

# The Sundial

Issue 9 | Spring 2024

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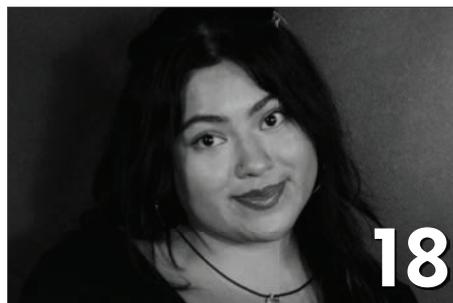
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Dr. Seung Yoon Lee in her office in Bayramian Hall.  
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# Letter *from the* EDITOR



**M**ental health is a pervasive part of students' academic lives. Whether students feel proud of their grades, nervous about finals or excited to graduate, emotions guide students' success and endurance throughout their semesters. The ninth issue of the Sundial magazine focuses on mental health on campus with topics from therapy to graduation.

In multiple interviews for this issue's stories, mental health professionals commended the wave of openness about feelings and anxiety. People were and continue to be shamed for seeking help or admitting they are struggling, but the promotion of therapy and vulnerable conversations helps break down stigmas.

At California State University, Northridge, students have access to therapy through University Counseling Services, which are highlighted in the feature story. In the process of writing the story, everyone contacted was warm and welcoming with a clear passion for helping students both in person and virtually. If a student cannot come into the office, UCS offers online therapy, which makes care accessible, as mentioned in the Technology story by Conrado Picanco. Past students shared their advice in the Yesterday's News story by David Chavez, and current seniors shared how they were feeling about their imminent graduations in the Campus Talk story by Henri Mossiat.

This issue combines the perspectives of students and care professionals on campus in an effort to have something interesting for any reader. The throughline of the stories is that everyone on campus is a person. Everyone has unique experiences and emotions that guide them in their lives. No two people are the same, but we can find ways to connect and relate. At CSUN, we are a community, and we can support each other by spreading awareness and championing vulnerability.

Спасибо,

*Sasha Alikhanov*

Sasha Alikhanov, Print Editor

# Staff *Highlight*

The students who make the Sundial possible

WRITTEN BY SASHA ALIKHANOV



**David Chavez**

As a writer, David Chavez works on stories for various desks, including print, which we get to publish. Chavez's work has been included in many of our issues this past academic year.

"Passionate writers write passionate stories," said Claire Boeck, the print managing editor, about the palpable interest of Chavez's writing.

Boeck also mentioned a reverence of Chavez from seeing him as the editor-in-chief of their past college's publication. His Yesterday's News story for this issue can be found on pages four and five, which illustrate his talents as a competent and engaged journalist.



**Ranae Mauck**

As a graphic designer, Ranae Mauck has worked on the magazine since fall 2022, while remaining positive and hardworking amidst deadlines and schoolwork.

"What I love about Ranae is that she is open to anything," said Jody Holcomb, an adviser of the Sundial. "She is humble too."

The Table of Contents, Letter from the Editor and Media Querencia sections are Mauck's specialties at the magazine. With streamlined and professional designs, she remains constructive with the team and flexible with her work. Mauck remains positive and hardworking amidst deadlines and schoolwork.



**Kevin Silva**

As a graphic designer, Kevin Silva has worked throughout the magazine's sections and created memorable visuals for stories that catch the eyes of consistent and casual readers alike.

"As a designer, I am drawn to his dedication, his passion," said Sam Lindberg, a fellow graphic designer. "His work is really energized."

Throughout his time working at the Sundial, Silva has produced eye-catching designs with pops of color and intricate illustrations. The latter, an emerging signature, garnered praise from the entire newsroom and professional graphic designers at national conferences.



# Sundial Alumni Advice

Where they are and how they got there

WRITTEN BY DAVID CHAVEZ

**M**ore than half of the semester has gone by and project deadlines and finals are approaching. Stress makes it difficult to stay motivated while pursuing graduation, but these former Daily Sundial editors persevered and found their motivations in their university journeys.

Christopher Torres is a former editor-in-chief who graduated in the 2021 fall semester as a general journalism major with a minor in photography. Torres' career accomplishments include winning the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Award for sports photography and a few awards with the Press Photographers

Association of Greater Los Angeles.

One of the reasons Torres stayed motivated to pursue graduation is to make sure all the money and time he spent on school would not go to waste. Before California State University, Northridge, Torres went to the University of Hawaii, but dropped out and later went to Pierce College, eventually transferring to CSUN.

"That was really exhausting, but I'm just glad to have been able to get it done because it was tough," said Torres. "It was tough for sure."

Torres advises utilizing all the services the school has to offer, whether it be clubs, educational resources or the

library in order for students to get their money's worth from the tuition.

Andres Soto is a former sports editor who graduated in the 2021 fall semester as a general journalism major. One of Soto's career accomplishments is working for ESPN for some time and winning an award from the LA Press Club.

Soto was motivated by the prospect of being the first in his family to graduate from college. He also wanted to prove to himself he could do it. Soto dropped out of college once, then returned to go to a community college and then transfer to CSUN to get his degree.

