Grant funding helps professor seek answers to one of life’s most fundamental questions

Class of ’28 graduate inspired a fellowship that continues to change lives

Contract with district connects health researchers with students struggling during the pandemic

Impact

Director Greg DeAngelo’s Lab Uses Data to Take on the Tough Issues of Justice
CGU is a great university. You’d expect the university president to say that, but I’m part of a large chorus. Amazing work is taking place across campus despite the challenges of living through a pandemic, and much of it is supported by those who believe in CGU’s greatness. Every gift, grant, and contract represents an investment in research and student success—an investment that is paying significant dividends by fueling innovation and discovery, and by addressing pressing needs in some of our most underserved communities. Our faculty and students are literally changing and saving lives.

Welcome to Impact, a publication that reports on investment in and partnership with CGU and the vitally important role they play. This newsletter provides a snapshot of what I have the privilege to see firsthand across campus: In this issue you will meet faculty and students who are immersed in improving health and well-being, in unlocking the benefits of living a life of purpose, in assessing issues of equity, and in using data to advance justice. You will also hear from donors who were inspired to invest in CGU. (In one case, that inspiration came from a member of the university’s first graduating class.) All show the power of financial investment in our work.

Such investments are built on relationships and grounded in trust, and that is especially true in higher education. I speak often of passing the torch because I am acutely aware of our legacy and those who helped make CGU what it is today. I am confident that you will agree that our legacy is evident in this first Impact.

Since this is a new publication and, like much of education, an iterative process, let us know what you think, and please share your story ideas. Lastly, and I cannot say this enough, thank you for being part of the CGU family. We could not live our mission without you.

Len Jessup
President, Claremont Graduate University
A Causal Connection Between Philanthropy and Success

Do judicial elections affect the outcome of criminal cases?
Are neighborhood patrols or police patrols more effective in promoting the public good?
How can law enforcement agencies improve officer safety and attract high-quality applicants?
Do 911 call dispatchers prime violent citizen-police outcomes?

When you’re analyzing consequential social questions—the kind that inform what justice, government, and civil society really mean—you can’t take anything for granted. There’s data, and then there’s clean data. Supposition and expert analysis. Published findings built on faulty premises and foundational documents that point the way. If you succeed, you have established a causal connection, and you just might have made the world a better place.

Causal is perhaps the most important word at the Computational Justice Lab, which focuses on issues of law enforcement, public safety, social policy, and criminal justice reform.

“Identifying something like institutional racism causally requires a complex skillset,” says Greg DeAngelo, founding director of the lab and associate professor of economics. “Individual events are important, and could suggest a significant problem, but showing cause requires much deeper analysis. Getting to ‘A causes B’ is a high standard.”

In fall 2019, the Charles Koch Foundation donated $5.4 million to the lab—a major gift and vote of confidence in its work and its promise. “We’re proud to support scholars whose discoveries can benefit millions of people who interact with the criminal justice system,” said Ryan Stowers, executive director of the foundation, in announcing the gift. “The Claremont team’s interdisciplinary research has the potential to uphold public safety and create a more constructive experience for the accused.”
By virtually every measure, the investment is paying dividends. The gift has allowed the lab to grow from 7 to 15 PhD students this fall, as well as add two faculty. Spread over five years, it ensures that all students receive a full-tuition fellowship, plus a stipend intended to obviate the need for outside work.

“In the age of COVID, federal funding is very competitive, which means private funds are a lifeblood,” DeAngelo says. “Private support fills the void and gives opportunities to students who might not otherwise have them. Some students have families to support, so receiving a full fellowship and a living-wage stipend means that they can focus on their studies and research.”

DeAngelo says the lab creates “triple threat” students who can work in academia, government, or private industry such as think tanks. “They leave CGU with a range of options and a deep skill set.”

Jiusi “Josie” Xiao, Rainita Narender, and Maryah Garner exemplify the quality of the students in the lab.

