Hello, CASSA Members! If you are new to CASSA this year, welcome! If you’ve been a member for a while, we’re so glad you’ve continued to participate. We hope you all have had a wonderful semester as part of this organization and genuinely appreciate your commitment! Without its fabulous members, CASSA would not continue to thrive as a leading club on campus! As the semester comes to an end, take a moment to give yourselves a huge round of applause. Collectively, you have done a tremendous amount of service through CASSA, including numerous events that have contributed to the well-being of children in our local community. You should not only be proud of your efforts, but you should also be honored to be among so many like-minded students. As advisors of CASSA, we continue to be blown away by how much the club is able to accomplish in just a single semester! It is such a privilege to be your advisors! We sincerely hope you enjoy your much-deserved break and look forward to seeing what you’ll accomplish in 2019!
Hello CASSA! My name is Melissa Viana and I am the Executive President of CASSA. My job entails being the official spokesperson and representing our organization. I send out all those updates you receive each Sunday. My main responsibility is to make sure every event runs smoothly and to respond to any issue that may arise throughout the year. This year will be my third year of being a part of CASSA. I first joined as a member when I was a sophomore. The best decision I made was to run for a position on the executive board as a junior. Now, as a senior, I’m the current executive president. I can’t imagine not being a part of such an amazing group of individuals. The best part of being in CASSA is getting to know the members and hearing everyone’s journey in college. The friends I have made in CASSA are now some of my closest friends. In addition, CASSA has allowed me to connect with faculty and work closely with them. I have seen how much work they put in to make our department as amazing it is. My dear CASSA members, my hope is that you all would realize your true potential and never doubt yourself. Once you have the realization that you have the power to make a difference, you WILL make a difference. Do something you normally wouldn’t see yourself doing. I never imagined I could be a leader of an organization on campus, but here I am. I shoved self-doubt out of the way and ran for a position. If you knew 2017 me, you would know that it was totally out of character for me to pursue a leadership position. Push negativity out of the way, build just enough courage, and throw yourself out there. We are TITANS!

Ashton Faragalli- Vice President

Hello CASSA! My responsibilities include managing the CASSA website, advertising all our events through social media, organizing donation drives, and planning different walks/runs for a cause. I love that CASSA is a fun way for me to get involved in college and meet new people. In addition, I love being able to volunteer and make a difference in children’s lives and networking with different organizations and companies. I want to encourage you all never to pass up an opportunity. If there is an opportunity that comes your way, and it might have an impact on your future, then take it! Never be afraid to go after what you want, and always push yourself over your limits, because the best opportunities present themselves in that environment.
Hello CASSA! This is Jennifer Garcia, as one of your Community Project Managers. My job is to contact organizations to coordinate community service events. I enjoy helping out in my community, and CASSA offers different community service events for our members to be a part of, while working with children, adolescents, and families. One of my favorite Fall 2018 events was the Best Buddies’ “Fall Masquerade Formal”. This event was about inclusion, friendship, and having a great time. Our members were assigned a Buddy who was a student with an intellectual and/or developmental disability. This was a new experience for me, and I had a wonderful time. It was a pleasure seeing many smiles and making new friends. Most importantly feeling valued and included by everyone around us. My advice to you all is to get involved on campus. Your time at CSUF will go by quickly, and before you know it, graduation time will be here. Get involved and try to get out of your comfort zone so that you can experience new opportunities.

Hi CASSA! My name is Tiana Simons, and I work alongside Jennifer Garcia to coordinate community service events for our members to enjoy. For example, when planning visits to Orangewood Children's Home, I conduct a sign-up list, randomly select members to attend (to be fair) and give them the information they need to know, so they are prepared for the event. I communicate with the event coordinators to set up future events and notify them on how many members will be attending. Honestly, my favorite part about CASSA is the friendships. I started at CSUF as a Freshman, and it was tough for me to make friends at first. CASSA provided me with a loving community where I felt safe to be myself. Together, we serve kids and families in our community; it is one of the best feelings! Here are a couple of encouragements that have helped me throughout my college experience: "When you can't control what's happening, try to control the way you respond to what's happening; that's where your power is." We are at a unique time in our lives when we are figuring out how to be adults while also navigating life struggles, exams, and assignments. Remember to take care of yourself and seek relationships and friendships with those around you. I wouldn't be where I am today without my friends and family who have supported me. Find your people, and hold on to them. :)

