

# together

EXPLORING WHAT CAN BE

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Social Sciences

SPRING 2015 NO. 08



## STEWARDSHIP

stewardship [stoo-erd-ship]

Noun: the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially : the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care



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# STEWARDSHIP

## from the interim dean

I have taken the concept of stewardship very seriously while shepherding our College through this momentous year as its interim dean.

I'm happy to report we are attracting top candidates to succeed our former dean, Sheila Bienenfeld, who is enjoying her retirement. Meanwhile, our faculty, staff, students and alumni continue to achieve remarkable things.

Kevin Jordan, from the Department of Psychology, has won three prestigious awards. He received NASA's Exceptional Public Service Award in November. Then, in a California State University-wide competition, Dr. Jordan won the Wang Family Excel-

lence Award in the Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Service. He is also San José State University's 2015 President's Scholar. He will retire this spring, but will remain an active researcher and citizen of our College.

Andrew Wood, from the Department of Communications Studies, is spending the spring in Belarus as a Fulbright Scholar, joining many others from our College who have represented the United States in this esteemed scholarly exchange program.

Locally, "What's Happening California?" opens this June at the Oakland Museum of California. This exhibit is the work of Department of Anthropology faculty and students.

Alumna Bonnie Belshe, who teaches at Cupertino's Monta Vista High School, is the Glider Lehrman Institute of American History's 2014 California History Teacher of the Year. Ariel Rivers, alumna of the Environmental Studies Master of Science program, is a member of the Entomological Society of America's first class of Science Policy Fellows.

These accomplishments reflect the strengths and vibrancy of our College. In this issue of Together, we will see how our alumni, faculty, students and staff steward our mission to make life

better in the communities around us.

Hilary Nixon, chair of our Urban and Regional Planning department, looks ahead to what will keep us peddling into a healthy urban future. Alumna Diane Solomon has been instrumental in organizing an exhibit detailing the history of cycling.

Similarly, alumna Amie Frisch's vibrant legacy, Veggelution Community Farm, attends to the environment and local food needs. Rigo Garcia, a graduate student in Mexican American Studies, draws on his own past in Fresno to give back to struggling youth in the Central Valley. And Linda Garcia-Young, retiring from the dean's staff after 47 years, has done more to make this College a community than I can ever say.

I hope you will enjoy these glimpses into our College. Please stay in touch with us and your departments and let us know how you are doing.

Jan English-Lueck  
Interim Dean



# Let's Go Ride a Bike!

Psychology grad traces cycling's roots in Silicon Valley

Outside of her career as an accountant managing tax audits for a high-tech company, Diane Solomon has a lot of enthusiasms—history, public affairs, social justice, Buddhism, journalism. But get her talking about bicycling, and she kicks into a higher gear.

"I love it," she says. "I'm out in the community. I'm moving. I'm not using oil, so I'm helping to end suffering in that way. And it makes me happy. It's good for anyone, really. People who are connected to bicycling tend to be happy."

Solomon, a graduate of the College of Social Sciences, is on a bench outside the old Pacific Hotel building in History Park in San José, where the fruits of her enthusiasm for bicycling are on display.

"Silicon Valley Bikes! Passion, Innovation and Politics Since 1880," displayed in the Arbuckle Gallery through July, is the result of a collaboration between Solomon and History San José, a volunteer, nonprofit organization that collects and preserves artifacts of the Santa Clara Valley.

The exhibit is the culmination of more than a year of work on Solomon's part. The germ of the idea came from stories she wrote for Metro, a local free weekly, about the latest innovators in cycling.

The 61-year-old CPA describes herself as "a worker bee" and she balances her full-time job with a full plate of writing and volunteer pursuits. "I love doing useful things," Solomon says. "That's what's fun for me."

Solomon earned her psychology degree in 1976 and, finding the job market tight, she decided to retrain. She received a business degree in 1982 and became an accountant.

"From the time I graduated, I've always been interested in working for change and public service and social good," Solomon says. She joined the board of public radio station KKUP-FM in 1996 and soon was hosting her own radio program, a public affairs interview show.