Based on her interests and DeAngelo’s professional connections, Josie Xiao is focusing on a project with significant implications during the pandemic—streamlining Los Angeles County’s 211 telephone referral system. The non-emergency number connects people seeking food, COVID-19 testing, mental health services, and a range of other needs to the appropriate social services, based on the caller’s location. She is part of a team, along with fellow CGU student and lab member Anuar Assamidanov, working to create a website dashboard that will allow service providers to respond nimbly and not have to request individualized activity reports, which can slow a response. She is also working to develop a chatbot, which will both answer questions and assess data based on interactions.

“This project is a natural fit because I’ve always been passionate about helping others,” says Xiao, who is entering the third year of her PhD program after earning her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in economics at USC. She plans to publish her research and use it as the foundation for her dissertation. After graduation, she will seek a research position in academia.

Rainita Narender has a passion for data and the story behind it, especially when it comes to determining whether policies intended to benefit people really do. This summer, she worked at the Cicero Institute, a San Francisco-based nonprofit, to learn how a $300 million project for parolees helps them integrate into society. She talked to hundreds of service providers to understand what was happening at the ground level and how the project affects recidivism rates.

“In order to understand what you’re looking at, you want to see how it’s being implemented,” she says. “Reading documents online is totally different from talking to people. There can be a disconnect between how things are supposed to happen versus how they work in the real world.”
After completing the PhD program, Narender would love to work at a research think tank and then perhaps enter academia. The emergence of artificial intelligence and machine learning in policy analysis and decision-making intrigues her. “It can speed the appeals process, for example, but the potential downfall is that you might have years of systemic racism guiding decisions that’s baked into the model. There’s a tug of war over how much good data science can do and how much it can propagate the existing reality that we’re trying to mediate.”

Maryah Garner, the first student DeAngelo recruited for the lab two years ago, didn’t exactly follow a traditional academic path to a PhD program.

The second youngest of eight children, she grew up on the Yurok Reservation in Northern California in a home without electricity. Elementary school consisted of two classrooms, each with four grades, and high school required a two-hour bus ride each way. She blended high school and college courses; joined the Marine Corps at 17, where she worked as an aviation mechanic; married a fellow Marine at 21; had twins; and attended two community colleges before enrolling at Cal State San Marcos. There, she met the mentor who would change her life: Assistant Professor Quinn Keefer, a CGU alumnus.

“He was so passionate about his econ research and learning that we would talk for hours about concepts beyond what we were learning in class,” Garner says. “I ended up taking all of his courses.”

When she sought his advice about where to pursue her master’s, he told her to go straight into a PhD program at CGU. “He said at CGU, you can find a family. It’s a place where the professors support you and understand the responsibilities you have as a parent.”

Now in her fifth year, she relishes the experience, despite the challenges, and says DeAngelo has “opened up this world of being able to work with district attorneys, prosecutors, lawyers, and judges and to have our research mean something. It’s about understanding the truth and diving into causal connections. It’s exciting when you start getting results. When you’ve done your work and you find out what’s happening, it’s empowering.”

It’s also personal.

“My kids are biracial, so researching racial inequalities in policing is very important to me.”

Maryah Garner

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Maryah Garner
Kendall Cotton Bronk wants to answer one of life’s most fundamental questions. The developmental psychologist and professor of psychology at the School of Social Science, Policy & Evaluation has dedicated her career to understanding what it means to live with purpose and the benefits accrued by doing so. The work is rooted in understanding the way people’s innate tendencies interact with their environment.

“Individuals with a clear sense of purpose benefit in a variety of ways. They report better psychological and physical health,” Cotton Bronk says. “Emerging research suggests that having a purpose in life actually confers these health benefits, including physical health benefits, such as better cardiovascular functioning, better sleep, and longevity. The list of benefits is kind of amazing.”

Cotton Bronk’s academic pursuits stem from her own experiences more than two decades ago when she worked as a management consultant for a large firm, where moral issues ran a distant second to competitive interests that walked the tightrope of legality. She realized that she was in the wrong line of work, so she poured herself into books on morality and pursued a PhD in moral development.

“While I was at Stanford, my husband became very ill and had to have a heart transplant,” Cotton Bronk says. “This made me step back and think about what I wanted to do with my life—what I wanted to accomplish. At just this time, my advisor was starting a project on young people’s purposes in life, and I realized that it was really relevant. As the wife of an organ recipient, it was hard not to think about issues of purpose and gratitude.”

