



**“In a world more than ever that moves at the speed of light...the types of leaders that we need are the connectors, the servants, the empathths.” —Danielle Slaton '02**

*Bay FC Co-Founder, former USWNT player, and 2024 ECP Commencement Speaker*

2023–2024  
ANNUAL REPORT

# SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

# LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends,

It's been a year of new beginnings, major achievements, and continued momentum here in the School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP) and at Santa Clara University at large. We invite you to take a look!

I am especially proud of the work that our ECP faculty, alums, and staff are doing to support SCU's investment in becoming an Hispanic Serving Institution (with the emphasis on serving). I'm so honored to serve on this HSI Advisory Group led by ECP alums **Eva Blanco Masias MA'11** and **Sergio Lopez MA'22**, ECP faculty member **Marco Murillo**, alum and current EdD student **Veronica Villa MA'14**, and ECP staff member **Carmina Mendoza**.

This year, our Counseling Psychology department launched its new Child and Adolescent Mental Health emphasis (p. 4). We also commenced a long-awaited collaboration with SCU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) center, with Counseling Psychology practicum students joining CAPS mental health professionals in supporting students across campus (p. 6).

In Education, we celebrated the graduation of our first EdD cohort (p. 18) and welcomed our second and third cohorts of Online Master of Arts in Teaching with Teaching Credential (OMATTC) students. Enrollment in our teacher preparation programs—including Catholic education programs—has more than doubled, demonstrating the value that students can see in this work. Across departments, faculty continue to receive awards and research grants that highlight the esteem with which they and their work are held (pg. 9, pgs. 32-35).

I am so proud of the milestones achieved across our School, but what matters most of all is the impact that we are having on our students, community, and schools across CA and beyond. Throughout this report, you will see how the work of our ECP community demonstrates a steadfast commitment to Jesuit values of respect, excellence, social justice, and care for the whole person. Our faculty, staff, students, and graduates are truly changing the world each and every day!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina Zirkel'.

Sabrina Zirkel, PhD  
Dean, School of Education & Counseling Psychology



# CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH



# *ADVOCATING FOR OUR YOUTH: REFLECTING ON THE FIRST YEAR OF OUR NEWEST EMPHASIS*

This year, the Santa Clara University School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP) celebrated the commencement of a brand new Counseling Psychology (CPSY) emphasis—Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH). Funded by a generous gift from SCU alum **Sheri Sobrato '94**, the creation of the emphasis area comes at a crucial time for young people. In 2021, the US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared a youth mental health crisis, underscoring the urgent need for innovative and inclusive mental health interventions for people 0-25.

“There is an ongoing youth mental health crisis that demands well-trained clinicians working with children and adolescents,” says **Greg Hajcak**, the Sheri Sobrato Professor of Child & Adolescent Mental Health. “A large portion of our students end up working with this group, so it is imperative that we facilitate the learning of developmental psychology and effective interventions tailored to their age group.”

CPSY students were also pleased with the decision to launch the emphasis, citing how its formation underscores the needed shift from reactive to preventative therapy.

“In my mind, it is important to have a specific emphasis for Child and Adolescent Mental Health because of the idea that the best time to solve a problem is before it starts,” says student **Hallie Smith**. “So much of therapeutic study and education to this point has been reactive, exploring how to help adults reflect on the life experiences that have gotten them where they are, which is useful. But I think that shining a spotlight on the things we can catch when they are small and while clients are young—the problems we can head off at the pass—will benefit everyone in the long run.”

The first year of the emphasis got off to a strong start, establishing a recurring speaker series discussing key CAMH topics and kicking off student-coordinated development of scalable interventions to improve youth

mental health, both of which the emphasis has plans to fortify in the years to come.

## **Inspiring Reform Through Conversation**

This Spring, the emphasis hosted two speakers and one day-long training on family based youth suicide risk management. **Dr. John Pachankis** from Yale joined faculty and students for a conversation about LGBTQ-affirmative mental health care, specifically diving into the development, application, and efficacy of the first identity-affirmative mental health intervention for sexual and gender minority individuals to be tested in randomized controlled trials. The University of Miami’s **Dr. Annette La Greca** visited for a dialogue on the impact of natural disasters on our youth and research-backed strategies to help them cope. The family based youth suicide risk management training drew nearly 100 attendees comprising of students, clinicians, and faculty, and is an event Dr. Hajcak hopes to hold again in the near future.

## **Engaging Students in the Classroom**

Student feedback from those in the emphasis has been positive, noting excitement around the filling of this critical gap in the field and captivating classes and professors as some of the highlights.

“So far, I am impressed with the professors that are teaching these emphasis classes. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience there, and we as students are so fortunate to have access to these resources,” says Smith.

“Having completed 99% of the required classes for the CAMH emphasis, one course that particularly resonated with me was CPSY 317: Therapeutic Interventions for Children. I found the study of play therapy techniques, creative interventions, and the major theoretical approaches used with children especially engaging. The practical skills and intervention ideas I gained are invaluable for my future clients,” says student **Theresa Brinkman**. Dr. Hajcak has also enjoyed working with students on creating interventional content to be used both in and outside of the classroom, including



scalable app-based intervention for youth. “In the next year, I’d like for these materials and interventions to be available at no cost to CAMH students for them to utilize and integrate into their own work after they leave the program,” says Hajcak.

### Looking Ahead

Continuing to build out a vibrant calendar complete with speaker events, workshops, and other relevant events is also on Dr. Hajcak’s agenda for the upcoming year and beyond. “Next year, I’m going to focus on people and events related to advocacy. For example, in the Fall we’ll be hosting **Erik Ewers**, the filmmaker of ‘Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness.’ He’s going to screen some of the film and bring along some of the youth who were in the documentary for questions

and answers. That’s going to be very special.” With the emphasis now fully up and running, students are hopeful for how it will not only increase their competitiveness in the job market, but also equip them to be quality therapists and advocates for early mental health intervention. “I chose to focus on the CAMH emphasis because early intervention in mental health offers tremendous hope,” says Brinkman. Research confirms that early relationships, attachment, belonging, and connection can positively rewire the brain for long-term outcomes in adulthood. With a combination of head, heart, passion, resilience, and commitment to learning, I hope I’m well-positioned to contribute to the field and help individuals achieve happiness and contentment throughout their lives.”



From left to right: Center for Professional Development Director Carmina Mendoza, Greg Hajcak, speaker Suzanne Levy, and Dean Sabrina Zirkel at this year's Family Based Youth Suicide Risk Management Workshop.



Clinical psychologist and co-developer of attachment-based family therapy (ABFT) Suzanne Levy led the Family Based Youth Suicide Risk Management workshop.

# A STEP FORWARD FOR BRONCO MENTAL HEALTH

SCU School of Education & Counseling Psychology Joins Forces with  
SCU Counseling and Psychological Services to Launch New Student Practicum

In their final year, Santa Clara University (SCU) Counseling Psychology (CPSY) students begin a 10-month practicum program, designed for students to get first-hand experience and training in the field before they graduate. This academic year, a new practicum at SCU's in-house Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) broke ground, facilitating a unique opportunity for CPSY students to support fellow Broncos while garnering valuable experience working with young people in a crucial developmental stage of their lives.

## The Collaboration

Beginning each year in September and wrapping up in June, the CAPS practicum is structured as a paid, part-time position with trainees working with up to 10 clients each week, following 80 hours of orientation training. In addition to providing ongoing therapy for clients, students are trained to provide crisis assessment and interventions, create clinical documentations, conduct intake assessments, and collaborate with the multidisciplinary clinical team. Work days can include anything from client time to case management, ongoing training, and meetings with CAPS staff. Trainees are also invited to join CAPS' outreach efforts to promote mental health and CAPS services.