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Christian Garcia - Departmental Awards and Activities Manager

Hello CASSA! My name is Christian Garcia, and I am your Event and Activities Manager for the 2018-2019 academic year. My Board responsibilities focus on organizing this year’s socials and co-planning the department’s Alumni Mixer and Celebration of Achievement. I also update our CASSA Bulletin Board once a month. What I love about CASSA is the unity and cohesion of students wanting to make a difference. I’m very passionate about helping children in the community. I love that through CASSA, I can meet people who feel the same way. My advice to other CASSA members: always push yourself to be involved in extracurricular activities, try to meet new people, and make new friends. College offers experiences that usually only come once. Don’t just power through it, slow down and make a few memories.

Juan Cuevas – Finance Manager

Hello CASSA, my name is Juan Cuevas, and I am the Finance Manager for 2018-2019. My position's responsibilities include setting-up special fundraisers for CASSA, as well as maintaining the CASSA budget for the academic year. What I love the most about CASSA is meeting different types of people and being able to build strong friendships with everyone. It is because of CASSA that my CSUF experience has been better than I ever expected. I encourage you to break out of your comfort zone because you would be amazed at how much you can learn from others, and especially, what you will learn about yourself.

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Melanie Ascencio- Membership Manager

Hello CASSA! My name is Melanie Ascencio, and I am this year’s Membership Manager. My role requires sending emails to interested members, provide them with details on how to join this organization, and how many hours are needed to accumulate. After setting deadlines to join, I create a spreadsheet with membership information, and I use it to keep members' hours documented. My favorite part about CASSA is the friendships that I have made along the way. I encourage all members to participate in as many organizations as possible to create networking opportunities. Also, do not be afraid of not knowing what the future holds for you, take it a step by step. I hope this year creates new and fun opportunities for you all.

Susan Geiger- Professional and Career Development Manager

Hi there CASSA members! My name is Susan Geiger, and I am this year’s Professional and Career Development Manager! For my position, I bring in the bi-monthly guest speakers, select at least one conference per semester for CASSA to attend, as well as informing members of any job or internship opportunities! My favorite part about CASSA has been all the incredible people who make up this great organization! Since day 1, I have been so inspired and motivated by every one of our members, especially my fellow Board members. By being involved in CASSA, I have had numerous opportunities to be involved in my community, learn about the different careers one can have with my major, as well as improved and strengthen so many of the skills I have today. The advice I can give to CASSA members is that when you have an opportunity, jump on it. I have learned that great opportunities do not come around every day, so, when they do come around, I encourage you to take it! Going out of your comfort zone is one of the best things you can do for yourself; you never know what may lie ahead if you are always stuck in the same place. Today, I serve on the CASSA Board because someone gave me an opportunity, one that put me way out of my comfort zone and has required a lot of courage, but alas I said: “count me in.” Although it was hard, I jumped on the opportunity, ran for my position, and here I am.

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Vivian Lu– ICC Representative

Hi CASSA! My responsibilities include attending the weekly meetings for the College of Health and Human Development’s Inter-Club Council. In these meetings, I represent CASSA and request funds for our organization, while informing other HHD student clubs of CASSA events. I also meet and collaborate with other clubs within the College of HHD every week. In addition, I reach-out and build relationships with the Irvine Campus students. What I love the most about CASSA is the community, the networking, and most importantly, the members. Do what you love, ask for help if need it, but always remember self-care! (: I personally like to end my day with a cup of hot tea and journal. What do you like to do?