Cotton Bronk is best known for her research involving teens and for her role as director of the Adolescent Moral Development Lab at CGU, which seeks to help young people develop in optimal ways through establishing a sense of purpose and learning how to meaningfully contribute to the
world. Recently, however, she and a colleague mused about collective purpose and whether those bound by a common bond and moral dimension could make a difference in the world. The John Templeton Foundation, which pursues the Big Questions, awarded Cotton Bronk a three-year grant for a qualitative study of “Family Purpose in the 21st Century: Understanding and Fostering Purpose Among Families with Extraordinary Responsibilities.”

She and her three-student team recently wrapped up their first year on the project, which included:

- Identifying a study group and comparison group. Cotton Bronk and her student colleagues chose a dozen ultra-high-net-worth families with a family foundation or a family business and the capacity to effect significant change through their actions, as well as a dozen families with shared businesses or interests from more typical socioeconomic backgrounds. Among those in the ultra-high-net-worth group are highly recognizable names and organizations, and among those in the comparison group are farmers, five generations of Lutheran ministers, and owners of a small newspaper.
- Creating an interview protocol. This qualitative study relies on interviews with approximately 80 family members from 24 families in the U.S. and Western Europe. Interviews were conducted in person early on and via Zoom once COVID-19 hit.
- Coding the data. This requires piecing together the three-dimensional puzzle of responses, looking not only for patterns among participants in a family, but across families in both the main and comparison groups.

“It made sense to look at ultra-high-net-worth

“Emerging research suggests that having a purpose in life actually confers these health benefits, including physical health benefits, such as better cardiovascular functioning, better sleep, and longevity. The list of benefits is kind of amazing.”

Kendall Cotton Bronk
families because the social impact of having or not having a purpose could be really great,” Cotton Bronk says. “We’re still refining the definition of purpose based on what we’re seeing, but we view it as a shared vision, goal, or intention that is meaningful and evidenced by active engagement—by people in the family doing things that make progress toward that vision. It’s not just something they talk about. And the vision is directed beyond the family: ‘What can we as a family do to make a meaningful difference in our community or in the broader world?’ How they choose to spend their money or run their companies has a real impact. If they’re using their resources to do good, they can do a lot of good.’

The researchers have found that families enact their purpose in several ways. For some, it’s through providing jobs. For example, one family made all their employees shareholders and tried diligently not to lay anyone off during the pandemic. In other cases, family purpose is separate from business and is manifested through philanthropy.

Elyse Postlewaite, a PhD student working on the project, says her interests lie primarily in children and education, but she wanted to develop skills in qualitative research—and the opportunity to work with Cotton Bronk was too good to pass up.

“I’ll work on publications with her, but I also love that we’re aiming to do some popular pieces and work with family business foundations rather than waiting for someone to read a peer-reviewed journal article.”

Although COVID-19 has had the silver lining of making it easier to interview participants—most were reachable digitally—Postlewaite says she would have loved the opportunity to travel. “There’s something about meeting face to face,” she says. “Zoom really helps, but you can pick up cues and clues when you to go into people’s homes.”

Cotton Bronk says the research team will spend the upcoming year gathering more data and diving deeper into analysis. They plan to share their findings in year three, including with other ultra-high-net-worth families and with professionals who work with these families, given their potential to have a significant impact. “We want to ensure these families think intentionally about how they use their resources to make a positive difference in the broader world and how they can effectively transmit that purpose across generations.”

What About Those Farmers and Ministers?

The very rich may be different, but the less wealthy comparison group families have their own challenges with purpose, especially when it comes to maintaining it over generations.

“It’s early in our analysis, but emerging findings suggest these families tend to be more open to letting members of the younger generation do what they enjoy, even if it does not sustain the business or enterprise,” Kendall Cotton Bronk says. “There’s more at stake for the ultra-high-net-worth families in keeping future generations committed to the business. They have a lot of history and tradition to live up to.”

