The President’s House has enough history to fill its 49 closets and then some. Come take a guided tour.

A partnership with San Bernardino County expands paid internship opportunities and CGU’s impact in the region.

Why I Give: ‘I can’t let his memory go, and so I want people to remember him.’ This is Alfie’s story.

Endowing a Legacy: How One Family Found Meaning in Tragedy
Being president of CGU has its perks. Foremost is the privilege to build upon a legacy of excellence that began nearly 100 years ago when our first president, James Blaisdell, laid the foundation for a superb all-graduate university. He was a scholar and a dauntless visionary. I hope one day I can look back and feel that, in some cosmic sense, President Blaisdell would approve of how I helped carry the flame.

On a lighter note, being president means I get to live in the President’s House, a wonderful venue for university events that Pomona College alumna Ela Sugg bequeathed in 1971. You could say it’s more house than my wife, Kristi Staab, and I could possibly need (it has 49 closets!), but we are, after all, just the latest guests.

One of my greatest joys as president is being able to thank those who entrust CGU with gifts that change students’ lives and support faculty. Some are transformational, such as fellowships and research endowments. Some are both practical and symbolically important, such as the monthly pledges of support for programs and schools.

Others are deeply meaningful because of the circumstances surrounding them.

Many years ago, Antone and Edith Kohler established a fellowship in memory of their daughter, Francisca, who passed away while a student at CGU. Their generosity, borne of grief and gratitude, has assisted dozens of students over the decades. In some cases, it proved the difference between pursuing dreams or deferring them.

Recently, CGU became the beneficiary of the Kohlers’ estate, which will endow student fellowships in perpetuity.

This gift really moved me. I will never get to thank the Kohlers—just as I cannot seek reassurance from President Blaisdell—but I can do my part to see that CGU honors them by ensuring that our community knows the story of their love for their daughter, as well as their commitment to create something meaningful from tragedy.

That is a true legacy.

Len Jessup, President,
Claremont Graduate University
Introducing the New Blaisdell Society

We invite those who have made a planned gift to CGU or are considering one to enjoy the benefits of the Blaisdell Society.

Named for the university’s founding president, the Blaisdell Society has been reestablished and reinvigorated to honor the growing number of our alumni and friends who see planned giving as a mutually beneficial way to support the university. It is a process that can be done at any point in one’s life, from early career through retirement.

Gizel Avina, associate director of alumni relations & development, will oversee your personal engagement with campus. You may call her at 909-607-1493 or email her at gizel.avina@cgu.edu if you wish to join or have any questions. She’s looking forward to the conversation!

Membership Confers Many Advantages
- Special access to online and in-person events
- Being among the first to hear major CGU news announcements
- Special recognition benefits

Those who join this academic year will receive a custom-designed planter from local ceramic artist Amy Santoferraro, which will contain a plant from Claremont’s renowned California Botanic Garden.

“This is an amazing group of individuals who help carry the flame forward. They deserve a special thanks, and the Blaisdell Society intends to provide it.”

– GIZEL AVINA
Associate Director of Alumni Relations & Development
Planned Giving: If You Have a Q, He Has an A


The lexicon might seem complex for someone considering a planned gift, but help is one phone call and one friendly person away.

Meet Tony Todarello, CGU’s associate vice president of development, who sat down with us to discuss the finer details of planned giving.

Tony Todarello, CGU’s associate vice president of development, says planned giving is a very transparent process.

“I’ve always loved talking with people and hearing their stories.”
In simple terms, what is planned giving?
It’s about people using the tools available to them to support their causes and maximize their opportunities for financial security. That could be a tax benefit, an annuity that pays them monthly income, or something else. It’s becoming increasingly popular for Baby Boomers as they age to start thinking about how they want to start transferring their wealth.

What is your guiding principle in working with people on planned gifts?
It’s all about understanding what the potential donor wants and what they’re passionate about. You can never assume anything about someone’s interests. You need to listen. You need to be curious. It all boils down to the fit and to respect—doing what the donor wants to do.

What should someone do when considering a planned gift to CGU?
They can start by contacting me. We’ll start with a casual conversation either in person or on the phone—whatever the person wants. We want this to be a pleasant process where everyone has the information they need to come to an informed decision. Based on what the potential donor wants, we provide information and scenarios to help them achieve their goals, and we ask them to consult with their attorney or professional advisor before completing their gift.

Is this a very transparent process?
Absolutely. After hearing their ideas and goals, I walk them through the process of what a planned gift might look like, including how to make a bequest through a living trust or will. If they want to do something a little more complicated, we have experts who can work with them. I’ve found, though, that most people have their own experts. Most people who come to us have already done a lot of thinking about this.