Nearing 50, Solomon signed on as an intern for the Center for Investigative Reporting and spent six months learning the trade. She began freelancing at the Silicon Valley Metro in 2006, which led her to learning about the history of bicycling and to History San José.

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Solomon was so jazzed about what she found when she started researching bicycle history for the newspaper that she pitched the idea of a bike history exhibit, got the green light from History San José and was off to the races. She did much of the research and tracked down many of the artifacts of San José's long and exuberant relationship with the bike.

"I was lucky enough to recruit two Spartan alums, Terry Shaw and Bess Hernandez Jones, to help," Solomon says.

Shaw had operated a bicycle shop, Shaw's Lightweight Cycles, near SJSU for many years. Jones is on the board of directors of the Northern California Velodrome Association. Together they had a lot of knowledge and a lot of contacts and helped Solomon stitch together the narrative of Silicon Valley on two wheels. Ken Middlebrook, the collections manager and another SJSU alum, scoured History San José's archives for vintage bicycles and pulled their work together into the exhibit.

In the 1880s, Solomon says, about 4,000 people lived in San José and there were 27 bicycling clubs and a couple of dozen bike shops. The Garden City Velodrome, built in 1936, was the only outdoor velodrome west of Chicago and bicycle racing was the biggest spectator sport in America.

After the heyday of bicycle racing, Silicon Valley remained key to the sport and a hub of innovation in cycling technology.

Today, San José remains a bike-friendly city, which Solomon has experienced firsthand since she gave herself a challenge more than a decade ago.

"Since 2003, when the second war in Iraq started," she says, "I thought, 'You know, all these wars and problems all over the world are about oil. Can I have one car-free day a week?' It seemed impossible. But it turned out I could have one or two."

In 2007, Solomon started attending the San José Bike Party, a community bike ride that runs from 8 p.m. until the wee hours one night a month.

"That got me very comfortable riding in an urban environment," she says. Now she bikes to her radio show and does a lot of errands on the weekend on her bike, a 10-year-old Giant hybrid.

Biking led to writing about biking for the Metro, which led to launching the History San José exhibit, which led to Solomon getting to know more people in the biking community, which led to her putting on more miles on her bike. It's an example of how living her life with enthusiasm and dedicated to action have paid off for Solomon and for San José.

"Some people think talking about a problem and complaining about a problem is actually doing something," Solomon says. "It's not. I get enormous satisfaction from doing things where I feel that I'm being useful and that I make a difference." 🍷



*"Silicon Valley Bikes!" traces cycling back to the 1880s and includes some classic bicycles, including a comfy cruiser, top, and a local product.*

**EXHIBIT LOCATION**

Pacific Hotel at History Park

**HOURS**

Saturday, Sunday

11:00 am to 4:30 pm

**INFORMATION**

408-287-2290

# Growing Good

Amie Frish had a shovel and a dream



Six acres of neatly planted rows of kale, snap peas, purple potatoes and a tossed salad of a dozen other veggies spread out in one of the unlikeliest places in all of San José: right under the elevated interchange of Interstate 680 and U.S. 101.



As tender carrots push their way into the earth and cilantro sends out its flowers, traffic drones by.

It's not a bucolic setting, but Veggielution Community Farm founder Amie Frish says it's a perfect location for an urban farm that relies on an army of community volunteers to plant, tend and harvest upwards of 30,000 pounds of produce each year.

"We're really lucky to have this resource right here in the middle of the city," Frish says. "We have easy freeway access. We're connected to major bus lines. Anyone can reach us."

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Veggielution is a San José State-grown venture. Frisch and fellow Spartans Mark Medeiros and Monica Lisa Benavides were all part of a campus crowd that planted the seeds for Veggielution in the late 2000s.

Frisch had grown up in the East Bay hating to eat vegetables but loving to watch them grow.

“Since childhood,” she says, “I had this fascination with the idea that you could plant a seed and then this plant would grow out of nothing. And it would produce something you could eat.”