They do appear to have at least one thing in common: Younger family members in both groups are more interested in environmental sustainability than those in previous generations.
Combating Chronic Stress with Precision and Compassion

The phone call came in late 2018. The Corona-Norco Unified School District was alarmed by the growing number of suicides—of high school students, intermediate students, even some in elementary grades. The district was addressing the crisis but wanted to do more, so it turned to one of the region’s foremost experts in social and environmental influences on health-related behavior.

“I said I couldn’t predict that we had the solution, but if we entered into this program of discovery together, we’d try to find a way to mitigate some of the causes,” says Andy Johnson, professor and founding dean of the School of Community & Global Health at CGU. “I told them we were going to do some experimenting with the science as we know it, do some adaptations and some novel things, some of which may prove useful.”

It’s called translational research, and it is at the core of much of CGU’s research model.

“We take from the best of science—what is learned and what are promising strategies—put them into practice and study the impact,” Johnson says. “We identify where things work and where they don’t and then refine them.”

With seed money from a contract with the school district, Johnson began assembling an impressive team, starting with some of CGU’s faculty and students from public health, psychology, and evaluation. They began the meticulous process of systems development and management,
building the measurement tools, such as surveys, that are essential to assess and evaluate psychological factors associated with chronic stress. They also explored how to support teachers, who face stresses of their own and are counted upon to be perhaps the only positive role models in some students’ lives.

Lucie Leung-Gurung, a PhD student in community and global health, designed some of the measurement instruments to assess psychological factors such as depression and impulsivity.

“We looked at how toxic stress affects youth and at the high-impact positive factors that make them stronger,” she says. “We make sure that the surveys and biomarkers are evidence-based and that what is designed works—finding the sweet spot for how much participants are willing to do. And then we assess the data.”

Tapping a network of educators and professionals built through decades of collaborative research, Johnson brought aboard colleagues and students from Loma Linda Medical Center, USC, UCLA, Western University of Health Sciences, and elsewhere to fill clinical needs, such as social work and nursing, that CGU does not provide.

They chose to focus initially on Auburndale Intermediate, a school that serves a community where 63 percent of the residents live below or just above the poverty line, and where school is the only safe haven for many students. The chemistry with the principal and teachers was excellent, Johnson says, and social workers were imbedded in early March to begin the assessment. But with COVID-19 forcing the closure of schools, Johnson and the research team regrouped and transitioned to telehealth, using a HIPPA-compliant form of Zoom to ensure privacy.

“COVID has really changed what we do,” says Allison Maladore, a former teacher and principal who is in CGU’s DPH (doctor of public health) program. “We’re working with teachers to identify their challenges and stressors and the frustrations of not being able to communicate with students in the ways they usually do—or at all. For them, it was refreshing to have someone care about their mental well-being.”

Participants have embraced telehealth, Johnson says, “in part because we make it very personal.”

The research is in the early stages, but the initial findings are both sobering and inspiring. In some instances, family relationships have frayed, depression increased, and certain types of substance use, such as vaping, have gone up. In others, however, family relationships have improved during confinement at home, and students have embraced the outreach,

“We make sure that the surveys and biomarkers are evidence-based and that what is designed works—finding the sweet spot for how much participants are willing to do. And then we assess the data.”

Lucie Leung-Gurung
which included the addition of undergraduates from USC who are acting as mentors and tutors. And this fall, with additional contract funding, students in Johnson’s systems engineering class are designing and refining their work while establishing referral protocols for the Corona-Norco students and families to tap other resources.

Johnson says that even after students return to the classroom, telehealth will remain part of the outreach.

“We can do an assessment, and nobody notices the student has been pulled out of a classroom. He doesn’t have to go to a mental health center, where a friend might see him walk in or out. That’s a big positive we’ve gotten out of this: Isolation forces us to find workarounds that have lasting value.”

Longer term, and with additional contract or philanthropic funding, Johnson wants to continue serving the initial group of students, as well as scale up the program to cover all K-12 schools in the Corona-Norco district. But he also hopes for a much larger impact.

“We have converging missions. We share the district’s passion, but the larger mission for academia is to learn things and develop systems that are widely applicable.”

Doctoral students Allison Maladore and Lucie Leung-Gurung came to CGU with different backgrounds and career objectives.