Soto wants to remind students of the reason they decided to go to college.



From left to right: Photos of Christopher Torres, Andres Soto, Ariel Gil and Samantha Neff. (Courtesy of pictured)

“I know it’s easy to lose sight of that,” said Soto. “Just remember what’s driving you and what’s forcing you to get up everyday.”

Ariel Gil is a former social media editor who graduated in the 2023 spring semester as a general journalism major. Gil went to Moorpark College, then went to Pierce College until she transferred to CSUN.

Gil was motivated by the desire to finish school and focus on herself and her career after receiving her degree. She thinks it’s important to look forward to the free time students earn once they graduate, and to think about how they can choose to surround

themselves with new people or do new things right after they graduate.

Gil advises students to be confident in themselves and their education, to not be discouraged by their educational background and rather be genuine with themselves instead.

Gil also recommends that students seek help during stressful times to take care of their mental health and to use counseling services that CSUN offers for free.

“Talk to somebody,” said Gil. “It is so important to be able to confide in people.”

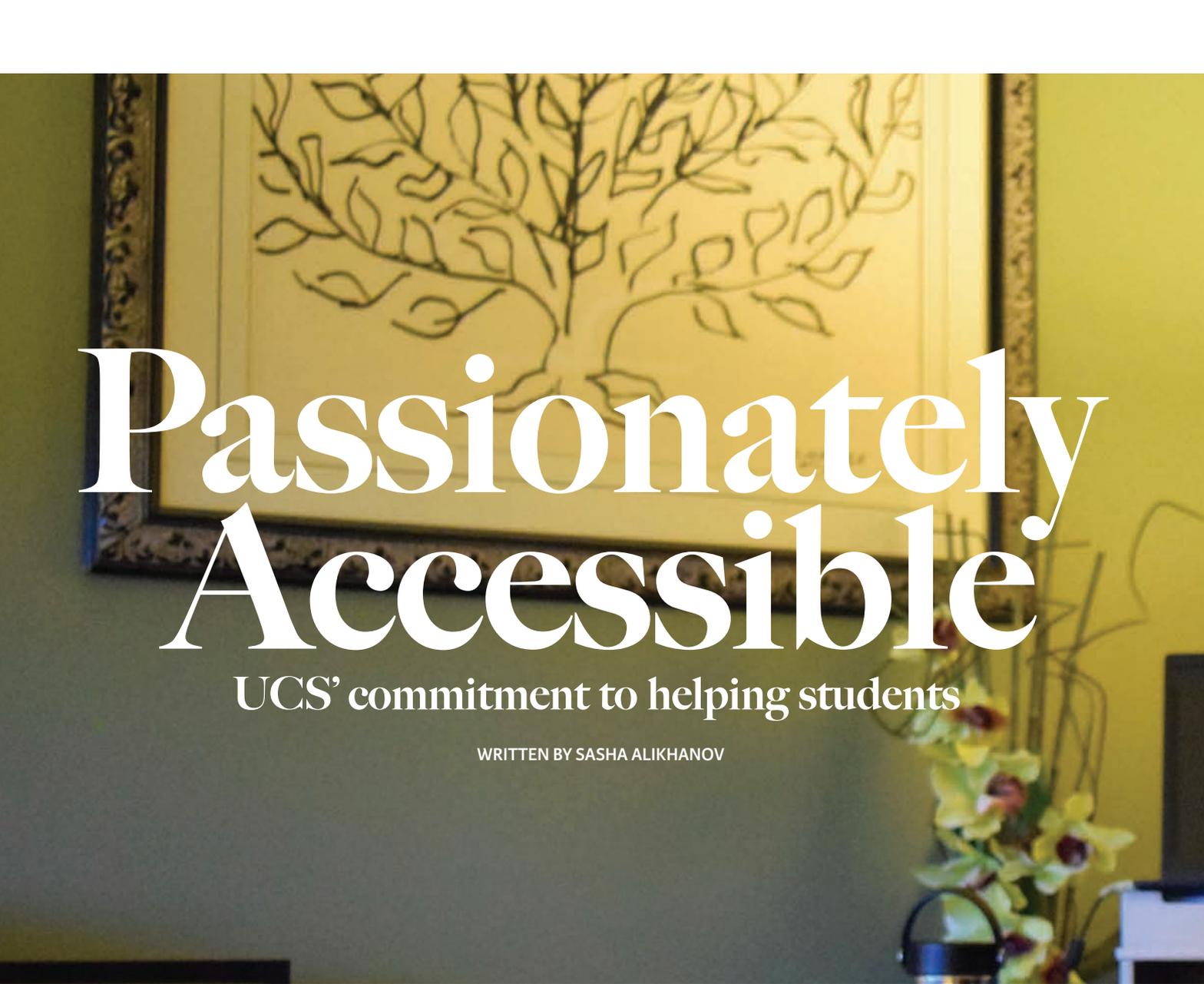
Samantha Neff is a former culture editor who graduated in the 2023 spring semester with a major in general

journalism with a minor in sociology.