Frisch considered a lot of possible futures, including being a teacher and going into agriculture. It was a seat in Professor Rachel O’Malley’s sustainable agriculture course that set Frisch on an environmental studies major and, eventually, a path toward farming.

“I really loved environmental studies because it was this broad view of the world and the connections between different things,” Frisch says.

O’Malley remembers Frisch clearly and isn’t surprised that she has created a sustainable urban farm.

“Amie is a force of nature, herself,” O’Malley says. “She came into my sustainable agriculture class with a clear vision and drive, ready to learn and grow, and with a strong sense of mission and adventure. She left my class with the knowledge that she could change the world through her actions, for the benefit of the community and for the benefit of the planet. And then she did it.”

Frisch helped start SJSU’s environmental club and started looking for gardening opportunities. With a two-year wait to join local community gardens, she and Medeiros asked homeowners near campus if they could start garden plots in their backyards. Soon, Frisch, Medeiros and others were growing vegetables in four backyard plots.

What they wanted, though, was a true community farm where volunteer gardeners would steward communal land and share in its healthy bounty. Before even graduating, they were starting to consider what it would take to make it happen.

“Then I thought, ‘I can do this. I can start a non-profit. No one’s going to do it if I don’t.’”

She started scouring property records for vacant land in San José and imagining a large farm that would be tended by volunteers in return for fresh food.



***Veggielution founders wanted to grow healthy food and include community members in farming. The farm now has six acres under cultivation and engages thousands of volunteers.***

When a friend who worked at Emma Prusch Park, a former dairy farm operated by the city of San José, alerted them to an unused corner of the property that had been designated for row crops but never planted, “Our jaws just dropped,” Frisch remembers.

They started with one-sixth of an acre and dug the garden plot by hand. When a beautiful garden grew, the city let them use more land, then more. They now have six acres under cultivation, four full-time employees, four AmeriCorps volunteers, nonprofit status and have raised money to buy a tractor and build a large gathering place for a weekly communal meal for volunteers. They operate a busy and affordable farm stand, a weekly box-of-vegetables subscription program and an education program—and manage 3,000 volunteers who work 16,000 hours a year.

Early on Frisch adopted a phrase from a volunteer’s email—“Let the veggielution begin!”—and named the undertaking Veggielution.

Frisch works out of an office in an old white barn on the property and is accompanied to work each day by her Jack Russell Terrier, Stella. Nearly eight years after the first shovel-full of dirt was turned here, she is still a little awed at what Veggielution has become.

“We were just a couple of college students with this big idea,” she says. “We wanted food to be the basis of a community we would build. We wanted to give people a hands-on way to learn about healthy eating and take control of their own health and to connect with other people who were also trying to change their diet for the better.”

Frisch is now 32 and her only post-college job has been executive director of Veggielution. As much as she loves it, it’s time for a change. She’s stepping down to allow herself some time to repot—a trip to India, some quality leash time with Stella—and to find her next professional chapter, most likely somewhere in the nonprofit world.

Looking for a job will be a new challenge for a young woman who created her own first job.

“A founder can’t stay forever—and shouldn’t,” Frisch says. “It’s really hard to let go because I’m so attached to this place and this thing I created. I love it so much.” ☺

# Taking It to the Streets

Urban planning chair practices what she preaches



A sturdy bicycle equipped with a child's seat occupies a corner in Hilary Nixon's second-floor Washington Square office, testifying to her personal commitment to alternative transportation.

Each morning Nixon, who chairs the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in the College of Social Sciences, drops her 4 1/2-year-old daughter off at day care on her morning ride into the office.

"I've been biking to work for years," says Nixon on a February morning, still clad in her biking gear. "My daughter loves it."

Nixon, whose research includes an interest in determining what motivates people to pick alternatives to driving as a way of getting around, is one of a number of faculty members who are interested in getting people out from behind the wheel wherever possible.

"I started as a Ph.D. student looking broadly at what are some of the factors that affect pro-environmental behavior in

general, whether that's recycling, water conservation or alternative transportation," she says.