"The practicum is designed to be a learning and serving adventure. We are intentional about cultivating a supportive and challenging practice environment that accepts, expects, and anticipates that mistakes are a part of learning. Our practicum provides trainees with coaching and modeling of the essential skills of reflective practice, making repairs, adjustments, and integrating clients' feedback into practice." says **Bich Nguyen-Hamilton**, SCU CPSY graduate, CAPS MFT Training Director, and practicum administrator. "I have learned from over two decades of clinical practice that the best way to ensure quality, effective mental health services for clients is for therapists to adopt a mindset of being lifelong learners. Practicing is the most effective way to develop competencies and skills, and it is a vulnerable way to learn. CAPS' training team collaborates with trainees to cultivate a safe space for practicing, which results in life-giving personal and professional growth."

## By Broncos, For Broncos

While the collaboration presents clear education and professional development benefits for CPSY students, it was also created with client benefits in mind as well.

"CAPS therapists provide support, tools, and resources so clients can achieve their goals—whether it's managing stress, navigating interpersonal dynamics, or identity development," says Nguyen-Hamilton. "Trainees, who are students themselves, can be more approachable and make it easier for clients to establish the therapeutic alliance that is essential to effective therapy."

Adding trainees to the team also means CAPS is able to serve more students, which is an exciting prospect for Vice Provost of Student Life **Jeanne Rosenberger**: "The addition of three MFT trainees in CAPS has surpassed my expectations. In addition to serving clients through individual and group work, the trainees have allowed CAPS to expand outreach to a larger and more diverse campus audience. The MFTs have provided important workshop topics such as processing grief and trauma, supporting life skills development, managing stress and cultivating healthy relationships—all that have benefited our student community."

This partnership between CAPS and The School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP) serves to support the SCU student body and educate the next generation of therapists simultaneously, and ECP Dean **Sabrina Zirkel** is glad to see the collaboration propel the school's mission of expanding access to mental health care: "Our Counseling Psychology students are well prepared for this work and are in high demand among the schools, agencies and clinics in our region. We are so thrilled to partner with CAPS to make these same trainees available to support students at Santa Clara University, and to expand access to support the well-being of our SCU students. Currently a donor-funded initiative, we are so grateful to those who have made this partnership possible and look forward to growing the program in the years to come."the program in the years to come."





Bich Nguyen-Hamilton and CAPS staff attended this year's Practicum Fair, an event designed for Counseling Psychology students to get to know future employers for their upcoming Practicum.



***“The practicum is designed to be a learning and serving adventure. We are intentional about cultivating a supportive and challenging practice environment that accepts, expects, and anticipates that mistakes are a part of learning.”***

**—Bich Nguyen-Hamilton**  
 SCU CPSY graduate, CAPS MFT Training Director, and practicum administrator



# LATINX/É RESEARCH CENTER





# *SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY AMONG WINNERS OF THE 2024 WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE GRANT*

Funds will support collaborative research into pre-collegiate and college support programs for Latinx/é students

**S**anta Clara University is one of four winners of the 2024 Institutional Challenge Grant, awarded by the William T. Grant Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation, and the Bezos Family Foundation. The grant encourages research institutions to build long-term research-practice partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

The three-year, \$650,000 award will fund a partnership between The SCU School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP), the Latino Education Advancement Foundation (LEAF), and The Foundation for Hispanic Education (TFHE) to support college preparation, persistence, and completion for Latinx/é students.

## **How Can We Better Serve Latinx/é Students and Their Families?**

Since the 1970s and 1980s, East San José has been home to the majority of Silicon Valley's Hispanic and Latinx/é communities. Many of its families are first- and second generation immigrants, and it has one of the region's highest rates of English-Language Learners and first-generation college students. Given fewer resources and the many socioeconomic barriers to educational and economic success, its schools and students encounter far greater challenges than their neighboring peers in attaining high school and college degrees as well as succeeding to their full potential.

The research, led by ECP scholars **Pedro Nava**, **Jasmín Llamas**, **Argelia Lara**, and **Marco Murillo**, aims to understand and tackle educational inequalities for East San José Latinx/é students transitioning from high school to college. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with students and families, the project will explore how high schools, nonprofits, and colleges

can better prepare, support, and engage Latinx/é students to enhance their success and take full advantage of the collegiate experience. This research seeks to shed light on student experiences and guide interventions that build resilience and close persistent gaps.

"A systemic change needs to occur in our higher education systems to serve a huge population of students who aren't being reached in our public education systems," says **Brittany Alvarez**, Executive Director of the Latino Education Advancement Foundation. "LEAF wants to be part of that work and this partnership will deepen the areas of expertise we have around collecting and utilizing data for programmatic improvement and then sharing that research and best practices widely with all of the colleges and universities we work with."

The project also aligns with TFHE's goals, as noted by CEO **Dr. Sherry Segura**: "As we strive to be the model for equitable education, our collaboration with Santa Clara University and LEAF on this valuable research underscores our commitment to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by Latinx/é students in their educational journeys. Through this project, we aim to eliminate opportunity gaps, celebrate diverse identities, and empower students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds for leadership and success."

## **A Lasting Partnership**

This collaboration is a natural progression in Santa Clara University's long history of engagement in East San José. In 1986, SCU and three partner organizations launched the Eastside Project to provide community-based learning placements for students. By 2000, that program had grown into the Arrupe Center for Community-based Learning, one of SCU's four interdisciplinary centers of distinction. Today, it serves more than 1,200 undergraduates across 50 placement sites,

many in East San José neighborhoods. In 1995, Santa Clara launched the Eastside Future Teachers Project, which paired outreach to high school students from underrepresented communities who were considering teaching careers, with supplemental tuition scholarships and a supportive learning community. As National Hispanic University was winding down its operations in 2014, ECP adopted its bilingual teacher training program to sustain a graduate education degree program focused on preparing teachers from and for Latinx/é communities.

### More to Come

Today, SCU has pledged commitment to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), and is dedicated to enacting the campus changes necessary to become the university of choice for Latinx/é students. This includes ensuring that faculty who are researching methods to fortify the academic preparation of Latinx/é high school students and curate supports that enhance the Latinx/é college student experience are resourced

and acknowledged appropriately. With this project underway, ECP is excited to see it inspire more of this type of research at the university.

“We are deeply honored to have been selected as a recipient of the 2024 Institutional Challenge Grant, one of the most competitive equity-oriented participatory research grants in education,” says **Sabrina Zirkel**, Dean of ECP. “This community-based research partnership, which converges three mission-aligned organizations with strong Latinx/é leadership and deep community connection, represents a significant opportunity. Our collective aim is to strengthen program delivery, enhance data sharing and analysis, and improve handoffs across key transitions in student pathways between institutions. This initiative embodies our dedication to creating a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.”



From Left to Right: EL Paraprofessional and ECP student Montserrat Viramontes, RCLA alum and SCU undergrad student Belen De Los Angeles Santos Santiago, and ELD teacher Brody Klein.



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**—Brittany Alvarez**  
*Executive Director of the  
Latino Education Advancement Foundation*

# CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF OUR SEMILLA TEACHER FELLOWSHIP

As an expression of its commitment to preparing teachers devoted to serving students and families in the Latiné/x and other under-served communities, the SCU School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP) launched the SEMILLA Teacher Fellowship in the 2014- 2015 academic year. Almost ten years later, the Fellowship continues to provide financial and professional support to students pursuing the Master of Arts in Teaching with a Teaching Credential (MATTC) who are committed to serving as educators in high need communities.

Almost 400 fellows have passed through the program, which provides mentoring, support, and scholarships to students who truly embody the Jesuit ideal of "women and men for and with others." The vast majority of fellows are bilingual and/or bicultural students whose mission is to serve their community.

