Expressions, Fall 2020

San Jose State University, College of the Humanities and the Arts

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As the cover of this Expressions suggests, the Fall semester here at San José State University was anything but business as usual. When classes started in late August, student musicians were practicing in a parking garage—we had set up an outside dance studio for students to develop their craft—art students were meeting in small groups to keep safe during a global pandemic, and the majority of our students were experiencing classes on-line.

Despite the many challenges, the Fall semester has been a time of creativity, innovation, and commitment to our values as the College of Humanities and the Arts. The Theatre program produced a wonderfully timely piece, The Living, about the 1667 London plague outbreak, giving us an opportunity to reflect on our anxieties and practices in the time of a global pandemic; you can read an article on this fantastic theatre experience in an upcoming issue. Students socially distanced during rehearsals and the performance to stay safe, but also to illustrate the line between our reality and this impressive fictional re-telling of a previous pandemic.

The College created “Pandemic Pandemonium” to allow students to explore ethical, artistic, and humanistic perspectives onto the period we are living through. Our Dance program took up the challenge to keep dancing, and produced “Surge,” an inspiring rethinking of dance in 2020 that you can read about in this issue. Our programs all innovated and developed new ways to engage and teach students, and we are all so proud of them, as well as of their intrepid instructors.

We continue to innovate across the ten departments and schools within the College. We have just received an NEH Challenge Grant that will support a Digital Humanities Center in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. This will allow us to develop a rich curriculum around digital projects in our college, one that will benefit our students here in the Silicon Valley. More information will be available in future issues of Expressions.

As always, our College leverages the arts and humanities to ask the most important questions of our time, and our H&A programming themes will continue to do this with two topics in 2021-2022, one on Racial Equity and Social Justice, and the other on Sustainable Futures. These issues, about recognizing structural racism, about celebrating our diversity on our campus and in our state, and about understanding and preparing for climate change, have been at the center of our state and our nation this summer and fall. It is the power of the humanities and arts that can help us conceptualize our future, feel the importance of these two challenges, and work to provide leadership to face them.

Earlier this year, San José State University was named the #1 most transformational university by Money Magazine. The future of California starts here at SJSU. And our College will be leading the way as we face the future and make it a better place for all.

Sincerely,

Shannon Miller
Dr. Anthony Fauci & His Connection to the World

by Christian Jimenez

The 2020 William Randolph Hearst Foundation Award given by San José State University’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication is an award given to people with exemplary ethics, writing, and communication. This year’s winner holds all those traits—the prestigious Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.
Professor Bob Rucker, the Hearst Awards coordinator, was assigned the task of contacting Dr. Fauci. Professor Rucker’s work in reaching Dr. Fauci to present the award is compelling and assiduous, a tale of how human connections can help unite us all.

The William Randolph Hearst Foundation takes in millions of dollars to spread worldwide to help fund programs like the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at SJSU, which enables these types of national awards to help students have a role model for quality reporting. The Foundation was founded by William Randolph Hearst, a 20th-century news publisher who originally started his career producing yellow journalism. Hearst eventually transitioned to creating credible work out of the San Francisco area and became a reputable journalist. Typically, SJSU picks a practitioner in one of its fields: advertising, journalism, public relations, etc. However, as COVID-19 spread across the nation, the department noticed that one person was becoming the go-to advisor for pandemic information—Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Due to Dr. Fauci’s status and position, the department understood that contacting him would be a challenge. The faculty voted unanimously to give Professor Rucker the task of tracking down Dr. Fauci, to which Professor Rucker responded by saying, “Alright, I love a good challenge!”

This nomination marked the beginning of Professor Rucker’s journey in contacting Dr. Fauci.

