CSUSM RETIREES

May 2025



Message from the Chair

Greetings everyone and happy spring! This will be my last chair report for the Tukwut Times as my four years on the Advisory Council comes to an end at the end of next month. How quickly four years has gone by. It has been a pleasure and honor serving on the council with some amazing and dedicated retirees with the support of fantastic staff that make our work so easy: Lori Brockett and Anna Fleming. Heartfelt thanks to all of you.

If you were unable to attend our annual luncheon and business meeting on April 30th, I'd like to provide some highlights of the day. We selected a new venue: The Innovation Hub in the Extended Learning Building and it did not disappoint. After a wonderful mediterranean buffet, Dr. Scott Gross filled us in on what actually takes place in the Innovation Hub including building mutually beneficial partnerships with the community to create opportunities for social innovation between students, faculty and industry. Dr. Gross shared details about creative programs that have been highly successful for Cal State San Marcos students and faculty.

At the business meeting I was able to share some truly exciting news with those in attendance - news that speaks volumes about what we can accomplish together as a community. Thanks to the Retirees Association's incredible generosity and steadfast support, we have fully funded our endowed scholarship fund. We only initiated the fund in April 2023 and had five years to raise the required $25,000. In true RA spirit, we reached our goal in just two years. Thank you to all of you who donated to this fund; we will be able to award our first scholarships next year.

Even though I will be leaving the Advisory Council, I plan to remain active in the Retirees Association. I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events.

Take care,

Pam



Pam Wells, Chair

Past Events

Annual Business Meeting & Luncheon









Upcoming Events



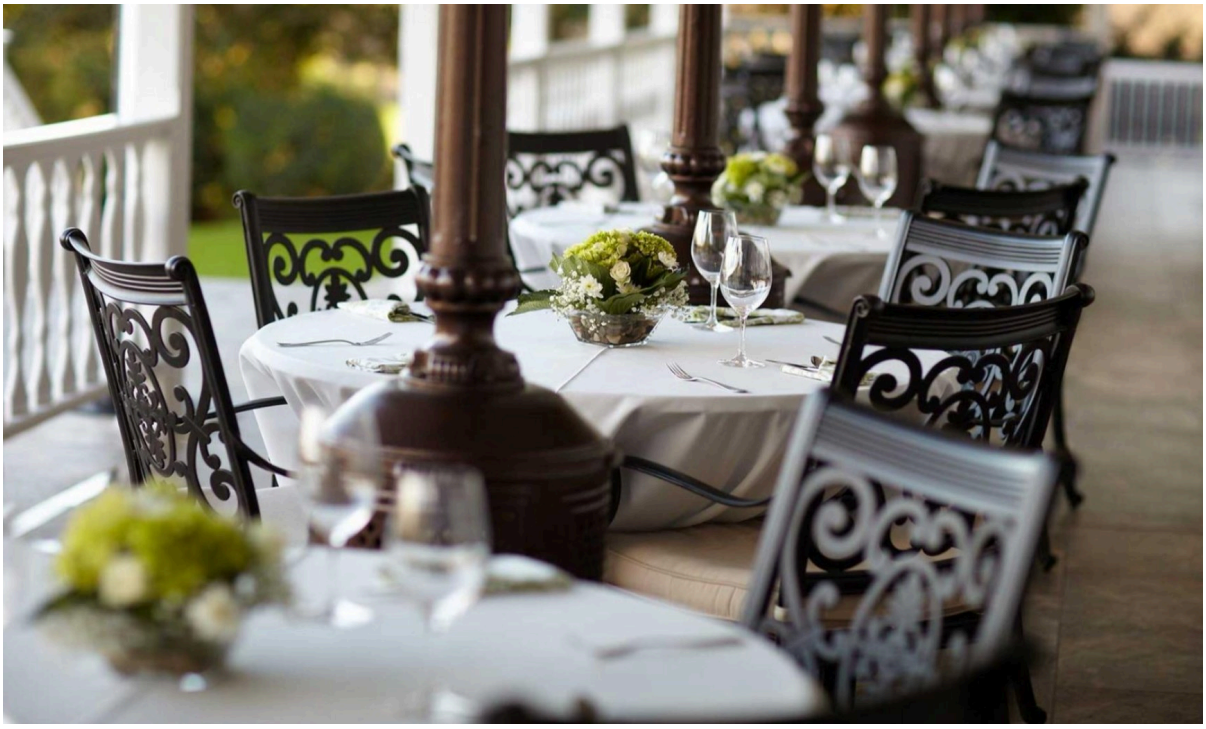
Lavender Farm Visit

Thursday, June 5, 2025
2:00 pm

Join fellow CSUSM Retirees Association members for a relaxing afternoon at A Little Bit of Land, a charming boutique lavender farm nestled in the hills of Vista. The farm is proudly run by CSUSM faculty member Catherine Matsumoto, who will share insights into her journey with sustainable farming and the benefits of lavender cultivation.

