It’s a Dean’s Life

Our January 2020 issue welcomes the new year by celebrating our amazing students in the College of Humanities and the Arts. This issue focuses on our dance program, our student marketing team, and our student organizations. The heart of our mission at San José State University is supporting the development and success of our students, whether that be the assistance that the Writing Center provides to all SJSU students or the professionalization that our student organizations create, including the recent performance of our dance students at Jacob’s Pillow—a nationally recognized dance venue to which they were invited last summer.

We are also working to develop more avenues for student success that may branch out into their future careers. This year, one of those developments has been building our student marketing team to include four new faculty members who can lead students in design, writing, photography, and video production. Through this work, students support the Hammer Theatre and the College of Humanities and the Arts by understanding their own faculties and preparing for their individual careers. Their work is at a professional level, which you can clearly see in their recent Hammer Theatre video, which highlights the excitement of the diverse programming that we make possible.

Faculty members are incredibly resourceful to our students; therefore, we have been hiring new tenure-track faculty at a rate of approximately ten to twelve hires a year. As a result, fantastic new faculty in dance, design, art, English, humanities, music, philosophy, and theatre have joined us this year, and they are already quite occupied with teaching and assisting students across the entire college. Kristen Brandt, our latest addition to the Department of Film and Theatre, will be directing the Three Penny Opera this spring as the department will continue hosting one major musical a year. We also hope to have the Spartan film Breakfast appear at Sundance and other film festivals in the coming year.

Furthermore, our faculty are centrally involved in our Deep Humanities & Arts and Borderlands initiatives. We have eleven Borderland events prepared for the Spring semester that will explore the themes of “Blurring Boundaries, Breaking Barriers, and Building Bridges.” Join us for original music and theatrical events, such as a Global Shakespeare Film Festival, a conversation with the author of The Devil in Silicon Valley, a master-class on the animated film Coco, an original student film and TV series premier, a poetry reading, and an interdisciplinary event, “Decolonizing Borderlands,” which will be brought to us by our Department of World Languages and Literature.

Please see a listing of all of our upcoming events at: https://www.sjsu.edu/humanitiesandarts/College_Programming/index.html

We hope you can join us!

As we begin our Spring 2020 semester, please check out the amazing activities and events that we have going on in the College of Humanities and the Arts. These events will highlight the power and importance of the humanities and arts within our world today by exploring each in all of their forms. We encourage you to attend a performance or support a student exhibit this semester and consider a gift to our college by helping us continue our incredible mission.

In gratitude,

Shannon Miller, Dean
And Suddenly We See: The Journey from SJSU to Jacob’s Pillow

Thirteen San José State University dance students flow across an outdoor stage. The audience watches their every move. These dancers are members of SJSU University Dance Theater, the advanced dance team of the School of Music and Dance. Their location: the Inside/Out outdoors stage at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, a three-month celebration of dance. The group performs their piece, And Suddenly We See, to a mixed audience of dance lovers and casual viewers. As the sun falls beneath the horizon, their performance, the final one of the day, finishes among cheers and applause.

Just as the performance moves the audience, the experience of dancing at Jacob’s Pillow expands the world of the University Dance Theater members. Jacob’s Pillow, located in Becket, Massachusetts, was built by dancer Ted Shawn as the headquarters for his dance company, Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers, and eventually became a school, a retreat for dancers, as well as the location of the largest dance festival in the U.S. The New York Times calls it, “the mecca of dance.” Most of modern dance history in America can be traced to Jacob’s Pillow. By performing there, the members of University Dance Theater were no longer just students: they have taken the first step into the world of professional dancing.

“I was amazed by the amount of history I was surrounded by,” says Kaitlyn DelaCruz, one of the SJSU dancers who performed at Jacob’s Pillow. “I was proud to be there with my peers and instructors. We all worked extremely hard to reach this haven for dance, but to be there was otherworldly. Most of all, it was humbling.”

Their piece, And Suddenly We See, is an expression of life’s constant movement, punctuated by moments
of clarity. From the slow moments to the dramatic lifts, this dance embodies the neverending flow of life and the moments of self-awareness scattered across this great flow. The dancers’ moves express such emotions that members of the audience tear up as the dance reaches its grand finale.

