

PRESIDENT'S
ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

2023-2024

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, BAKERSFIELD



CSUB



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P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Long before there was a Cal State Bakersfield, there were civic leaders, businesspeople, elected officials, clergymen and parents who fought for the opportunity to place a four-year college in the heartland of the state. Here on our campuses, we remember with gratitude the pioneers of higher education in Kern County, whose fierce will and bold vision transformed a field of beets into the nexus of progress and enlightenment in our region.

And in our gratitude, we give back to the community that made it all happen every single day.

At both of our campuses, in each of our four colleges, and among the dozens of programs and services we offer, CSUB Roadrunners are faithful to the mission that galvanizes us: to educate the next generation of leaders, welcome all who wish to transform their lives through education, and support the community that has always supported us.

Our theatre students visit local schools to introduce the arts to children; our social work students go to homeless encampments to offer assistance to the most vulnerable; our accounting students volunteer their services to prepare tax returns for the underprivileged; and CSUB's Legal Information and Support Clinic works with local attorneys to clear the records of local residents seeking to restart their lives.

Perhaps the most powerful expression of CSUB's service to our community is our top-rated Nursing Program, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in the spring. In 1974, Cal State Bakersfield graduated its first class of nurses. Eventually that number would grow to 2,500 professionals who have been there in hospital rooms, physicians' offices, community health centers, schools and beyond, providing care and compassion in moments of great need.

Our Nursing Program's 50th anniversary celebration brought many of our first graduates home, including Margaret Freyberger Levy, who still carries with her the lessons she learned more than half a century ago: *"We were taught that patients go to hospitals for nursing care. It was important to know your patients, not just their diagnosis."*

We are proud of our milestones and believe in celebrating them. We are grateful to partners, both near and far, who collaborate with CSUB to uplift and advance our students and university. We look ahead to a future where our region realizes the promise of prosperity offered by a university education.

In the pages of this report, you will see there is ample reason to be optimistic about that future. And when CSUB thrives, so do the families in the communities we serve.



VERNON HARPER JR., PH.D.
PRESIDENT, CSU BAKERSFIELD

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing glasses and a blue lab coat, is focused on her work in a laboratory. She is wearing blue gloves and has a yellow sash over her shoulder. In the background, another person is visible, also working in a lab setting.

ACADEMICS

California State University, Bakersfield is committed to being a key driver of economic change, community development and social growth across the southern San Joaquin Valley and the nation. CSUB is Kern County's University, where Roadrunners use the transformative power of a university education to shape their personal futures and guide their families and communities onto a more prosperous path. CSUB offers 37 undergraduate programs, 5 teacher credential programs, 17 master's degree programs and a doctoral program in educational leadership. Here are just a few academic highlights from the year:



Best RN Programs in California
RegisrerdNursing.org 2024

Best Bang for the Buck: West
Washington Monthly 2023

Master's Universities
Washington Monthly, 2023

Vernon B. Harper Jr. appointed interim president

In September 2023, California State University Interim Chancellor Jolene Koester announced the appointment of Vernon B. Harper Jr., Ph.D. as interim president of California State University, Bakersfield. The appointment was effective Dec. 31 following the retirement of President Lynnette Zelezny. Harper joined CSUB in 2016 as associate vice president for Academic Affairs and dean of academic programs. He was named provost and vice president for Academic Affairs in 2020. Over the course of his time at CSUB, Harper has led efforts to improve the university's graduation rates, helped launch the Department of Ethnic Studies, worked with local community colleges to streamline the transfer process, and introduced a public health bachelor's degree and a master of kinesiology degree. (Note: Harper was appointed as CSUB's sixth president in September 2024)



CSUB opens new Media Arts Center

CSUB's performing arts building was given new life last year as the result of a \$7.5 million renovation. The building has become the Media Arts Center, which opened last November. The facility includes an art exhibit space, darkroom, printmaking facilities, a digital media studio, computer lab, sound booths and faculty offices. The center serves as a dedicated home for the communications department and marks the first time the department has been housed on one location. This hub supports students in the department's three degree concentrations: journalism, public relations and digital media.