Neff was motivated to pursue graduation through her own joy and pride in her work — and the pride of her mother.

“Never had I had a taste of what it was like to get good grades and have my mom be outstandingly proud of me,” said Neff. “So when I started to feel that feeling, I was like, ‘I have to see this through, for sure.’”

A common sentiment among the alumni was the importance of balance for one’s mental health in college. Students from all backgrounds can dedicate a little bit of time for themselves and value themselves and their work as they pursue graduation.



# Passionately Accessible

UCS' commitment to helping students

WRITTEN BY SASHA ALIKHANOV

Colleges were shutting down across the country amidst COVID-19's rapid spread in 2020, and California State University, Northridge students needed support in a manner yet explored on campus. Amidst the closures, University Counseling Services did not shutter for a day, they rather opened their virtual doors to students to talk through the global event both one-on-one and in groups of their peers. UCS has maintained accessible support

since with a large and diverse staff, each with a unique passion for their work.

UCS offers a range of services, including short-term counseling, specialized group therapy and Let's Talk sessions across campus to introduce students to therapy and their options. The numerous kinds of services were designed to give students many mediums of care in hopes at least one would click. While all counselors are generalists, meaning they can assist students in all situations, UCS

has a variety of liaisons who specialize in certain demographics. Students are able to meet with counselors in person and over the phone, the latter of which was introduced in the midst of lockdown.

Accessibility is a key characteristic for the services to be able to serve students whether they are stuck at home to avoid a virus or to take care of a newborn, and telehealth was implemented when the former became mandatory, as shared by Dr. Julie Pearce,



Dr. Julie Pearce, the director of University Counseling Services, in her office. (Sasha Alikhanov)

the director of UCS.

“We needed to be available to our students,” said Pearce. “We did not close for one day, and I am really proud of us for that.”

The team conducted sessions with students over the phone until they gained access to laptops and a version of Zoom compliant with federal medical privacy laws.

During the lockdown, many students were forced to return to house-

holds they did not feel comfortable in, and the LGBTQIA+ group sessions doubled to accommodate students seeking community.

“Students wanted that connection with each other,” said Pearce.

With lockdown in the rear view, UCS continues to offer telehealth services alongside in-person sessions. In the four years since the start of the pandemic, the staff grew larger than their office space in Bayramian Hall, so their counselors

have hybrid schedules to be able to meet as many students as possible.

Outside their Bayramian home, counselors host Let’s Talk sessions to bring therapy to various hubs on campus.

Let’s Talk originated at Cornell University, and Pearce brought the idea to CSUN after learning about it at a conference. Let’s Talk gives students an informal setting to meet counselors and learn about the variety of resources available to them on campus, including UCS.

***“I am just another person who happens to be trained in how to listen.”***

*Dr. Marlon James Briggs*

Staff counselor Dr. Marlon James Briggs hosts the Let’s Talk sessions at the Black House, where he is open to any student who wants to inquire about mental health. He shared hosting the sessions at places like the Black House is to meet students where they are and be able to speak without paperwork. At the venues, which include the Glenn Omatsu House, Pride Center and more, counselors have a confidential space where they can meet with students privately and get to know them.

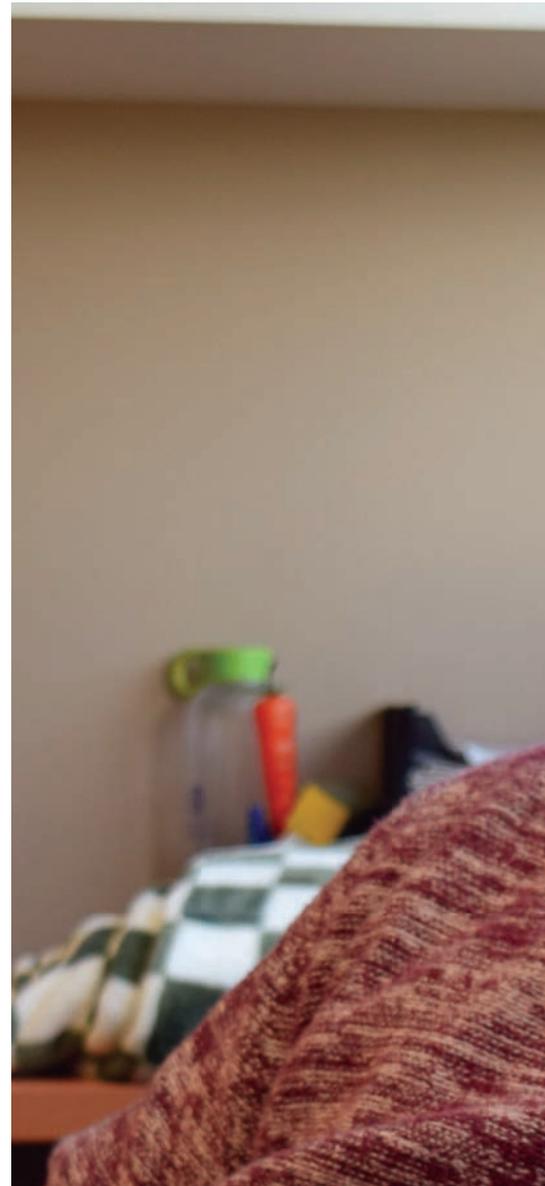
“If after, you’re like, ‘No, this whole talking thing ain’t for me,’ okay, but know we’re here,” said James Briggs. “If it’s like, ‘Yeah, let me make an appointment,’ then let’s do that. Let’s see if we can keep this help going.”

