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Forest (for a thousand years ...)*

9 a.m.–5 p.m. / Exhibition and admission to the Arboretum is free for alumni and guests on Saturday/UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Botanic Garden
Experience the critically acclaimed art exhibition. Curator-led walk-through at 2 p.m.

Shahnameh in Iran, India, and Beyond

9:30 a.m.–3 p.m. / Porter Hitchcock/Fireside Lounge
Dick Davis, British poet and translator of the *Shahnameh*; Larry Reed (ShadowLight Theatre); and other artistic directors of Bay Area theater groups will meet Theater Arts Department faculty and students and discuss producing themes from the Middle East and India in contemporary California.

Economics Alumni Reception

10–11 a.m./Engineering 2, Room 499
After a brief introduction and short presentation, enjoy a continental breakfast while mingling with other alumni and Economics Department faculty, staff, and current students.

Tour of the Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems at the UC Santa Cruz Farm

10–11:30 a.m./Meet at the Cowell Ranch Hay Barn
Join us for a walking tour of the 30-acre organic CASFS/UC Santa Cruz Farm and learn about its research, education, and community outreach work.

Resource Centers Alumni Reception

10 a.m.–12 p.m./Cardiff House Women's Center
Reconnect with fellow alumni and meet current staff and students. Find out about new programs, initiatives, and ways to become involved. Light brunch and refreshments.

KZSC Alumni Airchecks & Open House

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Crown Library Grand Reopening

10:30–11:30 a.m. / Crown College Library
Join Crown alumni, donors, students, faculty, and guests for the grand reopening of the Crown College Library. Light refreshments.

Global Engagement Photo Reception

10:30 a.m.–12 p.m./Cervantes and Velasquez Conference Room
Mingle with fellow alumni and current students while viewing winning photos showcasing photography from both our returned Study Abroad student participants and our international students and scholars. Light refreshments.

Engineering Teach-Ins

11 a.m.–12 p.m./Engineering courtyard
No quizzes! Get acquainted with the groundbreaking research of one of our accomplished faculty. Three different talks will run concurrently. Arrive at 10:30 a.m. to check in. Choose from: *Connecting Through Play by Design*—Katherine Isbister, professor, computational media; *New Optical Tools for 3D Functional Neuroimaging*—Sara Abrahamsson, assistant professor, electrical engineering; and *Sharing Precision Medicine*—Benedict Paten, assistant professor, biomolecular engineering.

Faculty Keynote with Bettina Aptheker: "The Ethical Role of the Public University"

11 a.m.–12:15 p.m./Quarry Amphitheater
Bettina Aptheker (Ph.D. '83, history of consciousness), distinguished professor and Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation Presidential Chair for Feminist Studies, created one of the country's largest and most influential introductory feminist studies courses, taken by more than 16,000 students over four decades. Aptheker will talk about the public university's potential to be a center of courage, insight, and principled rational discourse. Marlene Tromp, campus provost and executive vice chancellor, will join her in conversation.

Banana Slug Kid Zone

11 a.m.–4 p.m./Quarry Plaza
Family-friendly zone with craft booths, games, and snacks.

Lunch with Baskin School of Engineering Dean Alexander Wolf

12–1 p.m./\$8/ Engineering courtyard (between BE and E2)
Join the Baskin Alumni Advisory Council for lunch with the dean. When pre-registering, guests will have a selection of gourmet boxed lunches from which to choose.

Everett Program and GIIP 20th Anniversary Lunch

12–1 p.m./\$25/Soc Sci 2, Room 47
Join us for discussions about social change and innovation both past and present, and discover more about our work building the next generation of compassionate, strategic, and skillful change makers.

We are Wiser Together—10th Anniversary of the UC Santa Cruz World Café Learning Program

12–2 p.m./Kresge Town Hall
Free lunch and intergenerational dialogue about how we can be wiser together through our unique contributions. Participate in a fun, lively, and intellectually enriching World Café-style conversation. Pre-registration required.



Green listings indicate special anniversary events.

EOP Open House: Building Foundations for Success; Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

12–3 p.m./ARCenter
Get updates on EOP trends and future vision and talk with EOP academic counselors, student staff, and EOP students. Pablo Reguerin, associate vice chancellor for student success and EOP director, will be the featured speaker. Light refreshments.

Porter College Student and Alumni Makers' Faire 2018

12–4 p.m./Porter College Quad
Enjoy student-run creative makers' stations. We'll have sun prints, tie-dye, photo booth, screen printing, card making, origami, crochet, poetry, student performances, and KZSC DJs!

Digital Arts and New Media M.F.A. Exhibition

12–5 p.m./Digital Arts Research Center
The art exhibition is open to the public. Tours available throughout the day; wine reception 4–6 p.m.

Mentor Match Luncheon

12:15–2:15 p.m./\$20/Café Iveta (Quarry Plaza)
Connect with bright young students who want to hear from alumni and get an honest look at the good and the bad as they embark on their professional journeys.

Romeo and Juliet

12:30–1:30 p.m./Quarry Amphitheater
Students who are part of Theater Arts outreach project Shakespeare to Go will present their 50-minute adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Artisanal Carry-Out Lunch

12:30–2 p.m./Quarry Plaza
\$20 per box, \$35 for a group of two, \$65 for a group of four
Grab a gourmet carry-out lunch to eat in Quarry Plaza or bring to your lunchtime event.

Teach-In with the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning: "How Slugs Teach and Learn Now: What is Active Learning and Why Does it Matter?"

12:30–2 p.m./ Humanities 259
Come back to class with four of the campus's most innovative educators and see how we keep our classes dynamic and relevant, while maintaining the great tradition of teaching at UC Santa Cruz.

Merrill College Alumni Panel: Five Decades of Free Speech and Political Action at UC Santa Cruz

1–2:15 p.m./Merrill Cultural Center
To celebrate 50 years of Merrill College, a panel of alumni from across the decades will speak about witnessing and participating in their era's engagement with academic freedom.

Norris Center for Natural History—Art and Science Open House

1–3 p.m./Norris Center for Natural History—Natural Sciences 2, Room 239
See natural history displays and student artwork of local Santa Cruz bees, and try your own hand at natural history drawing. Students will talk about their science and art projects and guide you in drawing insects, banana slugs, and more.

Baskin Engineering: Lab Tours

1:15–2:30 p.m./Tours depart from the courtyard between Baskin School of Engineering and E2
Join a group tour of three of Baskin Engineering's research labs: *Illuminating RNA "dark matter" in stem cells and cancer*—Daniel H. Kim, assistant professor, biomolecular engineering; *Modeling, stability, robust control, observer design, and simulation of nonlinear and hybrid systems with applications to power systems, robotics, aerospace, and biology*—Ricardo Sanfelice, associate professor, computer engineering; *Cave Automatic Virtual Environment/Multi-user immersive virtual reality tools for research and teaching*—Sri Kurniawan, professor, computational media and computer engineering; *Mircea Teodorescu*, associate professor, computer engineering.

Women in the Arts

1:30–2:30 p.m./Cervantes and Velasquez Conference Room
Bay Area opera company Opera Parallèle, founded by UC Santa Cruz Music Professor Emerita Nicole Paiement, has commissioned an opera based on the life of Georgia O'Keeffe. Bettina Aptheker, distinguished professor of feminist studies, is collaborating with Paiement. Aptheker and panelists will talk about the opera and women in the arts. Light refreshments.

What's Growing on in the Garden

2–3 p.m./Kresge Garden Co-op
Summer Session lecturer David Shaw (Porter '04, community studies) will lead an interactive tour of Kresge Garden, which is used in his course open to alumni during summer. Light refreshments.