#16 #16 #22 NATIONAL RANKINGS

Western Colleges
Degree Choices, 2024

Top Public Schools in the West
US News and World Report, 2024

Top Performers on Social
Mobility in the West
US News and World Report 2024



CSUB receives \$1 million grant to launch doctorate of nursing

CSUB received a \$1 million grant from Kern Health Systems to establish a Doctor of Nursing Practice program at the university, part of a \$20 million package of support made by Kern County's largest health plan to expand access to health care, educate more primary-care professionals and narrow health equity gaps. The doctoral degree program replaces CSUB's Family Nurse Practitioner program. It will offer three tracks of study and is scheduled to welcome its first cohort of students in fall 2025.

Nursing department celebrates 50th graduating class

CSUB's Department of Nursing welcomed back alumni from its first graduating class for a special anniversary fundraiser in April, celebrating the department's 50th graduating class. The event — themed "50 Years of Excellence: Reflecting on the Past and Envisioning the Future" — covered the program's early years, its success since then and exciting developments still to come. More than 200 alumni and family members attended the event, which helped raise around \$30,000 to support CSUB's nursing students.

Aera Energy provides \$2.5 million to support energy research

Aera Energy is providing \$2.5 million to CSUB to support its research into the effects of the energy transition on technology, the economy, the workforce and planetary resources. The investment funds an Executive Director for Energy Research position at the university's California Energy Research Center that will help focus and enrich the science produced by faculty and students. The executive director will also identify solutions that will forge a path to a new energy future.





