



25 / 26



The President's Associates

in support of the Student Research Scholars

Dean Profile: Dr. Elizabeth Adams

Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Academic Programs Dr. Elizabeth Adams has long had a passion for research that stems from her own experience as an undergraduate.

While pursuing her bachelor's degree in history at American University in Washington D.C., Dr. Adams conducted research as part of a senior thesis on the divisions in the Presbyterian Church prior to the Civil War. She was able to study primary sources at locations including the library of a seminary in Richmond, Virginia, as well as the National Archives in Washington.

Dr. Adams ended up presenting her research at a conference and her thesis was published in a scholarly journal.

"That sort of totally hooked me," she said. "I loved it. It was just a fun and fantastic experience."

When Dr. Adams was initially hired to join CSUB as the dean of the Antelope Valley (AV) campus in 2022 after having worked at CSU Northridge for nearly 25 years, she was immediately drawn to the President's Associates (PA) and the Student Research Scholars (SRS) program. PA was the first CSUB initiative that she donated to.

"It really is because of the transformative experience that the program is for our students and our faculty, and the promise that the experience and those students have for the region," Dr. Adams said. "Every time I go to one of the events and talk to the students, I'm just so excited about the research. To watch people from this region get engaged in that kind of innovative and transformative research is why we all do this."



Dr. Adams said she enjoys getting to hear from faculty about their research.

"It's so great to hear somebody talk about what they're passionate about," she said. "I love being able to be here and interact with faculty whose fields are very different than mine, but who are doing amazing research and engaging with students. The students are getting so much depth of experience."

While Dr. Adams' administrative duties keep her busy, she has worked to keep her own research spark alive. She is currently working on a few scholarly projects; one is about folklore in the literary works of Agatha Christie and the other focuses on the experiences of women in the South during the 1930s.

"Even though being an administrator makes doing active research really hard, I've tried to at least keep a pinky in it, because I don't want to lose that," she said. "It is one of those things that I wish I could do more of."

Based on her own experience, Dr. Adams understands firsthand the impact that research experience can have on students.

"We've got to make sure that our really talented students have the opportunity to do research. The more a student is exposed to research, the more likely that student is not only to graduate but have a higher GPA and feel that their degree had meaning," she said. "That's really important to incentivize. To be able to show a student how to engage with research and then go on to do something with it that gives back is the whole point of what regional higher ed is about." ■



25 / 26



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College of Arts & Humanities, Faculty Mentor: Dr. Amy Ressler

Linnette Serrano

Building Bridges Through Bilingual Theatre: Translating Stories So Every Child Can See Themselves on Stage

Born and raised in Bakersfield, a West High School and Bakersfield College graduate, Linnette Serrano is not shy of hard work. She is currently a Junior at CSUB studying Public Relations. While she considered going to Los Angeles for college, she chose to stay close to home in Bakersfield. "This is my community," she said simply.

Discovering Research Through Theatre

Linnette discovered the Student Research Scholars Program in an unexpected way—through her theatre class. After hearing a speaker discuss bilingual work in the community, her professor, Dr. David Melendez, saw an opportunity. He told Linnette about the SRS program and connected her with Dr. Amy Ressler, setting in motion a research project that would combine her passion for language with the power of performance.

Translation as Representation

Linnette's research focuses on translating theatrical works into Spanish to create bilingual experiences for young audiences. She is currently translating the beloved children's story "Frog and Toad" so elementary school students can learn the story in Spanish and perform it as a play.

For Linnette, translation is personal. She regularly translates for her mother and jumps at any opportunity to help bridge language barriers. "Any time I can help translate, I will do it," she said. Her work goes beyond simple word conversion—it's about creating authentic translations and cultural connections that Google Translate simply cannot provide.



A Perfect Partnership

Working with Dr. Ressler has been a great opportunity for Linnette. This partnership highlights the beauty of interdisciplinary research, each of them bringing unique knowledge and experience to create something neither could accomplish alone.