Maladore originally attended medical school but, as she says, “it felt like I was soul searching,” so she went into education. When she became a teacher and a principal, “It was like, whoa, this is hard work, this is real. Most people don’t understand what teachers go through to invest in their students’ education.” She left her position as a principal in Boston to pursue her DPH in order to have more of a macro impact in education through policy implementation.

Leung-Gurung, a PhD student in community and global health, was drawn to the program because of its focus on mental as well as physical health. She wants to fine-tune the triage system to address chronic stress and give students, parents, and teachers tools they can use for the long term. “How can we use technology to make sure we don’t leave behind those who are already facing multiple struggles?”

Maladore and Leung-Gurung both say their experience at CGU is unlike anything they could receive elsewhere because it gives them the opportunity to thrive and make a tangible difference.

“Our situation is unique,” Maladore says. “Dr. Johnson empowers us to be leaders. We meet with four faculty at least twice a week, and we are free—we are encouraged—to share our ideas as peers in the process. We are really fortunate.”

Leung-Gurung relishes the opportunity to collaborate and assess challenges in a holistic way, and she sees Johnson as a role model for the kind of academician she wants to become.

“Dr. Johnson and the program have helped me grow my leadership skills because as researchers we have to understand the other side—the organization’s culture and how things work. We could provide the best ideas, tested and evidence-based, but it’s not as effective if it’s not in the language that organizations speak.”
As a young historian, Linda Perkins helped propel the study of Black women in higher education into a serious discipline. As a longtime professor, she has mentored generations of scholars and shared her wisdom on numerous expert panels. In both her lived experience and her academic pursuits, she is a witness to the struggles and accomplishments of those who have persevered.

“I’ve done research on women who were the only Black people at their institution,” Perkins says. “They couldn’t live on campus, couldn’t swim in the swimming pool, yet they graduated Phi Beta Kappa.”

Her passion for research—for poring over weathered documents and listening to oral histories from long ago—runs deep. She spent time over several years examining the archives from the Rockefeller Foundation, one of just two institutions that offered significant fellowships to Black women in the 1930s and 40s. Their applications and background materials, as well as the fellowship reports they submitted, offer rich insight into what life was like for those who pursued their dreams at elite and historically white institutions.

Perkins, who was recruited to CGU in 2003 as a professor, is now director of Applied Gender Studies and holds an interdisciplinary university appointment in the departments of Applied Gender Studies and Educational Studies. She initially came to Claremont in 1983 with her then-husband for career opportunities in higher education.

The reception they received was far different from what she experienced two decades later.

“Nineteenth century blacks blindly, and perhaps naively, believed that if they demonstrated their intellect, ‘culture, refinement,’ and moral integrity, racism would decrease. Joel Williamson points out the fallacy in this view and the paradox of white attitudes towards blacks after Emancipation. While they deplored and rejected unacculturated blacks, whites also deplored and rejected blacks who resembled them either biologically or culturally.”

An excerpt from Professor Linda Perkins’ “Black Feminism and Race Uplift,” written during her postdoctoral fellowship at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College in 1981.
They had made arrangements to move into a sabbatical home, a residence that would be vacant while the owners, a professor at one of the Claremont Colleges and her husband, were away. “When he saw that we were Black, within an hour we were told they had decided they were not going to rent. That was my first introduction to Claremont,” Perkins says. “We found another place with another professor, so it worked out. It wasn’t a new experience—the same biases existed in Cambridge.”

Perkins had arrived from Harvard-Radcliffe in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute, which provided financial support, a vital community of women, and access to Radcliffe’s and Harvard’s ample resources. She credits much of her success to her mentor, Patricia Graham, who invited Perkins to events, introduced her to people, and “opened up the world to me.”

That success was later nurtured by a series of grants from the Spencer Foundation, the only national foundation focused exclusively on supporting education research. (Perkins paid it forward by serving on a fellowship selection committee during Graham’s time there as the foundation’s president.) Perkins also earned a Ruth Landes Memorial Fellowship, named for a pioneer in the study of race and gender relations—and someone who had written to Perkins years earlier to inquire about her research. Later, while Perkins was studying Landes’s papers at the Library of Congress, she made an interesting discovery in the archive: her correspondence with Landes. “I had to check to make sure I hadn’t said anything embarrassing in the letters!” Perkins recalls with a laugh.

