

California University  
**JOURNAL**

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 18 DEC. 9, 2019

KEEP UP WITH CAL U NEWS ONLINE: [calu.edu/news](http://calu.edu/news)



Ivy Savidge, a junior anthropology major, researches and compares notes from the 1930s in an effort to identify human remains from the Greene County Historical Society.

## Prof Goes From Stats to Mysteries

Statistically speaking, it's unlikely that a math expert would publish a mystery novel under a pen name.

But the odds were favorable for Cal U's Dr. Melissa Sovak, a professor in the Department of Math, Computer Science and Information Systems, who released her first fiction novel on Nov. 26.

*The Secret of Dunhaven Castle* follows Cate Kensie, an adjunct history professor at a local university, and her dog, Riley. Kensie inherits a castle in Scotland but must live in it first. She soon experiences strange occurrences as she tries to figure out the castle's secrets.

"Cate quickly finds out this is not quite the fairytale she thought, and there's much more to her inheritance than she realizes," Sovak said.

Sovak decided to write the book as a surprise for her mother's birthday in June 2019. To expand her views on how to bring characters and a story to life, she completed a five-class online creative writing certificate.

Beta readers — those who read and provide feedback on manuscripts before they are published — liked the book. So did her mom.

"Of course, she's biased because she's my mother, but she read it, liked it and so did the other readers," said Sovak, who coordinates Cal U's B.S. in Statistics and Data Science program. "Hopefully many other readers will enjoy it too."

She is working on the second

— *Continued on page 3*

## Cal U Helps to Catalog Native American Remains

The Greene County Historical Society is partnering with Cal U to help identify and match hundreds of uncatalogued remains, believed to be from Native Americans.

The bones — teeth, skulls and other fragments — need to be reported under terms of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act, says Matthew Cumberledge, executive director of the historical society.

The goal is to report the remains and to facilitate the process if any tribal descendants should wish to claim them for burial.

Dr. Cassandra Kuba, a professor

of anthropology at Cal U, and nine students have been working throughout the fall semester on the project. The work is expected to continue through spring.

They are analyzing 700 adult teeth, 150 baby teeth, 30 skulls, not all of them complete, and other parts, including 42 mandible pieces, to verify they are Native American and match what they can.

"They are taking measurements and taking note of evidence of disease or infection or other features that might allow us to reaffiliate the remains," Kuba says.

"The measurements of certain teeth should be consistent, and there are certain diseases that affect the health of bones that allow us to say they came from the same person. It tests (the students') ability to determine if separate fragments really do belong together.

"The remains could represent 10 different sites or more from all sorts of time periods."

Cumberledge says the remains were excavated in the 1930s, in some cases by founding members of the historical society.

"Under the Works Progress

— *Continued on page 3*

## Winter Commencement Set for Dec. 13-14



Col. Lance D. Oskey '93 will address students at Winter Commencement.

Col. Lance D. Oskey '93, will address graduate and undergraduate students at the University's 189th Commencement.

Master's and doctoral degree candidates will receive their diplomas and be vested in their academic hoods at 7 p.m. Dec. 13. Undergraduate Commencement begins at 10 a.m. Dec. 14. Both ceremonies will be held in the Convocation Center arena.

In all, more than 1,000 students are expected to graduate, including those who choose not to attend Commencement.

University President Geraldine M. Jones will confer degrees and greet each graduate who walks across the stage. Graduates' families and friends are welcome to attend.

Cal U's Winter Commencement recognizes students who completed their

studies in August and December 2019.

Both ceremonies can be viewed live online at [calu.edu/news](http://calu.edu/news). For more information, visit [calu.edu/events/commencement](http://calu.edu/events/commencement).

Oskey is stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he is Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Oskey began his military career at Cal U, where he was an ROTC cadet and a Distinguished Military Graduate. He received his first military commission, as an Army second lieutenant, at Old Main in 1993, and he celebrated his promotion to colonel in a ceremony at the Kara Alumni House in 2014.

Oskey's service includes deployments to Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to many stateside assignments. Before his appointment as chief of staff, he was commander of the 7th Brigade,

U.S. Army Cadet Command, also at Fort Knox.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge and Ranger Tab. In 2019 he received the Rear Admiral William R. Furlong Award for Military Service from the Cal U Alumni Association.

In addition to his bachelor's degree in business finance from Cal U, Oskey holds a master's degree in international relations from Troy State University, Alabama, and a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College.