James Briggs, a double CSUN graduate, has experience working in a domestic violence shelter and an interest in grief and loss. He hosts a grief and loss group once a semester with a schedule based on students’ needs to make it as accessible as possible.

“Grief is associated with love,” said James Briggs. “The reason that we grieve is because we had a relationship with that person, that place, that situation.”

When students meet counselors, they are able to see that therapists are human, which James Briggs champions amidst preconceived notions of intimidating white coats.

“I am just another person who happens to be trained in how to listen,” said James Briggs.





Staff counselor Dr. Marlon James Briggs in his office. (Sasha Alikhanov)



Staff counselor Dr. Paulette Theresa-Schechtel in her office. (Sasha Alikhanov)



***“It’s important for our students to see us as regular people.”***

*Dr. Paulette Theresa-Schechtel*

His sentiments are mirrored by staff counselor Dr. Paulette Theresa-Schechtel.

“It’s important for our students to see us as regular people,” said Theresa-Schechtel.

She also encourages students to connect with each other, which inspired her to originate Sistahood and WISDOM. Both were started to bring Black female students together with the latter focusing on mentor relationships.

“When you give someone a sense of who they can be ... it opens them up

and gives them a sense of ‘Oh, I can do that too,’” said Theresa-Schechtel.

In both counseling and mentoring relationships, she stressed the importance of vulnerability to build trust.

“Because I am human, there are going to be times when I make a mistake. When I do, I have to own it,” said Theresa-Schechtel. “The client then gets to see me as a human being, as opposed to someone who is intimidating or someone who is above them, because that is not what therapy is about.”



*“They can just be themselves, they don’t have to try hard.”*

*Dr. Seung Yoon Lee*

Postdoctoral counselor fellow Dr. Seung Yoon Lee in her office. (Sasha Alikhanov)

Dr. Seung Yoon Lee, a postdoctoral counselor fellow at UCS, notes students from varying countries, including South Korea, see therapists as authority figures, which can keep them from sharing freely.

“It is not something you can just get rid of because you are in the U.S.,” said Lee.

Coming from a culture heavily influenced by respect, Lee understands the hesitation and brings it up in sessions.

“The power difference is like an elephant in the room,” said Lee.

Her approach to dispel the imbalance is to address it and let students know she understands.

Because she grew up outside of the United States, Lee is aware of cultural differences between people from other countries, including behavioral customs, colloquial sayings and more. Each session is a learning experience for Lee, which she applies to her prac-

tice moving forward.

“Having all this marginalized identity really kept me humble and curious,” said Lee. “There is always a lot of room for me to explore.”

Another way Lee puts students at ease is speaking Korean with those who might feel more comfortable sharing their feelings in their mother tongue.

“It’s helpful for them to express themselves,” said Lee. “They can just be themselves, they don’t have to try hard.”

UCS has a number of counselors who speak multiple languages, including Spanish, Tagalog and Russian. There is also a counselor who can conduct sessions in American Sign Language.

The multicultural aspect of UCS gives students resources in which they see themselves reflected. As a former international student, Lee understands the value of mental health care for students from different backgrounds.

“When I look back, I could have gotten a lot of help,” said Lee. “It could have changed my trajectory if I had some help and support from counseling services.”

Students interested in UCS can schedule appointments with specific counselors or be placed with counselors by availability, and first appointments are all scheduled within two weeks to make sure students are seen, as explained by the director. UCS also has walk-in urgent care Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Bayramian Hall 520.

“We know it is hard for students to ask for help,” said Pearce. “We want to make it as easy as possible.”

Seeing a student’s improvement and success in their university journey is the best feeling as a care provider for her.

“That’s the biggest reward,” said Pearce. “Being out there at graduation and seeing students who we knew almost weren’t going to stay.”

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# Cantando

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN DIRCIO

The 80s and early aughts saw a rise in music emphasizing themes about mental health and perseverance. Following cultural shifts and the influence of pop culture, artists expressed their personal experiences and emotions through their work. This changed the music industry forever, inspiring many artists to sing for the purpose of reaching out to their audiences' emotions. The following songs focus on themes of mental health and perseverance.



## I Will Survive

Gloria Gaynor

Gloria Gaynor's iconic "I Will Survive" disco anthem serves as a beacon of perseverance empowering resilience and self-discovery. With a 1978 release, the song's impact stretched through the following decades, eventually named the 35th-best pop song of all time by Billboard in 2023. The song topped the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 for three weeks and reached No.1 on both the U.K. and Irish Singles Charts. Following the success of the song, it was nominated in multiple categories at the Grammys and won Best Disco Recording. The song's success serves as a reminder of the indomitable human spirit and people's ability to persevere through challenges.