Professor Rucker began his mission in contacting Dr. Fauci by first looking into his vast list of journalism contacts. Professor Rucker discovered that a friend who worked at Adobe knew a colleague who frequently mentioned Dr. Fauci in executive briefings. Professor Rucker’s Adobe contact agreed to help him get his message to that colleague, with the small chance that the colleague might reach out to Dr. Fauci’s team. Miraculously, the colleague agreed to share Professor Rucker’s message because he recognized Professor Rucker’s name and remembered him as a reporter for CNN. This string of connections is why Professor Rucker always reiterates to his students to “make contacts and keep friends because you’ll never know how in the future they’ll come back and help you.”

Thankfully, SJSU is in the heart of Silicon Valley, where the opportunity to network with other fantastic people is an incredible possibility.

Two weeks later, Professor Rucker received an email from Dr. Fauci’s office, saying that “he is thrilled to receive this honor.” Since Dr. Fauci is a federal employee, he’s not allowed to accept an honorarium. But to honor Dr. Fauci, the school decided to convert the award into a scholarship in Dr. Fauci’s name.

The William Randolph Hearst Foundation Award took place on Tuesday, November 17th. The ceremony began with a video introducing SJSU’s recently proclaimed title of “#1 Most Transformative University” by Money Magazine, to then transitioning to a compilation of clips involving notable professors, journalists, and students congratulating Dr. Fauci for his award. Professor Rucker then formally introduced the award, himself, and Dr. Fauci.

Dr. Fauci then began his acceptance speech where he spoke passionately about the similarity between being a physician-scientist and a journalist stating, “You are never quite done. There is always more to learn and more questions to ask whether you are assessing a patient, conducting a lab experiment, meeting with public health leaders, or meeting up to prepare for a media appearance. There are always more angles to cover and more follow-up questions.” The ceremony then concluded with the President of SJSU, Mary Papazian, thanking and inviting Dr. Fauci to our wonderful campus.

Dr. Fauci’s extraordinary work in providing information to the public about COVID-19 has been incredibly important to millions of people worldwide. Thanks to Professor Rucker’s resilient efforts in successfully contacting Dr. Fauci, the department can grant an outstanding scholarship to an exceptional student for many years to come. SJSU’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication plans to continue working alongside The William Randolph Hearst Foundation to continue to inspire future journalists to come.
In Spring 2020, the Dance Program in the School of Music and Dance (SMD) faced challenges presented by COVID-19 when courses transitioned to virtual learning. Many colleges and universities had to shut down campuses back in March, but SJSU’s SMD kept their dancers in mind by thinking of innovative ways to continue safe in-person training for their students. With the support of the University’s facility operations, staff, faculty members, and students, the SMD found a creative way to dance: they moved the Dance Program to the fifth floor of the 10th street North Garage at SJSU!

SJSU Music and Dance programs have always provided students with experiential learning environments, offering students multiple opportunities to practice and perform in-person. Dr. Fred Cohen, Director of the School, says, “Even under the restrictions of the pandemic, we thought outside-of-the-box to give our students the opportunity to have these experimental experiences.” For the dancers, in-person sessions are a critical part of dancing, especially having specific, safe equipment to dance on.

Since most classes at SJSU moved to virtual learning for the Fall 2020 semester, students had to practice at home on hardwood floors, tile, and carpets, which can lead to extensive injuries to their ankles, hips, and backs. Professor Heather Cooper, the Associate Director of the School and coordinator of the Dance Program, describes her concerns for the dancers, “In-person class meetings are so crucial for so many reasons, to have the opportunity to have enough space to move is a really big part of that.
“A lot of our students are either in the dorms or small apartments, [in which] there is just not enough room for them to physically do everything they need to do for a dance class.” While the students in the Dance Program continued to practice at home, faculty and staff in the College of Humanities and the Arts, such as Dean Shannon Miller, Dr. Cohen, Professor Cooper, and Associate Dean Jason Aleksander, worked to create a space for dancers to practice safely. Working with Dean Miller, the School came up with a plan to safely meet the needs of dancers. Dean Miller asked the SMD what they needed, such as the proper setting and equipment, to continue the program. Professor Cooper says, “Dean Miller knew that dancers cannot just completely dance on concrete all the time.”