"Usually, this involves survey-based research," Nixon says. "You've got a number of questions you'll ask people about their own behaviors, their own attitudes toward the projected behavior, their willingness to do something. You often get a general sense of their values, their morals, their beliefs on different issues, and then combine that with a pretty standard set of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics."

Scholars traditionally have focused on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics to explain people's preferences, but Nixon says the current conversation looks more toward their values—"the connection between one pro-environmental behavior and another."

Peer influence also turns out to play a role in becoming comfortable with alternative transportation technologies. "If your neighbor purchases a hybrid or electric vehicle and you see them out and about, you become comfortable with the technology," she says. "You see that happen with lots of different technologies."

It turns out that consciousness of concerns such as climate change and fuel security doesn't have much of an impact on consumer decisions. "They're falling very, very low in the list of things people use in the decision-making process to purchase a new vehicle," Nixon says. "It's kind of sad, actually."

In 2011, Nixon collaborated with a colleague at University of California, Irvine, for a study conducted under the auspices of the Mineta Transportation Institute titled, "Understanding Household Preferences for Alternative-Fuel Technologies."

Among other things, the researchers asked potential auto buyers to rank their priorities when making purchases. Sixty-six percent listed "reliability" as "very important." Only 32 percent ranked fuel economy as very important, and just 14 percent put environmental impacts in that category.

She notes that with the recent decline of fuel prices, sales of large trucks and SUVs have skyrocketed in the past few months and points out that short-term changes in fuel prices have a lasting effect. "You tend to keep a vehicle for six to 10 years," she says. "You're putting a long-term commitment into a very expensive-to-drive vehicle. It's bizarre."

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Finding ways to encourage people to adopt alternative modes of transportation is not just a theoretical research topic for Nixon and her colleagues. Adjunct professor Eduardo Serafin, the technology transfer program manager at the Institute for Transportation Studies at University of California, Berkeley, is leading a class of 22 SJSU students in his local transportation planning class on a semester-long exercise that could one day lead to a comprehensive bike plan for San José State.

The project was triggered in part by a tragic March 2014 accident in which a bicyclist riding through campus struck an 89-year-old pedestrian, who later died of her injuries. “That apparently really stirred up a hornet’s nest,” Serafin says. “We’re doing a bicycle safety assessment.”

“We don’t assign blame,” Serafin says of the study process. “We ask what are the primary factors for collisions on campus. We might be able to identify things that we could correct or potentially mitigate.”

The students, divided into five teams, are moving around campus on foot and by bike, looking for the ways in which cyclists and pedestrians interact. “We want to provide the data and comparative analysis,” he says. “We’re setting the stage for a more extensive planning process.”

Certain realities have to be factored into the equation, not the least of which is the central location of the San José State campus, adjacent to the downtown business district. People from surrounding neighborhoods regularly pass through campus as they go about their business, Serafin says.

“We are an open university,” he says. “We don’t have gates that bar people from access. That means that people can walk through campus at any time of the day.”

Serafin says the team-based learning is representative of what his students will one day encounter in their planning careers. That immersive experience is conducive to gaining a deeper understanding, he believes. “My students are learning things as they go along,” he says. “They’re being asked to perform as they do the job.”

The safety assessment could one day pave the way for developing a comprehensive bicycle plan, Serafin says. “It will ultimately talk about the overall process of how one gets about doing a plan,” he says. “We will have recommendations both for the short term and the long term.”

A proper bicycle plan will draw input from multiple constituencies throughout the university and from the community at large. “I wanted to make sure there is no ‘plan’ developed with a bunch of students and an adjunct faculty member presuming we know everything—which we don’t,” he says.

Nixon meanwhile points out that San José State occupies “a small, urban downtown campus,” crowded with cyclists, skateboards and pedestrians who may be devoting more attention to their smart phones than to their surroundings. It’s a classic urban planning problem.