Oskey and his wife, Amy Boehm Oskey '94, have a son who is a college sophomore.

# Garden a Delight to the Senses

When you're 4 years old, words like "vegetation" and "nutrition" are B-I-G. "Those are some big words," acknowledges Dr. Denise Joseph, an associate professor and director of Cal U's Learning and Language Center in the Communication Disorders Department. "But it's all part of their vocabulary development as they get ready for kindergarten."

As part of a "Pennsylvania habitats" lesson, 13 children in the center's preschool program and their teachers — Cal U students majoring in communication disorders — spent a fine fall October day learning about squirrels. At the same time, they focused on important speech and language objectives like sequencing, following one and two-step verbal directions and increasing vocabulary.

And then the fun part: Jackets on, out they flowed from their classroom to a garden located just outside their Morgan Hall classroom, where they got to fill feeders with squirrel-friendly food and make squirrel food cookies.

"They loved working with the peanut butter," says graduate student Camryn Dugan, who led the lesson.

The outside spot is known as a sensory garden, a collection of plants and materials that stimulate seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting.

A sensory garden can be enjoyed by anyone who simply wants to relax, but it is especially wonder-inspiring for children, whether they're developing normally or delayed.

Cal U's garden was developed in a cross-discipline collaboration led by Joseph, associate professor and director of the Learning and Language Center, and Dr. Sarah Meiss, associate professor of biology. The two received a \$5,000 grant from the Faculty Professional Development Committee at Cal U to get the garden growing, with an emphasis on plants and structures that encourage learning and play.

Joseph and Meiss met at Cal U, but came up with the idea of a sensory garden while both were attending classes at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens for Master Gardener Certification. The sensory garden



Graduate student Maura Glennon looks on as Makayla Reynard and her friends hang a squirrel feeder in the sensory garden outside of Morgan Hall.

seemed like a perfect project to meet two objectives, improving interdisciplinary collaboration and providing the children with a unique environment for hands-on learning experiences.

"Dr. Joseph and I met often to figure out what we wanted in the garden," Meiss says. "She wanted plants with color and texture. We also wanted perennials and ways to grow vegetables in the winter so the children could use the garden year round. She tells me what she'd like to have to achieve goals and objectives outlined in the curriculum, and then I make designs and suggestions about what will work."

The University's sensory garden includes an educational space; a pollinator garden loved by bees and butterflies; an art station that highlights the rainbow of plant colors; plants of different tastes, textures and smells; a sensory walkway with stones that all feel differently under little feet; and a music space with wind chimes and plastic pipes that make beautiful noises.

Students in Cal U's Sustainability Club pitched in, spreading soil, planting beds, painting objects. Selecting and planting flowers, spreading soil, painting planters, placing decorative rocks, and making the best use of the space are

some of the projects always underway.

Each semester 32 graduate students and about 30 undergraduate students studying to become speech language pathologists complete a practicum in the Learning and Language Center. The preschool program enrolls 14 children each academic year. They may be developing normally or have speech or language issues.

The preschool program is a laboratory school for Cal U students who are training to be speech language pathologists. One of the objectives is to learn strategies to integrate Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards, including Scientific Thinking and Technology, into their classroom interventions.

"Integrating skill areas outside of their traditional scope of practice presents challenges, creating the critical need for speech language pathology students to develop skills to work collaboratively with professionals in other disciplines in unrelated specialty areas," Meiss and Joseph wrote in their grant proposal.

The garden is the perfect place to enhance children's education development and social interaction and also address the core curriculum standards.

"We want Cal U students to know that they can take an integrated approach

with a discipline other than theirs, like a science class, and still be an effective speech therapist," Joseph says.

"The activity with the squirrel feeders involves following directions and sequencing. Those are speech and language goals that also mesh with the biology lesson. This garden helps to prepare our students for situations when speech therapy happens in an integrated classroom setting."

Dugan agrees.

"It's very important for speech language pathologists to be educated in all the fields," she says. "We introduced the word 'vegetarian' — that's a big word. When we went outside for the activity, they didn't say the word exactly right, but they definitely had the concept of what it means. That was awesome! That's exactly how speech and language concepts can be integrated."

"It's a great reinforcement to the lesson," says Megan Teres, a graduate assistant in communication disorders. "Children love hands-on activities, and as speech language therapists we always try to incorporate all aspects of learning."