Do you stay in touch once someone has made a gift?
I definitely love staying connected to the extent that the donor does. I’ve met some of the most interesting people—fascinating people. I’ve met multimillionaires who started a company in their garage with borrowed money, the millionaire next door who found wealth by being a savvy investor, and educators who work with their retirement funds to endow a fellowship. It’s always been interesting, the path that people have taken to become philanthropists.

What is it about CGU that makes you feel good about raising money?
You have to believe in the cause to be successful. CGU is like family. You really get a sense that the professors and deans have a caring relationship with their students. It’s the personal learning experience. It’s natural to want to support that.

Any other advice to those thinking about making a planned gift?
Just because you’re not Warren Buffet doesn’t mean you can’t be a donor. You can change lives by supporting things that are important to you.

Tony, how did you enter this line of work? Kids don’t grow up dreaming of becoming a planned giving professional.
I started in the health field and transitioned into fundraising when a university decided to build a hospital. I’ve always loved talking with people and hearing their stories, and planned giving practically guarantees a good conversation.
Many Ways and Benefits of Making a Planned Gift

Terry Alexander (MA, Psychology, ’77)
Terry Alexander is a highly successful data analyst and data architect in Northern California, but her career path to the Bay Area went from Michigan to Claremont first—a move that she says transformed her life.

“It felt so good to get there,” she says. “I never wanted to go back home. Claremont is very special.”

Her experiences while earning a Master’s Degree in Psychology in 1977 inspired her to include the university in her will with a bequest to establish The Claremont Sangha Fellowship at CGU. Sangha is a Sanskrit word that can be defined as “community.”

“If you can direct a gift to a place that has been an important part of your life, that’s a great thing to do.”

She will never forget a lecture she attended at UCLA on the topic of Indian spirituality. The lecturer, whose name was Rama, told the audience that he really wanted to attend Claremont Graduate School but could not afford it.

“He could have been here in Claremont with us, and who knows how many lives could have been changed?”

The fellowship will benefit first- and second-year students as well as those working on their dissertations.

“Students need time to just focus their energy on their work,” she says.

Dorothy Heide (PhD, Business Administration, ’77)
Dorothy Heide knew what she wanted—and what she didn’t—when she decided to pursue a doctorate. She recalls a candid conversation with then-Dean Paul Albrecht at the School of Business before she applied.

“I didn’t want to go to a university that didn’t treat women the same as men. He assured me that women were treated fairly, and that proved to be the case,” she says. When it came time for her dissertation defense, her committee chair, Peter Drucker, knew the quality of the research. “He advised the other members of the committee to say yes to my dissertation. And they did.”

Heide’s PhD helped propel her distinguished career at Cal State Fullerton, where she was a professor of management and associate dean at the College of Business Administration and Economics. In 1989, she and her husband, Bill, created the Heide Fellowship at CGU.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do what I did if not for the opportunities I had at UCLA, Cal State Fullerton, and CGU. In this way, I am paying it forward.”

“We were pleased to give back, especially in a way that helps students,” she says.

The charitable remainder unitrust provides Heide, now widowed, with a steady current income and generated an initial tax benefit. She offers the following advice to those considering a planned gift:

“Determine what you want to do with your assets...”
and where your family fits in. Assess the benefits of giving, and then follow up to make sure that your gift is being used wisely.”

**Ted Wiprud (MFA, ’64)**

After teaching two years of junior high school art, Ted Wiprud decided to continue his education and enrolled at Central Washington University, where he earned a master’s degree in education. A colleague at Central told him about his experiences while attending Claremont Graduate School. After growing up in dark and wet Seattle, Wiprud thought Southern California and Claremont sounded wonderful, so he applied to the art program and was accepted on a full fellowship. Graduate school was the experience of a lifetime.

The early 1960s was a heady time for the art scene in Southern California. He recalls students piling into a faculty member’s van on Monday nights to drive to La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles to check out the new galleries, taking in openings that included Andy Warhol and his iconic Campbell’s Soup Cans.

Wiprud graduated from Claremont in 1964 with an MFA. That year, he joined the faculty at Oregon State University, where he taught ceramic sculpture, design, and drawing for 36 years. Teaching at the university level was challenging and rewarding. What he enjoyed most was mentoring students, some of whom became lifelong friends. After retiring, he moved to a new studio in downtown Corvallis, where he concentrated on painting and photographing his installations. Wiprud and his wife now live in a retirement community near Portland, overlooking the Willamette River. He enjoys serving on their art committee, helping purchase and inventory the over 800 artworks in their collection.

He says his decision to make a bequest to CGU was easy. “Giving back and allowing young people the opportunity to pursue their dream is the greatest thing you can do.”

**Cecilia Stephens**

Cecilia Stephens comes from a family of educators. She met her husband, Garth, at Eastmont Intermediate School in Montebello, where he was an administrator and she taught sixth grade. Garth’s stepfather, Edwin Clarke, was a principal in the Ventura area before becoming superintendent of the then-burgeoning Rowland Unified School District in the 1980s.