Try  
P!nk

Pop star P!nk champions the theme of embracing vulnerability in "Try" with the message that finding the strength to make mistakes is vital for improvement. The song peaked at No. 5 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 and topped the charts in both Spain and Slovakia in 2012. In her performance of the song at the 56th annual Grammy Awards in 2014, she spun above the crowd with her signature aerial style. The song's lyrics advocate embracing vulnerability and experiences as key for self-improvement and growth.



Unwritten  
Natasha Bedingfield

Another artist who empowers perseverance through self-discovery is British singer Natasha Bedingfield with her song "Unwritten." The song reached the top five in the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 and topped the charts in the Czech Republic and Poland. The song was an international hit with platinum status in the United States and a Grammy nomination for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance. The lyrics aim to inspire listeners to be introspective and self-aware for a good life.



I'm Still Standing  
Elton John

The confident musician Elton John displays his talent on "I'm Still Standing," which reached No. 12 on U.S. Billboard Hot 100 in 1983 and topped the charts Canada and Switzerland. The song's success further solidified the star power of Elton John making this his anthem of resilience and perseverance while providing hope for the audience with a narrative of pushing through adversity.



Man in the Mirror  
Michael Jackson

The renowned Michael Jackson made headlines with his song "Man in the Mirror," which focuses on self-reflection and how it is necessary for personal growth. It topped the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 and was nominated at the Grammys for Record of the Year in 1988. The song showcases Jackson's vocals with lyrics that make a literal comparison of self-reflection to Jackson looking in a mirror.

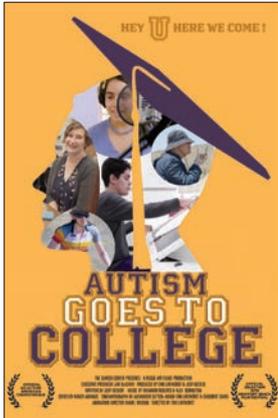


Open the Spotify app to scan the code and listen to the Cantando playlist.

# Matador Marquee

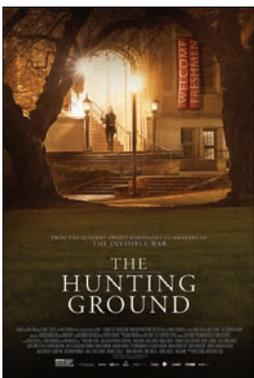
WRITTEN BY ZIPPORAH ALTITIA PRUITT

College is a place that can be full of triumph, but also adversity. Challenges can vary from other students, bullying, academics or lack of accommodations. Due to this, many students in college have issues with their mental health. When this happens, it helps to curl up and watch a film that can show you that you are not alone and that your struggles are valid.



## “Autism Goes to College”

is a 2019 documentary that follows five students on the Autismspectrum as they traverse the precarious but fulfilling stage of college life. Through this, many experiences are shown as the subjects are interviewed about how the changes from high school to college affect them mentally and how they are making it through. The film was featured in the Newport Beach Film Festival and 2020 SXSW Edu Festival and won the prestigious Gold Anthem Award in Awareness and Media Category (Nonprofit). The five students’ journeys show how people with disabilities can achieve higher education. Their unique stories offer new perspectives to some and relatability to others.



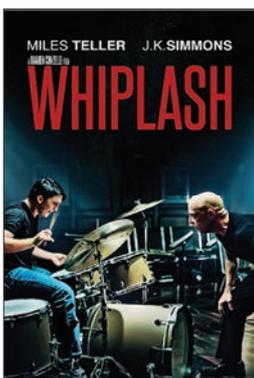
## “The Hunting Ground”

is a 2015 documentary dealing with the topic of violent sexual assaults on college campuses and their far reaching effects, including the emotional tolls they take on the victims and their families. This documentary pulls no punches as it is raw, emotional and exposes how sometimes justice is not done. Its poignant tone reminds viewers of the dangers on campus, while encouraging people to raise awareness strongly and passionately.



## “Autism The Sequel”

is a 2020 documentary follow-up to 2007’s “Autism the Musical,” where a group of children with Autism write and perform an original theater production. Thirteen years later, the filmmakers catch up with the children and their families in order to see the strides they made and how they have changed. One of the people highlighted is in college who shares their perspective on higher education and individual living.



## “Whiplash”

is a 2014 film directed by Damien Chazelle about a prospective drummer, played by Miles Teller, who deals with an abusive music teacher, played by JK Simmons, who pushes him to the brink of insanity. This film received multiple Academy Awards, including Best Supporting Actor for JK Simmons, Best Film Editing and Best Sound Mixing. This film is important due to showing the pitfalls of perfection and that one must prioritize their mental health over their art or schooling.