Rachel Carson College Wine & Cheese Reception

2–4 p.m./Rachel Carson Red Room
Enjoy wine and cheese and learn about student projects at Rachel Carson College.

Sesnon Gallery Signage Dedication and Alumni Wine Reception

2–4 p.m./Porter College Koi Pond courtyard
Meet the dean of the arts and Porter provost for a toast to celebrate the new Sesnon Gallery signage, and join us for exhibition walk-throughs with Gallery Director Shelby Graham and alumna Molly Cliff Hilts (Porter '81).

In Celebration of Black Life at UC Santa Cruz

2–4 p.m./Oakes Learning Center
An event highlighting the experiences and memories of current and past African, black, and Caribbean students. Featuring a "memory space," including photos and memorabilia. Refreshments.

CONTINUED

Lace up for the Campus 5K Fun Run!

Supporting student scholarships. 8 a.m. Saturday, April 28, at OPERS.

For more information and to register, visit:

alumniweekend.ucsc.edu

GAME ON!**2–4 p.m./Crown/Merrill Dining Hall**

Enjoy the creativity of student-designed games. Test your skills with current and alumni Crownies. Snack provided.

Lavender Alumni Reception**2–5 p.m./Lionel Cantú Queer Resource Center**

Join fellow LGBTQIA+ alumni, current students, and the Cantú Queer Center staff at this informal event, which will serve as our spring GALA Gallery art exhibit opening. Hearty refreshments.

Noel Q. King Memorial Lecture**2:30–3:30 p.m./Merrill Cultural Center**Professor Noel Q. King helped introduce the study of religion to a young UC Santa Cruz and engage Merrill College students in lifelong curiosity about and respect for the beliefs of the peoples of the world. Award-winning scholar Mark Massoud, associate professor of politics and legal studies, will speak about the lived experience of Islamic law for Muslims in Somalia, Sudan, and California, followed by an onstage discussion between Professor Massoud and writer Laurie R. King, King's widow, author of the *New York Times* best-selling historical series featuring Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes, and holder of an honorary doctorate in theology.**Classics Theater Redux****3–4 p.m./Cowell lawn**Mary-Kay Gamel, research professor emerita of classics, comparative literature, and theater arts, will present a scene from one of her adaptations of Greek and Roman drama—the Aristophanes comedy, *The Wasps*.**MCD Biology Alumni Reception****3–5 p.m./Humanities courtyard**

We invite alumni of the MCD biology undergraduate and graduate programs to a reception with MCD faculty. Light refreshments and drinks.

Commemoration of Charles E. Merrill Jr., and Celebrating 50 Years of Merrill College**4–4:30 p.m./Merrill Cultural Center**

The philanthropist, writer, and artist Charles E. Merrill Jr., who facilitated the gift to endow Merrill College, died in 2017 at age 97. Provost Elizabeth Abrams will preside as we formally celebrate the 50th anniversary of the college and commemorate its influential namesake.

Latino Alumni Network and El Centro Reception**4–6 p.m./\$10/Cowell Conference Room 132**

An afternoon of socializing and enjoying food and drinks while celebrating many accomplishments with El Centro Chicano/Latino.

Film: Merrill at 50—Looking Forward**4:30–5 p.m./Merrill Cultural Center**

Please join us for the film's premiere.

Movie Screening and Discussion: *The Cat That Saved America***4:30–6:30 p.m./Crown/Merrill Dining Hall**

Join alumna Lisa Rose (Crown '72) for the showing, followed by a presentation by the Santa Cruz Puma Project.

ACE Program Reunion**4:30–6:30 p.m./Engineering courtyard**

Join us for a reunion and refreshments.

Wind Down: Alumni Beer and Wine Reception**5–7 p.m./\$25/Quarry Amphitheater**

UC Santa Cruz alumni are making some of the highest-quality and most innovative wines and craft beers in the industry. Stop by for tastes and appetizers. New Bohemia Brewing Co. and Uncommon Brewers are pouring again, along with local and/or alumni vintners.

EOP Celebration: Passing the Torch, Reigniting the Flame**6–9 p.m./\$10–\$15/Stevenson Event Center**

Enjoy dinner, drinks, and dancing while you engage with the EOP community.

50 Years of Student Radio—KRUCZ Through KZSC's Radio History**7–9 p.m./Quarry Amphitheater**

A live radio variety show featuring personalities, artists, and other creatives who were part of the 50-year history of student radio at UC Santa Cruz. Want to be a part of the show? Contact Maelin at alumni@kzsc.org.

Snacks, Sips, and Sweets**7 p.m.—midnight/Crown Senior Commons**

We invite Crown alumni to enjoy snacks, wine, and dessert.

A Performance by Los Mejicas**7:30–8:30 p.m./Merrill Cultural Center**

Grupo Folklórico Los Mejicas, a student-run and -directed Mexican folkloric dance group, has had a long association with Merrill College and is honored to perform in celebration of the college's 50th anniversary.

SUNDAY, APRIL 29**Brunch with “Breakfast in Bed”—Womyn’s Radio Collective****9 a.m.—12 p.m./Colleges Nine and Ten Multipurpose Room**

Break bread with current and past members of the Womyn's Radio Collective and celebrate women in the arts and media! Broadcasting live from the event. RSVP required.

A Conversation with Kresge Alumna and American Book Award Winner Reyna Grande**9:30–11:30 a.m./Kresge Provost House**

Join Kresge Provost Ben Leeds Carson and fellow alumni and friends for brunch and good company.

Merrill Provost and Emeriti Brunch**10 a.m.—12 p.m./Merrill Provost House**

Join Provost Elizabeth Abrams, fellow alumni, and current students for good food and good company. Provost Abrams will present a program in celebration of Merrill's 50th anniversary.

Cowell Alumni Brunch**10 a.m.—12 p.m./Cowell Provost House**

Enjoy brunch with fellow alumni.

Stevenson College Alumni Brunch**10 a.m.—12 p.m./Stevenson Provost House**

Join Stevenson College Provost Alice Yang for brunch and get involved in the discussion about events and projects at the college.

KZSC Alumni Airchecks & Open House**10 a.m.—6 p.m./KZSC Radio 88.1 FM**

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Brunch at College Nine and College Ten**10:30 a.m.—12 p.m./Terry Freitas Café**

Join us for a continental brunch and an opportunity to reconnect with students, staff, and alumni.

Calling All Crownies Continental Breakfast**11 a.m.—12:30 p.m./Crown Provost House**

Highlighting mentors/mentees and new alumni/student partnerships and friendships, Crown College Provost Manel Camps invites Crownies past and present to his home for an informal breakfast.

Oakes Alumni Weekend Brunch**11 a.m.—1 p.m./\$5/Oakes Provost House**

Enjoy a casual brunch, including mimosas, overlooking the lovely West Field and catch up with other alumni.

Student Research Symposium**12–2 p.m./Stevenson Event Center**

Drop in to see the research being done by undergraduate students.

Annual Dizikes Concert**12:30–1:45 p.m./Cowell Provost House**

Everyone is welcome to come dance the afternoon away!

Physics Picnic and Softball Game**12:30–4 p.m./DeLaveaga Park: Lone Tree Picnic Area**
Join physics faculty, grads, undergrads, and staff for our fun, famous picnic and softball game. BBQ burgers and drinks provided. Please bring a side dish to share! Softball game will start at 2 p.m.**PLASTIC'S PERILS** continued from page 12

also been linked to diabetes and thyroid irregularities.