Stephens has no formal connection with CGU, but she is a beneficiary of a planned gift to the university. Soon after Garth passed away in 2018, Stephens received a letter informing her of a monthly annuity she would receive, thanks to the charitable remainder trust that her mother-in-law, Marjorie Clarke, had set up for Garth and her. Edwin Clarke was an alumnus of Claremont Graduate School (Education, ‘47), and Marjorie wanted to honor his memory with a gift. After Stephens passes, the assets in the trust will be given to the university.

“Mrs. Clarke did a wonderful thing in planning for our future. And it will allow the university to benefit as well.”

Stephens, who lives in a retirement community not far from CGU, says the charitable remainder trust has proved “super helpful in allowing me to live comfortably.” It will also allow her to leave her own assets to her stepchildren.

“It was such a wonderful gift.”
Francisca Toery-Kohler moved into student housing upon her arrival at CGU in fall 1986 to pursue a PhD in psychology.
Through the Success of Future Students, Francisca Lives On

The nearly $5 million gift to the fellowship endowment was transcendent, the largest of its kind in decades, and one that will benefit students in perpetuity. It would be natural to thank the donors with a celebratory event on campus or, at the least, a heartfelt personal acknowledgement—but that would prove impossible.

The planned gift was made posthumously. It reflects a bond between two parents and the university community, and the selfless act of ensuring that students they would never meet could achieve dreams in ways that their daughter could not.
Antone and Edith Kohler were a refined couple, accomplished in their careers and eclectic in their tastes. Personally and professionally, they were a team. They lived in a rambling purple house (Edith’s favorite shade) that provided a panoramic view of the Sonoma Valley. She enjoyed painting and architecture. He liked adding to the abundant wine collection in his cellar. They traveled frequently to Europe and Asia. Using 5-by-7 pieces of paper, Edith painted richly detailed watercolors of buildings that they saw along the way, and then hung the paintings in their home alongside artwork and documents that paid homage to their ancestry. They were immigrants who were proud to be citizens of the United States.

Above all, one thing was abundantly clear: They were deeply dedicated to their only child, Francisca, whose likeness was prominent in the gallery of paintings and photos that lined the stairs to the second floor of their hilltop home.

Francisca chose CGU as her graduate school and moved into student housing upon her arrival in fall 1986 to pursue a PhD in psychology, which came as no surprise. After all, the campus community was small and engaging, and the department had a reputation for excellence. By any visible measure, she was thriving.

Betty Hagelbarger, who started working at CGU in 1976 and knew Francisca casually, was serving as dean of students when the phone call came on Sept. 30, 1987. Francisca had tragically passed.

“I had to call her parents to tell them,” Hagelbarger recalls. “It was without doubt one of my most difficult conversations. But the thing I remember so clearly,
never having met them, was their immediate reaction. They reassured me, which speaks a lot about who they were.”

The Kohlers traveled to CGU for a memorial service, which the university arranged. Professor Mark Lipsey, Francisca’s advisor, shared a moving tribute. Hagelbarger took the couple to lunch and dinner.

“They loved Francisca dearly…. They were amazingly strong people—marvelous people,” Hagelbarger says.

Shortly thereafter, the Kohlers established the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship endowment to assist deserving second-year students. Over the years, dozens have benefited, including some who otherwise could not have attended CGU.

The Kohlers kept in touch with Hagelbarger through the years, sending chocolates or flowers for her birthday and other meaningful occasions, and they continued to financially support the endowment.

Because of their close connection with CGU, they chose to amplify Francisca’s legacy.

Charles Valier, an attorney specializing in healthcare finance, met the Kohlers over business in St. Louis in the late 1990s. Antone served on the board of a local HMO with Valier. Edith, an architect with a deft touch for medical buildings, was a natural complement.

“They had a spiritual connection,” Valier recalls. “They clearly thought and worked everything out together.”

Soon, Valier and the Kohlers became friends outside the boardroom. One evening, the couple broached a delicate subject: Could Valier prepare an estate plan to ensure that all their assets would support the memorial fellowship for the long haul?

“They had this overwhelming desire to honor her,” Valier says. He handled everything, and when they asked that CGU be made trustee of the estate, he took care of that as well.

Antone Kohler and Francisca at the ranch house in Sonoma around the time of her undergraduate commencement.

Antone died in November 2019, shortly after Edith passed. CGU worked with Valier to put everything in order. This summer, after the sale of the Kohlers’ property and possessions, the university received nearly $5 million. It is a gift that honors Francisca’s memory and provides support to countless future generations of students—the gift of a lifetime.