To learn more about majors in Communication Disorders and Biological and Environmental Sciences, visit [calu.edu/academics](http://calu.edu/academics).

## Cal U Hosts Parks and Recreation Conference

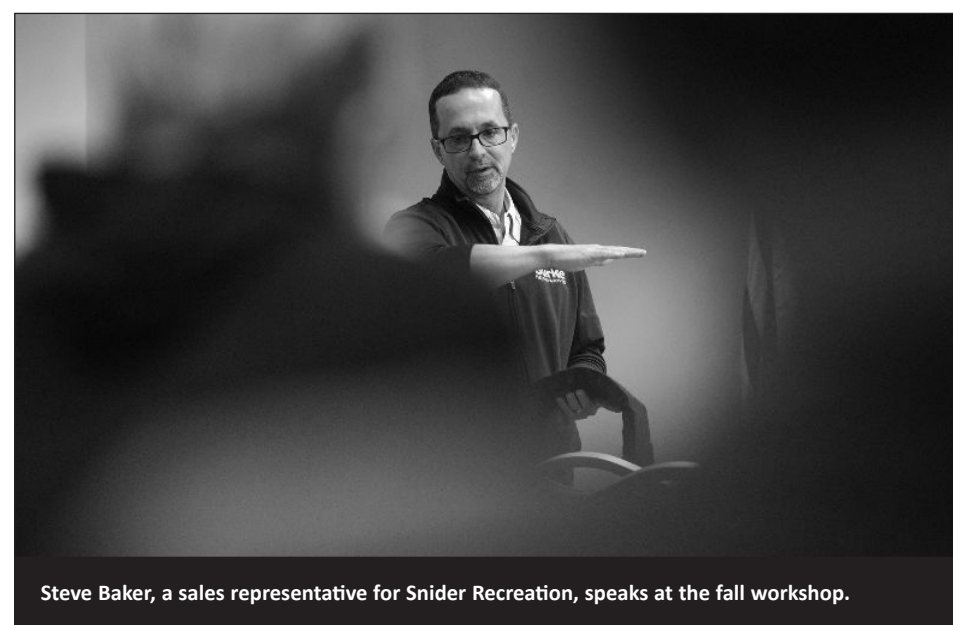
Cal U students majoring in parks and recreation management learned from the pros during the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society's District 1 Fall Workshop.

Various professionals from parks, recreation and leisure programming organizations in western Pennsylvania engaged in interactive sessions that covered outdoor fitness courses, inclusive playgrounds and playground surfacing.

"Hosting this workshop allows students the opportunity to network with professionals from the parks and recreation field and learn firsthand the trends and issues surrounding the parks and recreation profession," said Dr. Candice Riley, assistant professor in the Department of Earth Sciences.

One of the students taking advantage of the conference was Logan Tew, a junior and president of Cal U's Parks and Recreation Society, which hosted the conference.

"These events help us improve our



Steve Baker, a sales representative for Snider Recreation, speaks at the fall workshop.

networking skills and earn internship opportunities that can potentially lead to jobs," he said. "PRPS District 1 is very local, so this conference really opens up a lot of doors for us."

Dr. Tom Wickham, professor in the

Department of Earth Sciences, said the conference also provides a venue for students to showcase some of the off-campus projects or events they've helped to organize.

This semester students from his

master planning course are designing and creating a comprehensive plan for the West Brownsville American Legion's outdoor recreation facility.

Riley's students worked with Washington County Parks and Recreation to design a disc golf course at Mingo Creek County Park.

Tew and other Cal U students also helped the Peters Township Parks and Recreation and Public Library manage and lead tours during their annual "Haunted Trail XX: Walk into the Darkness" kickoff to the Halloween season.

"We bring students to these meetings so they can meet the professionals and also to find out about more projects we can have our classes become involved with," Wickham said.

"Everyone graduates with the same parks and rec degree, but it's what have you done that matters. Our students are volunteering with community projects, working with young kids and doing the extra work, which sets them apart."



## Donations Fill Manderino Library Spot

Students Andrew Yankovich (left) and Roger Hansbarger, both members of Phi Gamma Delta, along with Chris Johnston, Cal U's director of parking and transportation, volunteer at a food drive at Cal U. The University's Office of Parking and Transportation and Center for Volunteer Programs and Service Learning organized the drive to fill a parking spot in front of Manderino Library with nonperishable food items. The drive, which benefited the Cal U Cupboard campus food pantry, was part of Cal U's observation of the national Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

# Speaker Spotlights Food Insecurity

Amber Deemer, a trained dietitian and development officer for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, spoke at Cal U's Vulcan Theatre about food insecurity on Nov. 14.

