

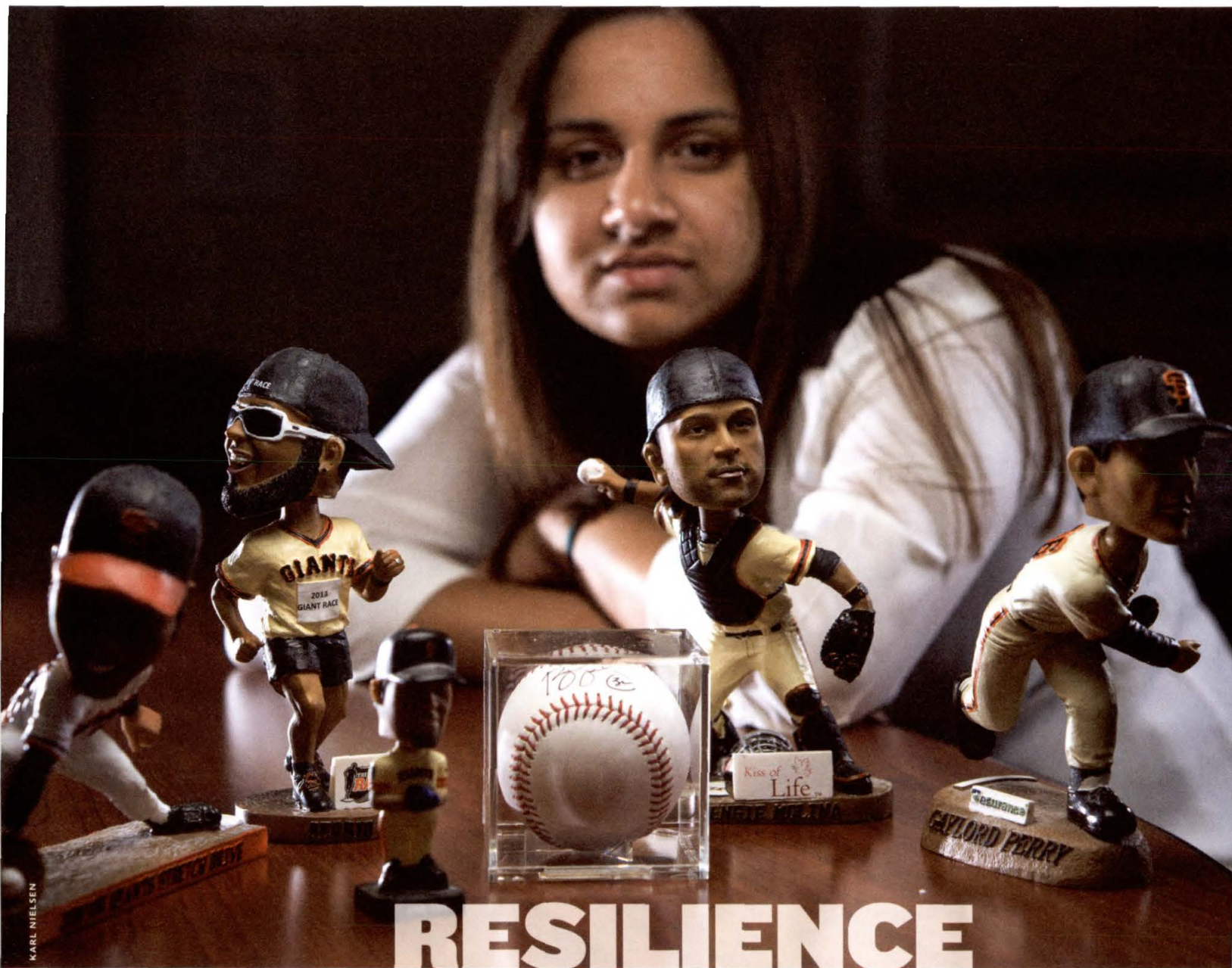
together

EXPLORING WHAT CAN BE

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Social Sciences

SPRING 2014 NO. 06



RESILIENCE

re-sil-i-ence [ri zily ns/]

noun : the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.



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dean's message

Greetings all!