“It’s a shining example of how important it is that we pay attention to our students and that we acknowledge families,” Hagelbarger says. “It was an incredible opportunity for me to get to know Antone and Edith and to experience the love they had for Francisca.”

If you are interested in discussing ideas about your family’s legacy, contact Tony Todarello, associate vice president of development, at 909-607-9230.
Kohler Fellowship Recipients

For more than 30 years, the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship has been instrumental in supporting students’ goals and dreams. Here are the stories of three recipients whose interests and career paths are as varied as the opportunities CGU provides.

Lori James
MA ’94; PhD ’97, Psychology
Professor of Psychology, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

Professor Lori James looks back fondly at her time on campus in the early 1990s. After earning her undergraduate degree at UCLA, she was drawn to the sense of community and the opportunity to tap the broader resources of the Claremont Colleges. She sought to deeply explore her passion: the science of psychology.

“I needed the expertise of different researchers studying memory and perception from totally different perspectives,” she says. “And I found it.”

James also found that faculty and staff were invested in student success—one student at a time—which played a role in her receiving the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship in her second year on campus.

“The fellowship was huge. Having my tuition covered meant I could concentrate on doing research and not have to take out a loan. It bought me the time that I needed.”

“I think the intimacy of those connections was part of why I got the fellowship. It wasn’t just my academic record, because everyone had a strong academic record. It was the opportunity to get to know people, to talk with them about ideas and feel that I had a team of folks who cared what happened. ... It benefited me tremendously.”

James entered the professoriate in 2001 at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), where she teaches cognitive psychology and researches memory, language, and their age-related changes. One of her most rewarding experiences involves exposing students to the science of psychology.

“Science literacy is really important,” she says. “I teach a research methods class to many students who don’t want to be researchers. But when they start to see how you use these methods to develop new knowledge, they discover that they can do this. Showing them that this is accessible and seeing the light go on is huge.”

James is on sabbatical this academic year and will spend much of her time in Claremont, most likely in the spring. Two of her master’s students from UCCS are now pursuing PhDs at CGU. (They heard about CGU through her and her UCCS colleague, Andrew Lac, who previously taught Statistics and Methods in Psychology at CGU.)

“There are a lot of connections,” she says.

Robert Garrow
MA, ’10; PhD, ’12, Politics & Policy
Principal, Golden View Classical Academy

Robert Garrow’s interest in American politics began during his undergraduate studies through reading the Federalist Papers and the works of political philosopher and historian Harry Jaffa. When Garrow learned that Jaffa taught at CGU, he knew where he wanted to attend graduate school.

But he was wrong about learning under Jaffa, who had retired.

“I had mistakenly thought he was still teaching at CGU,” Garrow says. Undeterred, he entered the university “and found an excellent group of professors that I hadn’t expected, and who I came to understand were

For more than 30 years, the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship has been instrumental in supporting students’ goals and dreams. Here are the stories of three recipients whose interests and career paths are as varied as the opportunities CGU provides.
really the top professors in the country in my field.”

At the time, Garrow did not know the significance of receiving the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship, assuming it was part of a general acceptance package, but the assistance proved crucial.

“While I was prepared to take on more debt, it really was the extra support that made it worthwhile to attend.”

The intellectual rigor of his graduate studies took some getting used to, Garrow says, recalling that he was “outclassed academically” in the first week. He used that experience as motivation and found friends with wide interests and a love of conversation, as well as professors who challenged them.

Today, Garrow is the principal at a charter public school in Colorado that its website says puts a premium on “a classical, content-rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue in an orderly and disciplined environment.”

It is an academic environment that reflects Garrow’s priorities.

“You can’t just go about your life on autopilot and be happy,” he says. “You need to examine yourself and what makes a human being truly happy. In a free republic like ours, citizenship requires habits of mind and heart that incline you toward effort and productivity, even nobility and self-restraint. These things require training and habituation as well as explicit teaching, and classical schools take care to do this right.”

Jessi Knippel
PhD student, Women’s & Gender Studies)
Jessi Knippel’s road to a PhD has not been easy. She was diagnosed with dyslexia at six and learned she had two other learning disabilities after finishing her second master’s program at another university. She struggled with the GRE, taking it three times, and came close to giving up on her dream of earning a doctorate. She attended a preview weekend at CGU a decade ago but chose not to enroll because she was concerned about her writing ability.

“I’m really thankful for the dynamic education and support I’m able to get at CGU. Having the fellowship has been part of that.”

Today, Knippel is in the fourth year of her PhD program, the mother of a young son, and a two-time recipient of the Francisca Toery-Kohler Memorial Fellowship.

“The money is important, but it was even more important to be in a program that would encourage me to do the research I was interested in, allow me to do transdisciplinary work, and be supportive of recognizing that life happens. On all of those fronts, CGU was astronomically wonderful.”