Finally, Dean Miller and the SJSU staff members came up with a solution by both investing in a specialized dance floor, and by moving practice to the 10th Street Garage to create a safe, hybrid-learning environment for students and faculty. By the end of August, the SMD purchased “a specialized ‘temporary suspended floor’.” Professor Cooper says, “The dance floor is temporary, which means once students can move back to their classrooms or studios, the floor can be used for other purposes.” The floor is cushioned and about 45 ft by 20 ft in size and allows dancers to practice without injuring themselves. The floor resembles other dance floors used by professional dance theaters; however, this floor is unique as it’s housed outside to allow dancers to follow appropriate safety guidelines. The 5000-sq-ft dance space, now known as “the Miller Studio,” took only about a day to set up and came together thanks to the SJSU faculty and volunteers.

Dr. Cohen and Professor Cooper both took the time to thank everyone who came together: John York from Film and Theatre, Keay Edwards, Anthony Sutton, and other faculty members from SJSU and the Hammer Theatre. Of the process, Professor Cooper says, “2020, in general, has been a lot about resilience and re-imagining things, certainly education.” She adds that students are part of that resilience and “realizing what we can still do, what we [have] done in this new space is in line with 2020.” Professor Cooper adds, “We recognize the gifts from where they come, [the dance floor] is a gift, and I don’t know any other program that has a solution like us.”
“Whatever it takes, we’re going to make it happen. We hope in the future to have outside performances, where we can have a full audience ... and be able to use it for additional performance opportunities on campus near the Hammer Theatre.”

Students are grateful to have the ability to attend class in small groups rotating weekly between online and in-person, taught safely outdoors and 12 feet apart from others, allowing for valuable face-to-face interaction between students, instructors, and classmates. Professor Cooper says, “Whatever it takes, we’re going to make it happen. We hope in the future to have outside performances, where we can have a full audience ... and be able to use it for additional performance opportunities on campus near the Hammer Theatre.” SJSU’s Dance Program has shown resilience and adapted to the changes of these uncertain times. Professor Cooper says the Dance Program is “making dance happen in 2020” and will continue to persevere.

Watch a clip from University Dance Theatre’s Fall Performance, Surge: https://vimeo.com/486198549

Learn how to support our Music and Dance programs by visiting their websites: https://www.sjsu.edu/music/ https://www.sjsu.edu/dance/
San José State University (SJSU) has a long-standing tradition of celebrating and honoring literary artists through The Lurie Author-in-Residence Program, the awards and fellowships offered by The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, and the Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. The M.F.A. Program describes itself as “The Literary Incubator in the Heart of Silicon Valley,” but all of these SJSU programs have integral parts in this “literary incubation.” The shared goals of all of these programs—of supporting education and the literary arts through fellowships and awards have supported untold numbers of students, writers, and artists, creating a legacy of which we are very proud. SJSU is pleased to honor these talented writers, and we are even more delighted when these artists receive national recognition for their work. The following writers are only a small sampling of the many writers and literary artists who have been supported by SJSU’s numerous literary awards, fellowships, and programs, but they all have one important award in common. These seven SJSU-associated writers have also been awarded the prestigious Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award for emerging women writers.

In 1995, celebrated novelist Rona Jaffe established The Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Awards, a foundation to “identify and support emergent women writers of exceptional talent and promise in recognition of the important contributions they make to our culture.” The awards are given annually to six women writers who demonstrate excellence and promise in their careers’ early stages. The Jaffe Award carries a cash stipend of $30,000 to afford these emerging writers the time to write, and has been instrumental in advancing the careers of many prominent women writers. To date, 164 writers have shared over $3 million in Foundation grants to recognize the valuable contributions that women writers make to our culture. Yalitza Ferreras is the most recent SJSU-associated writer to receive a prestigious Rona Jaffe award. She joins the ranks...
of other Steinbeck Fellows, Gabriela Garcia, Dominica Phetteplace, and Vanessa Hua in this honor. SJSU Assistant Professor of English Selena Anderson, English Lecturer Aamina Ahmad, and former Lurie Visiting Writer ZZ Packer have also been honored with a Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award. These extraordinarily talented women writers of diverse backgrounds speak to diverse audiences through their works, and for Selena Anderson, Aamina Ahmad, and ZZ Packer, through their teaching, as well.