If you have been following the news, you probably know that San José State University has faced significant challenges over the past year. Along with the chronic challenge of continually being asked to do more with less money, we've endured a racially motivated incident on campus, personnel and administrative changes and a controversy over our online courses. Some faculty, staff and students understandably feel a sense of unease.

What all this brings to mind for me is *resilience*. It is a reminder that we always have been a resilient institution, full of strong, dedicated and adaptable people. I am convinced we will learn from our difficulties and move on—and we will be stronger for it.

This issue of *Together* introduces members of the College of Social Sciences community who all share the quality of resilience. You will read about Dr. Stephen Millner, a beloved professor and SJSU alumnus who is too modest to make much of the challenges he has faced—or take credit for the thousands of students he has inspired over his decades of service.

You will hear about Dr. Lynne Trulio's dedication to understanding the limits of evolutionary and environmental resilience and her tireless commitment to a sustainable future. Christian Rodriguez and Natalie Leong Jenks are two of our most gifted and deserving scholarship recipients. Both have overcome personal and financial challenges that many would find insurmountable. Both are individuals of exceptional resilience and impressive promise.

Simrat Dhadli, the recipient of the college's award for our most outstanding staff member, recently earned her master's degree in Sports Management, which serves her well in helping to manage several of our departments. She is one of the most resilient people I know, meeting the challenges that come her way with grace, intelligence and adaptability. Finally, you'll learn about two new professors in our Psychology department, Jeremiah Still and Dave Schuster, whose work reflects a kind of academic resilience—a willingness to evolve new areas of study in response to the dramatic changes wrought by the Internet.

I am proud of our College and its extraordinary, highly resilient faculty, staff and students. I am especially proud of this issue of *Together*, as it is my last as dean. In what may be a test of my own resilience, I am stepping out of the dean's office this June, and embarking on a new career as a retired person! While I look forward to some much-needed R&R, I will miss the College and the many wonderful friends I have made here.

Be assured I will think often of SJSU and my beloved colleagues. It has been a great honor to lead the College of Social Sciences, and I leave with confidence that this resilient institution will continue to meet all challenges and thrive in the coming years.

With love and much gratitude,

Sheila Bienenfeld
Dean, College of Social Sciences
sheila.bienenfeld@sjsu.edu

Growing Green

College of Social Sciences Uses Campus to Teach Sustainability



Environmental Studies Chair Lynne Trulio, pitching in at her department's Sustainable Agriculture Garden, won a grant to teach students about sustainability by taking them on field trips to green campus features.

The interactive sustainability map on San José State University's web site is dotted with spots where students, faculty and staff are engaged in the practice of taking care of the natural environment.

On one side of campus there's the university's large co-generation facility, a power station that produces three-fourths of the electricity required to run the campus each day and captures steam from that process and uses it to heat and cool campus buildings. On another side is the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, which is built to LEED Silver standards. Recycling bins dot the map all over the 82-acre campus, including one for old cell phones.

Students walking through the campus on their way to class or dinner might notice those features, but more likely they walk on by.

A \$12,000 "Campus as a Living Lab" grant from the California State University Chancellor's Office aims to change that by bringing students into the campus's green features and making them part of the general education curriculum.

Lynne Trulio, an ecologist and professor and chair of the Environmental Studies department of the College of Social Sciences, said the grant will tie together San José State with two nearby junior colleges, Foothill and DeAnza, in developing one-period class modules, each featuring a sustainability practice on campus.

"The idea behind the SJSU grant is that you use sustainability features on your campus as teaching tools for promoting, advancing and educating everyone about sustainability," Trulio said. "We're using it to help infuse sustainability further out into the curriculum at San José State."

San José State will offer three hands-on lessons—one on the King Library, another on the co-generation plant and the third on the Sustainable Agriculture Garden, which sits right outside Trulio's office window. The garden, with six raised planting beds, composting and a rain barrel, is used as a teaching lab on sustainable agriculture practices.

Each community college will also select three features and write a lesson based on it that incorporates a trip outside the classroom to explore the sustainability feature.

Every lesson on sustainability will begin with a basic question: What is sustainability?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Personal History

Steven Millner Lives—and Teaches—the Black Experience

Steven Millner remembers details of his classroom experiences with the clarity of the historian and sociologist that he is. Arriving in California as a 10-year-old from southern Ohio where he'd lived in a pocket of ancestors of freed slaves and attending his first integrated school in Monrovia: "It was the first time I had ever gone to school with white children and the first time I had ever had any white teachers and I found out that we had to be twice as good to get half as much."