## History of the Program

Two-thirds of K-12 students in California identify as Latinx/é or Hispanic, but many are not taught by teachers who are educated about or identify with their culture. In 2014, National Hispanic University (NHU), a university built to serve the needs of Latinx/é students, announced it would close operations. With its closing, so too closed a pipeline of bilingual and bicultural teachers with a deep desire to ensure that schools meet the needs of this community. Former SCU President **Fr. Michael Engh**, NHU Chair of the Board **Ed Alvarez '60**, **JD'65**, NHU Vice Chairman and

SCU Trustee **John A. Sobrato '60**, and former School of Education & Counseling Psychology dean **Nick Ladany** sought to continue this legacy at SCU by providing a culturally grounded teacher preparation program with strong scholarship support. This program would ensure that Latinx/é educators continued to flourish, providing that they commit the first years of their career to serving in schools with the highest need.

The SEMILLA program represents that dream. Originally housed at the East San José campus of the former National Hispanic University and alongside the high schools of the NHU-inspired Foundation for Hispanic Education, SEMILLA now represents one of our largest groups of teacher preparation candidates. While the 50% scholarship serves its purpose of making an SCU education more accessible, former SEMILLA fellows cite the program's unique experiences as its richest benefits.

## SEMILLA's Impact

"SEMILLA really embodies this "servant leadership" mindset, where we learn how to become more effective leaders and educators through service. This manifested through my favorite part of the fellowship, which was the opportunity to meet students and their families in East San José," says **Erik Ugalde MAT'18**, **Edd'24**. "In the classroom, we'd discuss theoretical frameworks that we could then apply to real conversations with families. It enabled us to humanize their stories, and understand how to provide long-term



## Nearly 400

*SEMILLA Teaching Fellowship graduates since 2014*



## 70

*SEMILLA Fellows in 2024 working with communities in East San José*





SEMILLA alum and 2024 EdD graduate, Erik Ugalde.

support for families and students beyond the 30 hours of community service required by the fellowship. I loved the encouragement to leave the university campus and listen to stories that are so often overlooked. I still apply takeaways from these conversations to my work today.”

By getting out of the classroom to engage in real conversations with families in high-need schools, the program sets to not only expand the number of bicultural and bilingual teachers serving in these schools, but also forge future teachers who leave these conversations inspired to rebuild support systems in place or create new support systems where one historically hasn’t existed.

“Partnering with East Side schools allows us all to gain a more profound understanding of the critical needs in the classrooms of historically marginalized communities. Such understanding, if pursued with hearty *con cariño* (deep care) has the potential to ignite in future teachers an understanding and urgent need for transformative

pedagogies that are culturally responsive and relevant,” says Assistant Professor of Education **Karla Lomelí**. Latinx/é students now make up 65% of our teacher education programs. At ECP, we pride ourselves on providing a strong and steady pipeline of educators who represent the very best of our Jesuit mission: teachers and leaders who are for and with others.

Building on the work of her predecessors, current SEMILLA Director **Argelia Lara** has big plans for the program in the years to come: “Moving forward, we’d like to provide SEMILLA Fellows with more professional development opportunities through ongoing workshops, and build relationships with more school districts to support their students’ needs. With ten years under our belt, we would also like to activate our SEMILLA alumni network so our students have additional support and a network of friends and colleagues.”

# *JUNTOS APOYANDO A NUESTRAS FAMILIAS*

SCU to host symposium centering on the role of  
community-based practices to support Latinx/é youth and families

The pandemic has exacerbated learning loss, mental health challenges, and existing disparities within the Latinx/é community. As the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child.” Endorsed by the The California Department of Education and The National Education Association (NEA), community-based approaches can create this supportive “village” by integrating parents, educators, and health professionals to work together for the benefit of the child.

In response to this call for community school models, the School’s Center for Professional Development (CPD), in partnership with the Latinx/é Research Center, the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education’s Thriving Neighbors, and the Latino Education Advancement Foundation, will be hosting an inter-professional symposium to unite teachers, school administrators, and licensed mental health providers. Guided by Jesuit values of social justice and holistic care, this event aims to explore community school models and enhance efforts to promote equity, particularly within the Latinx/é community.

“Participating in this symposium is a natural extension of our ongoing commitment, which began with our initial mental health training driven by Thriving Neighbors (ICJE), the School of Education & Counseling Psychology, and Sacred Heart Community Service. This collaboration strengthens our collective efforts in advancing community engagement and social impact through mental health initiatives specific for the Latino community,” says **Iliana Molina-Estrada**, Senior Program Director for Thriving Neighbors. This symposium will feature experts from various fields discussing effective strategies for Latinx/é education, parent engagement, and mental health care.

Attendees will hear from faculty, mental health providers, and educators actively involved in community-based care and education. “More than ever, schools need to focus on closing the opportunity gap that exists for so many of our students and families. Every school and community has the potential to come together to make sure every student has every opportunity and

support needed to thrive and maintain hope in a challenging environment,” says Hillsdale High School Dean of Students and symposium speaker **Brett Stevenson**.

Presenters will include faculty from the Counseling Psychology, Education, and Public Health departments at SCU, as well as representatives from organizations like The Primary School and the San Mateo Union High School District. Participants, including educators, school administrators, mental health providers, students, parents, and community members, will engage in conversation on topics such as:

- Mixed-Status Family Dynamics
- Latinx/é Culturally Relevant Community-Based Mental Health Care
- Community-Based and Peer-to-Peer Health Interventions in Latinx/é Communities
- Community Schools as a Model for Long-term Latinx/é Child and Adolescent Support
- Latinx/é Parent Wellness Programs: The Intersection of Wellness and Community
- Latinx/é Family-School-Community Engagement

“We are honored to participate in the Latinx/é Summit focusing on Community Schools, as we look to continue nurturing the momentum towards radically improving the outcomes for Latinx/é students and families. This is a wonderful opportunity to focus on the wellbeing of the whole family and share culturally responsive family engagement strategies so our Latinx/é students and their parents can feel deeply connected and fulfill their full potential,” says **Valentina Hello-Villegas**, Director of 2nd Gen Programming at The Primary School and symposium speaker.

By focusing on these vital areas, CPD and the Latinx/é Research Center aim to create a collaborative environment that strengthens support systems for the Latinx/é community and beyond.

<sup>1</sup> [cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ccspp.asp](https://cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ccspp.asp)

<sup>2</sup> [nea.org/student-success/great-public-schools/community-schools](https://nea.org/student-success/great-public-schools/community-schools)





Speakers from the 2023 Latiné/x Mental Health Symposium with SCU ECP Center for Professional Development Director Carmina Mendoza.



***This is a wonderful opportunity to focus on the wellbeing of the whole family and share culturally responsive family engagement strategies so our Latinx/é students and their parents can feel deeply connected and fulfill their full potential.***

*—Valentina Hello-Villegas  
Director of 2nd Gen Programming  
at The Primary School*

# THE PROMOTORAS PROJECT

SCU CPSY tackles post-pandemic mental health crisis with community wellness project

Headed by Counseling Psychology faculty **Jasmín Llamas** and **Lucila Ramos-Sánchez**, the Proyecto de Bienestar Comunitario de Santa Clara (Santa Clara Community Wellness Project) was established in response to the urgent need for mental health and wellness support following the COVID-19 pandemic. Joined by a team of SCU staff, graduate students, local non-profits, and community members, Llamas and Ramos-Sanchez developed a prevention intervention to help community members manage stress, increase well-being, and practice evidence-based experiential exercises. The goal for the program is to empower community members with the tools to “pass this on” and teach others about these basic skills for wellness. So far, over 100 individuals have received the free wellness training.

Conducted in Spanish (but also available in English), the program features two methods for community members to get involved.

## Juntos Mejor (Better Together)

In an effort to empower the community with tools to “pass wellness on,” the team employs a “Train-the-Trainer” model to prepare promotoras (promoters) that are equipped to facilitate wellness workshops for others in the community. Promotoras are trained in managing conversations and questions during workshops and navigating difficult situations that may arise.