**YALITZA FERRERAS**  
*Rona Jaffe 2020 & Steinbeck Fellows 2014-2015*

Yalitza Ferreras is a Dominican American writer based in San Francisco. She held the Steinbeck Fellowship award from SJSU in 2014-2015. She describes San José State’s Steinbeck Fellowship as a turning point in her writing career, which was interrupted in 2011 when she suffered a brain injury in a car accident. The fellowship allowed her to visit Spain and the Dominican Republic to research trips for her brilliant upcoming novel, *The Four Roses*.

Ferreras is also one of the most recent Rona Jaffe award winners. Her nominator writes, “What I love about Ferreras’s singular voice is the way it catches the reader by surprise. You read her and immediately understand she can write beautifully, with vigor, and insight, but then like an undercurrent, she snatches the reader by their feet with the story’s emotional power. The stories are intimate and fueled with her passion for strong women in challenging situations who must and will survive.” Ferreras plans to use the Rona Jaffe award to take time off from her graphic design job to focus on completing her novel.

*The Four Roses* follows an ambitious poor young Altagracia woman who emigrated from the Dominican Republic to Spain in the 1990s to undertake art while struggling to survive. Ferreras’s unique writing mainly revolves around people who are disproportionately marginalized in society. In light of the pandemic, Ferreras comments, “It is during these times of economic and political and social upheaval that exposes exacerbated disparities that marginalized communities live with every day. These are the people I write about. The essential workers and those who are trying to make a home where they are not welcome. I am driven to tell these stories because representation matters and can inspire positive change.”

Shortly after being awarded the Steinbeck Fellowship, her story “The Letician Age” was selected for inclusion in the 2016 Best American Short Stories. Ferreras appreciates the support from both the Steinbeck Fellows and the Rona Jaffe Foundation. She says, “They’re helping me make [my writing career] happen. It feels really amazing to be a part of these two communities.”

**GABRIELA GARCIA**  
*Rona Jaffe 2018 & Steinbeck Fellows 2019-2020*

Gabriela Garcia is a writer, poet, and a 2019-2020 Steinbeck Fellow who also received a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award for fiction in 2018. Like Ferreras, she is also proud to be a part of these two distinguished communities. Although very proud of receiving a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award, Garcia attributes it not only to her perseverance and hard work, but also to the community of women writers who preceded her: “I am indebted to the women writers...
who carved a path so that my own voice could find an audience [...] The Rona Jaffe Foundation [...] introduced me to a community of writers eager to champion each other’s work. I am not interested in success if I can’t bring a community with me, and this is one of which I am particularly proud to belong.”

Her upcoming novel, due to be released in April 2021, Of Women and Salt, is described as “a sweeping, masterful debut about a daughter’s fateful choice, a mother motivated by her own past, and a family legacy that begins in Cuba before either of them were born.” Garcia describes it as a “novel that deals with gender, race, immigration and the intersection of all these different forces that shape these lives through history.”

In this book, Garcia wove in her own experiences as a daughter of immigrants. She is a former Purdue University student of the inimitable Roxane Gay and is grateful to have her praise of her forthcoming novel: “Gabriela Garcia captures the lives of Cuban women in a world to which they refuse to surrender and she does so with precision and generosity and beauty.”