## “Monsters University”

is a 2013 animated film from Pixar that is a prequel to the 2001’s “Monsters, Inc.” This movie follows the journey of Mike Wazowski, a young student who goes to the titular university to learn how to become a scarer. Through this, he learns about how to pave his own path to reach dreams others deem unrealistic. An uplifting message for all, but especially for college students trying to find their way.

# Entering a *New Era*

A student's feelings about leaving university

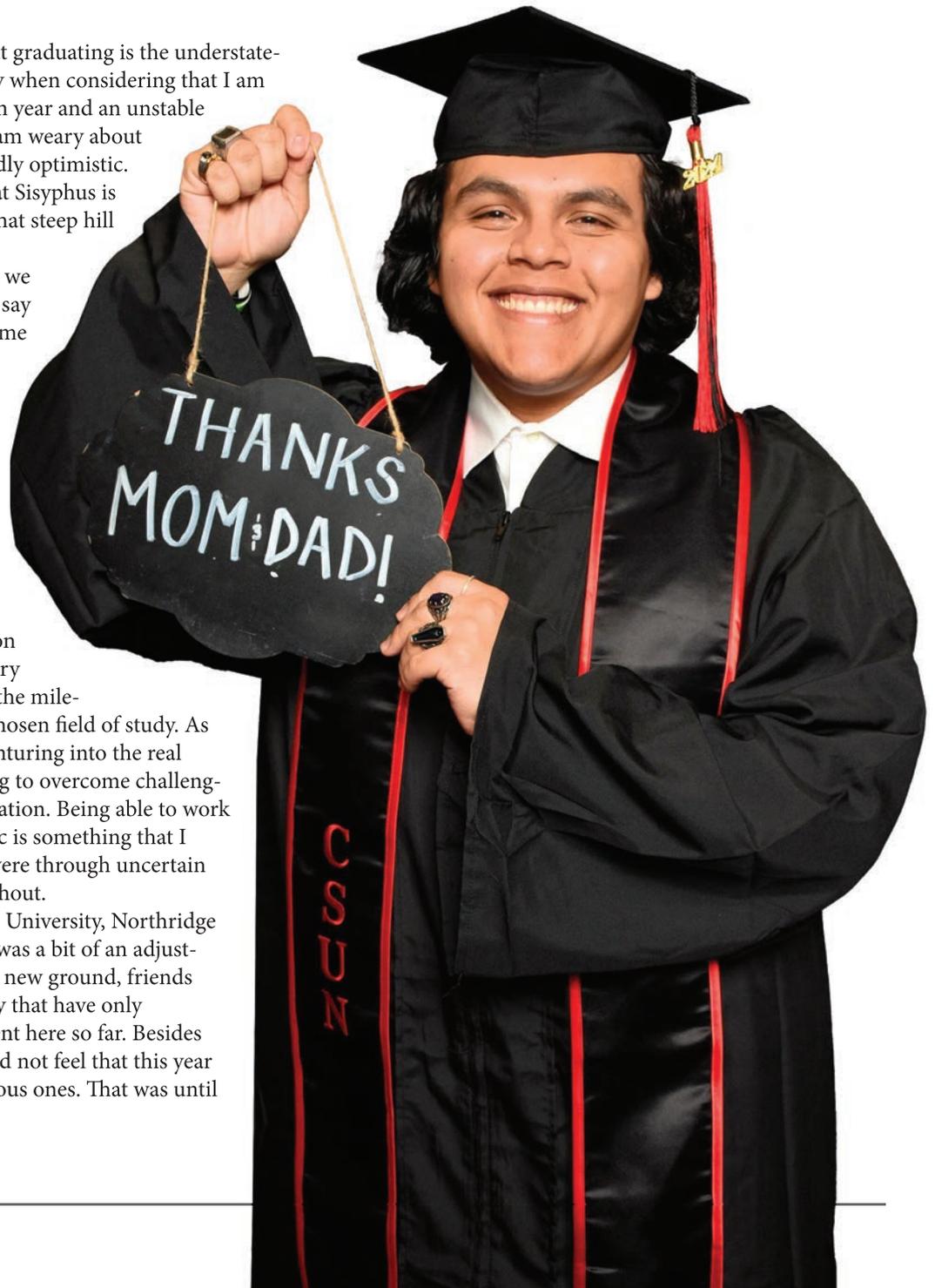
WRITTEN BY RODRIGO HERNANDEZ

Saying that I feel uneasy about graduating is the understatement of a lifetime. Especially when considering that I am entering a polarizing election year and an unstable job market, it is safe to say that I am weary about what the future holds, though oddly optimistic. Remember, one must imagine that Sisyphus is content carrying his boulder up that steep hill in the underworld.

In junior high and high school, we are motivated by instructors who say university years will be the best time of our lives while also disciplining us by saying, "Your professors won't put up with that in college." However, we know all too well that our wise and tenured professors will in fact put up with that and sometimes encourage it. Why do you think people look back so fondly upon these years after all?

The senior year. The culmination of all of the efforts since elementary school, aligning themselves with the milestone of achieving a degree in a chosen field of study. As daunting as it sounds to begin venturing into the real world, I do feel prepared in having to overcome challenges during my time in higher education. Being able to work through the COVID-19 pandemic is something that I believe helps me be able to persevere through uncertain times and maintain a goal throughout.