Phthalates are often called the “everywhere chemicals” because they are, well, everywhere. Yet sometimes they get confused with bisphenol A (BPA), which is used to make the polymer in a different type of plastic. Water bottles labeled “BPA free” may still contain phthalates.

Seeking a better way

When Braslau first began reading about these problems in the chemistry literature in the early 2000s, she had a realization. “I recognized that molecule,” she says, recalling the day she accidentally isolated phthalate from the plastic lab tubing.

She made it her mission to do something about the problem. She set out to make an alternative to phthalates that would retain its desired qualities without the negative health hazards. “I’m a trained synthetic chemist,” she says. “I’m not afraid to make new things, that’s what I was trained to do. I want to affect society. I want to do something that will help the world.”

Braslau sees plastic everywhere she goes.

“I’m not a chemophobe,” says Braslau as she sips from her plastic water bottle. But because of her awareness, she does take more precautions than most. She handles phthalate-laden grocery receipts (made of thermal paper, a special fine paper coated with a chemical that changes color when exposed to heat) as little as possible, and airs out products that have that “new plastic” smell.

Since the 1970s, when word about phthalate toxicity got out, environmentalists and consumer advocacy groups began to demand change. Braslau, a progressive at heart, chooses her battles carefully. She is a vegetarian because she says the environmental impact of eating fish and meat is too high. Yet she isn’t a vegan. She drives a car, but it is electric. She still uses plastics, yet recycles them. “You can’t do it all,” she says.

“If we can find a system that is inexpensive and can be scaled up safely, I would love to not have any more phthalates out there,” she says.

In 2008, the Consumer Product Safety Commission began prohibiting U.S. companies from using plastic containing certain phthalates in baby toys and products that were intended for a baby’s mouth. Many companies voluntarily followed suit. Now the commission is proposing to ban more phthalates.

With expanding regulations and mounting pressure from consumers, plastics manufacturers are vying to commercialize alternative techniques. Chemists across the globe are hoping, as Braslau is, to design and patent new molecules that plasticize without the toxicity.

“It’s a competitive field that’s gaining a lot of interest,” says Rudy Wojtecki, a chemist for IBM. Braslau “is trying to ensure we have a sustainable PVC, and one that doesn’t show societal harm.”

Cheering the competition

What drives Braslau isn’t the idea of being the first to find a solution or the one who lands the patent. “I just want it to be out there and used,” she says. So, if that means her competitors reach the finish line first, Braslau will be cheering them on. “They’re making this thing called phthalate on the multimillion-ton scale per year, and all of it will eventually go into the environment. It will have problems for humans and all sorts of animals.”

Wojtecki says Braslau is on the right path, and he hopes to work more with her soon. The two scientists met at a meeting for a new chapter of the American Chemical Society in Monterey Bay.

At the meeting, Wojtecki presented a slide show. “After the talk, (Braslau) came up to me and had my work all sketched out. She was asking me, ‘Did you think about this ... or that ...?’ It was like the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, wow,” he says.*“I’m not afraid to make new things, that’s what I was trained to do. I want to affect society. I want to do something that will help the world.”*

Braslau is holding the details of her progress close to the vest for now, but says, “We are trying to take something that looks and acts like one of these plasticizers and bond it so it can’t fall away.”

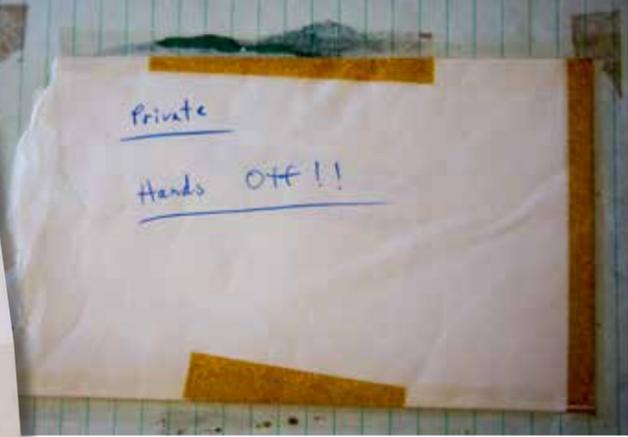
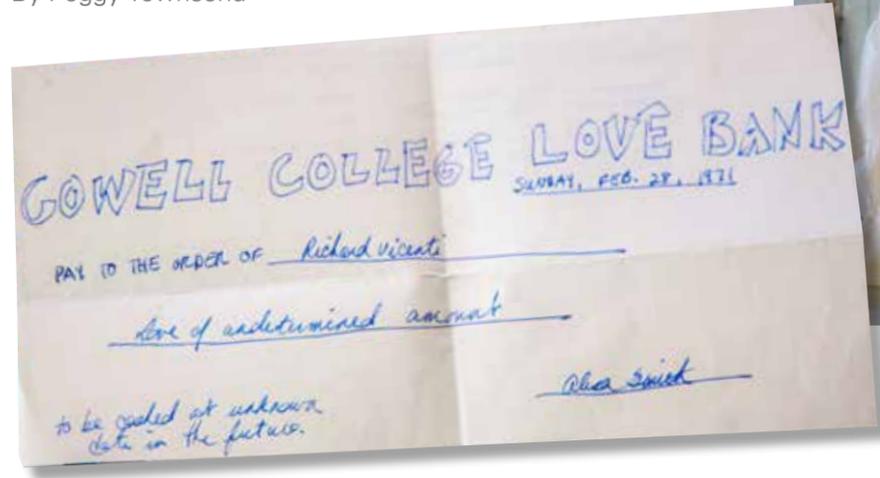
If Braslau’s technique works, the consumer won’t realize the plastic has changed. Yet the negative effects on health and environment could end.

With scientists in Spain, China, and Korea also making strides toward finding a solution, Braslau is hopeful that the threat to public health posed by phthalates will soon be a thing of the past.

“Sometimes I have dreams where I see electrons flying around me. You can’t actually see electrons, but I can in my dreams,” Braslau says, explaining that this chemistry challenge is constantly on her mind.

Then, folding her hands in her lap, she says, “But I think we are close.” ■

Teresa L. Carey (SciCom '17) is a Science and Social Media News Fellow at PBS NewsHour, where she covers stories related to the ocean and environment. She lives in Reston, Virginia. @teresa_carey



Above: An envelope labeled “private” and taped in the back of a poetry notebook held a nearly forgotten treasure.

A rain check for undying love

She sketched out a check for him from the ‘Cowell College Love Bank,’ and they went their separate ways—until 39 years later

He met her at his job exchanging students’ dirty sheets for clean linen at Cowell College. He was a 6-foot-4 sociology major with long sideburns and tousled dark hair. She was a slender blond freshman studying anthropology with a peaceful way about her that he admired.

So when he saw her across the room at one of the college’s semi-regular waltzes, he asked her to dance and she agreed.

His name was Rich Vicenti and hers was Alesia Smith. The year was 1970.

Over the next months, he pursued her even though she had a boyfriend. He took her to a Julian Bream concert and kissed

her on the college steps. He lowered a note from an upper floor of Beard House where she lived, asking her to change her mind and be with him.

To her, he was the handsome RA, a big man on campus who’d help found the free bus system that still serves UC Santa Cruz today.

“I really liked him. I was torn,” said Alesia (Cowell ’74, anthropology), whose last name is now Lightbourne.

But loyalty to her boyfriend won out, and on a February day in 1971, she sketched an image of a check in blue ink on the

back of a piece of scrap paper and handed it to him.