“You’ve got a whole lot of people in a very small area,” Nixon observes. “Knowing how the current infrastructure is being used, how do you put in place a proposal for how it could be used better to meet all of those users’ needs?” ©



# Deeper Understanding

Mexican American Studies  
student plans to take lessons home

**R**igo Garcia was six years old when his family migrated from the coastal state of Nayarit, Mexico, to Fresno, one of the poorest places in the United States.

His dad took jobs in landscaping and construction and Garcia began to see firsthand how Big Agriculture, poverty and racism combine to make a hard life for immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley.

"I've seen a lot of my friends end up in terrible situations. Some of them in jail. Some of them are dead," Garcia says. "I've seen a lot of families that struggle to survive, to make ends meet."

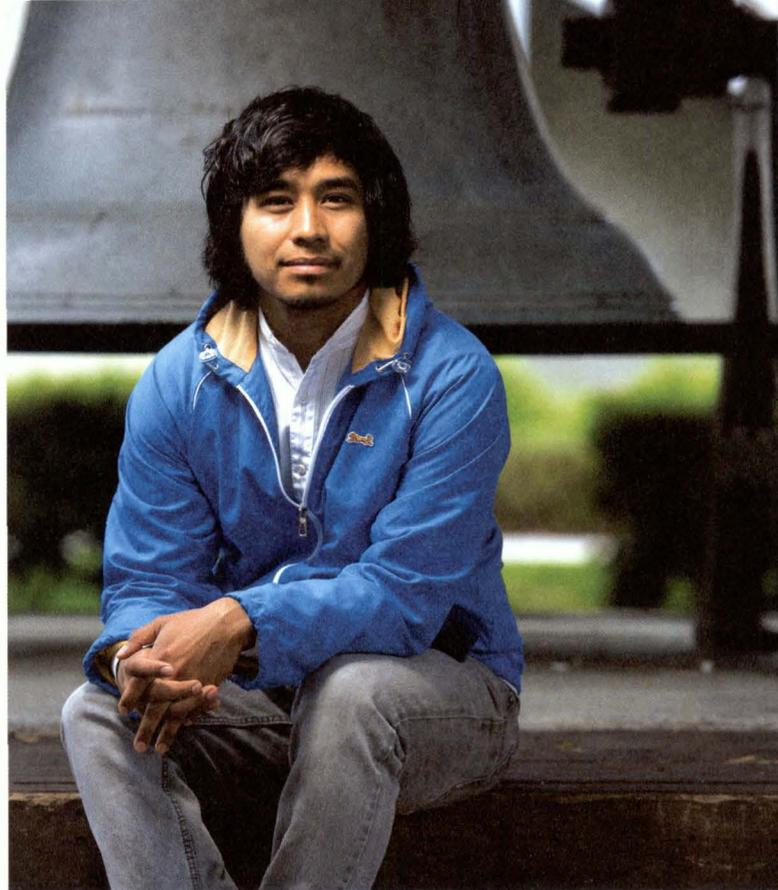
Garcia, now 29 and in the second year of the master's program in Mexican American Studies at San José State, has made a study of how history, economics, politics and other forces shape the lives of farm workers and immigrants. The spark to study the framework of his own life was lit in an American Indian studies course at Fresno City College, where he received an associate's degree.

"It was where I first started looking at racism a little more structurally and understanding the role of capitalism and labor and specifically how they relate to people from Fresno," he says. "I think beginning to understand that there are structural forces that play into people's lives inspired me to want to provide a service to folks like that, folks I could relate to."

Beginning an empirical study of race in America opened Garcia's eyes to his hometown, which ranks among the top 10 poorest American cities and second poorest region, according to the U.S. Census. "For me that was a huge realization," he says. "It let me understand my experiences."

Part of that Fresno experience was "brain drain," where Fresno's youth who made it to college tended to never return — either due to the lack of job opportunities or a desire to leave poverty behind.

Garcia left Fresno to earn a bachelor's degree at San Francisco State University and then to work on his master's in San



José, but he has always felt the pull to use his education to help youth struggling with the same issues he did.