## Wellness Workshops

Once trained, the promotoras are then able to support the Platicas—a five-part workshop series open to all members of the community. In these workshops, basic psychoeducation skills are emphasized: self-management of emotional and physical responses to life’s challenges (i.e., relaxation training), problem-solving, decision-making, and communication—all with attention to how our beliefs about ourselves and our heritage/ethnic identities can be a source of strength. Student research assistants co-facilitate these workshops with the promotoras. “In these sessions, as a team, the promotoras and I focus on helping community members manage stress, improve their well-being, and practice evidence-based

experiential exercises. These exercises include mindfulness techniques, coping strategies, and methods to improve emotional resilience. The goal is to empower participants with practical tools that not only benefit them but can also be shared with others in their communities,” says student research assistant **Jennifer Saldaña Luna**.



“I love being part of this project. I am still new to it, but so far my experience has been great. I’ve loved seeing how motivated the promotoras are to learn and impart their knowledge, as well as the massive impact this can have on our community,” says student research assistant **Sol Caselles**. “COVID was a huge turning point for many Latinx/é people to become more aware of their mental health and wellness. I think that turnaround can be used as the initial big push to promote wellness throughout our community. I look forward to doing more to help, and empowering more people to not only take care of themselves but also those around them. I am hopeful for the future, and the change that is to come!”



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



## CREATING LEADERS WHO LISTEN AND DREAM

This year, a group of 19 students crossed the graduation stage—representing the first of many cohorts who will complete ECP’s new educational PhD program in social justice leadership.

**A**fter three years of perseverance, the inaugural cohort of ECP’s new educational doctorate program graduated this June. At that ceremony, 19 teachers, principals, district officials, counselors, and administrators walked proudly across the stage to collect their EdD diplomas.

While they may have come from different professional backgrounds, they have a lot in common according to **Pedro Nava**. They’re all pioneers, groundbreakers, and leaders—precisely the kind of people who are needed to change education.

Nava, an associate professor and Director of Educational Leadership, arrived at SCU in 2020 to design and lead the new EdD in social justice leadership—a program deeply informed by Santa Clara’s Jesuit values.

“Our approach is really about creating a more equitable and humanizing society by preparing leaders to foster learning environments where everyone can thrive,” he explains, pointing to the wide range of issues that his graduates have explored—from vocational and dual language education to disabled and migrant student advocacy.

In addition to juggling the demands of full-time work and families, this initial class of students entered graduate school during a unique time, having to balance the stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing political opposition towards the program’s very mission.

“Some of our leaders have caught some of the pressures from this political moment, like parents who are anxious about the anti-racist pedagogical approaches being taught,” says Nava. “Part of our role is preparing leaders who can listen and offer a research-based and community-responsive vision forward in terms of these hot button issues.”

Of course, executing a vision is half the battle. Equally important is supporting the holistic well-being of the people who carry out this work who often can feel marginalized or burnt out by the institutions they work for.

When **Annie Phan EdD ’24** entered the teaching profession 8 years ago, she knew all about the teaching shortages, structural inequalities, and lack of resources she’d experience, but she wasn’t prepared for how dire things really were.

“It was hard to feel so passionate about what my amazing students needed and wanted to do, while also trying to be a human,” they recalled. “It took a devastating toll on my physical, mental, and emotional health to work in that context.”

But this feeling wasn’t just burnout, Phan later discovered. In the EdD program she learned about the term “moral injury,” which described a feeling of existential pain that comes with feeling forced to go against your core beliefs. It was exactly the despair that she and other teachers of color experienced regularly.

Phan’s research focused on combating this experience by cultivating trust, something they experienced firsthand among their peers in the EdD program, from shared snacks to commiserating over frustrations at work.

For **Edith Mancera de González EdD ’24**, that bonding was crucial in keeping her going through the program, and it validated the importance of community connections in knowledge-sharing, a theme that was central to her research in the program.

Pláticas, she explains, is a research methodology based on conversations that happen within communities when knowledge is co-created. It might be as simple as mothers chatting after dropping their children off at school, but it’s a powerful tool for communication, community-building, and healing.

And as a first-gen student, undocumented Mexican immigrant, and mother, it meant a lot to have this methodology affirmed within academia, which she describes as “not made for people like me.”



“Reconnecting with Chicana feminist scholars at SCU allowed me to step back into my own power by acknowledging that Latinas like me have so much ancestral knowledge and wisdom that we carry in our blood and in our bones, that no institution can ever provide,” she says.

To demonstrate that, Mancera de González makes a point to bring her full authentic self into her professional life and now begins every introduction with her full name, and the lineage of knowledge-makers she is proud to be part of: “I am the granddaughter of Concepción Gómez Sánchez. I am the daughter of Edith Mendoza Gómez. I am the mother of Julián, Adrián, and Isabel González.”

Authenticity in leadership was one of the main EdD takeaways for Phan, who once struggle to reconcile her Vietnamese values about humility with the racialized expectations she faced as a high achiever.

“Now I definitely I think leadership is about having the vulnerability to take the risks that need to be taken,” Phan says. “And as a younger member of our cohort, it meant a lot to see that leadership being modeled by people further along in their careers who are comfortable in their skin and willing to take those risks to be in service to others.”

Of course, this work can still be tiring even for the most experienced leaders, says both Phan and Mancera de González. That’s why the EdD program not only offers professional skills and personal validation, but is a reminder that change in education is a marathon, not a sprint.

“Every moment of change or anti-oppressive movement has come out of creativity, of dreaming,” says Mancera de González. “So now I ask the teachers I work with: ‘When are you giving yourself that opportunity to dream beyond what you think is possible? You have to rest to be able to do those things.’”



Our 2024 EdD graduates and Educational Leadership faculty at this year's Education Graduation Reception.



## *10 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION*

Alumna Dominique Salapare reflects on the impact of the Excellence in Catholic Education and Leadership program

For ten years, a select group of Master of Arts in Teaching and Teaching Credential Candidates have dedicated their studies to the Excellence in Catholic Education and Leadership (ExCEL) program. ExCEL supports Catholic school educators through a program committed to developing teachers pedagogically, spiritually, and communally; and working for social justice through educational equity.

### About ExCEL

Inspired by similar programs at a number of prominent Catholic universities, ExCEL represents the joint vision of **John A. Sobrato '60** and **Sue Sobrato**, philanthropists with a long commitment to Catholic education, and the Santa Clara University School of Education and Counseling Psychology (ECP), to prepare aspiring Catholic teachers with a commitment to Catholic education and our community at the highest level. Ten years ago, the Sobrato Family Foundation provided the seed funding and foundational resources to build and launch ExCEL. While programs at other schools provide full tuition scholarships, living stipends, and living communities committed to spiritual development for students in similar programs, they often support students in building a life in service, but not necessarily in education.

Focused on preparing Catholic educators committed to teaching in our region, Santa Clara's program is a strategic investment in bringing educators with the highest quality preparation pedagogically, spiritually, and technologically into our local communities. The program is tailored to student teacher needs and centers on the particular values and ambitions of Catholic education. **Dominique Salapare MAT'23** believes she wouldn't be the teacher she is today without it.

### Dominique's Story

Born and raised in Southern California, the child of Filipino immigrants, and a lifelong lover of reading and writing, Salapare has wanted to be a teacher since the third grade. So when she saw an ad for ExCEL upon completing her Bachelor's, it was a no brainer that she'd apply.

"I want to be the kind of teacher that is able to advocate for my students, so I immediately connected with ExCEL's pillar of Teaching as a Service, and the emphasis on anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogy that specifically focuses on supporting students from marginalized communities. I wasn't seeing these values advertised in any other teaching programs," says Salapare. "I also liked the idea of teaching in an environment where I could bring faith and education together, so a Catholic teaching program was right up my alley."



With a focus on living in community, ExCEL students are encouraged to connect with each other outside of the classroom.

During her two years in the program, Salapare and her cohort members each received full tuition scholarships and worked as student teachers for TK-12 Catholic schools in the Diocese of San José, while living in community with one another. She and her colleagues also enjoyed additional training and support as first and second year teachers. To Salapare specifically, the quality of education and the lifelong friendships she made while living in community were the highlights of her experience.