The recent rehearsal process has been particularly rewarding. "The actors playing the main characters, Frog and Toad, don't know Spanish, so it has been mind-blowing to help two worlds connect," she said.

Creating Opportunities That Didn't Exist

Linnette's gratitude for the program runs deep because she understands firsthand what this research means for young students. "I would like to thank the President's Associates donors for allowing schools to experience bilingual plays," she said. "I never had the opportunity to see this as a young student, nor had I had the feeling that I was being seen. This is a very exciting opportunity, and they should be proud of themselves for allowing this to happen."

After graduating from CSUB, Linnette plans to continue serving her community. She wants to work in Bakersfield serving the Hispanic community, particularly in roles that involve speaking Spanish and teaching English to Spanish-speaking children. ■



25 / 26



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College of Business and Public Administration, Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sunjin Pak

Jesus Arellanes Gutierrez

Bridging the Gap: Investigating Work-School Balance and Employer Flexibility for Student Success

After graduating from Wasco High School in 2009, Jesus spent years working in the fields surrounding Bakersfield, on construction sites, in warehouses and factories. Higher education seemed like a distant dream until his wife encouraged him to pursue higher education and his sister-in-law, a CSUB student at the time, convinced him to also take a chance at pursuing higher education.

A Seamless Transition

Jesus began his college journey at Taft College, completing his prerequisites in business administration. With only two classes online, he saw an opportunity to pursue his degree while managing his work responsibilities. "I was a little afraid. I didn't know what to expect. I was nervous about communicating and people skills," he shared. Those fears quickly dissolved when he arrived on campus. "After I got here, everyone was so nice and open to me. No bad experiences. The students and faculty were great." Jesus has since become deeply involved in campus life. He serves as Vice President of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapter, is a founding member of the Scholars Research Club, and holds the position of Treasurer for the organization. His transformation from uncertain newcomer to campus leader reflects the welcoming environment he found at CSUB.

Research Born from Experience

Jesus's research focuses on a challenge he knows intimately: the struggle students face balancing work and school when employers lack flexibility. "Bosses are asking their workers who are college students to adjust their work schedules based on what their bosses need and not considering school dynamics and giving a heads-up notice," Jesus explained.



His research investigates how employer scheduling practices impact student success, drawing from his own experiences and those of countless students navigating similar challenges. "I noticed this happened to me back in high school with the lack of flexibility."

Mentorship and Recognition

Working with his faculty mentor, Dr. Sunjin Pak, has been transformative for Jesus. "Dr. Pak has guided and taught me a lot about doing research and setting a schedule. He is always open when I have a question and is quick to respond," Jesus said. Together, they will present their research at the Western Academy of Management conference in New Mexico. In recognition of his growing expertise, WAM invited Jesus to serve as a reviewer for other research papers, an honor he holds close to him.

Building Toward the Future

Jesus discovered the Student Research Scholars Program through Dr. Pak, and it has opened new doors. Through his involvement with SHRM, he has applied for internships at Mission Bank and other companies, expanding his professional network and opportunities.

Now a senior, Jesus plans to pursue his MBA and eventually give back to the community that supported him. "This is a great life experience, and it has changed my life by investigating and finding people who are really struggling with work-school balance," he said. "Long-term, I want to give back to the community and support the President's Associates program." ■



25 / 26



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College of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering, Faculty Mentor: Dr. Gyeong Sung Kim

Emma MacKinnon

The Potential Effect of Plasma-Activated Water (PAW) on Agriculture

Born and raised here in Bakersfield, Emma MacKinnon has always called Bakersfield home. A Liberty High School and Taft College graduate, Emma does not shy away from hard work. Having received her associate's degree in engineering from Taft College, Emma served as a student ambassador for Taft College helping high school students apply to Taft College.