Stroll through the fragrant fields, learn about small-scale farming practices, and browse a selection of handmade lavender products. After the farm visit, you're invited to continue the afternoon with an optional meet-up at Sunshine Mountain Vineyards, located just a short drive away.

Register for Lavendar Farm Event



Fallbrook Focus: Lunch & Art Exhibit

(Rescheduled from March)
Thursday, August 7, 2025
Noon

Come and savor a delightful al fresco lunch at the stunning Grand Tradition in Fallbrook! Afterward, we'll take a short drive to the Fallbrook Art Center for the Galaxy of Glass exhibit guided by the wonderful fellow Retirees Association member, Dr. Jennifer Jeffries. This is an event you won't want to miss, register today—spots are limited!

Registration is currently full. If you'd like to be added to the waitlist, email retirees@csusm.edu.

Fallbrook Event Page



2025 Carlsbad Beach Walk & Lunch

Wed, Sep 10, 2025
11:15 am

Reconnect with fellow CSUSM retirees at one of our favorite spots—Carlsbad State Beach! Enjoy fresh ocean air, a relaxing walk, and great conversation over lunch with a stunning view. This outing is such a favorite with retirees that we offer it every year.

Register for Carlsbad Event

CSUSM Retirees Advisory Council Election

It's time to fill our open positions on the RA Advisory Council for the upcoming year. We are thankful to Judith Downie, Danna Wright & Paul Tiglao who will continue to serve on the Council. We are pleased to announce that Helen Purcell Montag and Robert Carolin have volunteered to fill the two open positions. In order to make it official, we put it out to our members to vote.

Special thanks Pam Wells and Maureen O'Connor DuPont who have completed their terms. We appreciate their leadership and know both will continue to attend events in the future.

Vote Now

Tukwut Profile: Helen Purcell Montag



Robert Aiello-Hauser and Helen Purcell Montag receiving their Masters in Education May 2013



Supporting Student Success! FA&S staff at CSUSM's 'Cash for College' event, hosted in partnership with the California Student Aid Commission, 2015.



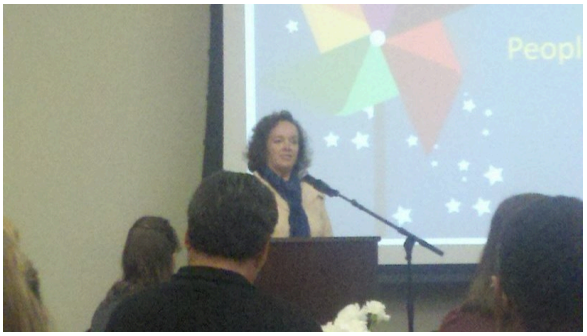


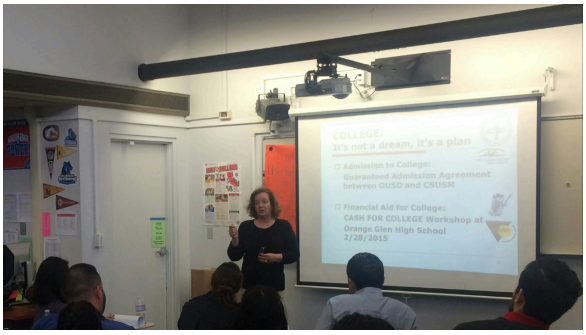
Down the Rabbit Hole with FA&S! Dressed as whimsical Alice in Wonderland characters, the team brought a touch of fantasy and fun to campus Halloween festivities, 2013.













Helen Purcell Montag retired from California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) as the Assistant Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships, a role she cherished for the opportunity it gave her to connect with students, staff, and instructors. One of the most rewarding and engaging aspects of her role was visiting local high schools and community colleges, where she had the opportunity to guide students and families through the often-confusing world of financial aid. She also found fulfillment in training staff in the complexities of need-based eligibility and awards, ensuring they were equipped to support students with clarity and confidence.