It is no surprise that Knippel values transdisciplinarity, given her background. Her father is a photographer and multimedia producer. Her mother is a dancer and choreographer. Both are deeply religious.

“I grew up in an environment that was very artistic but also fundamentalist,” Knippel says. “Some of my research can land on trying to understand how culture engages and conflicts with religion, and how gender is expressed within religion and art.”

Knippel has presented at the National Religious Scholars Guild conference several times and has been involved in a progressive arts organization based in North Carolina, where she has presented three times. She is looking into consulting with media organizations to help them better represent religion in their content. She also wants to teach full or part time.

First, however, comes her PhD comprehensive exams oral defense—two weeks before her second son’s due date.

“Having two pregnancies during a PhD is something that made me very thankful for the support and flexibility I’ve gotten at CGU,” Knippel says.

“CGU was incredible. I found a group of friends with wide interests, a love of study and conversation, and professors deeply engaged with their students.”
Welcome to the President’s House

CGU TOOK OWNERSHIP OF THE HOUSE IN 1971 through an estate gift from Ela Clement Sugg, a 1912 alumna of Pomona College and longtime Claremont resident. Located at 709 Harvard Avenue, it is two blocks southwest of the campus.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The property originally had a reflecting pool that was replaced by the city’s first air raid shelter during World War II. It has since been replaced with a patio and fountain.

**THE HOUSE WAS NOT THE FIRST RESIDENCE ON THE PROPERTY.** A wooden home built in 1892, just the third in Claremont, was moved from the site in 1928 to the southwest corner of Spring and Green streets, where it still stands. Ela Sugg then contracted with architect Helen Rolph Wren to build the Georgian style home. At the time, Wren was among the just 1% of registered female architects. Her designs have “provided a lasting contribution to Claremont’s architectural legacy.” (Claremont Heritage)

**Wren designed the home with the combination of old California low-roof lines and casual Georgian architecture.**

**Helen Rolph Wren**
IN WITH THE OLD: President Len Jessup and First Lady Kristi Staab moved into the house in 2018 and didn’t make many modifications. “We wanted to keep with the integrity and the history of the home,” Jessup said.

FAST FACTS
Built: 1928-31
Gifted: 1971
Lot: 0.69 Acres
Bedrooms: 5
Bathrooms: 6
Libraries: 1
Fireplaces: 5
Closets: 49

OPENING THE DOOR: Joe Platt was the first CGU president to call this his home.

JOHN MAGUIRE, CGU’s longest-serving president (1981-1998), hosted frequent events at the house—many headlined by an illustrious guest list that included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bill and Judith Moyers, Robert Redford, Billy Dee Williams, Norman Lear, Kate Tufts, and Chief Justice Harry Blackmun. Luzma Brayton, who served as director of events for the CGU president’s office for 23 years, oversaw the details.

PRESIDENT JESSUP has continued the tradition, hosting policy experts, industry leaders, alumni, faculty, staff, students, and Tufts Poetry Awards recipients. He looks forward to hosting members of the Blaisdell Society—those who have made or are considering planned gifts.

Thanks to Professor Kathy Pezdek, the Claremont Heritage Foundation, and the Claremont Colleges Photo Archive for their contributions.
Motivated by a Love of Words

Poets typically possess exceptional levels of wit, tact, and insight to paint a scene or evoke an emotion. Kingsley and Kate Tufts, part of the L.A. literati for much of the 20th century, had an appreciation of poetry that lives on to this day through two awards that are among the most prestigious for the medium—and both are housed at CGU.

As an executive in the Los Angeles shipyards in the 1930s, Kingsley Tufts wrote poetry in his spare time (with encouraging feedback from Kate) and had his work published in Harper’s, the American Scholar, the New Yorker, Esquire, and Coronet. Over the decades at their spacious Hollywood Hills home, Kingsley and Kate hosted an annual party during the holiday season where guests would engage in poetry readings and discussion. During one party in 1991, Kingsley finished his reading, sat down, and shortly thereafter passed away.

For almost a year, Kate thought deeply about how to honor Kingsley’s legacy with an endowed gift in his name. Norman Clement, Kate’s cousin, happened to be a friend of then-Claremont Graduate School President John Maguire. That summer, Clement encouraged Maguire to call upon Kate and share with her the university’s vision and how it aligned with Kingsley and Kate’s love of poetry.

Inspired by CGU, which was known among academic spheres as “the American Oxford,” Kate sold the spacious family property and used the proceeds to help endow the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award in 1992. “It blossomed—love at first sight—into the awards
program we continue to celebrate today,” Maguire said during his presidency. “Poets of every stripe have contributed, creating a bouquet of surrounding depth and beauty: a genuine national treasure.”

The award has become renowned as one of the largest annual prizes for poetry: $100,000 that recognizes the work of a mid-career poet. In 1993, the Kate Tufts Discovery Award was established to honor a first book published by an emerging poet in the amount of $10,000.