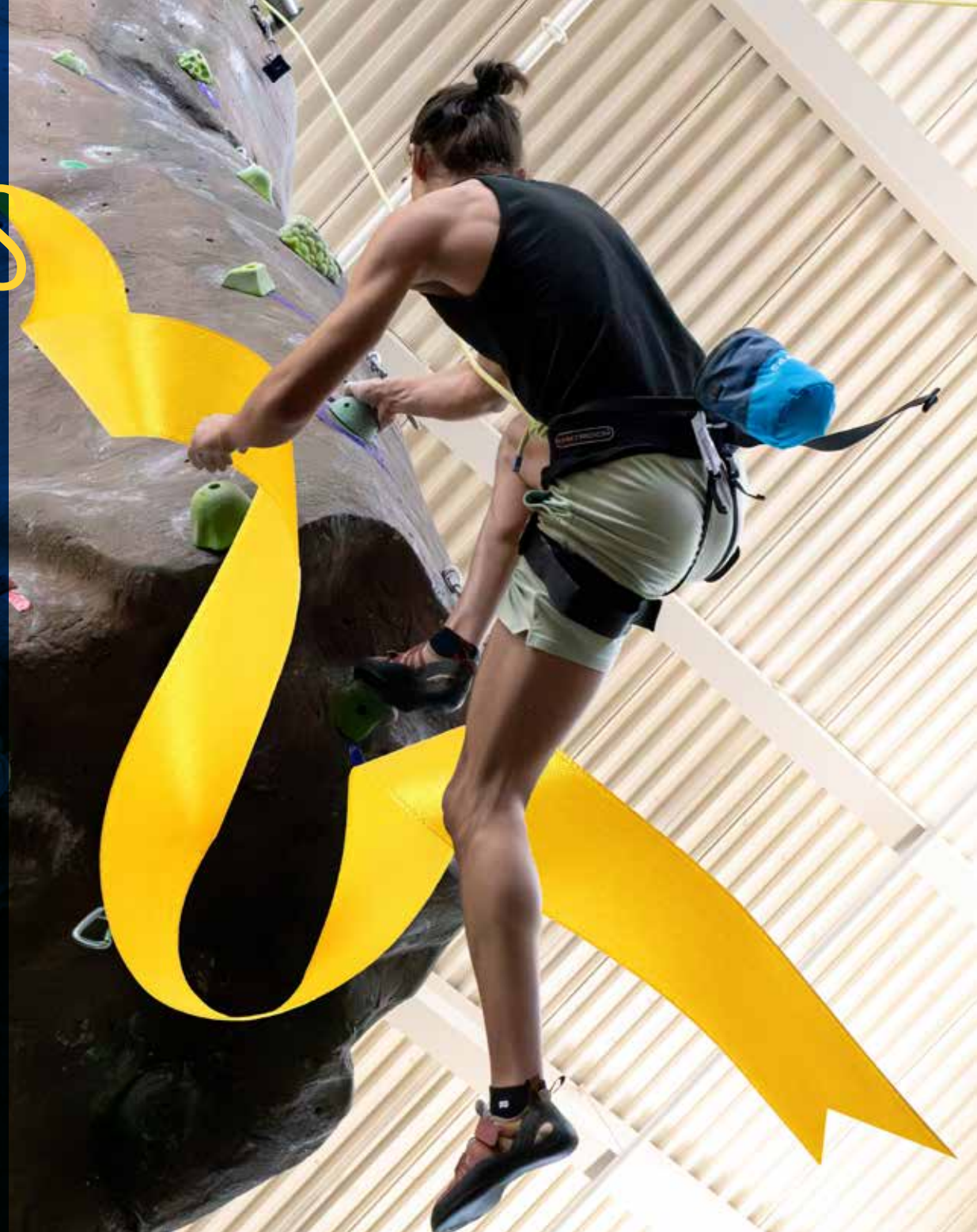
DEPARTMENT
OF NURSING
CSU BAKERSFIELD

50
YEARS
STRONG



STUDENTS

Just over 10,000 students are studying to earn their degrees at CSUB's main campus and the satellite campus in the Antelope Valley. Most are first-generation college students from diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences. What unites them is the ambition to learn, grow and graduate so they can use their CSUB degree to create positive changes in their lives and improve the futures of their families and communities. Here are a few of their stories:



10,020

STUDENTS

60%

STAY IN THE REGION
AFTER GRADUATION

2,500+

DEGREES CONFERRED ANNUALLY

Solmilena Herrera

Dominican Republic native Solmilena Herrera came to the U.S. in 2018 to begin her higher education journey after receiving an athletics scholarship. Herrera began her next chapter in Texas at Trinity Valley Community College, playing women's basketball. After receiving an athletics scholarship to CSUB, Herrera overcame the challenges of adapting to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, working as a student assistant on campus. Herrera did this all while keeping up with her studies and basketball schedule. Now, she is graduating with a Master in Public Administration degree, after graduating with her bachelor's in liberal studies just last year. She hopes to pursue a career in human resources and have the opportunity to help "people who are working and don't know what's available to them."

"If they walk in and they have questions, I can help them," Herrera said.

"It feels great helping other students. It's good to know I'm helping somebody and using what I've learned. It makes me feel useful."



Haydee Barahona and Luis Rangel

Undergraduate communications student Haydee Barahona and Master of Business Administration graduate Luis Rangel were presented with the President's Medal, recognized as the outstanding graduates for the 2024 academic year. Barahona helped launch El Veloz, a Spanish-language version of CSUB's student newspaper, The Runner. She was also named the top undergraduate student in the School of Arts and Humanities. Rangel received his Master of Business Administration with a perfect 4.0 GPA.

"Haydee and Luis are extraordinary students who excelled in every category," Dr. Vernon B. Harper Jr. said. "But what really distinguishes these Roadrunners is their commitment to the communities that we serve. They embody the CSUB spirit of selfless service and our mission to elevate the families of this region through the power of education. We are so proud to call them CSUB alumni!"



STUDENTS

Alondra Avila Santana

Alondra Avila Santana immigrated to the United States at age 17 to live with her mother in Delano. Eventually, she decided to rejoin her grandmother in Mexico, where she finished high school. With dreams of a university education, she returned to the valley and enrolled at CSUB, serving as a tutor at the Kegley Center for Student Success while working as a full-time substitute teacher for the Greenfield School District. Despite a language barrier and other challenges, Santana excelled in her studies and achieved recognition as one of the outstanding graduates in the School of Social Sciences and Education after earning dual degrees in liberal studies and Spanish. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in counseling with a concentration in student affairs.

"That is my dream. There's nothing I would love more than to give back to the school that helped me achieve my goals," she said. "I've always believed knowledge is a very powerful tool and that if you make an effort to learn, you're going to go many places. We all get out of life whatever we are willing to put into it, and I decided I want to get the most out of life. I cannot believe how far I've come."