"The Mexican American Studies department has greatly improved my understanding of the work I want to do with the community," Garcia says.

Garcia works as a graduate mentor now, helping sophomores in a Mexican American history course stay on track. Garcia sits in on the class and counsels students during office hours. With other mentors, he coaches the undergrads on refining their reading, writing and studying skills.

The goal is to keep students from less advantaged backgrounds on track to graduate.

During the summer, Garcia has gone home to Fresno to work with high school students who are considered some of Fresno's most at-risk. With others in the community he designed a unique summer program for a dozen teenagers sent by the courts or probation to alternative schools. The majority of the kids were also in foster care or group homes.

The program is called The Fresno Autonomous Summer Program, and its framework is simple—breakfast, sports, arts activities and discussions. But it was entirely designed by the participants themselves.

"The usual way that youth are treated is to try to instill on them what the person in charge wants them to learn," Garcia says. "In certain ways, that can absolutely be beneficial. But I

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## Taking the Long View

Linda Garcia-Young, wearing her marathon medals, has had a marathon career at SJSU

Linda Garcia-Young had just started at San José State University in her first full-time job when a recruiter from IBM called to let her know her pending application at the giant computer maker had been accepted.

The 17-year-old told the recruiter she had just started working at the university. “They said, ‘But this is IBM.’” she recalls. “And I said, ‘Yes.’ They said, ‘Are they matching our salary? We’ll pay you more!’”

She was making \$400 a month at San José State. “They were offering me like 600 over there,” she says. “It was quite a difference.”

So, why did she stick with SJSU?

“I had already accepted the position,” she says simply. “I liked the environment. Plus, Dean (Dudley) Moorhead was a real sweetheart.”

Garcia-Young laughs as she recounts the conversation from the fall of 1968. More than 46 years later, she is savoring her

first few months of retirement after a career as an administrative officer in the College of Social Sciences.

Garcia-Young worked with a long list of deans and interim deans whose last names might resonate for College of Social Sciences alumni: Moorhead, Sawrey, Wheeler, Burdick, Walsh, Noble, Agresti, Heckstrom, Cooper, Brazil, Bienenfeld, English-Lueck.

“The deans I have had have just been outstanding,” she says. “I admire them. They are totally great leaders. They are mentors and coaches. They inspire you. They really have a difficult job in leading the College – the faculty, students, staff and budgets – they have many, many fires to put out.”

Through the years, she also had a ringside seat as the College grew into the thriving, multi-faceted entity it is today.

Garcia-Young grew up on a farm in San José at a time when the city was much smaller than it is today. She graduated from Buchser High School in Santa Clara, then got a secretarial degree from the Academy of Business while working part-time in a law office.

Thanks to her recently acquired stenographic skills, she was hired in a Clerical II position in the College of Humanities and Arts, which at the time encompassed both social science and humanities programs. After Moorhead, the longtime dean, died in 1972, the College of Social Sciences was split off by itself, and Garcia-Young moved over to support the new dean.

San José State was a very different university in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For one thing, the whiff of tear gas was not unfamiliar to members of the campus community, as students frequently turned out to protest the Vietnam War and companies that supported the war effort.

In the dean's office there was a single outside phone line (with rotary dial phones, of course). The clerical staff used manual typewriters and mimeograph machines, because the university had not yet acquired photocopiers.

Additionally, city streets ran right through the middle of campus, posing hazards to students walking between classes.

She was younger than most of the students, some of whom wore flowers in their hair. "I wasn't a hippie," she says. "I was more with the miniskirts."

Garcia-Young also remembers encountering a work environment that sometimes had more in common with "Mad Men" than a public university.

At a time when the staff entered upcoming appointments on paper calendars, one dean liked calendars with photos of scantily clad women. "When we had to make an appointment, we had to do it on his girlie calendar," she says.

Later, while she served on a retention and tenure promotion committee reviewing a female faculty hire, "They said, 'I think we should hire, tenure and promote her, because she's young and cute,'" Garcia-Young recalls. "They wrote that down."