Coming onto the San José State University campus as a transferring junior in 1968 and one of only a handful of African-American students: "Gracious sakes. At that time this campus was something like 92 percent white. Classrooms were just as different from today as you could imagine. Some of the old professors here on campus took one look at us and decided that we were not their type of student. They had assigned seats and our seats were almost always in the back rows."

Teaching his first class as a young professor of Southern studies at the University of Mississippi in 1982, 20 years after the school had admitted its first black student: "My first class was an intro to sociology class. I had 112 students on my roster. I come in ... and I counted between 11 and 12 students who as I walked in from the back and up to the front podium, when they saw me and realized they had one of the new Negro teachers, they stood up and began to walk out. One spat on the floor and said, 'I didn't come here to have a nigger teacher.'"

The themes of those encounters are the themes of the African-American experience in the pivotal decades of the latter half of the 20th century and Millner's academic work is informed by experiencing many of the changes first hand.

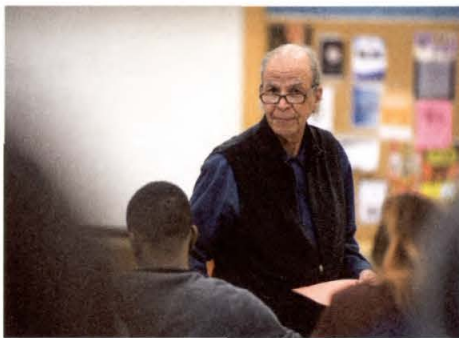
"The 60s were a very, very volatile decade, especially on this campus as we were beginning to experience change and we were forcing change," Millner says today as he looks back on his undergraduate years.

Millner's resilience in facing the racism of the time—from the son of descendants of freed slaves to a distinguished career as a college professor and the former chair of the university's African-American studies department—afford him a unique perspective as he guides modern undergraduates and graduate students through black history.

In his office on the second floor of Washington Square, a cubby that appears

to have surrendered to the accumulation of books years ago, Millner is contemplating a substantial change to his career. Although he could very well have lightened his teaching load long ago, Millner loves the classroom; this semester he's teaching four classes—a freshman-level introduction to African-American history, the history of race in the United States, California history and the history of African-American cinema.

In the fall, he will transition into the university's semi-retirement program and scale his load back to only two classes. He's 65 and has been on the faculty at San



José State for 34 years, coming into the African-American Studies department in 1978 before leaving for Ole Miss in 1982 and returning to SJSU in 1984.

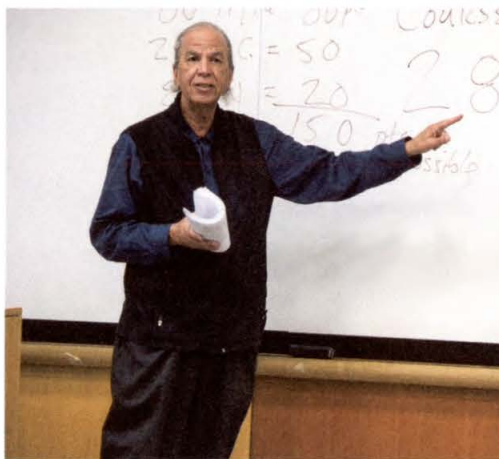
Millner is a popular teacher known for making history come alive and it's no wonder when he tells stories like the one about an ancestor who turned her home on the Ohio River into a stop on the Underground Railroad that moved slaves from the South to freedom north of the Mason-Dixon line.

"My great-great grandmother was a plantation cook, had three children by the master," Millner begins, harking back to the 1840s. "When the master was on his death bed he sent her and his children by her to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and on a flatboat up the Ohio with three bags of gold."

She bought a homestead of 160 acres on the Ohio River in Miegs County, Ohio, just over the boundary of the Mason-Dixon line.

"Built a nice farm house with a wine cellar," Millner continues. "It's in the wine cellar that they used to shelter slaves that did not have papers, right under the house. There was also a large tree on the property that had a small hiding place for people coming through."