Emmanuel Ntui

Emmanuel Ntui quickly realized an engineering major wasn't a good fit for him when he transferred to the university from Bakersfield College in 2020. After a short-lived business endeavor, he found his passion for business and switched his major to accounting. From there, he became involved in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which provides free tax services to individuals and families with low incomes. Outside of the classroom, Ntui has stayed active as a student assistant for the departments of student access and support, outreach services and athletics. Now, he is graduating from CSUB with his bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting. This fall, he will continue his education at Texas Southern University where he is pursuing his Master's of Business Administration.

"I'm ready to experience whatever life throws at me out there," he said. "It's a learning experience I'm definitely ready for."



66

FACULTY AND STAFF

CSUB employs more than 1,300 faculty and staff. Their collective goal is to inspire and support students on their journey to academic excellence, personal growth and career success after graduation. Here are just a few faculty and staff stories.

FACULTY AND STAFF

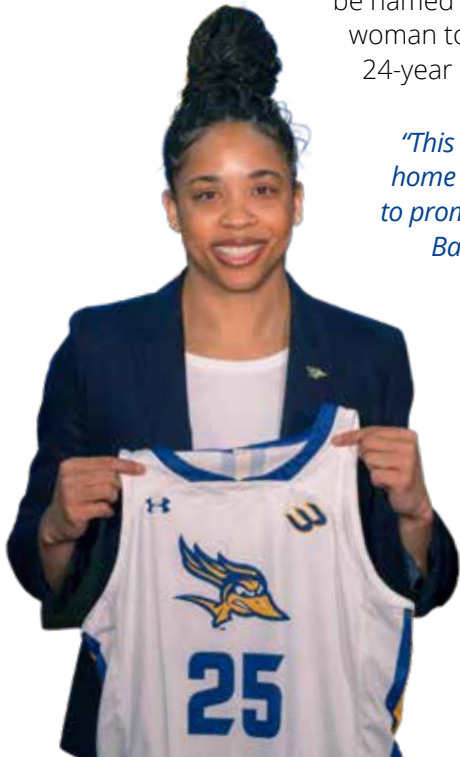
COLLEGES ACROSS ALL
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

CAMPUSES IN BAKERSFIELD
AND THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

Ari Wideman

Ari Wideman joined California State University, Bakersfield in May 2024 as the new head coach of the `Runner's Division I women's basketball team. Her hiring marked a significant milestone for the university, as she was the first Black woman to be named as a head coach at CSUB and the first woman to coach women's basketball in the 24-year history of the team.

"This is a dream come true to be able to come home to California and help lead this program to prominence. I want to be clear to everyone in Bakersfield, we are going to do great things here. I know that this is a special place waiting to erupt," Wideman said.



Liaosha Song, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Geological Sciences Liaosha Song is researching two ways to use open vaults within the crust of the Earth to combat climate change: sequestering carbon dioxide in those vaults and storing hydrogen to use in renewable energy technologies. Song and his students are researching the chemical resistance and porosity of rock layers to determine the kind of rock that must exist to store these gases over the long term.

"Number one, the purpose is to mitigate one of the things that is impacting everybody's livelihood — that is the severe climate change over the past decades," Dr. Song said, mentioning extreme heat waves, floods, wildfires and storms. "And particularly for Bakersfield and Kern County, geologic storage also makes a lot of sense in terms of generating new jobs and fueling new power to the local industry."



FACULTY AND STAFF

Deborah Cours, Ph.D.

Deborah Cours joined CSUB in August of 2023 as the Dean of the School of Business and Public Administration. The former marketing professor and assistant vice president of undergraduate studies at California State University, Northridge received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Iowa. She later received her Ph.D. in marketing at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"Exciting things are happening in the School of Business and Public Administration, and I'm pleased to help build upon the work completed to prepare our students for careers and lifelong learning, to partner in our community and to recognize the impactful scholarship and teaching our faculty provide and staff support."



Lupita Reyes-Garcia

Lupita Reyes-Garcia grew up in a farmworker family from Lost Hills and credits California State University, Bakersfield with sparking her belief that she could pursue higher education. After earning her master's degree at CSUB and launching a successful career as a social worker, she decided to give back to her alma mater by becoming a lecturer in social work.