The awards are made by a judging panel, with the winners selected from five finalists per category. “The award is a confidence builder. It’s that bit of light in the darkness that allows you to see your way, so that you can keep trying to write your best poetry,” one awardee has said.

Another reflects: “Writing poetry is hard work, not least because it requires me to convince myself that the world needs my poems. The best thing about winning this award is the feeling that my book has found some enthusiastic readers, that it isn’t so unwelcome in the world.”

Kate was known for adding a personal, informal touch to her love of poetry, which inspired the CGU tradition of announcing the awardees in a similar way. A number of CGU faculty and staff, including Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities and Director of the Kingsley and Kate Tufts Poetry Awards, Lori Anne Ferrell, typically gather in person to phone the winners.

“These are the best phone calls to make,” Ferrell says. “Kate was a very warm and gregarious person, and so it makes sense to notify our winners directly rather than through their publishers. It’s something I think she’d want us to keep doing.”

Ferrell added that the tradition of contacting the winners the old-fashioned way has “led to some lovely, touching, and very human moments.”

“The surprise and joy of their reactions are such powerful reminders to us of the special place that these awards hold in the poetry world,” she says. “We are so grateful to Kate for choosing CGU as their home.”

FROM THE NEARLY 400 NOMINATIONS SUBMITTED in 2021 by individuals and publishers, and 10 overall finalists, one winner was selected for each category of awards.

John Murillo’s *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry* (Four Way Books) was selected as the recipient of the 2021 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, and Jake Skeets’s *Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers* (Milkweed Editions) was selected as the recipient of the 2021 Kate Tufts Discovery Award.
Ahmanson Foundation Salutes Veterans With Scholarships

From individualized attention to a culture of caring, CGU has a well-deserved reputation as a campus that welcomes military veterans and those currently serving. Many graduate debt-free, thanks not only to their GI Bill benefits, but also to significant assistance from The Ahmanson Foundation.

For nearly a decade, the foundation has shown its gratitude to servicemembers through its Ahmanson Veteran Scholarship Initiative, funding more than 50 scholarships that benefit CGU students. The university is honored to be among a select group of institutions in California that The Ahmanson Foundation entrusts to assist those who have served our nation.

Two alumni and two current students stepped up to share their military, student, and career experiences.

MANNY LLANURA (MFA ’19)
Navy 1989-2010
Chief Electrician’s Mate

Manny Llanura was an immigrant from the Philippines when he joined the Navy in 1989 as a fast track to U.S. citizenship. He accomplished that goal, and much more, in a journey that took him around the world, to CGU, and to major fashion events.

**Proudest Achievement in the Navy**
“During my time at Naval Station Great Lakes from 2000 to 2003, I led the development of the basic engineering common core curriculum, which teaches surface warfare engineers. It is still taught today.”

**Most Dangerous Assignment**
“I was deployed for 10 months in support of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm and served in combat on the USS Fort McHenry, a dock landing ship off the coast of Kuwait. We were thinking that we would be sending Marines to attack on the beaches, like on D-Day, but it turned out we were the decoy. The attack came from the desert.”

**Why He Chose CGU**
“I wanted to stay in Southern California, which is an area rich in great art schools. I chose CGU because of its reputation and the quality of instructors. Also, you’re given your own studio—a big space for your graduate work. I was in my late 40s when I got out of the military, and the GI Bill and the Ahmanson scholarship gave me the ability to reinvent myself.”

**His Passion for Photography**
“Before the Navy, I was an artist—oil painting, charcoal drawings—but when I joined the Navy, I couldn’t do it. So as soon as I completed my service, I rediscovered my love for art and jumped to photography. As I met more people, I was drawn to fashion photography and landed with L.A. Fashion Week. They started picking up my work, and eventually I became one of the people front-and-center taking pictures.”

Llanura’s fashion photography has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times, Apparel News, Women’s World Daily,* and *Bride Magazine.* “I’m known to get the shot,” he says. “It’s a thrill.”
ELICIA VILLASENOR (Human Resources Management; enrolled fall 2021)
Army National Guard 2014-present
Motor Transport Operator

Growing up, Eliicia Villasenor never gave any thought to military service. She hated working out, had never shot a gun, and considered herself fragile during high school. That changed when she saw an ad for the National Guard. Seven years later, she looks back proudly on her service and her undergraduate degree, and she looks forward to the challenges of earning a master’s while raising a young son.

Her Experience in Basic Training and Beyond
“It opened my eyes to how strong I was. My mindset completely shifted, and I realized I was more independent than I gave myself credit for. I served in Kuwait in 2017-18 basically as a truck driver. When I was on my deployment, we did a lot of convoys and could see what a city in the Middle East was like. It was very humbling and made me grateful to live the life that I live. When I came back home, I wanted to take advantage of all my experiences and opportunities because I started to realize how privileged I am.”