Millner's parents both attended Ohio State University in the 1930s (although neither would graduate) and education was a Millner family value. Every night at dinner at 6 p.m., each child had to give



a report about what he or she learned in school that day. Of the five children, three went on to earn Ph.D.s and two earned law degrees.

It was in high school when Millner first discovered sociology from an unlikely source: His basketball coach encouraged his players to read widely.

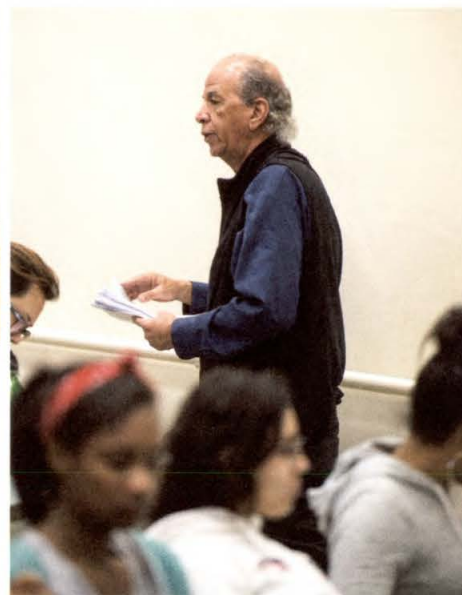
"I fell in love with the discipline of sociology," Millner said, "because I was convinced that it was the first discipline that treated questions of race in a serious way."

And Millner credits the family's move to California, where a college education was free, for his success. With the practiced skill of a historian, he describes stepping off the train for the first time.

"January 23, 1960, Los Angeles, railroad depot downtown," he says. "I'll never forget that first day in California. I was stunned by the beauty of the palm tree-lined streets and the winter-clear air. California was a revelation."

When he had his own children and began to think like his parents had, he looked for a place removed from the lingering racism of the deep South and a land that might afford better opportunities. He returned to San José State, which was a very different university from the one he had left. By then, it had about 1,200 black students and a thriving African-American Studies department.

While the 1970s and 1980s were the heyday of black history study in academia, Millner says, the coursework has a relevance to students of all races and generations.



"African-American history is not just our history, it's this nation's history," Millner says. "And the challenges and obstacles that African-Americans have overcome have lessons that can be learned by any human being about determination, perseverance, long-term commitment to an ethical cause."

Millner loves introducing young undergraduates to African-American history, but he loves his other subject matters as well and finds San José State students, many of them the first in their families to attend college, exciting to teach and watch grow.

"This has always been more than just a job," Millner says. "This has been a joy." ☉



*Psychology researchers
David Schuster, left, and Jeremiah Still,
bring Human Factors expertise
to solving stubborn cyber-security problems*

Cyber Safety

Exploring the Human Element in Online Security

Word that a data breach last fall had compromised the credit and debit card accounts of 40 million Target customers and exposed as many as 70 million customers' names, phone numbers and email addresses sent the retail giant's profit plunging by 46 percent.

The data loss and resulting avalanche of bad publicity were a stark reminder that no one—not even one of the nation's largest department store chains—can count on fool-proof computer security. Everyone, from major corporations to the National Security Agency, is vulnerable.

David Schuster and Jeremiah Still, assistant professors in the Psychology Department of the College of Social Sciences, are using their expertise in human factors—the study of how our capabilities (and limitations) affect our ability to interact with technology—to find new ways of addressing the problem.

They are part of a “cluster hire” of new faculty in library and information science, computer engineering, computer science and management information systems who have been brought aboard to create a cyber security research group at San José State University.

“It’s inherently an interdisciplinary problem,” Schuster says. “It’s going to require new solutions that we don’t just have in one of our fields.”

The pair brings to the project extensive experience in product design, human-computer interaction and robotics, as well as the determination to find fresh solutions to old problems. It’s a tall order, Still acknowledges. “The Internet is out of control,” he

says. “We’ve never really been in control of it. If we think we’re in control, it’s an illusion.”

Schuster, a Green Bay, Wisc., native who studied psychology as an undergraduate at the University of Tampa, received his Ph.D. in human factors studies last summer from the University of Central Florida.