"It's fun and exciting, but it's also daunting. I want to do a great job, but I'm still learning," she said. "I want to help other students just like myself – first-generation Mexican American and Latinx students. I carry that role of being a first-generation student and a CSUB graduate with so much honor and pride. I'm trying to instill that pride in my students as well."



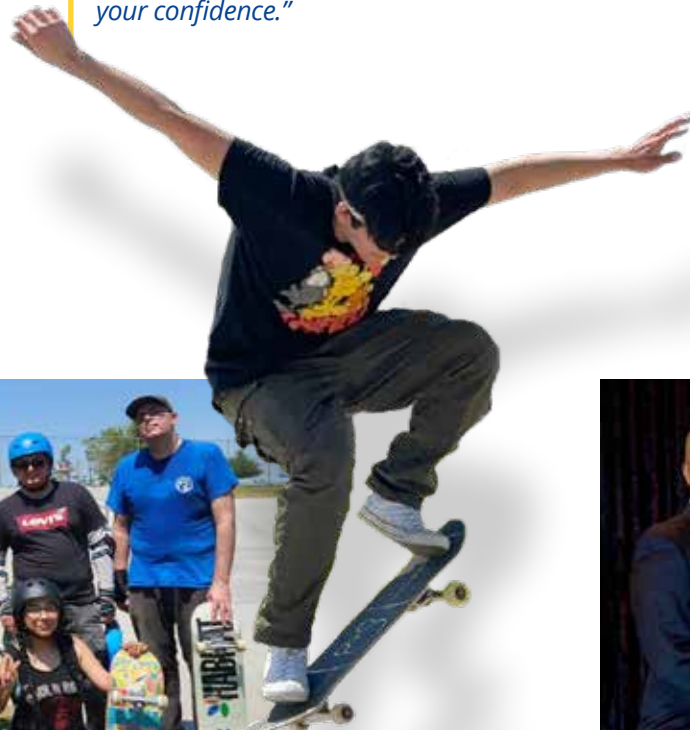
COMMUNITY

Kern County's diverse communities and their leaders, businesses, cultural institutions and unique spirit empower 'Runners' education. University supporters provide resources for life-changing classroom and extra-curricular activities and university students, faculty and alumni are constantly finding new ways to shape CSUB into a more exciting place to be. Here are a few highlights from the year:

Building a community through skateboarding

Veteran skateboarders and people who have just taken up the sport have come together to be a part of the growing Skater Society at CSUB. The club meets around once a week at a local skate park around Bakersfield to ride their boards, perfect tricks and – most importantly – build a community of people who can enjoy the sport together.

“We’re trying to build a community where we can all have fun doing something that we all have a shared interest in and just have that socialization,” said group president Marcila Diaz. “Skating is a great way to exercise and build your confidence.”



Alumni Hall of Fame

The CSUB Alumni Association honored four storied alumni by inducting them in the CSUB Hall of Fame as the class of 2024. They included screenwriter and television producer Matt Harris, law enforcement trainer and retired assistant police chief Hajir Nuriddin, Kern County Public Health Director Brynn Carrigan and energy industry leader Ken Haney.

The four leaders were honored during a gala event in February 2024 in downtown Bakersfield, attended by family, friends and a legion of CSUB supporters.

“We’re thrilled to share their stories with our broader CSUB family,” said CSUB Director of Alumni Engagement Sarah Hendrick. “What Brynn, Ken, Matt and Hajir have accomplished in their respective fields is extraordinary.”



Photo (L-R): President Vernon B. Harper Jr., Brynn Carrigan, Matt Harris, Hajir Nuriddin, Ken Haney, Andres Chavez

COMMUNITY

CSUB Antelope Valley and Antelope Valley College invest in STEM partnership

CSUB's Antelope Valley campus developed a partnership in late 2023 that will lead to increases in science, technology, engineering and mathematics degrees that will serve the burgeoning aerospace industry in the surrounding region. The first new bachelor's degree to be offered – in computer science – will begin in 2025.