The journey to this final performance at Jacob’s Pillow was a long one. The University Dance Theater started rehearsing their dance routine, choreographed and directed by SJSU Dance Professors Heather Cooper and Raphael Boumalia, in August 2018—a full year before their performance at Jacob’s Pillow. The University Dance Theater first performed And Suddenly We See at the ACDA Conference in November 2018, with great success. Their performance was chosen by the students throughout their journey, were the most emotional audience members. “For the graduating seniors of the team, going to Jacob’s Pillow is the result of four years of work,” says Professor Boumalia. “I have performed [at Jacob’s Pillow] multiple times, but to see people I trained perform there; I felt very proud of them.”

To Professor Cooper, Assistant Director of the Dance Department, the performance was worth all the hard work she put in, from leading rehearsals to fundraising the money needed to fly the team across the country to the event. “I was overwhelmed with pride when I saw them perform,” she says. “It was one of the greatest moments in my life.”

The students too were overwhelmed with emotions: “Performing on the Inside/Out stage was an absolute dream come true and I found myself tearing up throughout the performance,” says University Dance Member Paige Raffitt. “In that moment, nothing else mattered.”

The opportunity to perform at Jacob’s Pillow was a life-changing experience and a great achievement for the students, but Professor Boumalia does not keep the credit of the achievement to himself and Professor Cooper. He points to the important role the SJSU Dance Department and the faculty played in the students’ development as dancers. “If you look at schools like Juilliard, the students there start out as good dancers,” says Professor Boumalia. “What’s great about the faculty here is that we can take people with little experience and take them to Jacob’s Pillow.”

Performing at the Mecca of dance puts SJSU’s name in the hall of fame, but this achievement is not the endline for the University Dance Theater and the SJSU Dance Department. The medium of dance has endless potential, and the faculty and students will continue to explore its depth.

To see the University Dance Theater and other SJSU dance groups perform, check out the Dance Department’s event calendar at: http://events.ha.sjsu.edu/musicanddance/dance-performances/
The audience waits in anticipation while an assortment of student’s eyes are projected onto the backdrop. You can’t see the full faces of each actor, but you can feel the full weight of the stories behind them. Suddenly, SJSU Professor Kathleen Normington’s voice projects around the auditorium—reading her director’s note out loud. She says: “It is November 8, 2016, and I’m finishing up class. I have my ‘I voted’ sticker on my shirt. Class is dismissed, and a student comes to me, she says, ‘I wish I could vote.’ I’m not quite sure how to respond when she says ‘I am undocumented.’ I say to her with confidence, ‘My vote will be for you.’” The audience is captivated, and the play begins.

Last fall, San José State University’s Department of Film and Theatre presented Dreamer Project: An Undocuplay at the Hammer Theatre. The play follows the stories of several UndocuSpartans—undocumented SJSU students. The entire production is taken verbatim from interviews in which each student shared the struggles of navigating through America as undocumented immigrants.
The play was written and directed by Professor Kathleen Normington, who came up with the production idea after the 2016 election of Donald Trump and the anti-immigrant rhetoric that accompanied his campaign. Students from her class helped Normington collect interviews by putting her in touch with other undocumented peers. She wanted to create a play that would help debunk some of the misconceptions surrounding people with undocumented statuses. “I think that’s why I’m a professor. Why do I believe this whole paradigm?” she says. “It’s coming together and experiencing it together that will change people and hopefully help them understand this situation, not only on our campus but in our country.”

Daily frustrations constantly remind these students of their status. When their peers talk about going to Cancun for spring break, they can’t join. Or when people ask them, “Why don’t you just apply for citizenship,” the students are reminded that most Americans are unaware of the hardships that accompany the process. In one scene, each of the 17 actors read a requirement listed in the DACA application, and every question is nearly impossible to answer.

Some students were hesitant to share their stories in the beginning. Jose, an SJSU alumnus and the only character to play himself in the production says, “At first, it was kind of awkward for me because no one has ever asked me to tell my story. I held back a lot because when I tell my story, I don’t like people to feel sorry for me. Most of the time, I just want to talk about the part where my family and I persevered.”

Though these stories were hard for some students to talk about, they knew that it was important to get their messages out into the world. Normington’s vision was to show these students not only as undocumented, but as regular people, friends, and peers navigating through a difficult and uncertain political climate. Jose says, “I hope that people see a different side of immigration. I know that they will. I want people to know that we want basic human rights and nothing more. We are not dangerous. We are innovators. We are artists. We are students. We are parents. We are not criminals.”