Her presentation was part of the What's the T? Thoughtful Discussions About National Narratives, a monthly series sponsored and developed by the Student Affairs Diversity Committee.

It was also the first of several initiatives during Cal U's Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week planned by the Center for Volunteer Programs and Service Learning.

The food bank services 400 agencies in 11 counties. Food insecurity — lack of access to safe and nutritious food — affects one in seven American adults and one in five children, Deemer said.

"Food insecurity does not look like one particular person — they're not white, not black not tall or short," she said. "Food insecurity looks really different for a lot of different people, and there's a lot of negativity surrounding it."

"It's also something that can happen to any of us at any time."

Last year, with the help of some 6,000 volunteers and funding from Feeding America, the food bank distributed 10 million pounds of produce and 35.5 million meals.

"Those are numbers we are really proud of," she said. "But we still have a long way to go, and want to get to 60 million meals by 2025."

Deemer met with Diane Hasbrouck, the director of the Center for Volunteer Programs and Service Learning, and students who are involved in the Homeless and Hunger Awareness Week and assist with the Cal U Cupboard food pantry.

The cupboard, in the Natali Student Center, Room 119, stocks canned food, microwavable meals, pasta, breakfast items and snacks, as well as school supplies, apples and hygiene items.

Office hours are 8 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays; the cupboard is open 10 a.m.-2 p.m. weekdays. For information, call 724-938-4793 or email [calucupboard@calu.edu](mailto:calucupboard@calu.edu).

"Coming here today was really encouraging, and speaking with Diane and her students, I realize how much they love this community," Deemer said. "You are doing awesome things here that may not seem huge, but they are."

Jahneek Fant, a sophomore secondary education and mathematics major, who is a community assistant in Smith Hall, found the presentation worthwhile.

"I wanted to learn different ways to advocate about food insecurity and apply that to my residents, to let them know that someone is there for them if they have any food problems," he said. "We have the support here on campus and perhaps there's a way to have at least canned food or some mini pantry available for people in our hall."

"We came to learn and this was good."

# Prof Goes From Stats to Mysteries

— Continued from page 1

novel in a separate series. *Shadows of the Past*, featuring heroine Celine Devereaux, is scheduled to be published in early 2020. Sovak is consulting with Cal U's Graphic Design Club for the cover design.

Sovak said she always wanted to write a novel because, while there's considerable creativity in statistics, it's not the same as telling a story.

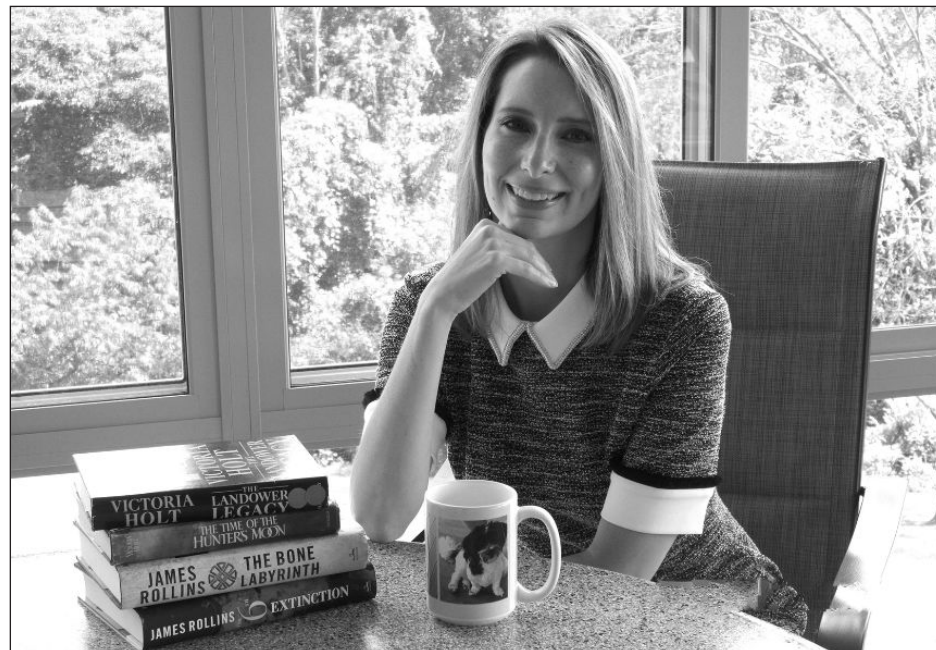
"It's a way for me to tap into my creative fire that I want to use and do things beyond the science field," she said.