In addition to being an award-winning, best-selling author, Vanessa Hua is also a former Steinbeck Fellow and Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award winner for fiction, as well as a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Like Gabriela Garcia, she also confronts the forces of gender, race and immigration in her work. Hua is the daughter of Chinese immigrants, so she intimately understands the concept of having her foot in two worlds; she has been writing about the Asian diaspora for nearly two decades. “Regardless of whether you’re from an immigrant family or not, your parents’ lives before you arrived are a mystery. That’s what drives me as a journalist and as a writer—trying to close those gaps in understanding with an empathetic eye and an open heart.” Though reporting has allowed Hua to uncover interesting stories and enact real change, she says there are limitations in journalism that she doesn’t face as a fiction writer. Hua feels that writing fiction allows her to fill in extra details that escape the press and extend the story in her own imagination. “Some things will never be determined by a journalist or a historian—it’s just lost to history or people aren’t talking or they’re dead,” she says. “Fiction is a way of exploring these really interesting circumstances and characters in a fuller way.” Hua describes her work as being about immigration, identity and “model minorities behaving badly” and that there is a theme of deceit that runs through them. She fittingly titled her award-winning collection of short stories, Deceit and Other Possibilities. “I realized it captured the duality of whether characters might think deceit is necessary to keep up family harmony or if it’s just self-deception and justification. “Deceit” has a negative connotation, but “possibilities” has a positive connotation.” Continuing this theme, her debut novel, A River of Stars, quickly became a bestseller and won numerous awards as well. Hua is working on a new novel, The Sea Places.
Dominica Phetteplace rounds out this award-winning group of women writers who have received both a Steinbeck Fellowship and a Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award for fiction, while using immigration as a recurring theme in their work. She describes herself on her Twitter page as: “Math tutor. Writer. Science fiction. Pulp queen. Literary too. Pushcart winner. MacDowell Fellow. Rona Jaffe Award.” She earned a B.A. in mathematics from UC Berkeley and is the first person from her family to graduate college. Phetteplace worked on her novel, Project Empathy, while in residence at MacDowell.

She explains that the story is set in a “near-future, heavily surveilled San Francisco that is inhabited solely by billionaires and their servants.” Phetteplace also received a MacDowell Fellowship, a prestigious award for artistic excellence that is given to only 300 artists in seven disciplines each year. “When I applied to MacDowell, I didn’t think I would get in, but I did,” says Phetteplace. “And after I got in, I didn’t think I would fit in. I’m a mixed-race woman from a low-income background, I don’t have an M.F.A., and I write science fiction. But I did fit in!”

In reflecting on her residency at MacDowell, she says, “I met lots of interesting people, made many friends, and I got more work done than I thought possible.” She goes on to say that she feels honored to be in the company of ZZ Packer, Lan Samantha Chang, Kirstin Valdez Quade, Solmaz Sharif, and Mary Szybist, all MacDowell Fellows who are also Rona Jaffe Awardees.

ZZ Packer
Rona Jaffe 1997 & Lurie Visiting Author 2007-2008

ZZ Packer, also a former MacDowell Fellow with summer residencies in 2002, 2010, and 2016, and a Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award recipient for fiction, holds a separate distinction as having also been a former Lurie Visiting Writer. Packer started her writing career at an early age. She was published in Seventeen magazine at age 19 and credits her love of writing to a love of reading. As a child, Packer accompanied her mother on daily trips to the library; when she wasn’t reading, she was writing. The title story of her short-story collection, Drinking Coffee Elsewhere, was included in The New Yorker’s Debut Fiction issue in 2000 and was instantly met with critical acclaim, as was Drinking Coffee Elsewhere, which was published three years later. It has since won numerous awards and is often taught in high schools and universities. Packer taught Drinking Coffee Elsewhere during her semester as Lurie Professor at SJSU. Packer has taught creative writing at numerous universities across the nation throughout her career, but even after years of success as a writer and teacher, she hesitates to endorse the profession, citing the enormous amount of time it takes to write well, the complications life can bring, and that good writing requires “an obsessiveness that’s not going to be taught.”