“I think that the living in community aspect is sort of a meta lesson for teaching. You’re living with seven individuals you’ve never met and didn’t choose. But this program was calling me to be in an intentional community with these people and find ways to love them,” Salapare says. “That is exactly what teaching is. I don’t choose who comes into my classroom, their parents, or my coworkers, but I’m still called to serve alongside them. It’s my duty to make sure I’m reaching them the best way that I possibly can with the support that they need.”

Salapare also cherishes the pedagogy and how learning was structured in the program. Each day, Salapare and her colleagues would teach full-time at a school, then gather for classes in the evening. Tools and strategies discussed in class would then be fresh in her mind to employ with her students the next day. Twice a month, Catholic Programs Director **John Beltramo** would observe her classes and share valuable feedback on her teaching.

In addition to development as a teacher, personal development was prioritized through spirituality-focused community events and anti-racism dialogues that Beltramo and the students would alternate in coordinating. “It was during these conversations that the Jesuit ideal of teaching the whole person shone through. We all have this innate goodness that needs to be affirmed

in the classroom or otherwise, and we were taught to understand where people are coming from and to approach situations with empathy,” says Salapare.

Now an English teacher at St. Francis High School, Salapare asserts that she needed her two years in ExCEL to be the teacher she is today— one that knows what it looks like to acknowledge all the backgrounds and cultures students come from and see it as a treasure and an asset in the classroom. As the program celebrates its 10th anniversary, director John Beltramo is excited for what’s to come.

“With support from the Sobrato family and leadership across SCU, ExCEL members have contributed so much to this diocese, both through their teaching and, increasingly, through their leadership, as we now have a handful of ExCEL alumni now serving as school administrators,” says Beltramo. “As we’re joined by **Kenna Arana**, our new Assistant Director of Catholic Education, ExCEL is positioned well to grow even more strongly in its commitments to bringing Christ-centered, equity-oriented education to Catholic school classrooms across the Silicon Valley. I’m excited to see what the next ten years have in store.”



Dominique Salapare and her fellow ExCEL colleagues on their graduation day.



Graduated **44** teachers over the past ten years



Currently supporting another **11** current teachers (5 second-years, and 6 first-years)



Those **55** teachers have taught in **26** local Catholic schools



Approximately **3,100** Catholic school students have been taught by ExCEL teachers while they were in the program.



SCU has awarded **\$1.7** million in scholarships to ExCEL teachers over the past 10 years

## *PURSUING A SECOND CAREER AT SANTA CLARA: RASHMI NAYAK'S STORY*

A year into our new Online Master of Arts in Teaching & Teaching Credential Program (OMATTC), student Rashmi Nayak reflects on her experience.

**R**ashmi Nayak has always had a love for teaching. As a child, playing pretend with her friends meant in any situation where a role as “student” or “teacher” was up for grabs, Nayak would be the first volunteer for “teacher.” But never in her life did she think she would actually pursue teaching as a career.

After earning her Bachelor’s in Computer Science and Engineering, Nayak spent 6 years as a software engineer. But she felt like something was missing. “Leaving a stable job that I’d worked so hard for was difficult, but I felt a longing to be more involved in giving back to the community. While still in IT, I used to volunteer to tutor students, and it was through this fulfilling experience that I decided that I wanted to make the career flip to teaching,” says Nayak.

Once the decision was made, Nayak earned her initial teacher credits, and landed her first teaching jobs as a Preschool/Pre-K teacher at Stratford Schools in the Bay Area, then an English Language Arts (ELA) Coordinator for a local school in her now home base of Lathrop, California. With dreams of earning her teaching credential and goals of teaching elementary students, Nayak set her eyes on Santa Clara University. “SCU was always going to be my first choice, but having recently moved two hours away, I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to manage the commute. So once I heard the School was introducing an online option, I thought, ‘yes, this is for me!’”

Even then, Nayak was still a little unsure about how the program would go since it was online and still novel. But an assuring orientation calmed her nerves, and she was pleased with how the program was designed and how the professors planned to support them every step of the way. And so far, the experience has been just as it was painted out to be.

“Since I’m new to teaching, I’m still comprehending all the exams that are required and navigating how to prepare for them, making guidance and support from professors even more important,” says Nayak. “All the professors have been so understanding and receptive to feedback to ensure we’re getting the quality education we need while still being able to manage commitments outside of the classroom. I’ve especially connected with **Dr. Kathy Stoehr**. I feel so at home with her and she’s always there when I need her.”

Even as an online student, Nayak has been able to find community with her classmates. With many being working parents in school like her, Nayak says she can relate well to them and has found offline project work to be smooth. She looks forward to the opportunities to come on campus and meet them in person.

“I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to pursue my dream job here at Santa Clara and be part of this new program. I’m so glad I made the leap and I’m so excited for the learning, personal growth, and teaching to come!”

*“Leaving a stable job that I’d worked so hard for was difficult, but I felt a longing to be more involved in giving back to the community. —Rashmi Nayak, OMATTC student”*







# FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS



## A HELPER'S JOURNEY

Dale Larson reflects on 40 years of leading ECP's Health Psychology Emphasis, a specialization within psychology that considers both mental and physical health.

According to the CDC and the National Institute of Mental Health, the U.S. is in the midst of an enormous mental health crisis exacerbated by the stress and loneliness of the COVID-19 pandemic. But **Dale Larson**, a professor of counseling psychology at Santa Clara University, believes this might be just the tip of the iceberg.

"I keep telling my students that 10 years from now, they're going to be working with someone who lost a loved one during COVID and is still struggling with it because they didn't have an opportunity to process it when it happened."

Larson, a pioneer in end-of-life and bereavement work, recently served on an expert panel for the Center for Mental Health Services about the long-term impact of the pandemic on grief and mental health—noting that during the height of the pandemic, anywhere between 500,000 to 1 million Americans did not have access to the normal grieving rituals and support networks to help them cope with their loss.

"And loss is a continuum," Larson adds. "We also grieve non-death related losses, like when a relationship ends, a business fails, or a house is destroyed. During the pandemic, people had many secondary losses, like financial instability, less social assistance, and fewer self-care practices."

His expertise on grief, loss, and bereavement plays a central role in his teaching and practice of clinical health psychology—an area of psychology that focuses on the intersection of mental and physical health. Larson has coordinated the Health Psychology Emphasis at ECP since 1982, and has seen how these tools have empowered his students to address the urgent mental health needs of today and tomorrow.

"What's great is that while these young clinicians are launching their careers, they're becoming familiar with the scope of the health psychology field, whether it's in

eating disorders, mindfulness, end-of-life issues, grief, or stress management," says Larson. "They're learning crucial interventions and bringing that knowledge into whatever focus their clinical practice becomes."

After celebrating 40-plus years of the Health Psychology Emphasis at SCU, he is now passing the torch of leadership on to **Shauna Shapiro**, who credits Larson for the program's success.

"One of the most important lessons of the last decade is the importance of resilience," Shapiro says. "As this ever-evolving field continues to grow through emerging science and the changing needs of the world, the values he promoted—wisdom, compassion, and flexibility—will continue to guide us."

### Caring for the whole person

When it came to learning from the best, Larson had a knack for being in the right place at the right time. As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, he learned from acclaimed person-centered psychologist Eugene Gendlin, and later, completed his PhD at UC Berkeley under Richard Lazarus, one of the foremost stress theorists of the 20th century.

Psychology initially appealed to Larson because of the mind-body connection, but this specific approach to psychology was still at the cutting edge. In fact, it wasn't until a year after he completed his PhD in 1977 that the American Psychological Association formally recognized the field of health psychology.