The work of historians often requires philanthropic investment. “Research is expensive,” says Perkins, who is writing a book about Black women’s experiences in higher education, from the elite Seven Sisters in the East, to land grant institutions in the Midwest, to historically Black colleges and universities. “You often have to travel to explore archives, and you need to establish a rapport with the people you interview. It takes time to put the pieces together to reveal history. You can’t just run the information through a computer.”

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of another Ivy League school, Yale, admitting women, including 40 Black women, some of whose oral histories are on file at the university’s library. Perkins attended the event, sharing her perspectives on several panels, and says she would love to return to research those who broke the gender barrier. “It’s such an important part of history, not only at Yale, but for the whole of higher education.”

Perkins, who received the first mentoring award at the Claremont Colleges, says it is gratifying to be considered one of “the elders,” as a student recently called her. Another student, a protege who was newly awarded tenure at another institution, just completed a book on the history of Black women in education in the Antebellum era in New England. She said Perkins was her inspiration.

Perkins encourages young women of color to consider similar careers but offers this advice: “You have to really want to do it. It takes time and money because you have to go to the sources—and they can be all over. You have to have a passion for it, but in the end it’s very gratifying because you never know what you’re going to find.”

“I’ve been extremely fortunate to do the research I’ve done because of philanthropy,” she says. “There’s always something new to discover.”
“Epidemiology is the detective side of science and disease. You don’t just treat people; you figure out the why to prevent the crime from happening.”

Jessica DeHart
Cancer is an elusive foe, but Jessica DeHart, a molecular epidemiologist and assistant professor at the School of Community & Global Health, is relentless in her pursuit—and she and her team have found some tantalizing clues.

“Epidemiology is the detective side of science and disease,” DeHart says. “You don’t just treat people; you figure out the why to prevent the crime from happening.”

DeHart has been figuring out the why since 2009, when she joined other researchers in the California Teachers Study. The study, which began in 1995, is one of the most comprehensive scientific looks at breast cancer and its possible links to lifestyle factors including physical activity, with a cohort of more than 133,000 female teachers and administrators answering questionnaires and providing blood samples. Over the years, the research has expanded to multiple cancers, as well as numerous clinical and disease outcomes.

“You name it, we can track it,” says DeHart, who serves on the study group’s steering committee.

With a multimillion-dollar grant from the National Cancer Institute, DeHart and her colleagues, including CGU students, are looking at the relationship between sleep and multiple cancers. They are focusing on telomeres, the tiny parts at the ends of X chromosomes that are markers of longevity. Besides the process of aging, researchers are finding that smoking, lack of physical activity, and lack of sleep are also shrinking telomeres.

“We’re still teasing it out,” DeHart says. Now in their third year of the four-year project, she and her team are about to publish several papers, including research into endometrial cancer.

One of the more intriguing findings of the sleep research was the data on whether study subjects were morning or evening people (taking into account an equal amount of sleep). They found that morning people had fewer incidences of breast cancer, but they also had shorter telomeres.

“That’s not what I expected,” DeHart says, “but at the same time it makes me excited when I see things that I didn’t expect. It’s fascinating and it drives me. Now I’m asking, ‘What am I missing?’ My next grant will not look at sleep by itself, but at a Healthy Index Score, with sleep, physical activity, and diet over the entire lifetime to see if we can predict telomere length and biological age.”

Telomeres are a hot topic, DeHart says. “If we can come up with a Healthy Living Score and say ‘If you do A, B, and C, your biological age will be younger and your health better, a donor could find it really cool to look into.’

Why CGU’s Approach to Research Matters

Jessica DeHart says she came to CGU for one compelling reason: transdisciplinarity.

“It’s a massive word that’s hard to digest, but it’s so much more effective than traditional silos. With siloed research you say, ‘Let’s all get together and figure out a problem to solve and maybe our paths can cross.’ With transdisciplinary research, you take a problem and say, ‘What disciplines do you need to solve it?’ It brings the right people to the table.”