Along with this project, faculty and students from the Department of Film and Theatre have created a scholarship that supports undocumented SJSU students who want to major in the arts. More information about the Film & Theatre Dreamer Project Arts Scholarship Fund can be found at sjtu.edu/giving.
The Clubs of our College: A Highlight of the College of H&A’s Exceptional Student Organizations

College clubs and organizations allow students the opportunity to congregate around a common cause, interest, or focus of study. SJSU’s College of Humanities and the Arts stands out as having some of the most beneficial student clubs on campus. Each H&A department has its own selection of clubs and organizations operated by current students or alumni. The advantages of these clubs are endless. They help students establish a community, enhance academic performance, develop relevant skill sets, build resumes, provide networking opportunities, open the door for prospective job opportunities, and so much more.

These clubs demonstrate the variety of options that The College of H&A has to offer, as well as the great potentiality of joining one of its student organizations.
ShrunkenHeadMan, or SHM, serves as an acronym for the San José State Animation and Illustration club. SHM is an extension of the award-winning Animation/Illustration program, which prepares student careers in print, feature and television animation, effects animation, layout, and multimedia by providing courses that encourage conceptual thinking and professional practice.

Established in 1995, this club is home to self-described, “sleep-deprived, charismatic, professional, knowledgeable, and friendly animators and illustrators.” The name of the club was inspired by an absent-minded sketch of a man in a suit with a visibly minimized head, done by former student—now current faculty member—David Gustlin. The club felt it should encompass a name as creative and unorthodox as those who pride themselves on being a part of it. The club’s values lie in what the ShrunkenHeadMan is meant to represent: those with extreme talent while always remaining humble and never displaying hubris, or “big heads.”

One of SJSU’s largest campus organizations, SHM was designed to create a sense of community among the animation and illustration students and to support the subject’s faculty.

“Our club’s call to action is to keep our members and community well informed and enthusiastic about art and the industry,” says Club President Flora Rees-Arredondo. The club achieves this goal by offering events such as the famed guest lecture series: where noteworthy graphic designers come to speak about their experiences, life drawing sessions, and special celebrations to help students de-stress and get in touch with their creative side. Flores says, “The ultimate goal, however, is to foster a tightly knit network of artists while establishing the ShrunkenHeadMan movement in the world of visual communication.”

The Philosophy Department at SJSU is recognized for its scholarly activity and achievements of its faculty. The Department is strong in traditional areas of philosophy, as well as active in the more progressive ones, such as Feminist Philosophy and Applied Philosophy. This innovative Department houses a club for students who are dedicated to advancing society through philosophy by deep examination and appreciation of it.

The Philosophy Club, officially titled “The Symposium,” is an SJSU organization aimed at aiding students in academic achievement through the cultivation of philosophical understanding. This club works to foster fellowship among students who are interested in and passionate about philosophy by sponsoring activities that encourage philosophical pursuits at San José State. In the past years, these activities have included talks, guest speakers, movie screenings and subsequent discussions, trips to conferences, as well as excursions to plays and art related events with philosophical themes. All SJSU students with an interest in philosophy are welcome to participate regardless of their major.
The Young Professional/Technical Writing Offensive, or TYPO, is the first-ever club designed for professional and technical writers at SJSU. The club’s itinerary hosts professional and technical conferences at SJSU. This provides opportunities for students to work with peers and professionals outside of their major, through projects like rebranding a beloved local taco truck and building phone apps, to forming connections between students, alumni, and employers.

The club’s founders, Seniors Antionette Traub and Ellie Vengala, pioneered the club after discovering what they believed to be a critical organization missing from SJSU’s club selection. “I really wanted to be involved in school, but I’m not a creative writer. In the English department, we only have a Poets and Writers Coalition. I felt that there really wasn’t a place for me,” says Traub. With the help of Dr. Mark Thompson, the two girls formed the first Professional and Technical Writing club on campus.

The primary reason Traub, Vengala, and Dr. Thompson developed TYPO was the overwhelming number of professional and technical writers and SJSU alumni who are eager to engage with current students. By engaging with fellow technical writers through such organizations, alumni and students are able to network for free. The club’s next event is LinkedIn Learning, whose classes will include introductions to HTML/XML and Adobe FrameMaker. The possibilities for the club’s future projects appear endless. “No matter what major you’re in, there will always be a need technical writing,” says Traub.