By that point, Larson had already started applying health psychology-inspired psychosomatic interventions in his work in the Bay Area, first conducting biofeedback and hypnosis sessions for the ill and dying at the VA, and later, helping to launch the Shanti Project, one of the first volunteer organizations in the U.S. that supported people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS during the epidemic's early, most traumatic days. "AIDS really was



a learning experience for us all about the interaction between mind and body, and the need to provide many kinds of support and care for people with AIDS and those caring for them,” he says.

That holistic vision of healthcare aligned perfectly with the Jesuit value of *cura personalis* at Santa Clara, where Larson began teaching in 1982.

One of his students, pediatric oncology nurse **Leslie Griffith MA '93**, was particularly drawn to that human-first approach.

“Often in hospitals, the whole focus is on the body, but the reality is that health affects people emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually,” she explains. “Having this training took me to another level of what I was able to offer my patients, especially in being present and listening during stressful times when people feel most vulnerable.”

She describes one training exercise Larson led where students faced a wall thinking of a difficult experience as other students sat behind them and simply listened.

“It was a reminder of the power of somebody being witness to that difficult experience,” Griffith says.

### Care for the caregivers

It was through Larson’s increased work in hospice care that he saw a particular need to not just support the sick and dying, but their caregivers too. Across the decades, Larson has led national training programs, edited a 15-week newspaper series on end-of-life issues that reached 8 million Americans, and lectured throughout the U.S. and Europe. His latest book, “The Helper’s Journey: Empathy, Compassion, and the Challenge of Caring,” published in 2020, has taken the field by storm, winning a Book of the Year award from the American Journal of Nursing.

However, for Larson, it’s not about the success or acclaim—it’s about getting this information to the people who need it.

“During the height of COVID, I was working with people who had to be the go-between on the phone between

dying people and their loved ones—that’s a very traumatizing experience for a healthcare worker,” he recalls, describing the PSAs and webinars he developed to encourage self-care among health workers. “I’m trying to teach people how to do this emotionally challenging work without burning out,” Larson explains. “As caregivers, you have to find a way to convert your empathy to compassion, which we find is more sustainable and energizing. Regulating your emotional responses is key to that.”

One of Larson’s most well-remembered analogies in his classes involves helping a client who’s fallen into “the helper’s pit.”

“If your client is in a pit, what’s going to happen if you fall in too? It’s not helping anybody if you both are stuck together, so it’s important to stay grounded as you reach a hand in,” describes **Jonathan Tong BS '14, MA '18**.

Tong says that Larson’s lessons gave him the clarity to seek therapy as an adult as he grieved his godfather who passed away from brain cancer during his Master’s program.

“My godfather was like my dad—he raised me, so he wasn’t a case study to me, he was a real person,” Tong says. “The Health Psychology Emphasis really connected to what I was going through. Dr. Larson talks a lot about needing to process your own emotions in order to be a good therapist and not let what you’re working on interfere with the treatment you’re providing the other person.”

In some ways, Griffith adds, the care Larson offers his students is a way of modeling the care his students will one day provide to their patients as caregivers.

“This is such a heart-centered profession, and Dr. Larson really embodies that,” she says. “I feel I’ve gained this beautiful humanistic perspective on my work, which continues to give me gifts on a spiritual level. I’ve truly grown as a person being able to serve others.”



Professor Dale Larson with incoming Health Psychology emphasis coordinator, Professor Shauna Shapiro, at a reception celebrating 40 years of the emphasis.



***“This is such a heart-centered profession, and Dr. Larson really embodies that. I feel I've gained this beautiful humanistic perspective on my work, which continues to give me gifts on a spiritual level. I've truly grown as a person being able to serve others.”***

**—Leslie Griffith MA '93**  
*Former student of Dale Larson*





## DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY?

Associate Professor Pedro Hernández-Ramos celebrates the mothers of the Ignatian Center's Abriendo Puertas program in an autobiographical collection.

For more than 20 years, **Pedro Hernández-Ramos** has spent his weekdays training Santa Clara University students to become better teachers. And for the last seven years, he's given one more day—his Saturdays—to the families of Washington Elementary in San Jose.

As the faculty coordinator for the Ignatian Center's Abriendo Puertas tutoring program, Hernández-Ramos leads twice-monthly sessions where Santa Clara University Education students help students from pre-K through third grade improve math and literacy skills through small-group tutoring and use of educational apps on iPads.

But tutoring is only half of the equation. While the students receive one-on-one attention, Hernández-Ramos meets with parents, often mothers who are immigrants, to help them navigate what can be a difficult transition to life in the United States.

"They come from an education system in Mexico and Central America that is fundamentally different," Hernández-Ramos says. "So we talk a lot about that and how they can better support their children."

In these meetings, Hernández-Ramos serves as an ally and advocate, tackling topics from managing their kids' social media time to problems they might be facing at school. "I don't lecture them. There is no podium. We sit at a table, at the same level," Hernández-Ramos says. "It's a conversation where I bring knowledge and experience, sometimes expertise, to share."

One goal of Abriendo Puertas is to encourage a love of reading in their children. With that in mind, **Liz Molina**, a mother in the community, suggested the group start a book club so parents could model the behavior. The first book the club read was Santa Clara Professor **Francisco Jiménez's** first volume of his autobiography, *Cajas de Cartón* (published

in English as *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*). When reading the book, many parents could see themselves in Jiménez's story. During one discussion, Hernández-Ramos asked if any of the mothers would be interested in sharing their story.

That question sparked an 18-month journey that culminated in "Proyecto Contando Sus Historias. Sus Historias Cuentan," (*Telling Their Stories. Their Stories Matter*), a collection of the autobiographies of seven mothers from the Greater Washington neighborhood. Women like **Paty Lozano** and **Yazmin Balderas** sat for six- to eight-hour interviews with Hernández-Ramos, recounting the rich details that made their lives unique.

On April 5th, Santa Clara University hosted an event where the mothers read excerpts of their books in front of an audience. "This process has empowered the women to feel that their stories matter," Hernández-Ramos says. "It has had a wonderful effect on their children."

Publishing the mothers' stories was a fitting final note for Hernández-Ramos, who retired at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, and was awarded Emeritus status. Though his research focused on technology in the classroom, the projects he led, like Abriendo Puertas and SEMILLA, a scholarship program for students who commit to teaching in underserved communities, always had service as a connective tissue.

That's a mission, he says, that won't end with his retirement.

"It's fulfilling work. I plan on continuing to work with the Greater Washington community and finding new ways to get engaged," he says. "It's a long-term commitment for me."

# FOSTERING MORE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

ECP launches professional support program for Santa Clara County School Districts

This year, SCU's School of Education & Counseling Psychology (ECP) launched an Inclusive Education Professional Support Program with principals and school leaders across our region. Funded by Charmaine and Dan Warmenhoven, longtime supporters of inclusive education, the program is free to districts and is being executed with additional support for engaging superintendents from Jessamy Tang and John Blascovich, as part of ECP's ongoing commitment to fostering more inclusive classrooms.

The three-year pilot program is being led by ECP lecturer **Victoria Forrester** and three of her colleagues, who together bring years of experience as educators and school leaders to the work. Designed to support and coach professional learning communities of school leaders in approaches to serving students with diverse learning needs, the program begins with planning and data collection from leaders detailing the needs of their districts and how the program could be most helpful to them. It then continues with cycles of action, inquiry, and reflection. School leaders are also given the tools to continue this work after the program concludes.

Backed by research that has demonstrated how equitable systems of intervention and support have a positive impact on academic growth, student behavior, and social-emotional learning, the program provides coaching on implementing the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) in public, charter and Catholic schools. The coaching ultimately boils down to asking why students are misbehaving and/or falling behind, and finding ways to work with these students and high performing students in one classroom.

## What is MTSS?

MTSS is a systemic approach designed to meet the academic, linguistic, behavioral and social emotional needs of all students through a continuum of support that includes fluid access to instruction and interventions of varying intensity.