"For over 30 years, CSUB has been a proud partner with Antelope Valley College, and now we are taking that partnership to new heights, all for the benefit of our students and the community that we serve," said CSUB President Emeritus Lynnette Zelezny. "The Antelope Valley is at the vanguard of discovery and exploration, and it is the honor and responsibility of the two institutions of higher education in the region to provide the leaders who will advance this proud legacy."

Students captivated by visit to New York financial district

Twenty-two CSUB students from the local chapter of the Financial Management Association were inspired in their careers as they visited New York City's world-renowned financial district, visiting iconic institutions including the New York Stock Exchange.

"Stepping onto Wall Street isn't just a field trip — it is a gateway to a world of finance that ignites the passion and ambitions of our finance students," said Dr. Mahdy Elhousseiny, a finance professor at CSUB. "It is engaging with industry leaders and witnessing the heartbeat of global finance firsthand."

Our FMA group's visit was a transformative experience, enriching minds and shaping futures."





CSUB launches historic partnership with Lawrence Livermore

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Livermore Lab Foundation signed a powerful memorandum of understanding with California State University, Bakersfield in September 2023. The agreement was aimed at evolving energy technology, advancing decarbonization science and promoting climate resiliency – all while providing CSUB students and faculty an invaluable connection to one of the most renowned research organizations in existence.

“We are here today to herald a new era in energy that is vital to the security, sustainability and prosperity of our region and the world,” said CSUB President Lynnette Zelezny. “And there is no better place to celebrate this new era than right here in Kern County, where California’s energy industry was born.”



PHILANTHROPY

More than 1,640 supporters donated \$6.1 million to California State University, Bakersfield during the 2023-24 fiscal year, helping the university to passionately pursue transformational educational experiences for our students that transform their families and our communities.

MORE THAN

APPROXIMATELY

1,600 \$6.1

GENEROUS DONORS

MILLION RAISED IN 2023-24



The `Runners on the Rise campaign continued to pursue the goal of raising \$50 million to support the university and drive CSUB's tradition of academic excellence into a dynamic future.

`Runners on the Rise was launched to support future leaders, foster academic excellence and build opportunity and prosperity in the community. Funds donated to the campaign will expand our region's access to higher education, fuel the success of our student athletes and strengthen our ability to enhance our campus' physical and educational environment.

Notable gifts provided during the 2023-24 fiscal year include:

- Aera Energy gave \$2.5 million to establish the Executive Director for Energy Research endowment.
- Kern Family Health Care gave \$1 million to expand the nursing program with more graduate studies.
- Chevron gave \$550,000 to support NSME faculty laboratories, CSUB Fab Lab, SURE program, engineering machine shop, and the President's Associates.
- The Estate of Gaye Barnes Siemon gave \$80,000 to support the Dr. Jimmy Barnes Memorial Scholarship and the Beta Gamma Sigma memorial award to honor Dr. Jimmy Barnes.

"Donors to this program play a vital role in turning dreams like mine into reality. Their investment in student research and scholarly pursuits creates a ripple effect that extends beyond the research lab."

*- Nora Alammari, psychology major,
Student Research Scholar*



ENDOWMENT

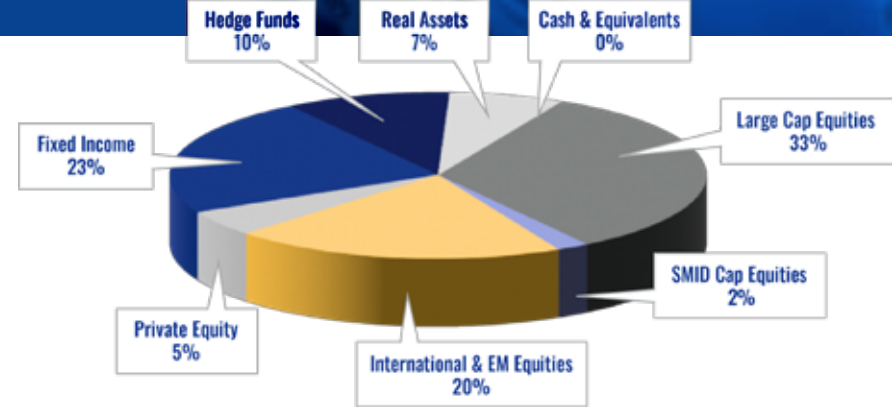
Philanthropic gifts for endowments are critical to ensure a permanent source of support for CSUB students. Endowments create an enduring legacy for donors while transforming the lives and futures of many bright, promising students, and the exceptional faculty who teach and mentor them.