Packer is currently working on a historical novel, The Thousands, which follows the lives of several Buffalo Soldiers after the Civil War, through the violence of Reconstruction and into the “Indian Campaigns” in the American Southwest. She says that the novel tells the story of the soldiers, but it is really about Reconstruction. “I am very much concerned with the “hidden history” of America; many Americans know about Geronimo, but few know about Apache leaders such as Victorio, a master of guerrilla warfare who arguably forced the United States military to rethink (and rewrite) the prevailing tactics of the day.”
Like ZZ Packer, Aamina Ahmad is also sharing her writing expertise through teaching. She is currently a lecturer in the English Department at SJSU. Ahmad received a Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award for fiction in 2017 and said that the award was “transformative in so many ways [...] it allowed me to tell a story that mattered to me and made me feel that it mattered that I tell it.” Her nominator writes, “A brave, disciplined, and unconventional mind is at work,” citing her “depth of characterization” and “undeluded empathy” as evidence. Ahmad grew up in London and worked for the BBC, ITV, and independent television production companies. Her first full-length play, *The Dishonoured*, toured the UK in 2016. It won the 2019 Screencraft Stage Play Award and was nominated for an Off-West End Award. Her debut novel, *The Walled City*, is expected in Fall 2021. It is a crime novel, but also a family saga. Ahmad calls it “a story of relationships, about the roles of men and women in Pakistani society and the binds that family, industry, marriage, and political institutions impose on ordinary people.” She tells her followers on her Facebook page, “Through my writing, I hope to give the glory back to the giver of the gift. I ask you to read my work fairly but sincerely.”

**SELENA ANDERSON**

*Rona Jaffe 2019 & Current SJSU Faculty*

As one of the core faculty in SJSU’s M.F.A. Program, Selena Anderson is making an impact on campus through both her teaching and her writing. Anderson joined the faculty at SJSU in 2017 as an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing and is the Director of the Center for Literary Arts. She is also a 2019 winner of the Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award for fiction and is thrilled to “be in the sisterhood.” The Rona Jaffe Foundation press release comments that Anderson’s work “pushes the boundaries of realism and fantasy as she explores and interrogates the ideas of race, identity, and Black womanhood in the American South” and her nominator for the award feels that she “articulates, through brilliant prose, the fears and thoughts that preoccupy modern society [...] There is, at once, an emotional honesty and physical reality to her writing.” Her most recent collection of short stories, *Tenderoni*, explores race, identity, and Black womanhood in the American South. A reviewer from The Rona Jaffe Foundation describes her characters in these stories as “runaways, enchanted mirrors, judgy psychics, mischievous ghosts, tiny men, women who fall spontaneously pregnant, and girls yearning for connection and trying to survive.” Anderson has authored two novels: *Quinella* and *Cenisa, Samira, Monet*, and has plans for a new work about the Texas-to-Mexico underground railroad.

The SJSU College of Humanities and the Arts is proud of its tradition of support, not just for these seven exceptional women, but also so many other talented writers over the years. To date, 64 Steinbeck Fellows have received approximately $750,000 in support from the program and these writers have published 40 books. The college is also proud to be able to support the SJSU writing community with the expertise of exceptional writers by bringing them on campus as faculty members and lecturers. Having these seven outstanding SJSU-associated writers also receive a Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award is testament to the success of SJSU’s tradition of supporting talented and emerging writers. Congratulations to Yalitza and all of the past and future Rona Jaffe Writers’ Award winners!