The framework consists of three tiers, with Tier 1 being high-quality and culturally relevant instruction

by teachers for all students. 80-85% of instruction should fall within this tier. Tier 2 consists of targeted interventions that some students receive in addition to Tier 1 instruction. 10-15% of instruction should fall within this tier. "The third tier is intensive instruction and intervention designed to serve only a few students based on their individual needs. Only a small percentage of the student population of instruction should fall within this tier, but currently, 45% of the student population is receiving this instruction. Our goal with this program is to bring more student instruction into Tier 1 by incorporating more equitable forms of teaching into the classroom," says Forrester.

While the needs of school districts are diverse, the reasons for too many students falling into Tier 3 are rooted in similar causes.

"You can walk on any campus and predict who's going to do well and who's not, because our school systems haven't changed much in the last 200 years. We see more students of color being sent to special education, tracking, and programs with dead ends because educators and school leaders fail to understand all the outside factors that can affect a student's academic performance," says Forrester. "Once educators feel like they've tried all they know with a student, they send them out of the classroom and assume they need special education. But sometimes, it just takes culturally responsive leadership and teachers that fully understand their own bias in addition to how students' life experiences outside of the classroom could be affecting their academic performance and behavior in the classroom."

## The Program in Motion

So far, the program has welcomed its first cohort of 18 school leaders, who participated in four symposiums aimed to build relationships within the cohort, introduce the MTSS frameworks, and set goals for the upcoming school year. The start of the school year will see Forrester and her team step into the roles of coaches and thought partners to those in the first cohort. In addition to individual support for educators,



five coaching sessions for principals will be held to create professional learning communities where they can learn what works and what doesn't work from each other.

“Feedback from our first cohort has been great! The principals are fired up,” says Forrester. “We’ll have an agenda for coaching in the fall, but it will ultimately be driven by the goals set by the principals. Over the next year, I look forward to seeing the new MTSS-inspired teaming systems up and running in their schools.” Forrester and her team also have big plans for the second cohort, set to begin their symposiums this fall and coaching in the winter. “I’d love to reach at least 30 principals in the next cohort, with some hopefully being from Catholic schools in the area. Catholic schools can sometimes have less resources to devote to these types of programs, so my team has curated special programming to support them,” notes Forrester.

“Another goal for this next year is to ensure inclusion of all backgrounds and identities is prioritized in the schools we are working with, not just special education.” In the long term, Forrester hopes to be able to secure more funding to ensure that schools across districts are able to continue incorporating this framework to the point where it becomes standard.

“I know we as educators and school leaders are all doing our best with the resources we have, and we all have the same goal to support our students the best we can,” says Forrester. “But to help our kids, it starts with us adults. We need to put in the work to enact the systemic change that ensures communities, schools, and families are working together to create more equitable classrooms.”



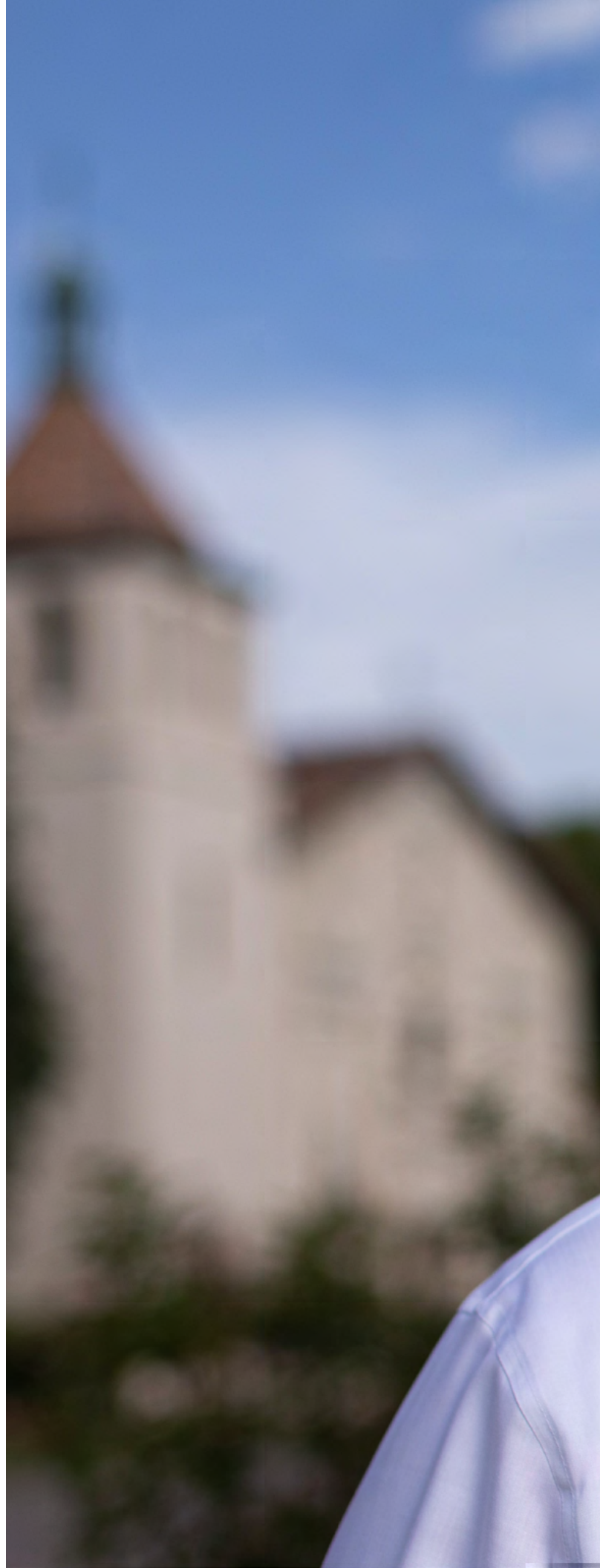
## *EDUCATION PROFESSOR RECEIVES NSF GRANT TO PROMOTE EQUITY IN STEM*

Education Professor and Associate Dean **Marco Bravo** has been awarded \$999,332 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to support his project “Investigating the Impact of Preparation in Racial Equity and Language Equity Practices on STEM Secondary Teacher Effectiveness and Retention.” In addition to the School’s NSF-sponsored Noyce Fellowship teacher development program dedicated to getting high quality mathematics teachers into high needs schools, the grant represents the School’s commitment to improving STEM learning opportunities for students from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Leveraging interviews, observation and survey data, this project proposes to study qualitatively and quantitatively if and to what extent STEM teachers continue to support racially and linguistically diverse students through instructional shifts that account for the racialized and linguistically complex nature of STEM education.

The four year study involves the University of California Santa Cruz and the evaluation firm Education Northwest with an external advisory board to ensure a robust research agenda. The findings will contribute new knowledge about students’ experiences with inequities caused by systemic racism.

“Racial and linguistic inequities often create barriers to STEM learning. Our teacher education program has done tremendous work to address these barriers. With this project, we hope to study how teachers feel about their preparation to deliver instruction that embeds racial and linguistic equity practices into their STEM teaching,” says Bravo. “Project findings will help inform our approach in our teacher education programs to support teachers in implementing STEM instruction that considers racial and linguistic inequities, broadening participation in STEM.”







*EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROFESSOR  
RECEIVES GRANT TO SPOTLIGHT  
THE BLACK WOMEN COLLEGE ATHLETE EXPERIENCE*



**A**ssistant Professor of Educational Leadership **Dr. Ezinne Ofoegbu**, received a \$49,988 award from The Spencer Foundation to support her project "Hidden in Plain Sight: Black Women Athletes' Narratives of Interpersonal Exploitation in College Athletics." This project will explore the experiences of Black women college athletes at predominantly white universities and reveal how these experiences contribute to larger patterns of exploitation in college athletics. "Historically, conversations about exploitation in college athletics have focused on Black men because of their hypervisibility in revenue-generating sports—men's basketball and football," notes Ofoegbu. "I hope centering Black women in this conversation will provide some understanding to how gendered racism shapes their experiences, and how different interpersonal interactions and relationships exacerbate and nurture larger systems of exploitation in college athletics."