"For me it's a relaxing outlet. I often write at night before bed and then I can't sleep because I get so excited I want to keep going."

Extensively published on topics such as statistical reasoning and color models for image decomposition, Sovak uses the pen name Nellie H. Steele for her fiction work. Her grandmother's maiden name is Steele and her sister and Sovak's great aunt, Helene, share the nickname Nell.

"There's no secrecy involved with the pen name," Sovak said. "I have publications professionally under my name and did not want people to Google me and see stats books and the Dunhaven book and be confused on one end or the other."

Cate Kensie is not using statistics to



Dr. Melissa Sovak, a professor in the Department of Math, Computer Science and Information Systems, has released a mystery novel.

solve secrets in the first novel, but there are elements of academia.

"As she goes through some rather strange experiences Cate's very research-oriented, keeps note sheets, researches questions and is very science-y as she approaches things," Sovak said.

"But she's more into the liberal arts and history side of things."

Sovak is pleased to have added fiction writing among her many skills.

"I'm used to writing and fixing other

people's code, and this is a complete contrast for me," she said. "When I think where I was when I started this process last January, it's really exciting."

"It's almost like a second career for me but it's not, it's just fun."

*The Secret of Dunhaven Castle* can be ordered through e-book or paperback through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Kobo and Apple Books. For more information visit [www.anoveldideapublishing.com](http://www.anoveldideapublishing.com).

# Cal U Helps to Catalog Remains

— Continued from page 1

Administration, archaeologists and amateur archaeologists were paid to excavate sites," he says.

"Unfortunately, over the last 70-plus years, the remains have been moved and repacked, and they lack context. They were all in one box, somewhat loose. One or two sets may be connected to a specific site, but the rest are not."

"Today, if you came across human remains at a site, all work would immediately cease. That was not the case then."

Cumberledge says the historical society appreciates the collaboration.

"I'm not an anthropologist, and you don't just look in the Yellow Pages to find someone who does this type of scientific study," he says. "Dr. Kuba and her students have been a tremendous asset, and the enthusiasm the students have had

for this project and the care with which they have treated the remains has been exceptional."

Cearra Mihal, a senior anthropology major, has spent much of the semester in the Frich Hall lab.

"Working with co-mingled remains means having to go through and test what I've learned for four years," she says. "We've had to decide if the differences we see in the bones are the result of pathologies or normal deviations."

"The fact that we can help (the historical society) out with this project makes me feel good. It's a great learning opportunity for us, and it helps them solve some mysteries."

Adds Cumberledge: "To a small degree, I feel like I've gotten to meet these people," he says. "Dr. Kuba has shared what she has learned from studying the remains, and I've gotten a sense of who they were as people, as opposed to the bland, impersonal facts. On a human level, it's been quite a wonderful experience."

# State System Advances Redesign

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education advanced its redesign efforts recently as its Board of Governors approved historic budgetary and policy measures aimed at increasing collaboration, transparency, and cost-efficiencies among its 14 universities.

At its most recent quarterly meeting, the board authorized the chancellor to seek each year for the next five years a line item appropriation from the state Legislature up to a five-year total of \$100 million. The non-recurring funds would be used to create enhanced online learning opportunities; transform information technology including student information services; and a new consortium of shared services to support the System Redesign effort.

The consortium is being developed with the goal of sharing services and leveraging the State System's massive scale to realize long-term cost savings.

"We've made substantial progress in many areas such as transparency and affordability that are central to the success of public higher education in Pennsylvania," State System Chancellor Dan Greenstein said. "Current and future students are counting on us to make quality public higher education affordable and accessible."

To increase transparency and accountability, the Board also approved a new financial sustainability policy for all 14 universities. The new policy standardizes terminology and metrics used to determine a university's financial wellbeing with the goal of improving financial stability through collaboration across the system.

Eight employees at Cal U are either leading or serving on redesign teams that meet in Harrisburg on a regular basis.