Garcia-Young remembers thinking, "I wish I had a woman boss."

Over time, she adds, "We started hiring more women, and women started becoming more involved in committees. They even started becoming more visible in the departments and chairing the departments. They had more of a voice."

And Garcia-Young finally got that female boss when Lela Noble was named dean of the College in 1998.

Garcia-Young, who raised two sons as a single mother, says she found a family in the College of Social Sciences. In fact, it was where she met her future husband, political scientist Roy Young (who died in 2002), and where both her sons attended college.

Now, having put in years as a caretaker for her late husband and both her parents, she's learning how to deal with more leisure time than she has ever known.

"The first week of full retirement, I was there by myself, thinking, 'There's something wrong here. I'm supposed to be doing something,'" she says. "It feels so good being at home. I must be doing something illegal."

Even though her last official day on the job was Dec. 30, she has continued to help out in the office until her replacement is hired.

"I never considered this job as just a paycheck," Garcia-Young says. "You really have to have a passion for it. You want to be there to serve the students, to serve the faculty and make a difference." ☉

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RIGO GARCIA FROM PAGE 9

think that gets the students in the habit of seeing a single person that dispenses the knowledge or has all the answers. The idea was to have them participate in the building of the curriculum and that that would inspire responsibility on their part."

The days were filled with kick ball and hip-hop poetry along with discussions of poverty, community building, violence and gender.

"I think one of the biggest successes was just having the kids enjoy themselves and begin to open up and also begin to think about some of the ideas we were talking about from their perspective, from their lens," Garcia says. "The hardest part was trying to convince the youth that, first, it was a safe space and, second, that they had a say in what happened."

The program operates as a nonprofit and relies on donations and Garcia is committed to keeping it going for at least the next two summers.

After he receives his master's degree in May he'll be packing up and heading home for good.

"I've always had an affinity for Fresno culture, Fresno people. I've always understood them in a certain way," Garcia says. "Seeing those realities and knowing that I managed to make it out and knowing that that's a privilege—that instilled that sense of responsibility in me."

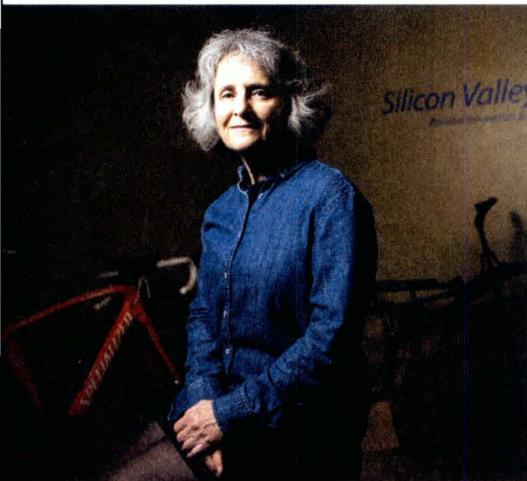
Instead of contributing to brain drain, Garcia hopes to complete a circle. He'd like to land a teaching job at the community college where he first learned about ethnic studies and to work with community organizations. And, of course, keep The Fresno Autonomous Summer Program going.

"I think we have a ton of problems in Fresno, from poverty to homelessness to violence to police brutality," Garcia says. "There's a lot to deal with. I think that any work that can be done in those realms would be good work." ☉

**College of Social Sciences**

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*Change service requested*



**ON THE COVER**

**DIANE SOLOMON**, accountant,  
writer, activist, helped launch  
the History San José bicycling  
exhibit.

# We're in this together

**IT'S NO SECRET**

Your annual gift to the College of Social Sciences assists us in our mission to deliver a high-quality education to students who need it the most.

Whether you designate your gift for the dean to invest in our most pressing needs or for your alma mater department, in an era of extraordinarily limited resources, your tax-deductible contribution will help to realize our students' dreams.

Please give to the College of Social Sciences fund today.  
We simply can't do it without you.

<http://campaign.sjsu.edu/give-now.html>

## together

**SPRING 2015**

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