Finding Her Way Home

Briefly leaving Bakersfield to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Emma realized something was missing. "I missed home and wanted to come back to Bakersfield," Emma said. "I've always loved Bakersfield and felt that I received a lot more support here than at Cal Poly." Making the move to CSUB to study traditional engineering was a decision that opened doors to exciting research opportunities.

Exciting Research

A shining star within NSME's engineering department, Emma's research focuses on plasma activated water (PAW), which is an innovative technology that helps plants grow faster and healthier while reducing dependency on chemicals in agriculture. Working alongside her faculty mentor, Dr. Gyeong Seong Kim, Emma tested the effects of PAW on carrots and radishes for their practicality and accessibility in our region.

The research requires specialized equipment, including a dielectric barrier discharge plasma reactor and a high AC power source in order to charge the plasma. While the technology is costly, Emma and Dr. Kim believe the benefits far outweigh the investment. "Dr. Kim showed me the research he had done at a prior university, and that motivated me to pursue this research as a Student Research Scholar," Emma said.



Support That Makes a Difference

As a student who doesn't receive financial aid, the Student Research Scholars Program has been instrumental in Emma's success. "This scholarship has helped me tremendously," she said. "I don't have to work as many hours, which means I can focus more on my research and studies."

Building a Future in Engineering

Emma is a senior graduating this spring with ambitious plans. She currently works for a company that partners with industrial food processors across the state and beyond, providing sustainability support, wastewater consulting and engineering planning services. After graduation, she will continue working with the firm full-time as an engineer while also pursuing her goal of teaching as an adjunct professor at Taft College to support its engineering program.

She will also be celebrating her marriage this May and is working toward her Professional Engineer certification and Project Manager Professional certification. While she's considering pursuing a master's degree in engineering management in the future, she's focused on building her career and giving back to the community that supported her education.

A Message to Donors

Emma wants donors to understand the real impact of their generosity. "Donors don't donate to just a program; they are donating to students who are going to make an impact by learning and doing the research that is relevant to their field of study," she said. "Thank you for making my research possible." ■



25 / 26



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College of Social Sciences and Education, Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Ault

Jackson Stout

Exploring a Job Reintegration Program for Homelessness in Kern County

Jackson Stout is in his final semester at CSUB, graduating in Spring 2026 with his degree in political science. After graduating from Valley Oaks Charter School in 2024 with two associate's degrees, Jackson was accepted at both UCLA and CSUB to pursue his political science degree. CSUB, however, was more accommodating and accepted all of his previous credits and associates degrees, ensuring he would be able to graduate in just two years. He is already applying to various law schools around the country to pursue his dream of becoming a criminal law or personal injury attorney.

Engaging in Real-World Research

Jackson's research began back in 2024 after a trip with his family to Salt Lake City, Utah. There, he observed that the population of homeless people living within the city was relatively small. Jackson did further research and discovered that, through job reintegration programs that helped unhoused individuals find employment, the homeless population in Salt Lake City was kept at low levels. This inspired Jackson to pursue his research in this field to discover whether similar reintegration programs could be instituted in Bakersfield.

Jackson learned about the Student Research Scholars through his faculty mentor, Dr. Michael Ault, in his political inquiry class. With Dr. Ault's extensive knowledge of public policy, Jackson has gained invaluable connections and research guidance. The SRS program has also taught him to pay close attention to important details, such as survey design and implementation.



Message to the Donors

Jackson would like to thank the generous President's Associates for funding his research, which enables him to work directly with formerly homeless individuals through surveys and community engagement. The scholarship he received allows him to advance his project while also preparing for law school. In the future, he hopes to give back to students interested in the SRS program or pursuing law school, supporting the next generation of student researchers. ■



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Student Research Competition - **March 6**
- Student Research Poster Presentations - **April 8**
- PA Recognition Dinner - **April 21**

For more information about the President's Associates, please contact Eric Weis at eweis@csub.edu or by phone at 661-654-3537.