Transferring to California State University, Northridge from Santa Barbara City College was a bit of an adjustment. However, I was able to find new ground, friends and experiences here in the Valley that have only enhanced the time that I have spent here so far. Besides applying for commencement, I did not feel that this year has been too different from previous ones. That was until



I went to GradFest and saw my friends and I dressed up in caps and gowns for our portraits. That is when it hit me.

The feeling was a mixture of pride, joy and the hard realization that my vibrant university life is coming to an end. Amidst the chaos of other grads preparing for their portraits and photographers managing to keep order in the place, it felt as if everything slowed down and blurred just for a second, with the voices of the crowd blending into a muffled choir before being snapped back into reality by someone yelling, "Next!"

Overall, I am looking forward to graduating and being able to pursue a career in journalism and art, but there are still some signs that prevent me from entering the market with full confidence. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 275,000 jobs were added to the economy in February of this year, the outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas found that US-based employers administered 84,638 layoffs — the highest for the month since 2009.



In January of this year, we saw the Los Angeles Times dismiss 115 members of their staff, which was around 20% of their newsroom. In an era where many in tech, media and entertainment are worried about AI taking jobs, these layoffs do not seem to put the public to rest.

For journalists, we have to be able to adapt to any kind of situation or technological shift. From the printing press to pandemic-era Zoom newsrooms, different circumstances and advances in technology directly affect the careers of reporters and editors. Today, we see a shift to online content through websites and social media, while also seeing a resurgence of zines and smaller, independent print publications.

The journalism department at CSUN has done its best to prepare me for an ever-evolving career that has such different trajectories for each person. While doctors and lawyers typically have clear set paths for how they advance in their practices, journalists often have to find their own way with the assistance of various internships, companies and mentors.

As a first-generation college student, I feel motivated by my parents and family members who moved here from Mexico to pursue new opportunities and a better life. I recently thought about what I would be doing if I was born in Mexico, and I don't think I'd be a journalist due to how dangerous it is for reporters in that country. Perhaps I would have found a way through art photography or music. However, I believe that everything happens for a reason.

This mindset is something I will keep with me as I move forward after graduation. Whenever I feel challenged, I think about how my parents felt having to learn a new language in a different country with a few relatives and still finding a way to be successful. The values of family, faith and discipline are ones I hope to continue holding and instill in my own family.

Graduation photos of Rodrigo Hernandez.  
(Courtesy of Hernandez)

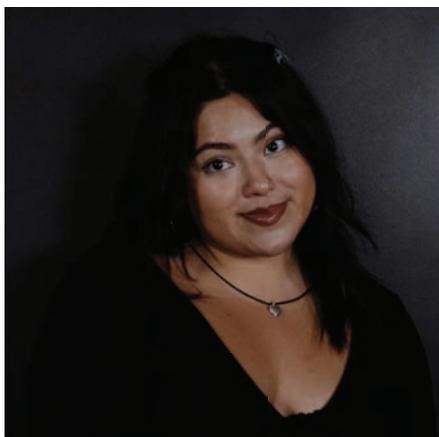
# Senior's Perspectives

## Reflections & Hopes from the Class of 2024

WRITTEN BY HENRI MOSSIAT

The California State University, Northridge class of 2024 endured COVID-19, online classes and in-person transitions. As the students near graduation, they offered a few words of reflection on their journey and what they hope to achieve next.

Graduating from college is a huge life achievement, and as students end this chapter of their life, they keep their eyes set on what will happen next. During this time, you are given the first taste of freedom and glimpse of adulthood. It is important to take a moment and reflect on your journey and where you came from. Living away from home, pursuing a degree, and keeping a social life makes this period of time a spectrum of emotions. College is difficult. One's effort and dedication is a direct reflection of who they are, and it is important to highlight students who are making a difference. The following six students dedicated the last four years to pursue their passion, each with their own unique voice and perspective on college and life.



Portrait of Era Ortiz. (Courtesy of Ortiz)

Era Ortiz, an English major with an emphasis in creative writing, started her CSUN journey as a freshman on Zoom then transitioned to in-person classes. "Higher education is only bearable when you have others to bear it with," said Ortiz. "The biggest lesson I learned is that everyone moves at their own pace. It doesn't make them better or lesser than you, or vice versa. Once I started looking around, my experience became more exciting. I'm looking forward to finishing my book, and seeing what life has in store after graduation!"



Portrait of Ophelie Le Houx. (Courtesy of Le Houx)

Ophelie Le Houx, a major in recreation, tourism and hospitality with a minor in management, came to CSUN after transferring from Santa Monica College. "At CSUN, I learned the importance of cultivating healthy professional relationships," said Le Houx. "I'm looking forward to what the future has in store for me. I know life is filled with new experiences and encounters which I'm excited for. As an international student, there's uncertainty with how I'm going to be able to stay in the U.S., so I can't wait to see what I accomplish in the coming years and if I stay."