Why She Chose CGU
“After earning my bachelor’s in organizational leadership at Arizona State University, I was looking for a school with a master’s in human resources. CGU intrigued me the most because it was close to home and had really good reviews. Students loved the campus, loved the experience. If I was going to invest my time and my GI Bill into a school, I wanted to enjoy it. I also wanted to find a school that gave me a flexible schedule. At CGU, I can work during the day, spend time with my son, and still go to classes at night.”

What the Ahmanson Scholarship Means to Her
“I learned in my acceptance letter that I had received the scholarship. I was so happy and grateful because it really took the financial burden off my shoulders.”

WILLIAM LAGE (MA ’20, Psychology)
Marine Corps 2011-2016
Small Arms Maintenance Mechanic

If you’ve been on campus in recent years on a quintessentially pleasant Southern California afternoon, chances are you’ve heard William Lage. He was the guitarist and singer in the Jenkins Courtyard whose rock anthems provided a soothing backdrop to campus life. Lage used music to rest his mind and spirit after amped-up class sessions—a technique he picked up from working in a bunker during his time in the Marines. An encore isn’t out of the question: He is considering returning to CGU to pursue his PhD.

Most Poignant Experience in the Military
“It’s the people that you lose unexpectedly. For me, that was Major Taj Sareen in 2015. We were coming home from the Middle East, and I had my camera videotaping the pilots as they flew off. They have this tradition where they wave their wings in a goodbye. When we got home, we were told there was an equipment failure and one of the pilots didn’t make it. He was someone you saw every day—and then you didn’t. There’s no closure.”
**Why He Chose CGU**

“It has a rigorous curriculum. Many of my professors wanted to make sure that we were the best in the field when we graduated. There’s also the sense of community. When I came for my first meeting, I heard the phrase ‘lift as we rise,’ which resonated because I’m not a fan of schools that pit students against one another. Seeing CGU’s ethos on developing a community that works together and builds each other up, I felt a lot more at home.”

**CGU as a Veteran-Friendly Campus**

“I was initially offered an Ahmanson Scholarship, but my VA benefits package covered everything. That gave me the freedom not just to de-stress about finances but to network and attend professional development workshops, which helped me to find my niche. This not only made me a better student but a better professional when I graduated.”

**His Career as a Data Analyst**

“I look for patterns to discern what is occurring at a business and what is likely to occur, and if it’s a bad thing, hopefully how to shift it. I also assess people’s discussions and writing. I pull out relevant themes to create a map of which words and topics represent their biggest concerns. I want to go to a client and say, ‘This is the answer and this is why.’”

**ZACHARY WARD (Human Resources Management and MBA; enrolled fall 2020) Army 2015-2020 Paralegal and Paratrooper**

Zachary Ward really wanted to live in Italy during his time in the Army. As in REALLY wanted. So he did the most challenging thing that someone with a fear of heights could think of to get there: become a paratrooper. In the truest sense, his first jump turned out to be a leap of faith.

**On Becoming a Paratrooper**

“I had a sprained ankle, but if I backed out of the jump, I could have jeopardized my opportunity to go to Europe. I remember almost having to become a different person—pretend I was a DC superhero or something—to face the fear. What I wasn’t prepared for was a switch in the jumping order, meaning I was going first. The thing about being the first jumper is, you don’t just quickly walk and jump out. You have to walk to the door, watch them open it, and stare out for about a full minute. It got very real. When the door opened, I looked out and saw clouds. I was shaking. When you jump, you count: 1,000, 2,000, and so on. By 6,000, your parachute should be open or you pull the reserve. I didn’t count. I just screamed the whole way down. I felt the tug of the chute opening and was in the air for a minute tops. When I landed, I was so relieved. I had to do it four more times after that, but it got easier, and I wasn’t the first jumper anymore. I was pinned my wings and was on my way to Italy, where I served as a prosecution paralegal for 2½ years when I wasn’t practicing jumps.”

**Why He Chose CGU**

“I looked up human resources programs in the area, and CGU was one of the best. My experience has been very positive. I’m working in the university’s HR department, where Alejandra Gaytan has been a great mentor. The classroom conversations have been enriching and thoughtful. I’ve been able to use some of my life experiences, including those in the Army, in my presentations. And being able to have conversations with people who are the top of their profession has been really helpful.”

**What the Ahmanson Scholarship Means to Him**

“It definitely relieves any financial hardship, especially getting a dual master’s. It frees up my time to focus on my studies and not have to worry about paying out of pocket for expenses.”
A dedication to service is what alumnus Jake Campbell gleaned from his time in the U.S. Coast Guard. “I’m well versed in the idea of being ‘mission first,’ and I think it’s what continues to attract me to public service,” he says.