Contact Ellie or Antionette to learn more about TYPO.
Email: antoinette.traub@sjsu.edu or ellie.vengala@sjsu.edu
The SJSU’s AIGA student group is an extension of the national AIGA: The Professional Association of Design. AIGA is the largest professional association of designers in the world, committed to advancing the value and impact of design, both locally and globally, and working together to inspire, support, and learn from each other.

SJSU’s student chapter is committed to encouraging students to demonstrate a commitment to their professional interests and assist them in understanding that profession. The aim of the AIGA student group at SJSU is to get the students involved in the local design community and create a community of their own so they can build leadership skills that will be valuable as they move into the professional world of graphic design. AIGA feels strongly that student groups should, as much as possible, be involved in programming their own events. This activity provides an opportunity for training future chapter officers and instills a sense of responsibility towards that organization. “The main goal is to get students acclimated in the professional landscape of design,” the groups’ website explains.

“Students will build their leadership skills and have the opportunity to work with the local design community. They will gain experience that helps expand their skills, making them invaluable members of society as they move into the professional world.”

For more information visit: https://www.aiga.org/

Students in our Graphic Design program at SJSU are offered many opportunities to gain professional and creative experiences, including clubs and organizations. One of the most popular and recognized clubs is the Neo-Design club. NEO is an organization created by students in the BFA Graphic Design Program. The organization’s mission is to promote creative growth and awareness of graphic design as a culture and community.

The club’s Facebook page describes it as, “a group of designers dedicated to fostering a creative community at SJSU. We focus on skills-based design workshops, sharing resources, and, of course, networking! We’re open for everyone to join, whether or not you’re a designer!”

For more information visits the club’s online platforms below:

Email: contact@neodesignclub.com
Facebook: Neo Design Group
Instagram: @neodesignclub
Twitter: @NEOdesignClub

Some of the groups most noteworthy activities include the Annual Students Design Gallery and the Annual Portfolio review.
Tucked away inside of Washington Square Hall is the bustling H&A Marketing and Communications office. The first thing you see when entering is the wall of their recently completed projects. Promotional posters for performances like Hamlet, SJSU Jazz Orchestra, and Rakugo adorn the corner of the office. Music softly plays in the background as the team finishes their latest client project. Finally, the Director looks up from his computer and gives the team a thumbs up. The printer immediately begins to hum and fresh posters are churned out. The warm prints are quickly delivered to the client, but one is left on the table to be proudly displayed on the wall.

The H&A Marketing and Communications Team coordinates with the College of Humanities and the Arts and the Hammer Theatre to promote programs and events. Working with a wide spectrum of clients has given the team the experience to tackle any event: theatre performances, musicals, talks, readings, and even symphonies. They’ve built strong rapport with the Hammer Theatre after years of partnership, managing the Theatre’s newsletters, event pamphlets, and online marketing. Editorial, photographic, videographic, and graphic design work weeks in advance to produce polished promotional material.

During the fall, an internship was introduced to H&A students—an opportunity to apply their studies. This internship not only gave students experience, but also brought fresh ideas to the team. Editorial interns wrote and edited copy used in promotional material. Photography and videography students captured the images and videos used both online and in print. The graphic design team created event posters and promotional flyers. Each student brought their own talents and personal touches, but they couldn’t have done it alone. Throughout the semester, students were mentored by their professors and H&A Director Derick Truong. Students were given direction and feedback—often going through countless rounds of revisions to meet expectations.

As an SJSU alum, Truong believes that HA 187 takes the traditional class structure one step further. Truong says, “Students have a place to practice the skills they’ve learned, with one-on-one guidance from our talented faculty, who all have extremely valuable insights into working professionally.” With his experience working in the office, Truong recognizes that everyone brings something unique to the team, saying, “Each student has their own style that they bring to their work, and the faculty and I try to make sure that everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and doing the best work they can do.”
Tarun Nalluri, a graphic design intern, believes that this internship has pushed him to do his best work. Nalluri says, “When working so closely with such a small team, we are always critiquing each other’s work. I am constantly getting feedback that helps me see things that I may have missed.” Designing for a client is different than finishing an assignment for a class. Nalluri and the team keep each other accountable, each knowing that they aren’t working for a grade, but for the College and the Hammer Theatre.

The curriculum and content depend on the needs of both the College and the Hammer Theatre. During the fall semester, interns created marketing content for events, including the Black Cab Jazz Series, A Conversation with Sonia Nazario, and Dreamer Project: An Undocuplay.