“Cowell College Love Bank,” read the block letters across the top of the note. “Pay to the order of Richard Vicenti, love of undetermined amount to be cashed at unknown date in the future.”

“Sadly, it was a nice form of a Dear John letter,” said Vicenti (Cowell ’72, sociology). He put the note in an envelope, marked it “Private” and “Hands Off!!” and taped it in the back of his poetry notebook.

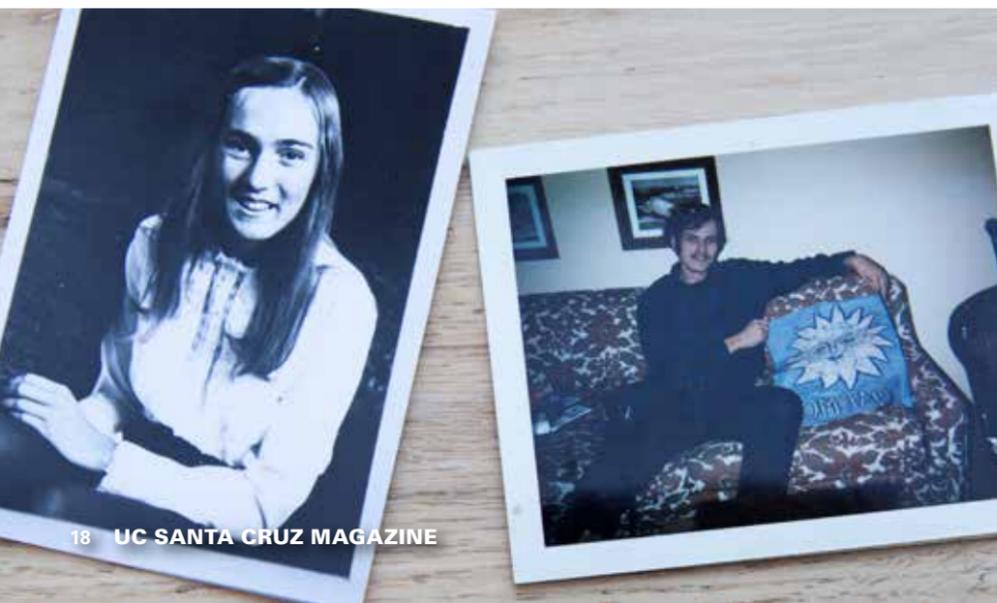
He graduated in 1972 and she followed two years later. Both went on to separate lives.

Diverging paths

Vicenti set up transit systems around the Bay Area, got married, received an M.B.A. in business at Stanford, and began working as a chief financial officer at high-tech companies in Silicon Valley.

She went to Jamaica, married a Jamaican man, and taught school there. Later, she taught in the Virgin

Left: Alesia Smith (now Lightbourne) and Rich Vicenti in their college years.



Left: Vicenti and Lightbourne, now married, live in Santa Cruz. “This was relaxing, natural,” she said of their romance. “A homecoming.”

“I looked at it and the handwriting looked familiar,” said Lightbourne. “Then it clicked and I started screaming and laughing. I’d totally forgotten that crazy rain check. Basically, he said, ‘OK girl, it’s time to pay up.’”

“I’d hung onto the note for 39 years,” Vicenti said. “Smart move. She was always a special person to me.”

They decided to meet at the Istanbul airport and travel through Turkey and Greece when her teaching duties were over.

“When we met in person, he apologized that he was older and not as skinny as before. And I said, ‘But you’re still Rich Vicenti,’” Lightbourne remembered.

A natural homecoming

On Vicenti’s 65th birthday, while on a bicycling trip in Tuscany, Lightbourne proposed to him over terrible pizza and a fine bottle of wine.

“Karmically, I owed him,” she said with a laugh.

Today, they share a light-filled condominium overlooking a spread of green pasture near Santa Cruz’s Small Craft Harbor. He’s 67 and she’s 65.

They’ve traveled to 17 countries, have five kids and five grandchildren between them, and Lightbourne has just published a novel based on her experiences in Iraq, titled *The Kurdish Bike*.

“It wasn’t like the falling in love that you have with someone you don’t know,” Lightbourne said of their romance. “This was relaxing, natural. A homecoming.”

She put her hand on his.

“We just fit.” ■

To hear a companion audio piece on this story, visit soundcloud.com/ucsantacruz/sets/storycruz.

Lightbourne’s novel, *The Kurdish Bike*, is available on Amazon.

Islands and Saudi Arabia. She divorced, came back to the U.S. for her master’s in creative writing, started work as a corporate writer, raised three boys, and eventually became a college professor in the Seattle area.

In late 2009, on a challenge from one of her grown sons to chase the thing she loved rather than stay in her safe world, Lightbourne quit her job, rented out her house, and was soon in Kurdish Iraq teaching middle school.

There, she was befriended by a widow and her daughter who lived in a small, cement-block house in a village outside of Erbil. Lightbourne ate with them, stayed over at their house on visits, went to weddings and funerals. But, she said, it was hard for her to reconcile the villagers’ kindness with the tribal customs they

practiced: female circumcision and honor killings of women who’d shamed their families in some way.

“It was a very difficult time,” she said.

Social media spark

While in Iraq, she saw a post on Vicenti’s Facebook page. “We’re praying for a speedy recovery,” it read.

Concerned, Lightbourne emailed Vicenti, who said he was recuperating from open-heart surgery and was fine. Both were now single.

They began to Skype and email. One message from Vicenti had an attachment: a photo of her “check” for love at a future date.

PHOTOS BY C. LAGATTUTA

By Dan White



COMIC RELIEF

Alumnus Doug Bragdon employs student artists with *Santa Cruz Comics*, a new glossy magazine that takes its cue from Japanese manga comics

In one storyline, a pale-skinned troll with bulging eyes befriends a beautiful young fairy with gossamer wings. Together they defend a forest near the UC Santa Cruz campus from a group of rampaging humans.

Another narrative follows the adventures of impoverished Mexican youth who dodge drones, robbers, and vigilantes, only to confront a border wall as they make their way across a desert toward the United States.

These are two of the illustrated tales that fill the pages of a new glossy magazine called *Santa Cruz Comics*, which is produced at UC Santa Cruz and takes its cue from the action-packed, splashy style of manga comics from Japan.

While many classic elements of contemporary manga are on display here—edgy visuals, racy references, and violent clashes between characters, for instance

—this fledgling publication, founded and run by alumnus Douglas Bragdon (Kresge '89, politics) has a uniquely activist bent.

"I don't think Japanese manga push an overtly political view," said Bragdon, principal writer and editor of the magazine he launched in 2016 after spending about a year fleshing out the details.

The major difference between *Santa Cruz Comics* and Japanese manga is one of sensibility, Bragdon said.

"(In Japan) they don't want to offend anyone with their manga," he said. "They want to maximize their ad revenue. I want ad revenue, too, but this is Santa Cruz, which has a history of activist publications."

Continuing in that activist tradition, *Santa Cruz Comics* includes features such as "Fairy and Troll," which talks about the way humans are destroying the Earth; "Against the Wall," which supports immigration rights; and "Moscow Hitman," which is about the abuse of power in Russia.

Opposite page: The first *Santa Cruz Comics* manga included "Against the Wall" by alumnus Doug Bragdon. Above: Bragdon with student intern Nick Yi, who is contemplating a comic about being Asian American, while touching on other issues.

A student start-up like no other

So far, the world is only just starting to find out about *Santa Cruz Comics*, which is available in a few select stores across the United States, including Santa Cruz's own Comicopolis, a graphic novel and gaming store.

