Welcome

Hello Alumni,

Welcome to the second issue of our student-run Alumni Newsletter! The Spring semester is a busy one in our graduate program, with activities such as prospective student program interviews and the annual NASPA conference. We’re excited to provide a snapshot of the past semester and introduce a few alumni, recent graduates, and incoming students in this issue.

Sincerely,
Victoria & Margarita

End-of-year Celebration at Woodstock’s Pizza
Prospective Student Interviews
By Victoria Couch

Our admissions cycle kicks into full swing during the Spring semester. Program interviews bring together faculty, graduate assistantship supervisors from SDSU and UC San Diego, current students, and prospective students into a whirlwind two days where over 200 interviews take place. The schedule of events included a blend of informational events and social activities. This year marked the introduction of 20-minute breakout sessions throughout the day led by students and alumni. Topics ranged from Life in San Diego to Working Fulltime While Attending Grad School. Social activities, such as an outing to Woodstock’s Pizza, provided an opportunity for prospective students and current students to connect with one another outside of the interview atmosphere.

![Breakout Session](image1.jpg)

![Evening Social](image2.jpg)

![Student Panel](image3.jpg)
Introducing Next Year’s Assistant Program Coordinator

Incoming student Maria Rodriguez will be our assistant program coordinator for the 2015/16 school year. Since this position interacts heavily with students and alumni, we thought it would be nice to ‘formally’ introduce Maria via the newsletter!

Educational background and professional experiences:
I graduated from UC Merced with my BA in Political Science in 2013. I am the first Latina woman in my family to graduate and I will be the 1st in my family to attend graduate school. I’m from San Diego, so I’m thrilled to be moving back. I’ve had a lot of experience in student affairs from programming, orientation, to residential life. The last 2 years of my undergrad at UCM I participated in the United States Department of Agriculture Scholars summer research program and got to do research in nutrition and obesity. Research was an awesome opportunity, but now I’m even more excited for the opportunities SDSU has offered.

What attracted you to this position?
I really feel that working as an assistant program coordinator will strengthen my communication skills and will allow me to gain experience in event coordination. Also, in the future I’d like to become a program coordinator so I believe the traits and skills I will learn in this position will only further advance me to the career I hope to one day have.

What are you most looking forward to about this role?
I’m most looking forward to being able to assist Marilee in the development of the cohort and getting to know the people I will be spending the next 2 years of my life with! :D

What do you like to do for fun?
I like to think of myself as an active person. I enjoy Pilates and working out, I love camping, hiking, beach volleyball and I’ve recently gained a new found love for board games. I would like to go out to more concerts and shows so I’m looking forward to what San Diego has to offer.
Welcome to our latest feature- the Alumni Spotlight. Every issue, we will feature 1-2 profiles of program alumni to learn where their careers have taken them since graduating.

Name: Sinton Soalablai

Graduation Year: 2003

Professional path since graduating from the program: In the years after I graduated from the program, I had no idea that I would ultimately become the Minister of Education of the Republic of Palau. I held positions as Chief of School Management, Research and Evaluation and Curriculum Planning and Improvement, an Education Specialist, and a classroom teacher.

How has the program helped you achieve your professional goals? In April 2014, I was appointed and confirmed from the Senate as the fourth Republic of Palau Minister of Education. The Republic of Palau Minister of Education is the head of the Palau Ministry of Education. The Minister is a member of the President’s Cabinet and deals with education policy.

Anything else you would like to share? My only hope is that I would make a difference in fulfilling my life’s work in improving our student performance.

Name: Azizi James

Graduation Year: 2008

Professional path since graduating from the program: Shortly after graduation, I was hired as an Admissions Counselor where I was tasked to help with the recruitment and yield of underrepresented populations. I recently received a promotion to work at UC San Diego as the Special Assistant to the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Admissions & Enrollment Services, where I will direct the strategy to increase the recruitment and yield of underrepresented populations.

How has the program helped you achieve your professional goals? One of the things that I learned in the program was that early on in your career, take advantage of opportunities to perform "other duties as assigned". Not only will this show your passion to learn and be a team player, it will also award you with new opportunities to be a leader on projects, and even more so, can lead to promotions. My hard work, innovation, and willingness to perform "other duties as assigned" far beyond 5% at SDSU gave me the opportunity to take a large step forward in my career.
“Where are you from?...No where are you really from?”

“Why don’t you have an accent? Isn’t English your second language?”

“You don’t sound Black.”

On April 10, 2015 Dr. Daniel Solorzano, the Associate Dean for Diversity and Equity at UCLA, presented to students and alumni in our program on the topic of racial microaggressions. His presentation, Using the Critical Race Tools of Racial Microaggressions to Examine Everyday Racism in Academic Spaces, shed light to the burdensome racist experiences individuals encounter on a day-to-day basis and tools we could use to (re)examine these experiences. Racial microaggressions is defined as a form of “systemic everyday racism (assaults) used to keep those at the racial margins in their place.” Furthermore, Dr. Solorzano discussed the different types of assaults: verbal and non-verbal, layered, and cumulative. Dr. Solorzano explained that given the incalculable effort exercised and ubiquitous experience of racial microaggressions, the “micro” in microaggressions is understood as “in the everyday” rather than “less than.” Last but not least, Solorzano challenged student affair professionals to (1) acknowledge our own racial history and how we view ourselves and others, (2) confront our own biases, and (3) actively work to develop our recognition, reflection, and action skills.