To illuminate their college experiences and highlight how they persist in spite of dehumanizing and exploitative relationships and systems, Dr. Ofoegbu plans to hold conversations with current and former Black women college athletes over the course of the 2024-25 academic year.

With her findings, she hopes practitioners can develop programming and support structures to combat exploitative and racist practices and cultures. Examples include expanding mental health services and programming to empower Black women athletes, providing clear mechanisms of reporting dehumanizing behaviors, and creating systems of accountability that will ultimately lead to longstanding cultural and organizational change within college athletic departments.



## *ASSISTANT PROFESSOR HONORED WITH EARLY CAREER AWARD*



**D**r. Dosun Ko, Assistant Professor of Special Education at Santa Clara University, has been honored with the prestigious Early Career Award from the Cultural Historical Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Created to recognize the methods and topics of study of younger generation cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) researchers, the Early Career Research Award celebrates Dr. Ko's outstanding contributions to the field of education, particularly through his innovative use of cultural historical activity theory.

Dr. Ko's research examines how intersecting social markers of difference—such as race, class, gender, disability, and language—shape intersectional power, privilege, and marginalization in special education referral and identification, as well as exclusionary school discipline. To develop equity-oriented solutions, his research also includes community-driven participatory design research. This approach encourages local stakeholders from historically marginalized communities to

engage in collective knowledge production and decision-making activities, addressing systemic contradictions they experience regarding disproportionality within their local school contexts.

"I am deeply committed to pursuing this community-engaged research because it is essential to uncover and dismantle the systemic inequities that disproportionately affect minoritized students," says Dr. Ko. "My goal is to ensure that every student, regardless of their background or abilities, has access to an equitable and inclusive education."

Dr. Ko's dedication to promoting inclusion, access, and justice in special education continues to inspire his colleagues and students alike. The Santa Clara University School of Education & Counseling Psychology congratulates him on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to his continued contributions to the field.

## *NEW FACULTY*

This Fall, the School of Education & Counseling Psychology is proud to have welcomed a new group of educators for the teachers and clinicians of tomorrow.



**Amelia Wedel** (she/her) joined the Counseling Psychology Department as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2024. Amelia earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Syracuse University and completed her predoctoral clinical internship at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. She is a clinical psychologist whose research, practice, and teaching focuses on the development, maintenance, and recovery from substance use disorders among young people. She is deeply passionate about examining substance use and associated psychopathology from a holistic lens that integrates social, contextual, and environmental factors alongside psychobiological ones.



**Aya Inamori Williams** (she/her) joined Santa Clara in Fall 2024 as an Assistant Professor in the Counseling Psychology Department with a specialty in Child & Adolescent Mental Health. Sponsored by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, Williams earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from UC Berkeley. She completed her clinical internship at UCSF and post-doctoral research at Northwestern University.

Williams is most passionate about research on bilingualism and how we can leverage multiple languages to improve mental health, especially for immigrant families. With the next generation of clinicians at SCU, Williams is excited to tackle questions such as how to effectively provide mental health services for multilingual and multicultural communities.



**John Beltramo** (he/him) stepped into a new role as Assistant Professor of Catholic Education this Fall 2024. He previously served as Director of Catholic School Partnerships, and leads the Excellence in Catholic Education (ExCEL) and Catholic Master of Arts in Teaching (CatMAT) programs. As a graduate student, John earned two master's degrees from Loyola Marymount University, and he also served as an assistant professor of education at Regis University in Denver. He holds a Ph.D. in Urban Education Policy from the University of Southern California.

John's connections to Catholic schooling run deep: he is a product of Catholic K-12 schools in Fresno, California; he received his pedagogical training through Response-Ability, a Catholic teacher preparation program; and he worked as a middle school teacher and assistant principal at Nativity Catholic School in South Los Angeles from 2003 to 2011. Additionally, John has published studies in Catholic school leadership and Catholic teacher development.

In addition to Catholic education, John's areas of inquiry examine how teachers learn about their students and become more equity- and asset-oriented classroom instructors. He is inspired by the Ignatian vision of justice and hopes in turn to inspire future and current teachers to work for equity in their classrooms each day.





**Chongzheng Wei** (he/they) joined the Counseling Psychology department in Fall 2024. His research broadly aims to address health disparities affecting sexual and gender minority populations with multiple marginalized identities and/or living in developing countries, by understanding the intersectional nature of discrimination/oppression and designing culturally affirming interventions (e.g., mindfulness).

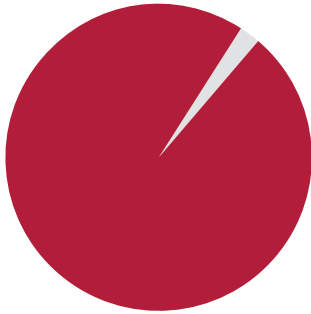
Chongzheng is a global citizen who grew up in China and worked at UNESCO in France and Thailand, on education for gender equality and LGBTQI+ inclusion. He earned his PhD in Counseling, Clinical and School Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. They completed their pre-doctoral Clinical Psychology internship at Richard J. Donovan State Prison with specialty training in LGBTQ Health and Sex Offender Treatment.



**Kenna Arana** (she/her) joined SCU in Fall 2024 as a Lecturer and Assistant Director of Catholic Education. Born and raised in Southern California, a milestone in Kenna's teaching career was when she experienced the joys and challenges of teaching and living in community in the ACE Teaching Fellows program. As an ACE Teacher, Kenna taught American Literature and Spanish at Bishop Machebeuf High School in Denver, Colorado. After graduating from ACE, she directed the ACE Latino Educator and Administrator Development Program at the University of Notre Dame.

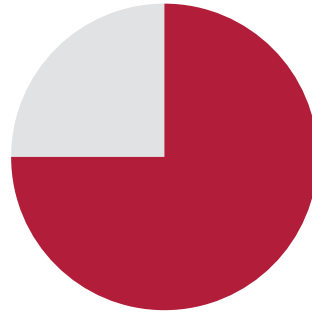
As a Latina and first-generation college graduate, Kenna has personally experienced the transformative impact that education has not just on students, but on their families and future generations. She is passionate about recognizing the gifts that multicultural, multilingual learners bring to our classrooms and helping them grow academically, socially, and spiritually.

# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



98%

of students in Practicums  
dedicated to serving historically  
marginalized communities



75%

Approx  
of students work with  
children in Practicum

145+

Students in Health  
Psychology emphasis

60+

Students in Latinx/é  
Counseling emphasis

50+

Students in new  
Child & Adolescent  
Mental Health  
emphasis

40+

Alternative and  
Correctional  
Psychology emphasis

40+

students in LGBTQ+  
Counseling emphasis



12

NSF Noyce Fellowship graduates teaching math in high needs schools

45+

ExCEL Catholic Teaching Program graduates since 2014

300+

SEMILLA Teaching Fellowship graduates since 2014

70

SEMILLA Fellows in 2024 working with communities in East San José

40+

Bilingual Authorization students enrolled in 2023-2024



SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
& COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

# Part of an Enduring Legacy

The School of Education & Counseling Psychology vision imagines a region and a world in which everyone has access to an inspiring education and is provided the psychological tools and support needed to propel them toward flourishing lives of meaning, purpose and connection. To embody this vision, our mission is to cultivate educators and professionals dedicated to positively transforming schools, communities, and the greater society through their work rooted in social justice.

## Department of Education

Preparing teachers and leaders for public schools, Catholic schools, and social impact organizations

### Academic Programs

Master of Arts in Teaching

Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

Doctor of Education in Social Justice Leadership

## Department of Counseling Psychology

Preparing therapists, licensed clinical counselors, human service professionals, and other counselors in non-mental health settings

### Academic Programs

Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

Master of Arts in Counseling

Master of Arts in Applied Psychology

[SCU.EDU/ECP](http://scu.edu/ECP)