But Bragdon has high hopes. He bluntly characterized this new publication as entertainment combined with "propaganda" in response to President Donald Trump's election in 2016.

"The combination of texts and visuals triggers different parts of the brain and makes it more engaging," he said. "It is very accessible even for those who don't really like to read. It could be a good tool to convince people and make them aware of different social perspectives."

Bragdon staffs his magazine entirely with student interns drawn from a pool of applicants attending UC Santa Cruz. He spread the word by reaching out directly to students in various disciplines, including the arts and games and playable media.

This is not the first time UC Santa Cruz students have helped bring comics to life on campus. Alumnus Jim Gunderson (Rachel Carson '77, philosophy), a comic-books aficionado, collector, and donor, pointed out that the Graphic Stories Guild, a student-run comics club on campus in the 1970s, was based at College Five (now Porter College).

"It was an entirely student-driven project," Gunderson said. Like *Santa Cruz Comics*, their publications were also available off-campus. In fact, you can still find secondhand copies listed in an official underground comics guide.

Gunderson, along with his friend Peter Coha (Kresge '78, mathematics), donated 1,700 vintage Marvel comics to UC Santa Cruz Special Collections and Archives three years ago.

Drawing them in

One recent rainy weeknight, a group of bedraggled students filed into the Stevenson Provost House to meet with Bragdon, who is married to Stevenson's provost, Alice Yang, an associate professor of history at UC Santa Cruz.

Most of the people who attended the meeting had already been selected as interns to work on the magazine, though a few other students were just tagging along, or were there to support their significant other.

The meeting was fast-paced. It was important to get the interns caught up. After all, production had already begun on the upcoming issue of the magazine before this latest crop of interns signed on; to make the process more efficient for himself and the students, Bragdon laid out the fundamentals of the stories and the storyboards before soliciting the help of these students.

PHOTOS BY C. LAGATTUTA



Santa Cruz Comics art by student artists. Artist credits for the above left panel, clockwise from top left: Reshma Zachariah (Cowell '19); Joyce Lin (Porter '20); Courtney Chavez (Porter '18); and Chloe Calhoun (Crown '21).

Long panel in center: Charisse Lo (Crown '21). Far right: Romeo Jung (Porter '20).

"Otherwise, I'd be like a movie director hiring actors without a script, and it would introduce a timing risk into the project," Bragdon explained later on.

Most of the selected interns were games and playable media and computer science majors seeking some extracurricular diversion, as well as a venue for their art and a way to make some money.

But several showed up because of the magazine's activist inclinations. "What drew me is the LGBT portion of it, and the fact that they are having those kinds of stories published," said Charisse Lo (Crown '21, games and playable media).

As rain pelted the wooden house, Bragdon handed out basic black-and-white mockups detailing the action, dialogue, and narrative for each frame of the new manga-in-progress. The template drawings were deliberately threadbare; the young artists are given the freedom to fill in the details, while adding their visual spin and style. This method adds a splash of personality and a dash of intimacy to each issue.

Welcome creative freedom

That creative freedom is good news for young contributors such as Tiffany Phan (Porter '20, games and playable media), who is already an accomplished artist.

During the informal meeting at the provost's house, Phan showed off a detailed portfolio of her striking and painstakingly crafted images on her smart phone, including a horned imp-girl with an elfish face, and a haunting watercolor-on-canvas portrait of a despairing young woman floating in a pond, while holding a koi.

"She wants to fade away from reality, but this fish means hope in my painting," Phan said.

After the artists finish drawing in the characters, Bragdon has them scanned and adds in digital text balloons. The magazine is full of surprises—there are several different storylines in each issue, hidden puzzles and backward messages, as well as flamboyant and mostly tongue-in-cheek *Saturday Night Live*-style parody advertisements. But the stylistic variations within each comic strip add another level of intrigue.

"My first impression is that this is extremely different from [other manga] that I've read because the different frames had different art styles," said Vivian Nguyen (Crown '18, computer science), who signed on to design the *Santa Cruz Comics* website. "That really caught my eye. That sealed the deal for me."

ILLUSTRATIONS CONTRIBUTED BY DOUG BRAGDON

Filling the bank —and the résumé

Bragdon is paying students \$25 for every frame they complete for his magazine. "There can be six to nine frames per page," Bragdon points out. "That can be \$150 or more per page, and for experienced artists, I pay more."

He is seeking grants and hoping to generate revenue from magazine sales to cover expenses including payments to artists, but for the first issue, he simply paid his young artists out of pocket. "I paid out about \$2,000 over the summer," Bragdon noted. "That was a fair amount of frames!"

For some students, this will be their first monetized artwork, but this manga also gives them résumé fodder as well as spending money. Students can even pitch Bragdon on their own edgy political comics.

Nick Yi (Merrill '21, games and playable media) is contemplating a comic about being Asian American, while touching on other issues, including the way people navigate their identities.

"I've written papers about this," said Yi. "I really think that art can bring about meaningful discussions about minorities, LGBT issues, and disabilities."

Roots of a new magazine

The roots of *Santa Cruz Comics* go back to Bragdon's time in Japan. In the early 1990s, he taught English classes there and started studying Japanese immersively for four hours a day. Bragdon was able to get work in the semiconductor industry, in part because of his proficiency with the language.

Meanwhile, he brushed up on his speaking skills by bingeing on manga, which was written in Japanese that was more informal and conversational than the kind he was learning from textbooks.

In 2015, after resigning from a nonprofit he was running, he decided to take advantage of his "between jobs" status. Bragdon, who has written two self-published novels, wondered if he could marry his interests in art, writing, and start-ups by creating homegrown manga.

That's when he realized that UC Santa Cruz would be an ideal place for such a venture.

"Here I am on campus with a lot of student artists wanting experience. Maybe this would be a start for them," he said. "Students had expressed an interest in working with me on art projects. This seemed like an ideal way to do that." ■

First-generation Salvadoran American Mauricio Ramirez finds voice, art, and inspiration in the murals of San Francisco's Mission District

These walls can talk

Mauricio Ramirez may be soft-spoken, but he found his voice among the color-splashed walls of San Francisco's Mission District.

Ramirez is an oral historian, interpreter, and, in his own words, "an interlocutor" for murals that speak for immigrants from all over the world, including Ramirez's ancestral homeland El Salvador. His parents fled the country in the 1980s in the midst of a brutal civil war that lasted until 1992, leaving 75,000 dead.

"Public murals give a voice to the community, and in this sense, the community reclaims its public space," said Ramirez, an alumnus (Oakes '11, art) who is currently a UC Santa Cruz third-year doctoral student in Latin American and Latino studies with an emphasis on visual studies. His dissertation focuses on transnational solidarity in Latinx visual art in the San Francisco Bay Area. "Really, the point of this is solidarity," he said. "These murals tell us this: You can create your own sense of place, and educate those who come by."

In portraits of laborers, immigrants, and martyrs, in streaks, dots, fine lines, and daubs of red and orange paint signifying blood and fire, in shoots of green showing growth and regeneration, these murals tell the story of people.

They tell tales of diaspora, of escape from genocide, grand ambitions, artistry, and collective identity. They also tell the story of the Central American "pioneers" who fostered a creative renaissance across America, while brightening drab and dreary walls with their paintbrushes.

Left: A section of a mural by Isaías Mata, *500 Years of Resistance*, 1992

Art history

"This is part of Central American history," said Ramirez, 28, one foggy winter morning in Balmy Alley, a block-long public art display between 24th and 25th streets in San Francisco's Mission District.