To get more information, visit the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies website: [https://www.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/](https://www.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/).
After her last day of high school in 2013, graphic design undergraduate Vicky Vo sent out countless cold emails to Silicon Valley companies in the hopes of landing an internship in User Experience (UX) design. In the end, she only heard back from five. But this was just the beginning of Vicky’s journey into the UX design world, and it was the first indicator of her fierce determination that led to the rich experience she’s had since. Now a Forbes 30-under-30 candidate, Vicky uses that experience to uplift aspiring UX designers in the SJSU community through speaking events and her new organization, Students of UX Design.
In Vietnam and under the influence of her creative parents, a young Vicky Vo found her love of design as she experimented with Yahoo360, MySpace, photo editing, and logo design. Vicky’s interest in graphic design shifted to an interest in UX Design early on into her college career. Along with her passion for design, Vicky has also always been interested in human behavior. She took several psychology courses through online programs and her local community college. Given this, it is no surprise that Vicky found her perfect match in UX Design. With UX Design, Vicky says she is able to “apply [human] behavior and understanding human psychology and interactions, together with design. So it’s not just design for just visual effect, it’s also design for social impact and human impact.” This more technical side of graphic design asks designers to account for the user experience in addition to the aesthetics.

“If you’re in the UX Design field, you will never stop being a student.”

Although she has yet to receive her B.A. degree, Vicky is already a well-established part of the UX design community. She lists a three-month-long internship with Doordash as her favorite experience to date. Vicky worked on Doordash’s design team to create and launch new features of the food delivery app. One feature that she worked on and launched herself is the self-help feature, which assists users when they run into problems while using the app, need to chat with a representative, or need to be issued refunds. Another project that Vicky remembers fondly is her time with OrthoFX, a Fremont based tech dental company. Vicky became one of the youngest people in the company to be appointed the role of Lead Designer. She led the design team in building the company’s mobile app, website, and software. Her efforts helped OrthoFX secure 13 million dollars in Series A funding.

In addition to working with established companies and teams, Vicky also has experience with creating her own projects from the ground up. Earlier this year, Vicky and her friend, Julia, had the idea to create a platform for people in the design community to connect with one another, to learn together, and to promote themselves as individuals. In November, she launched an organization called Students of UX Design, which aims to accomplish these exact goals. The inspiration for this...
project stemmed from their desire to shift networking opportunities from project-based discussions to more personal discussions that concern the designers themselves. Vicky and Julia wanted to address the lack of community within the design field and also help students break into that community.

“**I wasn’t afraid of failure, and it helped me grow... So just ignore impostor syndrome, set a goal, and do it.**”

Although they’ve only recently launched, Vicky and her team have big plans for their organization, with several speaker events and learning opportunities already in the works. The program currently has over 600 students worldwide. Among those 600, 24 are SJSU students. The Students of UX Design is open to designers of all ages, backgrounds, and experience levels.

Because technology advances so rapidly, designers’ methods and tools are always changing. Vicky says, “If you’re in the UX Design field, you will never stop being a student.”

In addition to providing this platform for aspiring designers, Vicky has contributed to the SJSU community in other ways as well. In her spare time, Vicky hosts panels where she introduces the UX design field to interested students and discusses her experience. Normally, she holds these events separately from SJSU. However, Sandy Ho, Vicky’s advisor in the Humanities and the Arts Success Center, recently invited Vicky to host one of these panels in collaboration with the Success Center. This panel turned into a two-day event where Vicky shared her knowledge and insight with her fellow Spartans.

San José State does not currently have its own UX design program, so Vicky has helped to fill that void by hosting informational panels and creating her Students of UX Design organization. She hopes to continue uplifting her fellow UX designers—starting with those she shares a campus with. Vicky’s advice to students just beginning their journey to a career in UX design is to not be afraid of failure because it is part of the learning process. She cites herself as proof of this. “I wasn’t afraid of failure, and it helped me grow... So just ignore impostor syndrome, set a goal, and do it.”
The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, better known as simply the Steinbeck Center, has created a unique experience for scholars who value John Steinbeck’s influence on literature.