While at CSUSM, she pursued and earned her ***MAEd in Multicultural Education***, deepening her understanding of equity and student support while continuing her work at CSUSM. Her commitment to inclusion and equity earned her CSUSM's ***Jonathan Poullard Award***, along with recognition as both a ***'People's Choice'*** recipient and ***'Student Services Employee of the Year,'*** reflecting her dedication to creating a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive campus environment.

Retirement has offered the chance to keep pursuing the things she loves. For several years, Helen presented financial aid information to college-bound high school students at county-wide "Cash for College" events sponsored by Student Outreach and Engagement office at UC San Diego. She informed students about Cal Grants available to both citizens and eligible non-citizens, including those who meet AB540 eligibility criteria through the California Dream Act Application.

Fluent in Spanish, she drew on that skill in her outreach to community colleges and high schools, especially when working with first-generation, college-bound students. Her ability to communicate directly with students and families made a lasting difference, and she felt privileged to build meaningful connections with those navigating higher education for the first time.

For Helen, the simple pleasures of gardening have always been a meaningful source of fulfillment, inspiring curiosity and a lifelong desire to keep learning. She especially enjoys helping fellow gardeners and county residents explore San Diego's rich horticultural heritage. As a UC Master Gardener and Docent at the San Diego Botanic Garden, Helen has enjoyed writing about the stories behind plants and landscapes and finds real joy in helping others grow—both in their gardens and in their appreciation San Diego's natural world.

Today, Helen serves as Co-Chair of the UC Master Gardener Committee that creates and maintains four demonstration gardens. ***The Demo Garden at The Flower Fields in Carlsbad***, just a short drive from the CSU San Marcos campus, features a variety of vignette gardens on display. Visitors will find everything from water-wise gardens to pollinator-friendly spaces, each highlighting different gardening styles. With the ranunculus at their peak bloom, she encourages

everyone to visit and experience both the vibrant flowers and the beautiful garden displays open to the public through May 19th!

More recently, writing has become a rediscovered creative outlet. During her CSUSM years, Helen's writing focused on creating, revising, and maintaining financial aid policies and procedures that not only ensured compliance with state and federal regulations but also served as essential tools for training and guiding staff. When the COVID pandemic arrived, those same skills found a new life in the form of creative nonfiction. Her articles for ***Southern California Gardener*** magazine and the ***San Diego Union-Tribune's Garden Mastery*** column blend horticultural information with local San Diego history, covering topics such as the native landscapes of Torrey Pines State Park, the vibrant Flower Fields in Carlsbad, the replica kitchen garden at Cabrillo National Monument, the botanical collections at the San Diego Zoo, and the rich history of Balboa Park's 1915 and 1935 exposition gardens. When asked what she's currently working on, Helen shared: 'I'm writing about Leo Carrillo Ranch and Historic Park in Carlsbad. It's a place full of personality and layers of local history, and I'm enjoying the challenge of bringing it to life on the page."

A lifelong learner and avid researcher, Helen brings the same spirit of curiosity to genealogy, where she presented original research findings at the Spring Seminar of the ***North San Diego County Genealogical Society*** on the family of American painter Robert Henri and his wife, Marjorie Organ Henri. In a conversation about what draws her to these artists, Helen shared: "I admire the way Robert Henri's paintings captured the essence of everyday people, always with honesty and dignity, no matter who they were. And I love the witty caricatures drawn by his wife, Marjorie. They show her sharp eye, sense of humor, and give such a lively window into their circle of friends and fellow artists."

Now a candidate for the CSUSM Retirees Advisory Council, Helen is eager to reconnect with the campus community and share her experience and perspectives. Energized by learning, sharing, and connection, she continues to build meaningful relationships in this next chapter of life.

Welcome New and Renewing Members

We are honored to welcome the following new and renewing members into our CSUSM Retirees Association family. We look forward to seeing and connecting with you all at an upcoming event.

Damon Adamo
Charles Allen
Theresa Aitchison
Christine Ashley
Clarisa Bercovich Guelman
Bonnie Campbell
Deb Bennet
Ivalee Clark
Marilyn Ferri
Karen Irwin
Dennis Jaehne
Lise Llanes
Deirdre Lowell-Caldera
Esther Minturn
Virgian Morrissette Hughes

Thomas Olson
Teresa Roudenbush
Barbara Sainz
John Segoria
John Schneider
Paul Tiglao
Mary Ann Wallner

RA Advisory Council

Chair - Pamela Wells
Vice Chair - Danna Wright
Treasurer - Maureen O'Connor DuPont
Recorder - Judith Downie
Member at Large - Paul Tiglao

CSUSM Retirees Association

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