## Important Dates

- Dec. 13:** Residence halls close at 8 p.m.
- Dec. 16:** Winter College classes begin; the online classes end Jan. 17.
- Dec. 23-26:** Holiday break (University closed).
- Jan. 19:** Residence halls reopen at 9 a.m. for new students, noon for returning students.
- Jan. 20:** University offices closed (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day).
- Jan. 21:** First day of classes for the 2020 spring semester.
- March 9-13:** Spring break for faculty and students.
- May 4-8:** Exam Week.
- May 8-9:** Commencement ceremonies.



Cal U's men's rugby team looks for continued success following a memorable fall season.

## Memorable Season for Rugby

Cal U's Men's Rugby Team will head into the spring season after a memorable showing this fall.

For the first time in program history, Cal U competed in the National Small College Rugby Organization's (NSCRO-15) Central Region Challenge Cup Championships, which were contested in Columbia, Mo.

Coached by alumnus Bill Marnell '09, the Vulcans clinched a spot in the Region semifinals and represented the NSCRO Three Rivers Conference following their 23-7 victory over Grove City College.

Before playing Grove City, Cal U earned regular season victories over Slippery Rock, Allegheny and Fairmont State.

In the semifinals Cal U lost to defending region champion and eventual region repeat titlist Wisconsin Stevens Point.

With just several minutes remaining in the first half Cal trailed last year's third place national finisher by just a 19-15 score after starting the game with a 10-0 deficit by allowing two quick tries.

"We got shell-shocked early but then we controlled the

game for about 30 minutes, played our brand and were pressuring them the whole time," Marnell said. "Then it came down to depth and they pulled away from us in the second half."

Marnell praised the efforts of senior Isaiah Harris (scrum half), senior and club president Brandon Fritzius (fly half), and junior Nate Godfrey (forward). He said his team gained invaluable experience from its first NSCRO regional tourney appearance.

"I say to my guys every day that you learn just as much in a loss as you do in a win, and every game you get a chance to get a little better," he said. "This trip was an eye-opener, an opportunity for us to grow and bond as a club and see what it's like to compete in playoff rugby."

Cal U will compete in NSCRO-7 tournaments this spring.

"This regional was a necessary first step, and if we can make it back next year, we will know what to expect," Marnell said. "We have the talent and infrastructure, and now we just need to focus on continuing to grow the club."

## First Generation Students Celebrate

Cal U students stopped by a table in the Natali Student Center last month. There, members of Cal U's TRIO Club greeted them and invited them to post their thoughts as a member of the first generation in their families to attend a four-year college.

"It makes my family proud," one wrote.

"Anyone can be successful with a little hard work."

"Better future."

"Being 1st generation gives me a huge sense of pride. I am proud to represent my family and be a role model for future generations."

Sophomore psychology major Kaleigh Moser and sophomore social work major Courtney Mackulin are members of the TRIO Club and greeted students in Natali.

"It's like having a second family at college," Moser said. "And it's cool to learn about other people like me."

"I made a lot of friends from TRIO Club," Mackulin said. "Kaleigh and I became friends once we realized we were both members."

The 2019 #IAMFirst campaign marks the 54th anniversary of the



Kaylee Isler (left), Alex Dalton, Yamilette Garcia, Kaleigh Moser and Courtney Mackulin show their pride as first-generation students during the national #IAMFirst campaign.

signing of the 1965 higher Education Act, which formed programs like TRIO.

The campaign was launched in 2017 by the Council for Opportunity in Education and the Center for First-generation Student Success. The day is meant to help campus communities better understand the needs of this population of students.

The TRIO Student Support Services program at Cal U provides support

services to low-income students, first generation college students, and disabled students. Eligible students may receive personal and academic career counseling, career guidance, instruction, mentoring, and tutoring. The goal of the SSS program is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants and help students make the transition from one level of higher education to the next.

The California Journal is published by California University of Pennsylvania, a member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

Geraldine M. Jones  
University President  
  
Dr. Bruce Barnhart  
Provost and Senior Vice President  
for Academic Affairs

Dr. Nancy Pinardi  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
  
Christine Kindl  
Vice President for Communications  
and Marketing

Robert Thorn  
Vice President for Administration and Finance  
  
Anthony Mauro  
Vice President for University  
Development and Alumni Relations

T. David Garcia  
Vice President for Enrollment  
Management

Wendy Mackall  
Editor  
Bruce Wald  
Writer

Office of Communications and Public Relations 250 University Avenue California, PA 15419 724-938-4195 wald@calu.edu