Student Attendees with Dr. Daniel Solorzano
The 2015 Annual NASPA conference took place in New Orleans, Louisiana. This year’s conference was the largest conference thus far, with over 8,000 attendees, over 750 sessions, and more than 1750 institutions representing 29 countries in attendance. On the first full day of the conference, keynote speaker Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry proceeded to set the stage for the upcoming conference days by challenging student affair professionals to navigate their professional roles with courage in light of gender inequalities and the country’s violence against Black citizens. Attendees expressed feelings of encouragement and motivation to continue fighting “the struggle” for social justice in their home institutions.

Many first-year and second-year students were at the conference. A handful of students in the program applied for and received special funds from the Dean’s Office in the College of Education to attend. For many, it was their first time attending a conference of this caliber. Students in the program enjoyed attending NASPA sessions and sightseeing during their free time.

First-Year Students at NASPA
Graduation Awards

The Fred McFarlane Transformative Leadership Award was created to recognize exemplary, innovative, and transformative leadership in postsecondary education. Dr. McFarlane’s approach to leadership is characterized by bringing new perspectives to education, and more importantly, how we translate our education into meaningful careers. He has been described as a transformational leader—impacting students and professionals, organizations, communities, and even large bureaucracies both here and abroad. The award goes to a graduate in the MA Postsecondary Educational Leadership program who exhibits these qualities.

2015 McFarlane Award Winner: Arthur Tovar

Professional Interests: I have always been in the educational field to help others. My current interests are to prepare aspiring and current college students for any academic endeavor or professional opportunity that comes their way.

Post-Graduation Plans: Currently, I have accepted a position in the South Bay of San Diego working at a high school where I will help to build a college going culture and prepare students for their next step into higher education.

The James R. Kitchen Award recognizes outstanding leadership and contributions to the student affairs profession. In line with the core values of student affairs, Dr. Kitchen has been steadfast in his advocacy for students who have been underrepresented and underserved in education—notably students of color, student veterans, and students from low-income backgrounds. Upon assuming the role of Vice President for Student Affairs at SDSU, Dr. Kitchen had a vision that SDSU would house a nationally recognized graduate preparation program for students who wanted to enter the student affairs profession. This vision was realized in 2003 when he and Dr. McFarlane created the Student Affairs Specialization as a component of our MA program in Postsecondary Education Leadership. The Kitchen award goes to a graduate in the Student Affairs specialization, who exemplifies his leadership, passion, and commitment to the student affairs profession.
2015 Kitchen Award Winner: Fnann Keflezighi

**Professional Interests:** I hope to continue working and growing in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion within higher education. Through the program I have had the opportunity to reengage in critical theory and research around supporting underrepresented and undeserved communities navigate access, affordability, retention and matriculation within the education pipeline. Through professional mentorship, staying on top of literature and research and professional conferences I hope to continue to develop skills around all the student affairs competency areas.

**Post-Graduation Plans:**

I have recently accepted a position at California State University Fullerton as their inaugural coordinator for the African American Resource Center within the new Student Affairs Diversity Initiatives & Resource Center (DIRC) department. In my new role, our DIRC team will facilitate campus wide efforts to engage in dialogue across different identities/experiences and provide trainings for campus departments about cultural competencies and social justice. My primary responsibilities within the division will be creating and implementing the vision of the African American Resource Center (AARC), and work with my intern team to make strides to creating a welcoming campus climate for African American/Black students, staff, and faculty and community members. I hope to start a PhD or EdD in the next 2-3 years.

Academic departments across SDSU elect one student in their department to receive the **Outstanding Student Award** every year. The ARPE Department’s recipient alternates every year between a Rehabilitation Counseling student or a PSE/Student Affairs student. This year’s PSE/Student Affairs recipient is an acknowledgement of the student’s academic, professional, and personal achievements during their graduate students in Student Affairs.

2015 Outstanding Student Award Winner: Victoria Couch

**Professional Interests:** My assistantship experiences clarified my interest in supporting student success through data-driven decisions. The fields I’m most interested in are institutional research, assessment, and admissions. I also enjoy opportunities to collaborate with professionals across a variety of student service areas.

**Post-Graduation Plans:** I plan to stay in the Southern California area and pursue a career in institutional research and assessment or admissions.
The end of the academic year is characterized by a series of transitions. Recent graduates transition out of the program, first-years transition into their ‘senior’ status, and incoming students prepare for the start of their graduate studies. As always, there are new and exciting things in store for the program as it prepares for the coming academic year.

- New Faculty: The program is excited to welcome two new faculty members, Dr. Marissa Vásquez Urias and Dr. Felisha Herrera.

- Peer Mentoring Program: Alyssa Patricio is now the official contact for the Peer Mentoring Program. She met with the previous coordinators several times to discuss future directions for the program and has a number of excellent ideas she plans to implement.

Thank you for reading!

The Spring 2015 issue of the Alumni Newsletter is brought to you by:
Victoria Couch- Assistant Program Coordinator; second-year
Margarita Lozano- Executive Board Vice President; second-year

Congratulations Class of 2015!

We welcome alumni ideas and submissions for the Alumni Newsletter. If you have an idea that you would like to share, contact the assistant program coordinator at mapostsecondaryedinfo@mail.sdsu.edu