After experiencing what the internship and the H&A Marketing Team has to offer, students are eager to see what’s in store for the future.

The H&A Marketing Team is proud to be partnered with the Hammer Theatre and Dwight Bentel Hall Communications.
The SJSU Writing Center Goes Beyond One-on-One Tutoring

The SJSU Writing Center is a two-location, multi-service resource center, capable of serving thousands of students every year. Throughout its 12 years of operation, the Writing Center has taught invaluable writing skills to students across all majors and levels. Since it began in 2007, the SJSU Writing Center has gone through a series of innovation not only through physical expansion but also with a variety of services provided and minds involved. And although the Writing Center has significantly grown over the years, its focus has never changed: an earnest dedication to the allocation of resources amongst the entire SJSU student population.

San José State University maintains the core values of innovation, creativity, diversity, and interdisciplinary collaboration throughout its campus. Consequently, the SJSU Writing Center offers an assortment of opportunities for faculty members and students alike. Comprising a team of rigorously trained tutors and highly experienced administrators, the Writing Center provides more than simply one-on-one appointments for students who yearn to strengthen their writing abilities.

As Michelle Hager, Writing Center Director, says, “We work with students and faculty from all across campus and we are a support service that is used by every college. Some of our tutors even work a few hours per week in the College Success Centers thanks to the successful agreements that we’ve had with the School, the College of Education, the College of Health and Human Sciences, the Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering Departments, among others.”

While the Writing Center offices are constantly buzzing internally with activity, the level of impact that they facilitate does not end there. As the administrators continuously update practices and expand the Writing Center’s capabilities, tutors develop semester-based, writing-resource projects, which may be added to the Writing Center’s list of homegrown handouts; pop-up events on campus; posts for their blog, The Write Attitude; and several other areas within the SJSU writing community. Outside of its office spaces, the Writing Center also engages in public events such as the Northern California Writing Centers Association (NCWCA) Conference—an annual, immense gathering of writing center faculties who collaborate on the future of writing instruction throughout the state.

All of this work would not be possible, however, without the influence of the individuals from the Writing Center team, each of whom present an array of backgrounds. Although a common assumption about the Writing Center is that every member specializes solely in the English language and grammatical rules, a look at their profiles proves quite the contrary. As Michelle Hager says, “Our tutors are also from a variety of disciplines—we want to hire student writing experts who have different backgrounds. Currently, we have tutors on staff who are majoring in English and Linguistics, but we also have tutors from History, Chemistry, Psychology, Philosophy, Animation, Business Marketing, Biological Sciences, and Computer Science.”

In attribution to the forward-thinking and interdisciplinary understanding of their administrative team, Writing Center tutors are also granted the irreplaceable gift of professional development—a benefit which SJSU happily supports. By training each other using knowledge-based examinations and a series of mock writing-session trials before entering the field, tutors prepare themselves to be courageous and excited about their professional endeavors.
In fact, the routine responsibilities of this center push tutors to explore their potential interests in various writing careers beyond their degrees, such as editorial, journalistic, technical, or academic writing. Senior Jack Brady, a current Writing Center tutor, says, “From working here for over three years, I’ve grown in my knowledge of English grammar, rhetoric, and digital design. With those skills, I hope to work in the technical writing field by either producing user-facing guides or creating content for software applications.” Because of journeys such as these for students like Jack, the SJSU Writing Center will continue strengthening its resources and preparing its students for their aspirations in writing and communication throughout their studies and beyond their degrees.

To view their blog, The Write Attitude, follow this link: https://sjsuwritingcenter.wordpress.com/

For more information on the SJSU Writing Center, please visit their website: https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/

Also follow them on social media for updates on their development and current events/contests:

- Twitter: @TheWCatSJSU
- Facebook: SJSUWritingCenter
- Instagram: @sjsuwcc
- LinkedIn: SJSU Writing Center

Thank You FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

To learn more about how you can support the College, please contact

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To make a gift in support of the College of Humanities and the Arts, you can give securely online at www.sjsu.edu/giving/support/colleges/coha

You also can make checks payable to the “Tower Foundation of SJSU” and mail to

MATTHEW TAYLOR SIEGEL,  
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For more information, send an email to: matthew.siegel@sjsu.edu

To receive our Expressions e-newsletter during the academic year, send an e-mail with your contact information to humanities-arts@sjsu.edu or visit blogs.sjsu.edu/humanities-arts and click “subscribe.”