Photo of Martin Avina. (Courtesy of Avina)

Martin Avina, a film production major with an emphasis in producing and a minor in business law, transferred from Glendale Community College for the film program. “I knew I wanted to attend a top-tier cinema school, and I am grateful to have dedicated professors here at CSUN,” said Avina. “I’ve learned the value of preparation while also gaining real-world experiences that I will never forget in both fields of study. I’m excited and pleased to apply what I have learned at CSUN in the future, and I am looking forward to seeing where the next chapter of my life takes me.”



Photo of Carly Pellot. (Courtesy of Pellot)

Carly Pellot is a senior journalism major with an emphasis in public relations. She transferred from Glendale Community College, where she discovered her passion for writing. “I couldn’t have gotten through college without a solid to-do list and good time management,” said Pellot. The biggest lesson she learned is to never be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Pellot looks forward to starting her career in journalism and hopes to move to the East Coast.



Portrait of Ravi Neil. (Courtesy of Neil)

Ravi Neil is a CTVA television production major. Since working online during COVID-19, he focused on honing his craft of filmmaking, which he dreams of pursuing. When lectures returned to classrooms, Ravi made the films he saw in his head. “I learned that the connections you make in college are the most important aspect of the experience,” said Ravi. “I am looking forward to creating the films I want to see on the big screen with my friends.”



Photo of Ian McKay. (Courtesy of McKay)

Ian McKay, a CTVA screenwriting major, came to CSUN at the start of the pandemic and worked on honing his craft through his studies. “In the day-to-day of routines I tend to forget what a gift it is to get to go to college!” said McKay. “When life gets tough, I remind myself that younger me dreamed of being here, going to a good school and putting in hard work to reach a career I’m happy in. With college ending, I’m excited to see where the winds will blow me both professionally and geographically!”

# Convenient Counseling

## Online therapy's benefits and controversies

WRITTEN BY CONRADO PICANCO

Most college students are no strangers to stress from their college work, after-school activities, relationships, futures, and daily needs. If left unchecked, it can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Therapy can help students with these problems, yet not everyone tries. Thankfully in the age of the internet, online therapy is offered as an alternative to in-person therapy — but it may have its own problems and controversies.

Around 74% out of 2,002 college students from 116 colleges and universities across the United States did not use counseling services in 2021 during the pandemic, and the numbers had barely increased after quarantine ended, as shown in the Student Voice Survey conducted by Inside Higher Ed and College Voice. Whether it is high costs, lack of time to meet the therapist, discomfort with meeting a stranger in person or long distances from their therapist's office, these obstacles can leave students feeling there is no hope of improving their mental health.

Rather than have clients meet a licensed psychiatrist or therapist in person, sessions can be conducted

through the internet, which can help those who live too far from their closest therapist, are too shy to visit or have physical disabilities. Online therapists having fewer overhead costs, such as renting office spaces and requiring insurance can also help ease college students' financial concerns. However, some have expressed concerns about privacy leaks due to the sessions being conducted online.

BetterHelp is a mental health platform that provides therapy and counseling services to clients through text and phone communication. The company states its mission is to make therapy more accessible for those with limited options, but the platform got caught in controversy over sharing their clients' private information with social media companies like Facebook for targeted advertisements. That sensitive information can be used to advertise products and content to vulnerable people who are less likely to question whether they should pay attention to them.

This contrasted their claim to adhere to HIPAA, which requires medical professionals to not reveal patients' information to anyone without the

patients' consent or knowledge. The Federal Trade Commission launched an investigation into the sharing of information and ordered BetterHelp to make their disclosures about information easily noticeable and understandable, according to the commission's July 2023 Decision and Order. BetterHelp was also ordered to pay \$7.8 million to the commission.

Luckily for California State University, Northridge students, their options are not limited to BetterHelp. University Counseling Services offer a variety of in-person and online assistance to students, such as disorder evaluations, psychiatric services, wellness workshops, group treatment and crisis help.

They have affordable rates — often it is completely free — and the service providers are not motivated by profit. As many professors and staff members remind students when bringing the services up, the costs are covered through their tuition, and they may have fewer opportunities to seek therapy once they graduate.

Students should remember that they are never alone, and they are never the only one struggling. If they need help, CSUN is here for them.

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## FEATURED EVENTS



### Oasis: Virtual Reality Mindfulness

Now through Tuesday, April 30  
 📍 Oasis Wellness Center



### Pride Center: Deaf Queer Coffee Nights

Tuesday, April 16: 5 – 7 p.m.  
 📍 Pride Center



### VRC: Spring Study Jam

Wednesday, April 17: 5 – 7 p.m.  
 📍 Veterans Resource Center



### DREAM Center: Survivors of Violence

Tuesday, April 18: Noon  
 📍 Zoom



### SRC: Poolside DJ

Thursday, April 18: 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.  
 📍 Rec Pool, SRC



### SRC: Lifeguard Certification Hybrid Course

Friday, April 19 – Sunday, April 21  
 📍 Rec Pool & Plaza Pool

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