Advances in health and well-being research require experts who understand not only the clinical side of things but the behavioral side as well. For example, the pairing of the School of Community & Global Health and the Psychology Department—renowned for its research into positive health psychology—is a natural fit.

“I came to CGU because of its open-door policy,” DeHart says. “I’ve never been in a research environment so collaborative in my life.”
There are many ways to honor a legacy through philanthropy. Gifts with a history to them build and strengthen programs, rewarding excellence and providing an experience like no other. We are deeply grateful for the generosity of those who help us realize our mission to provide a transformative graduate education. This issue of Impact highlights two of the university’s signature endowments and the people behind them. Future issues will include stories about how fellowships, established via a heartfelt connection to CGU, have changed lives.

A Name Revered, an Impact Never Forgotten

Horace Jeremiah (Jerry) Voorhis is a name virtually synonymous with education in Southern California. A graduate from the Claremont Graduate School’s first cohort (MA, Education, ’28), Voorhis proved to be a powerful and influential example to many, including Ben O’Brien, one of four brothers to attend the Voorhis School for Boys in San Dimas, California. There, Voorhis taught Ben and so many others the meaning of success, the importance of acquiring a trade, and above all, the power of charity.

Serving in Congress for nearly a decade, Voorhis dedicated himself to philanthropy and academia—echoing the generosity of his family. His father, Charles, founded the Voorhis School in 1927, where Jerry served as headmaster until 1938. The school was then donated to be the first site of what evolved into Cal Poly Pomona.

Even at a young age, Ben valued Voorhis’s generosity, which left an impression that he carried throughout his life. Ben fondly remembered his mentor’s impact: “Jerry was a gifted, brilliant teacher,” he said during an interview for a Cal Poly Pomona oral history project. “I said many times, and it’s largely true, that what I learned in the ninth grade at the Voorhis School let me coast through Pomona College, let me coast through law school at Georgetown, and stayed with me the rest of my life.”

All four brothers flourished after they left the school, with careers ranging from politics to law enforcement to the military.

For Ben, paying forward the opportunities given to him seemed the next logical step. “Being successful means helping other people and doing good for other people,” he said.

In 1995, he helped establish the H. Jerry Voorhis Memorial Fellowship for Public Service at CGU in collaboration with the Voorhis Viking Alumni Association. In addition, the gift funded three memorial plaques in Harper Hall’s courtyard.

A past fellowship recipient shared its life-changing impact: “This fellowship motivates me to strive for excellence in life and educational pursuits. I am very grateful, humbled, and encouraged.”

Ben O’Brien passed away in 2014, but the fellowship continues to honor the values and memory of its namesake.
A Thoughtful, Impartial View of the Road Ahead

Ernest Maldonado’s support of CGU over the years has taken many shapes and forms, from his regular attendance at school events to his service as a member on the DPE Advisory Board and the CGU Board of Trustees. Maldonado (PhD, Criminal Justice ’83) and his wife, Mary, have also established the Ernest M. and Mary J. Maldonado Endowed Leadership Fund, which aids students in the School of Social Sciences, Policy, & Evaluation.

Recently, they decided to give back to CGU in an even larger way.

Courtesy of an endowment from him and Mary, the Maldonado Institute for America’s Security and International Leadership was established in 2019 to collect and provide information for government and business organizations worldwide. Its goal: to excel in apolitical and unbiased research that echoes the pillars in its title.

Maldonado’s experiences serve as influences for the Institute. A CGU emeritus trustee and alumnus with career experience in national security, local law enforcement, and academia, he is a graduate of the FBI National Academy in Virginia and a member of the FBI National Academy Associates. He also supports the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and Pepperdine’s School of Public Policy.

He holds CGU especially dear, given its enriching research environment. “I think we all need to take a step back and look at the world from different points of view. It’s important to do that,” he said during the inaugural celebration of the Institute.

“When I was in both military and law enforcement service, we always assessed the present and how it would affect the future,” he said. “That’s what I want for this institute. The reason that I’ve created it is so that we can look at so many important topics like international security and global leadership and see where we are now and where we are going.”