His graduate research was part of an ambitious U.S. Army project to build robots capable of assisting soldiers in tactical situations. “What the Army wants is to move from a paradigm of robots being driven around to a mode of interaction where a soldier will give a robot a high-level task, like, ‘Monitor this floor of the building,’” Schuster says.

At the moment, that goal is more akin to a pipe dream, he acknowledges. His own focus was on situation awareness in the humans-robot interaction —providing a soldier with goal-relevant knowledge to perform a particular task. That entailed asking which information might be most relevant to a soldier at any particular point.

“It sounds intuitive,” Schuster says. “It sounds like we need to increase people’s understanding of what they need to know.” What isn’t particularly clear is how to measure or ensure that, he says.

Since arriving at San José State, Schuster has gotten up to speed on cyber security. The Target data debacle “underscores the fact that cyber security is far from a solved problem and really needs to be worked on,” he says. “It really shows the complexity of it as a problem.”

The heart of that complexity lies in the fact that information “is flowing in all different directions at one time,” he says. “You have to look at interactions between individuals and technology systems, and also interactions among individuals.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

HELPING HAND

SCHOLARSHIPS OPEN DOORS TO EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Students of limited means are all too familiar with the sacrifices and tough choices that come with paying for higher education—especially when loans, grants and part-time jobs just barely cover the bills.

That financial burden has been lightened for Natalie Leong Jenks and Christian Rodriguez, both of whom are benefiting from generous scholarships bestowed by supporters of the College of Social Sciences.

For Jenks, who is completing her master's degree in history, the financial support from the Les Francis Scholarship for Civic Education has paid for books and gas for her commute from San Francisco, where she lives with her 5-year-old son.

Rodriguez, a first-year undergraduate planning to major in history, says the John and Margery Vernon Scholarship will help safeguard his dream of one day becoming an immigration lawyer.

"It takes a giant burden off our family," says Rodriguez, the first in his family to go to college. "It's amazing."

Growing up in San Francisco, Natalie Leong Jenks knew that education made a difference. Her parents drilled that mes-

sage home. They sent their daughter on summer study abroad programs to Paris, China and Mexico.

Jenks earned her bachelor's degree in radio-television, with a focus on broadcast journalism at San Francisco State University in 1996.

She worked as a reporter and announcer for Bay Area radio stations, but as she turned 30, she thought it might be time to try something new. She returned to San Francisco State to earn her single-subject teaching credential in social sciences.

She wound up teaching history for four years at a Catholic high school in Honolulu. Jenks remembers the enthusiasm with which her students followed the 2008 presidential election, when Hawaiian native son Barack Obama became the Democratic nominee. "It was very exciting for my students," she says. "It was a prime opportunity to teach government and politics."

The faltering state economy led to layoffs in 2010. In a failing marriage and now the mother of a toddler, Jenks moved with her son back to the mainland. She was disheartened to find that only having a teaching credential put her at a disadvantage. "It seemed like every career posting expected a master's degree," she says.

Jenks was pleased to learn about San José State's master's program that had a concentration in history education. Since

enrolling in Fall 2011 she has commuted an hour or more each way from San Francisco. "It has taken me 2½ years," Jenks says. "It was so difficult because I didn't have an automatic babysitter." One week before she started classes, her mother died of cancer at the age of 69.

Jenks learned last summer about a scholarship established in 2006 by Les Francis, an SJSU graduate who earned his teaching credential in secondary education before embarking on a career that included stints as a congressional aide, deputy White House chief of staff and nationally prominent campaign manager and political strategist.

When she applied, she made sure to tell how she had used the 2008 election as a teachable moment for her high school students. Jenks was presented with the \$2,500 scholarship at an awards breakfast in early August attended by Francis himself. "He was a very kind man," she says. "I was just blotting my eyes as he was speaking."

The scholarship represents an important validation, Jenks says. "It's not just the financial prize," she says. "It's also someone seeing the hard work I've put into this—the commitment and the effort to carve out a new life for myself and my child."

Christian Rodriguez likewise feels validated by the Vernon scholarship,



which was established by the children of an SJSU alumna in her memory. “When I put my mind to it I can achieve a lot of things,” he says proudly.