Campbell (MA, ’15; PhD, ’19, Politics & Policy) has held true to the mission. A former senior assistant director of admissions and veteran outreach at CGU, he recently served as public health data manager for San Bernardino County. In that role, he led data analysis operations for the entire department of public health and proved instrumental in forging a close relationship between the county and the university—a relationship that today benefits students seeking paid internships.

“We were interested in an informal partnership,” he said, “where faculty members and research labs could serve as project leads—to consult on the deliverables we were seeking and answer questions along the way.” Student researchers would also be able to support the county through real-world applications of their skillsets.

Another CGU alum, county human resource analyst Samantha Abril (MA, Public Policy, ’14), had initiated the process of establishing an internship memorandum of understanding (MOU) before the pandemic in 2020. “When COVID happened, Jake and I spoke about how this MOU could have a significant impact for his team and help the county’s response,” says Abril, who is also Campbell’s spouse. “That is when he started to meet with CGU officials, and I spoke to HR management about prioritizing the MOU again given its renewed operational importance.”

School of Community & Global Health Dean Jay Orr was intrigued by the potential of a partnership and began strategizing with Campbell over the summer of 2020. Around that time, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to declare racism a public health issue and health equity its top priority.

By August, as the partnership continued to gain traction, it was formally presented to the County Human Resources Department.

The final MOU—adapted from Abril’s previous draft—was signed and passed by the County Board of Supervisors in September 2020. The renewable master internship agreement runs through 2025 and allows for paid CGU interns to work in any of five county departments.

A long-term goal of the partnership is to broaden CGU’s influence in the region and generate MOUs with other counties, including Los Angeles and Riverside. For now, the five-year renewable contract will be a cornerstone for CGU’s influence and a chance for student interns to engage in critical endeavors.

For Campbell—with major help from Abril—it’s all in a day’s work. “Analytics tend not to be at the forefront of having an impact on the community, but they guide what others do and improve the way they do them,” Campbell says.

As he settles into his new role as deputy executive director for data governance and analytics for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington DC, Campbell looks forward to the work to come from the CGU-San Bernardino County collaboration. “We hope this partnership will bring a huge impact over the next five years, and the department will focus its work on addressing the needs and wants of the members of our community while making sure each voice is heard.”
Alfie Christiansen was the kind of person you never forget. Thoughtful. Creative. Funny. Colorful. Straightforward. Caring.
A special friend.

His death in 2017 left a void that cannot be filled, but CGU staff member Sheila Lefor is committed to honor him by helping students who uphold his ethos: Work hard. Be kind. Have fun. Every month, through payroll deduction, she contributes to the Alfie Christiansen Memorial Fellowship.

You can almost see Alfie standing nearby when Lefor reminisces. The emotions of loss are still strong, but the sweet memories are even stronger—like the time he went with Lefor to one of her son’s water polo matches at Claremont McKenna College, “because if it was important to you, it was important to him.” Or when Alfie became acquainted with octopuses after watching a documentary created by Anthony Penta, CGU’s director of video production.

“He just fell in love with octopuses,” Lefor recalls. “They are very intelligent but they have a short lifespan. Alfie was at an art exhibit that showcased an octopus lighting the way with lanterns. After he died, I thought, Alfie was our octopus. He had such a short life, but he packed everything in.”

Lefor met Alfie shortly after her arrival at CGU in 2010. She was hired as the assistant director of digital communications, and he was the assistant director of creative services. Before long, they sat across from each other in the Marketing & Communications office. He was not only a staff member but a master’s student in the Arts Management program—someone with a thirst for learning. He wanted to discuss digital marketing with Lefor’s son and had arranged a dinner where the three would talk.

“That dinner never took place,” Lefor says. That was the weekend he died, just days before his 39th birthday.

Shortly after Alfie passed, a package arrived in the office for him. He had ordered clothing with an explosion of hues.

“That was Alfie,” Lefor says. “He colored his world that way. He lived that way. He sought out magical, colorful things. … I just can’t let his memory go, and so I want people to remember him.”

Giving Takes Many Forms
Some gifts provide income or offer tax advantages, and all are designed to give you peace of mind with your estate planning. If you are interested in exploring your options, please contact the Office of Development at 909-607-0275.

Why I Give | Sheila Lefor
CGU Philanthropy Guide

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“The Drucker School deanship is rooted in the generosity of Dorothy and Henry Y. Hwang, who endowed the position more than 20 years ago. Private support for endowed chairs is critically important because it frees up resources for other academic endeavors and attracts talented scholars. We cannot forget that Peter Drucker served CGU as the Clarke Professor of Social Science and Management.”

David Sprott
Henry Y. Hwang Dean
Drucker School of Management