The Maldonado Institute for America’s Security and International Leadership hosts a series of visiting guest lecturers, research workshops, and fellowship opportunities for students that include travel support for academic conferences and symposia. It is directed by the Luther Lee Jr. Memorial Chair in Government Yi Feng, who stresses the importance of the Institute providing critical support for students. In discussing the travel allowance to attend conferences, Feng said, “Our students become even more visible and more competitive in the job market. All of this wouldn’t have been possible without Ernie’s generosity and his vision, and his resolution to make CGU a leader in higher education.”
Large gifts to universities understandably generate the most headlines in the world of philanthropy, but consistent giving—no matter a gift’s size—is the unsung hero. Nonprofit Quarterly notes that while large donations can be game changers, “virtually all charities try to raise funds across the entire spectrum of donors and gift sizes.”

Nancy Lee Ruyter (PhD, History, ’70) is one example of this crucial support for CGU—and indeed she is a philanthropist.

“It’s a term I never really use, but I definitely do consider myself one,” says Ruyter, who spent 32 years as a professor of dance history at UC Irvine. “And I think anybody else who donates to good causes can be considered one too.”

After receiving her undergraduate degree at UC Riverside, Ruyter pursued a doctorate in dance history and found that CGU provided her with the flexibility in a traditional history program to also focus on dance. She was particularly interested in dance in the context of American history from the late 18th to the 20th century, resulting in her doctoral dissertation “Reformers and Visionaries: The Americanization of the Art of Dance.” She continues this kind of research today even after retirement, with her most recent book on the pioneering dancer and choreographer La Meri.

“My professors were very conscientious about helping us and improving our writing and research skills,” she says. “I really appreciated that. It had a big impact on my own scholarship.”

It is an impact she honors through a consistent, decades-long giving history to CGU.

“I’m grateful as a retired person that I have enough income to live comfortably and donate to groups I consider important,” Ruyter says. “I’m not a wealthy person, but I have enough to support CGU and other organizations I care about. I think it’s important to support the kinds of things that help people with whatever you can afford.”

That approach to giving is something CGU deeply appreciates, says Associate Vice President for Development Anthony Todarello. “We’ve been fortunate to have people like Nancy in our community, and we want to nurture even more like her. It’s important to recognize that gifts of all sizes matter.”

Many of CGU’s donors have been loyal, steady supporters with smaller-dollar gifts, each in the spirit of benefitting a student in need.

“Nancy’s attitude should resonate with a lot of people in our community,” Todarello says. “For any institution of higher education to survive, it’s important to create a culture of loyalty and dedication.”
“When we think of first-generation, Black, indigenous, and other students of color, and we assess our recruitment-retention rates, we identify success as being directly related to fellowships. When we build programs that better serve underrepresented groups, we’re sending a message to foundations, organizations, and corporations that scholars and the communities they serve are worth supporting.”

Quamina Carter
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs
and Dean of Students & Campus Life
How to Support CGU

Many of our alumni and community friends have supported an array of programs, fellowships, and research opportunities. If you are interested in making a gift, please contact:

**Kristen Andersen-Daley**
Vice President for Development & External Relations
909-607-8252 or kristen.andersen-daley@cgu.edu

Numerous planned giving options allow you to support the university while earning lifetime income and tax benefits. If you are considering ways to build your legacy with a planned gift, please contact:

**Tony Todarello**
Associate Vice President of Development
909-607-9230 or Anthony.Todarello@cgu.edu

If you want to support the amazing research taking place all across campus, please contact:

**Mary Jo Gruca**
Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations
909-607-9509 or maryjo.gruca@cgu.edu

You can also visit our website at cgu.edu/give/

So, What Do You Think?

The Office of Development & External Relations has launched *Impact* to share the many ways that philanthropy, contracts, and grants improve lives. We hope you enjoyed this inaugural issue, but we very much want to hear from you to help us make upcoming issues even better. Let us know what you think, and do not hesitate to suggest story ideas. Please contact:

**Tim Lynch**
Director of Development & Alumni Communications
909-607-0275 or tim.lynch@cgu.edu.

Thank You!