There’s plenty of evidence to back him up. Rodriguez was born in Oakland to immigrant parents (his mother from Mexico, his father from El Salvador). After his parents split up, he, his mother and his siblings moved around the Bay Area, finally settling in San Pablo.

As a student at Richmond High School, Rodriguez says, “I faced the daily struggles of a teenager. We could barely make ends meet to pay for rent.”

While he was always a good student, he says, “School started being a major priority for me in my sophomore year when I realized how much education would mean to me and my family.” He took part in a program called College is Real, which helps students from low-income families prepare for college.

“It guided me throughout my high school career,” he said. He also made a point of enrolling in Advanced Placement biology, literature, language, calculus and economics classes, graduating in the top 9 percent of his class.

“In my senior year, when I started thinking about college, I worried about money,” he says. “I chose San José State because they gave me the best financial aid package and because it wasn’t that far from home.”

Entering students were asked to specify a potential major. “At that point, I knew I wanted to go to law school and try to become an immigration lawyer,” he says. “I thought, ‘What’s the best preparation for that? I had always excelled in history, so I chose history.’”

Rodriguez jumped into campus life, studying history, art history, statistics, English and health science and bonding with other students who are the first in their families to attend college. “I like the whole campus,” he says. “It’s a really great school—it’s what I expected from school.”

He learned about the newly established Vernon scholarship, which provides \$5,000 per year for four years, through the campus Educational Opportunity Program.

“I had an interview with the dean about the scholarship,” Rodriguez says. “She congratulated me and said, ‘You received the scholarship. It’s yours.’” When he called to tell his mother the good news, “She was almost in tears,” he said.

Rodriguez says he chose his career path after accompanying his mother on visits to her immigration lawyer to obtain her permanent residency status—the proverbial “green card”—and realizing he could make a difference in the lives of others.

“I would see this process of going through the paperwork and how that one little card would make her so happy,” he says. “That’s how I decided, ‘This is what I want to do in my life.’” ☉

Jeremiah Still has also been on a steep learning curve around cyber security since joining the faculty. One thing he's learned is that computer users should create their strongest password for their email account, because if your email is attacked, hackers can reset the passwords to all of your other online accounts. "Passwords just aren't working," he says.

Still, who grew up in a small town on southern Missouri's Ozark plateau, has been exploring the human-computer interface since he was a teenager, when his parents bought an HP desktop. By the time he was in high school, he was charging \$150 an hour to help local businesses setup and maintain networks.

"Somebody would call me up and I knew how to fix the problem," Still said. "I liked learning it, but once I figured it all out, it was boring."

He earned a B.S. in psychology from Missouri Southern State University and moved on to Iowa State University for his Ph.D. in Human-Computer Interaction. Then, Still started a new human factors program at Missouri Western State University, where he designed the curriculum and taught all the classes.

Several factors contributed to Still's decision to relocate to San José. "I had the opportunity to have collaborators," he said. "I wanted to be somewhere where I was more immersed in technology. This is one of the hotbeds."

Human factors research can be applied to virtually every form of technology, Still says. "I find stuff in the cognitive science literature that's been around for 20 or 30 years," he says. "How do we apply that to the design context?" For example, research that predicts where people's eyes will land first when they visit a web page could be of great benefit in pricing online advertising.

Still, whose wife Mary is an SJSU lecturer in cognitive psychology and a collaborator in the cyber security effort, has been working with his students to create more intuitive Cyber Security interfaces. "We're taking this basic technology that's been around for a few years and understanding what the human needs are," Still says.

Still and Schuster meanwhile are working with an industry partner to study how people approach computer security ratings. The question, Schuster says, is "How people make use of ratings related to security when they're provided by other humans, or by some kind of automated method."

That entails, among other things, an assessment of the accuracy of crowd-sourced ratings, he said. "Fundamentally, people and computers are good at different things," Schuster says.

"People have different strengths than computers do. One of the strengths of people is that they are resilient, in the sense that they can deal with unique situations—things that are off the map, the unknown unknowns." ☉



Lynne Trulio surrounded by the Campus as Living Lab collaborators from SJSU and De Anza and Foothill colleges.

GARDEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

It begins with the premise that everything that we need for our survival depends on the natural environment—water, air, plants and land—and that the choices we make about how we live today can lead to depleting those resources or sustaining them so they continue to be available for future generations.