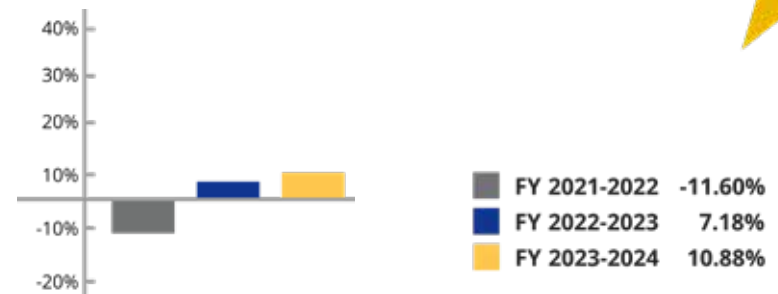
Endowment fund asset allocation

The endowment pool is invested in accordance with the CSU Bakersfield Foundation's investment policy, which is designed with principal preservation and controlled growth as the main focus. With this long-term objective in mind, the portfolio is a diversified mix of investments across a broad range of asset classes, including equities (stocks), fixed income (bonds) and alternative investments. The assets are managed externally by professional investment managers hired by the CSU Bakersfield Foundation and are closely monitored by the foundation's finance committee.

The CSU Bakersfield Foundation's invested endowment balance as of June 30, 2024 is \$42.7 million, allocated as follows:



Rate of return





ATHLETICS

Over 300 student-athletes have excelled in competition and in the classroom. Here are 12 highlights from Roadrunner Athletics' 2023-24 year:

CUMULATIVE

3.23

GPA FOR THE 2023-24
ACADEMIC YEAR

OVER

3,000

HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE
FOR THE 2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR



Four separate “education field trip days” were hosted for local elementary and middle schools. Nearly 9,000 Bakersfield youth were welcomed to campus for men’s soccer, women’s volleyball, men’s basketball and women’s basketball games, including a men’s soccer single-match attendance record with 2,514 fans in the stands.

Vili Sivec was named the MPSF Swimmer of the Year and qualified to represent his home country of Croatia in the world championships.

CSUB alumnus **Tazé Moore** became just the second Roadrunner in history to play in the NBA, making his debut with the Portland Trailblazers.



CSUB pitcher **Ryan Verdugo** was selected in the 12th round of the MLB draft.



Vili Sivec was the only freshman to win a 2023 individual MPSF title, taking first-place in the 200 free while earning MPSF Freshman of the Year.



Miranda Miller wrapped up a storied career for CSUB track & field, making the pole vault podium four times by earning a bronze medal at the 2024 Big West outdoor championships.

ATHLETICS

CSUB Athletics' Creative Services Department broadcast 96 home contests on ESPN+, recording over 250,000 viewers throughout the season.



◀ The `Runner beach volleyball duo of **Vivi Kaelin** and **Ella Erteltova** earned AVCA Top Flight and All-Big West honors after a record-breaking season. The pair smashed CSUB's single-season wins record with 28, including a program high 17-consecutive victories.



▼ A pair of `Runner women's soccer players earned call-ups to compete for their national teams. Karen Flores joined Ecuador for a pair of international friendlies while Catalina Roggerone helped her native Argentina during the Concacaf Gold Cup.

▼ Current `Runner **Kaleb Higgins** smashed multiple CSUB scoring records, including a Division I program best of 35 points against UC Riverside on March 13.

In Spring of 2024, CSUB Athletics welcomed two new head coaches:

Ari Wideman became the first female head coach of CSUB women's basketball and the first Black female head coach in CSUB Athletics history.

Jordon Banfield, a successful NCAA Division I head coach took over CSUB baseball and was tabbed by D1 baseball as a "sneaky good hire."



Karen Flores



Catalina Roggerone





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