Balmy Alley contains one of the greatest concentrations of murals in all of San Francisco. The paintings here are so mesmerizing that it is easy to forget that the "canvas" is the back walls of homes and apartment buildings. Sometimes, a visitor will look, hypnotized, at a piece of artwork, only to see that painting tilt upward unexpectedly when someone opens a garage door.

Ramirez paused for a moment in front of a 2004 mural painted by the artist Joel Bergner called "Un Pasado Que Aún Vive" ("A Past That Still Lives Here"), depicting a Salvadoran village under siege. The shapes of trees beneath a jungle-covered volcano suggest ghostly faces. Perhaps they're the phantoms of guerillas who died fighting the right-wing government, or they may be among "los desaparecidos"—the civilians who, presumably killed by the military or police, vanished and were never seen again.

While California's Chicano art movement has received a large amount of attention from academics, relatively little has been said about Central American art, and, specifically, Salvadoran murals. That's why Ramirez dedicated his life to telling the story of San Francisco's Central American-themed murals, collecting expansive oral histories from the artists; doing academic studies of the murals as part of his work toward a Ph.D. at UC Santa Cruz; and teaching art, murals, mural history, and life skills at juvenile hall facilities in San Mateo and San Francisco with the nonprofit organization The Imagine Bus Project. He also makes art of his own, either alone or as part of mural projects.

Dark times for Central American immigrants

Murals such as the ones in Balmy Alley foster a strong feeling of comfort and acceptance for immigrants and their children. "Central Americans see these murals and feel welcomed," Ramirez said.

But lately, Ramirez's personal mission has taken on a new degree of urgency, at a time when immigrants in the United States—including hundreds of thousands of Salvadoran immigrants—face a new set of hurdles and circumstances.

Most chillingly for Ramirez, the Trump administration announced this winter that it was ending a humanitarian program called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Central Americans—including Salvadorans and Nicaraguans—who had been permitted to live and find work in the United States legally in the aftermath of natural disasters and political upheavals. The protections, instituted in 1990 for the survivors of such traumas as earthquakes and civil wars, were routinely extended. The decision regarding the fate of Hondurans under the protection of the TPS program is pending.

This decision affects 200,000 Salvadorans living in the United States. Those who have not attained permanent residency in the U.S. face deportation. The measure goes into effect next year.

Salvadorans of San Francisco also face a more insidious enemy. Gentrification threatens to shove out all but the wealthiest residents from town. "It seems like this issue of displacement is something that keeps occurring to Salvadorans," Ramirez said. "First they were displaced from Central America. Then they came here, laid down roots, but now, again, they're being displaced."

Prior to a devastating 2001 quake in El Salvador, another great upheaval took place—the savage civil war from 1980 to 1992 that pitted a ruthless military regime, backed by the United States, against leftist rebels. Hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans fled the violence, seeking refuge in the United States and other countries.

Ramirez sees the bitter irony in the reversal of Temporary Protected Status.

“I like to call it the double displacement—not just from the immigration policy change, but also from the tech boom, the gentrification, the rising cost of real estate,” Ramirez continued. On top of this, Ramirez noted, some Salvadorans are in a precarious state. Many—but not all—of the Salvadorans who emigrated to the United States lawfully or illegally over the past few decades have become naturalized citizens. Those who haven’t face a potentially agonizing situation.

“It is heartbreaking to see families are being split up once again,” Ramirez said.

Ramirez sees a direct link to the displacement of those Salvadorans and the fate of the Mission’s murals; those public works of art could lose their cultural context, as well as their protections, if the people who made the art, advocate for it, and protect it, are forced to go away.

“If the population shifts, if it gets displaced, will the murals remain here?” he asks.

The silencing of walls

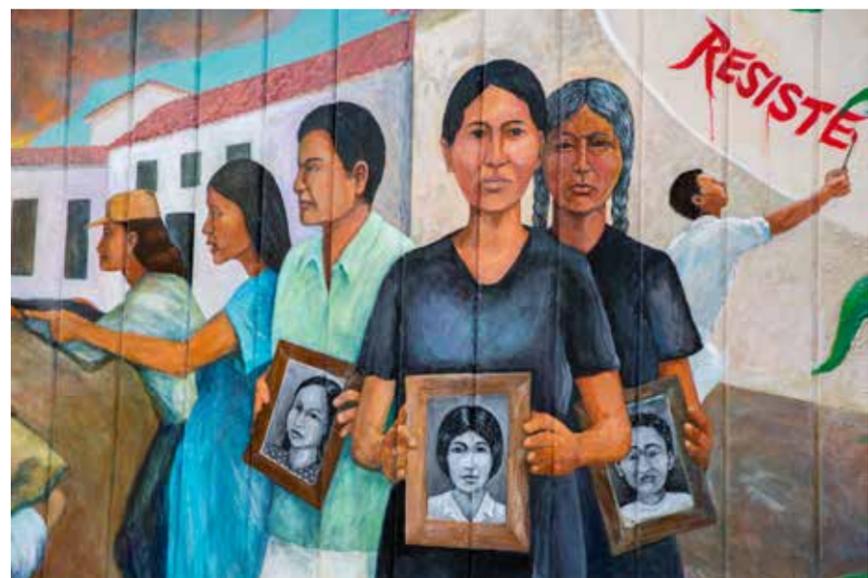
Balmy Alley is an important heritage site for Central Americans, but the Mission has many other beautiful murals. One of the most remarkable is “500 Years of Resistance” by the Salvadoran artist Isaías Mata. Newly restored, this panoramic artwork on two sides of St. Peter’s Church

on 24th street is a monument to resilience and pan-Latin American identity. One side of the church has images of saints and martyrs, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Archbishop Oscar Romero, who became a national symbol of resistance when he stood up to the murderous right-wing regime in El Salvador; he was killed by a death squad sniper in 1980. On the other side, the mural delves much deeper into the past, showing a magisterial Olmec head from Mesoamerica and a Nazca figure from ancient Peru.

But not all murals enjoy the same level of public support and protection. At 24th and Folsom streets, a two-part mural on a shop wall, created by Mission

youth artists, was whitewashed because the building’s owners had just leased the ground-floor space to a new restaurant and wanted “something bright,” according to a story published last year in the Mission Local news blog.

After the owners replaced a mural saying, “Our Culture Is Not for Sale,” with skulls, skeletons, and other vibrant images from Mexico’s “Día de los Muertos” (“Day of the Dead”), the artists and their supporters protested. The owners eventually agreed to work with Precita Eyes Muralists, the nonprofit organization that commissioned the original artwork, to replace the mural with help from neighborhood youth.



Left: Juana Alicia, *No One Should Comply with an Immoral Law*, 1996

developers often use the “funky,” “authentic,” and creative atmosphere of the Mission, including its murals, as incentives to lure renters and homebuyers, even as those same gentrifying forces make it harder for Salvadorans of modest means to keep living in the city whose walls tell their story.

This irony has not been lost on Josué Rojas, executive director of nonprofit Acción Latina, a respected figure in the world of San Francisco’s murals, and one of the artists featured in Ramirez’s oral history of the Mission’s Central America-themed murals.

“Enrique’s Journey,” one of Rojas’s most evocative artworks, is based on Sonia Nazario’s Pulitzer-winning nonfiction book about a Honduran child who faced robbers and multiple deportations in his efforts to reach the United States and find his mother. That mural has earned widespread praise from, among many others, Nazario herself.

Rojas believes that making murals has become “a double-edged sword because you might be beautifying the experience of a neighborhood for rich people that are coming in and raising property values.