"A very common definition," Trulio says, "is meeting the needs of today without preventing future generations from meeting their needs."

Another common way of looking at it, she says, is known as "the three Es"—environmental protection, economic vitality and social equity.

"All three of these need to work together for a sustainable world and basically a world that sustains humans and all the other species that are here," Trulio said. "I think it's a reorientation about the way we view our needs. The way we are using the planet now cannot sustain all the humans on the planet and so we need to find a way to reorient the way we live on this planet."

To that end, Trulio believes it's important to involve university students from all disciplines in a discussion of sustainability. "We're hoping to attract faculty who don't normally incorporate sustainability into their classes but are interested in doing that," Trulio said. "We need everybody, whatever their major, to understand the urgency of developing a sustainable society so that future generations will have a livable planet. Everybody needs to be on board with this, to understand how important this is for them personally, for their children, for life on planet Earth." ☉

Major League Dreams

Social Sciences Staffer
Swings for the Fences

Somewhere out there, preferably in the Bay Area, there's a desk in the front office of a professional sports team with Simrat Dhadli's nameplate on it.

Dhadli, a 2011 graduate of San José State's College of Social Sciences with a degree in communications and a 2013 master's degree in sport management, knows that the business side of major league sports is a tough world to break into, even more so for a young woman. But she has her sights set on a career in community development in major league baseball, football, hockey or soccer.

"I want to work with people and be in community development within athletics," says Dhadli, who grew up playing softball and watching professional sports with her father. "I like talking to people. I like learning about people. I like being around people."

Dhadli, 24, has actually been working since she was in elementary school. Hard work is second nature to the daughter of two immigrants from India. Her father is a postal worker and her mother runs a small business selling uniforms to police officers, nurses and other professionals.



Dhadli and her brother spent their afternoons in their mother's uniform store in San José from the end of the school day until the shop closed at 6pm.

"There weren't many people to watch us when we were younger so we'd go to her store and help her," Dhadli says. Part of the business was tailoring uniforms and young Simrat was put to work hemming pants and sewing on patches. "The customers loved it because there's a little 10-year-old girl pinning the bottom of your pants."

That work ethic continued into high school. Dhadli was 16 when she went to work at Sears and was assigned to the tools department. When she enrolled at San José State as a freshman, she found a work-study job in the administrative offices of the economics department within the College of Social Sciences.

She held onto her Sears job, so she was working 40 hours a week while going to school full time and putting in 60 hours a week during the summer breaks.

Dhadli also did an internship with the SJSU athletics department while she was an undergraduate and still managed to graduate on time.

She went directly into the sport management master's degree program, where

she studied everything from finance, law and communications to the sociology of sport and also did an internship in the ticket sales and promotions department of the Earthquakes, a Major League Soccer team in San José.

Dhadli has also volunteered for the San Francisco Giants (her favorite team) selling bobbleheads and helping at auctions and other fundraisers for the team's community outreach fund.

Her master's thesis looked at the perceptions of Giants' fans of a proposed move of the Oakland Athletics from Oakland to downtown San José. Her research found that, contrary to a belief that a second Major League Baseball team in the market would hurt the Giants, that Giants fans would attend more games and would welcome the move.

What draws Dhadli to the business of professional sports?

"It's very dynamic, every aspect of it," she says. "You get to meet the athletes. You get to travel. You get to be there when something big happens. You work really long hours."

Each professional team might have one or two jobs in its community development office, the spot where Dhadli hopes one day to land. And because they're good jobs, turnover tends to be low.

"It's really hard to get into that industry because once you get in, you don't leave," she says.

For now, she's working full time for Social Sciences as an administrative support coordinator, splitting her day between the departments of African-American studies, urban and regional planning and political science and building more skills—management, event planning, web development—that she hopes to bring to a sports team someday.

"I'll get where I want to get and go where I want to go," Dhadli says. "I just try to take my road where it's supposed to go. I don't feel as successful as I want to yet. I'm not there yet. I will get there." ◎



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We're in this together



INSIDE Freshman Christian Rodriguez is benefiting from a \$5,000-per-year John and Margery Vernon Scholarship to help him realize his dream of becoming an immigration lawyer.

PHOTO: KARL NIELSEN

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.

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