The Steinbeck Center’s Adventure for New Artifacts

By Elizabeth Cruz
The Center was opened in 1971 by Martha Heasley Cox, a professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature who served as Director of the Center until her retirement in the 1980s. Her incredible impact on the university was acknowledged when she won the Tower Award—the most prestigious award given to a member of the SJSU community per year for exemplary work—in 2000. The award was given to her for the creation of the Steinbeck Fellows Program, which is now overseen by Steinbeck Center Director Nick Taylor.

The Center began with a phenomenal director and is still being led phenomenally by Professor Taylor, as he follows in her footsteps of curating the Steinbeck Center. Because of Dr. Cox, Professor Taylor, and staff at SJSU who are dedicated to keeping Steinbeck’s legacy alive, the Steinbeck Center has become the largest publicly accessible university archive of Steinbeck materials in the world. Steinbeck’s third wife, Elaine, had a daughter named Waverly Scott and she inherited the Steinbeck estate after Elaine’s death. Waverly’s children later became holders of the estate and in February they held an auction in New Jersey, which Professor Taylor attended in his efforts to expand the Center’s artifact holdings. Taylor provides background on the auction and where the money came from: “While some of the money for the auction came from university sources, the Center’s archivist, Peter Van Coutren and I fundraised money specifically for this auction,” however, the majority of the money was fundraised through great support from the advisory board, which consists of faculty and members of the Steinbeck community.

The Steinbeck community anticipated unique artifacts and was hoping for interesting pieces to expand the collection. During the auction, Professor Taylor obtained many photographs and manuscripts from Steinbeck, along with a guest list for Steinbeck’s uncle’s party. While Steinbeck had many adventures on his own, Professor Taylor informs us that “Elaine loved photography and they loved to travel together. We were able to get some really awesome family photos of them on vacation.” Professor Taylor described one of their trips to the Midsummer festival in Sweden, which is a summer solstice celebrated in June. They also obtained photos of them in Algeria, Morocco, and Spain. The photos exhibit how adventurous he and his wife were, adding great value to our collection.

Professor Taylor included that they obtained additional photos from an archeological dig Steinbeck and Elaine did in England. Professor Taylor says “In the 1950s Steinbeck investigated the Arthurian legends and throughout his whole life he was obsessed with King Arthur and knights of the round table.” Steinbeck and his wife moved to England to investigate, showing how important archeological digs were to them.

One of the manuscripts was Steinbeck’s poem in Spanish that he wrote while in Cuenca, Spain titled, “Mayo”.

“...the Steinbeck Center has become the largest publicly accessible university archive of Steinbeck materials in the world”
The second manuscript was a poem Steinbeck wrote while he and Elaine were living in Paris titled “The Affair at 1 Avenue de M.” The manuscripts tell stories of his life in different places and shows Steinbeck as more than just an author, but a man who loved to travel the world.

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Throughout Steinbeck’s novels like *Travels with Charley in Search of America* and *The Moon is Down*, he invites his audience into his adventurous life and his newest editions to the Steinbeck Center continue to prove his love for traveling. Although Steinbeck’s travels drew inspiration to many of his novels, his classics were written in his home here in California, where his legacy continues to live on.

Since the Center is closed due to the pandemic, Professor Taylor adds “The photos will be scanned and tagged to be placed on the photo database of the Center’s website (University Special Collection systems- University library digital collections), which is open to the public, as soon as we can get back into the office.”

These artifacts, unlike the vacation photos, will be used mainly for scholarly review and will be placed in the Center’s vault. Professor Taylors explains that “The way that special collections and university archives work, is that you identify what you want by looking in the library catalog.” When the artifacts are ready for viewing, an appointment is needed with the archivist, Peter Van Coutren, and he will bring out the items wearing gloves. The artifacts are extremely rare and fragile, so the Center ensures people viewing the artifacts treat them delicately and with respect.

For now, the Steinbeck Center invites you all to pay the website a visit to view the wonderful artifacts and learn even more about the Center’s contribution to the Steinbeck community. 

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