“At the same time, communities can’t help but make this art, in the same way that a bird can’t help its song,” continued Rojas, a respected journalist as well as an artist and educator. “You have to do it. These murals are unique because they bear these stories, they bear our witness, they bear our experience. So I struggle with it. But at the end of the day, I know it is positive because those stories are there. And we can’t help but continue.” ■



Mauricio Ramirez is one of a dozen UC Santa Cruz graduate students who received support from the campus’s new Social Science Research Council Dissertation Proposal Development Program. Recipients received \$5,000 and were invited to attend two dissertation-proposal workshops with doctoral students and advisers from four other universities.

Such problems can be vexing for Ramirez and others who love the murals. Then again, the muralists of the Mission have lived and persevered through dire circumstances before.

In fact, it was a moment of crisis that led to the creation of the Balmy Alley public art project in the first place.

Back in 1984, a collective of artists, calling themselves PLACA (the literal translation is “badge” or “insignia,” but “placa” can also mean leaving a personal mark on a place), incensed by the United States’ support of brutal regimes in Central America, took over the alley. Thirty-six artists crafted 27 murals, telling the story of the beauty and culture of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, and the armed conflicts and acts of genocide that sent millions of their residents fleeing to the far corners of the world.

In doing so, PLACA gave birth to a cultural icon. Their murals helped build solidarity among Central American immigrants and beautify drab and gritty city blocks, while

sharing hundreds of years of history with artful brushstrokes.

It’s no small wonder that Ramirez, a San Francisco native who grew up close to the Mission District in the Excelsior neighborhood, found his life’s calling here as a young man, thanks in large part to Precita Eyes Muralists. The nonprofit makes and preserves murals of the Mission, providing historical information and expertise, as well as painting supplies and docent-led mural tours.

“I’ve got to give it up for Precita Eyes Muralists,” said Ramirez, who briefly experimented with artistic and unsanctioned spray-painted cartoon characters and other graffiti on the walls of San Francisco before Precita Eyes opened him up to the communal possibilities of mural work. “They changed my life.”

Murals and gentrification

While Ramirez talks about the way murals can build community, he is also aware of a troubling contradiction: landlords and

PHOTOS BY C. LAGATTUTA



Lisa White: Fueled by fossils
Ph.D. '90, Earth sciences

If you have a saber-toothed tiger fang on your desk, there's a good chance your life is pretty interesting. So it is with Lisa White, who is a working paleontologist.

But White is more than that. She is also director of education and public programs at the UC Museum of Paleontology, which means her job is to make sure lay people, especially students, have a chance not only to see evidence of the Earth's changes but also to understand them.

White spent 22 years as a faculty member and later as an administrator at San Francisco State. But her activist genes—her

mother, Myrtle Escort White, was a public health nurse and her father was the late Joseph L. White, who pioneered the field of black psychology—led her in 2001 to start a program called SF-ROCKS, which took minority youth into national parks to explore fossils and geologic formations.

Now, White not only leads students on tours through the museum's 5 million fossil specimens but is also reshaping its virtual offerings. This year, "Understanding Global Change" will join "Understanding Evolution" and "Understanding Science" as web-based learning tools.

"We're not afraid to look at challenging topics of the time," White says in a modulated voice that's born to teach. "Bring it on," she says.

Last summer, White accompanied 20 educators on a research vessel off Southeast Asia, where she brought science alive by letting them examine a deep core sample from the time, 65 million years ago, when much of the Earth's plants and animals went extinct.

Paleontology, White believes, allows us to see a world in change, a world in which saber-toothed tigers no longer exist.

PHOTOS: WHITE BY ANASTASIA SAPON; FUENTES; COURTESY OF CAROLINA FUENTES

Profiles by Peggy Townsend



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

Alumni

ALUMNI PROFILES

Carolina Fuentes: Singing out M.A. '10, social documentation

Carolina Fuentes had seen enough death in her native El Salvador to know it was no longer safe to stay.

Four classmates at the Jesuit university where she studied in the 1980s had been murdered by the military. Her friend and fellow musician Ricardo Merlos had been assassinated, and composer Guillermo Cuellar had been arrested and tortured for music the government considered subversive.

As a singer of protest music, called Nueva Trova (New Song), which Merlos and Cuellar had also practiced, Fuentes knew she also was in danger and fled north.

She landed, first, in Mexico, where she lived for seven years. Then she moved to California's Central Valley, where she worked as a journalist at

Radio Bilingue, the Spanish PBS, and then for 16 years as a reporter for Univision in Fresno and Los Angeles.

In 2006, her life turned again.

When her television contract wasn't renewed, she headed for UC Santa Cruz. It was there that she mentioned a life she'd rarely spoken about. A classmate encouraged her to tell that story in film.

"It was the realization that I had been denying my true self for so many years," she says of her decision to document what had happened to the protest singers of El Salvador and to her generation.

With an initial \$4,500 budget from her Berkeley Human Rights Institute fellowship and three years of emotionally draining work, Fuentes

finished the film, *Our Right to Sing*, which was eventually screened at the National Theatre for the arts in her home country.

"Music becomes the collective voice of people, for expressing ideals, hope, frustration, and anger in the context of social repression," says Fuentes from El Salvador, where she is now teaching.

"Through lyrics, we overcome the feeling of isolation that a repressive discourse tends to impose."

Read a companion Q&A about Fuentes's experiences at magazine.ucsc.edu.

For more on Salvadoran art, history, and culture, see "These walls can talk," page 24.



Above: Carolina Fuentes at her film screening. Right: With fellow musicians in 1980. Ricardo Merlos is behind the big drum.



Rolando Perez: Free from fear of failure

Kresge '15, bioengineering

In science, failure can be an important part of learning. The same can be said of Rolando Perez.

Now a 34-year-old Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University in one of science's most cutting-edge fields, Perez grew up a rebellious and confused kid in a low-income household in Salinas, Calif.

He had so many brushes with the law for fighting and drinking that when he walked in his high school graduation ceremony, he was wearing a court-ordered ankle monitor.

He joined the Air Force and became a jet mechanic but was arrested for drunken driving and underage drinking and discharged from the military. He worked his way up to an office manager job in L.A., but his drinking again caused him to spiral out of control and become

homeless. A stint at a college in Gilroy to earn his certificate to be a civilian jet mechanic ended after less than a year.

"The old life ended up sucking me up again," Perez says.

One day, right after he'd gotten a second DUI and learned of a friend's murder, an acquaintance pointed a gun at Perez and pulled the trigger.

The gun jammed and, in that instant, Perez says, he knew something had to change.

Perez moved in with his grandparents, enrolled in Hartnell College, sought counseling, stopped drinking, and became fascinated with synthetic biology, a science that combines genetics, engineering, computer science, and cellular biology to reshape the building blocks of life. It has the potential to

change medicine, the food industry, even the clothes we wear.

Today, Perez is working with Stanford Associate Professor of Bioengineering Drew Endy, one of synthetic biology's most important figures, and hopes to not only be part of this scientific revolution but also to make sure its potential for wealth generation is just, equitable, and open to those besides privileged white males.

His family and his innate intelligence were large parts of his success, but so, too, was UC Santa Cruz Professor of Biomolecular Engineering Nader Pourmand.

"He empowered me to be successful. He gave me the opportunity to fail without fear of judgment," Perez says.

It was something he'd never been given before.

PHOTOS: PEREZ BY C. LAGATTUTA; KILLION BY KLEA MCKENNA (KLEAMCKENNA@GMAIL.COM), 2014; "TREE WITH WINDOWS, SANTA CRUZ POGONIP," TOM KILLION, 2003.

Tom Killion: A life in color

Cowell '75, history

Tom Killion is in his studio on Inverness Ridge, describing the process for making his elaborate woodcut prints. First, there are hours of sketching and note-taking in the wild. Then later, maybe years later, he'll hand-carve a "key block" of one of those scenes into a sheet of Japanese all-shina plywood.

If the print is to be in color, each hue in his hyper-real offering will require a different carved color block and a separate run through his 40-year-old cylinder proof press. Some prints need 10 to 12 blocks.

"Then, depending on how the first layer of color, your foundation, interacts with the next colors, the print takes off in its own direction," says Killion.

Just like in life.

Killion, raised at the foot of Mount Tamalpais, was inspired by Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*; his own first layer were woodcut prints he made of Mt. Tam. Next came UC Santa Cruz, where, during what he called the campus's "golden age," he studied fine book making with the unconventional printer Jack Stauffacher.

Inspired by friends and UC Santa Cruz poet-in-residence William Everson, a Beat poet who, in 1975, created a fine-art book of poetry titled *Granite and Cypress*—"the most beautiful book created by anybody at UC Santa Cruz," Killion says—he used the Cowell Press to craft his first book using his Mount Tam prints that same year.



A doctorate in African history from Stanford followed, along with work in an Ethiopian refugee camp and travels with rebels in war-torn Eritrea. But Killion's "key block"—the light-lanced landscapes of Northern California—lured him back.

Over the years, he's turned out scores of prints and six books. His most recent volume, *California's Wild Edge*, is the basis for a

traveling exhibit, which is showing at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History through April 22.

His next project will focus on treescapes: another layer in an artistic life.

STAY CONNECTED; IT ISN'T ALL ABOUT THE MONEY



As president of Compton College—which just last year was formally recognized as a California Community College, becoming the college system’s 114th campus—I feel I have a different perspective than most alumni on staying connected to UC Santa Cruz.

In my role as college president, I participate in fundraising telephone calls, lunch and dinner meetings with potential donors, and exploring many new opportunities to raise funds for Compton College. As a UC Santa Cruz alumnus, when I receive those yearly calls from the fundraising office, I have to remind the callers (who are often very well-mannered and excited) that I already have the Keith Curry Destination Higher Education Scholarship, and all my financial donations go directly to that scholarship program.

This scholarship is awarded annually to a UC Santa Cruz graduate who has dedicated significant personal time and energy to the African/black community on campus. It is given out at the end of each academic year and is meant to help the graduate pursue future leadership opportunities. Since 2009, scholarship funds have been awarded to 11 graduates, providing a total of \$5,500 in scholarships.

But also, ever since I graduated from UC Santa Cruz, I have returned to the campus to speak with students. After graduating, many of them reached out to me for career guidance and requested to meet. During these

meetings, I learned many of them were applying to graduate school or pursuing other leadership opportunities, and together we sought out and researched available financial resources to help them pursue that dream.

While meeting with these young alumni, I found myself reminiscing and asking questions about UC Santa Cruz, faculty and staff members, and student organizations. These conversations made me think about my own college experiences, such as my accomplishments, Oakes College, and my friends. I was often reconnecting with UC Santa Cruz during these meetings while also providing advice to young people just starting out and beginning to build their careers—a very fulfilling experience.

This year is the “Year of Alumni” at UC Santa Cruz, and I would like to encourage you to become connected or reconnected with your alma mater. Staying engaged is not always about money (though of course UC Santa Cruz will gladly accept a donation). Rather, it is about giving back to UC Santa Cruz students (remember when you were one?) and maintaining a connection with the academic programs, with fellow alumni, and most importantly, with UC Santa Cruz, which has given us all so much.

Keith Curry, Ed.D., is the president/CEO of Compton College.

Visit alumni.ucsc.edu.



Plan ahead to change a life

Each year, the **UCSC Retirees Association Bruce Lane Memorial Scholarship Fund** provides needed support to student veterans. The fund, created in memory of the first campus architect, has awarded 81 scholarships for a total of \$50,000, helping the recipients achieve their academic dreams.



Contact the Office of Planned Giving today at (831) 459-1045 and learn what you can do to provide for the next generation of students.

Mary Joan Rodriguez, a third-generation “native Santa Cruzan” and UC Santa Cruz retiree (she was a registrar at Oakes College), loved helping students navigate the roadmap of their education. To help UC Santa Cruz continue its mission of research, education, and public

service, she created a Charitable Remainder Trust and designated the remainder to the UCSC Retirees Association Bruce Lane Scholarship and the Arts Division. Though she passed away in 2016, Mary Joan’s forethought and generosity will change the lives of students far into the future.

Mary Joan planned ahead by creating a **Charitable Remainder Trust**, a vehicle that paid her income during her lifetime and provided her with a charitable deduction. Because she funded it with an appreciated asset (real estate), she also avoided capital gains taxes.

plannedgifts.ucsc.edu

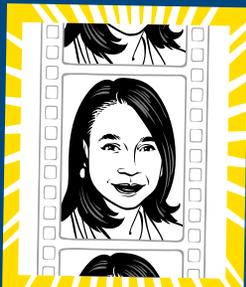
PHOTOS: CURRY, COURTESY KEITH CURRY; STUDENTS BY C. LAGATTUTA

Test your UC Santa Cruz alumni knowledge!

1. AXEL ALONSO



2. ADILAH BARNES



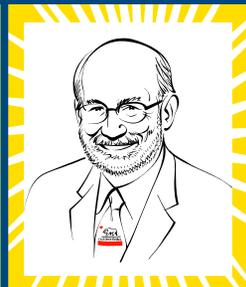
3. KEVIN BEGGS



4. REYNA GRANDE



5. JOHN LAIRD



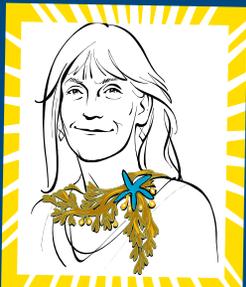
6. MARTHA MENDOZA



7. KENT NAGANO



8. JULIE PACKARD



9. KRIS PERRY



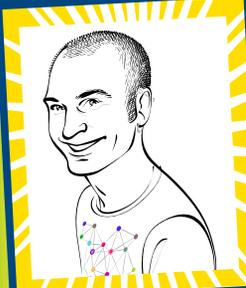
10. M SANJAYAN



11. KATHRYN SULLIVAN



12. SAGE WEIL



13. SUSAN WOJCICKI



Match the alumni illustration to the corresponding job title, career, or achievement and enter to win free admission for a guest when you register for the Alumni Weekend beer and wine reception on April 28—a \$25 value! See the full Alumni Weekend program inside for more details on the wine reception and all the other exciting events happening during Alumni Weekend (April 27–29).

- A. CEO of YouTube
- B. Award-winning film, television, and stage actor
- C. California Secretary for Natural Resources
- D. Scientist, astronaut, and award-winning educator
- E. Tech entrepreneur
- F. Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning Associated Press reporter
- G. Chairman of the Lionsgate Television Group
- H. Opera and symphony conductor
- I. Monterey Bay Aquarium executive director
- J. CEO of the nonprofit Conservation International
- K. Comics visionary
- L. Marriage equality trailblazer
- M. Award-winning novelist and memoirist



To submit your answers and enter to win, visit magazine.ucsc.edu/alumniquiz. A winner will be drawn at random from the correct entries.