Claudia Villaseñor– Information Manager

Hello CASSA :)! My name is Claudia, and I serve as your Information Manager! My responsibilities include recording the information discussed during our Executive Board Meetings, as well as being the Editor of the CASSA Newsletter. I love being part of CASSA because I have made meaningful friendships, and I had the opportunity to participate in amazing events. After being part of the Executive Board for one semester, I have developed both professional and leadership skills, which have enabled me to grow as a person and as a student leader. For that reason, my word of advice is this: try to seek meaningful experiences, such as participating in leadership positions or volunteering in an area that you are interested in. By doing this, you can build friendships and open new doors for other amazing opportunities. With that being said, good luck in all your academic and personal endeavors, and thank you for being part of CASSA :)!

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
Community Service & Walks

Samantha Morton - Brain Tumor Walk, September 15

I was one of the CASSA members that attended the Brain Tumor Walk on Saturday September 15th at 9am at the Angels Stadium in Anaheim. This event was organized by the National Brain Tumor Society, whose goal is to awareness about this illness and raise funds for patients. The CASSA club attendees were Ashton, Melissa, and Alicia, and me. At the entrance and registration line organizers handed out T-shirts. The CASSA club made it on the jumbotron when we walked past the camera. I felt like we were taking part in a good cause and this made the walk an enjoyable experience. A lot of people brought their dog with them. For example, Ashton brought her doggy Leia. For a new member of the CASSA club, like me, this event was a good opportunity to meet other members and hang out a little. I got more personal time with the CASSA board and new club members.

Sarah Preston - Orangewood Children’s Home, September 21

On September 21st, I was chosen to visit the kids at Orangewood! We interacted with 15 children around ages 2-10 years old. CASSA members brought board games and crafts for them to play with. I pulled out a couple balloons and the kids went wild! One little girl I got to bond with played with her balloon the whole entire time! It was so sweet to see how happy the activities had made them. The event was special for both the children and the CASSA volunteers because everyone got to forget about their stress for 2 hours and just have fun together. I had an amazing time and I was truly touched by the whole experience. Thank you CASSA for providing such an awesome opportunity for members! I will definitely be signing up to go again!
Community Service & Walks

Alexis Flores- Light the Night Walk, September 22

The Light the Night Walk, which was sponsored by the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, promotes awareness of blood cancers and raises funds for research. This event also serves as a support system for patients and their families. The event, which took place at the Angel Stadium, was full of emotional and spirited moments. The idea was to “light the night” with the multicolored lanterns to represent whether we have been affected (white), know someone battling the disease (yellow), or just a supporter (red). It was definitely a moment to take in, as it was breathtaking to understand how many people have been affected, but especially by how many people just come to support and raise awareness and funds for a cure. The event allowed participants to go through the field, and some people even appeared on the jumbotron (and yes, CASSA did get on it). There was even an abundance of food trucks, and we purchased food and dessert. Overall, the event was amazing, and it was great to hear the organization’s message of hope, try new foods, and meet new CASSA members and build new friendships.

Rebecca No- Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital, September 28

I was able to go to the Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital for an opportunity to volunteer with the children at that hospital. I knew that every volunteer opportunity at the hospital would be different therefore, I was looking forward to going back. This time around, only one teenager came out to play with the CASSA group. At first, I thought this would be sort of uncomfortable as it was one teenager among a group of college students. However, I was surprised to see how well the two hours went. We were all able to bond with the teenager by playing card games. The two hours went by so quickly, it felt like at a blink of my eyes, it already was time to leave. I hope I can volunteer at Miller Children’s Women’s Hospital once again.
Community Service & Walks

Susan Geiger- Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital, October 5th

Hello CASSA Members! My name is Susan Geiger, and I accompanied five other members to Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital; it was such a fun experience! Originally, all of us were supposed to be hanging out in the playroom of their general floor until they realized there were not going to be too many patients to come in. During this time they asked if two of us wanted to go up to a different playroom on the oncology floor. One of the CASSA members and I made our way up to this room. We got to hang out with preteens and a couple of teens during this time. My activity was making friendship bracelets with string. I used to make these all the time when I was younger, so I had a couple of different techniques in mind. I had the opportunity to take my string and go to a couple of different rooms of young girls who did not want to leave their room that day. I spent a few minutes in each room demonstrating how to make these bracelets. Both girls had such a great time, and it was such a special moment to see a smile on their faces! I had such a great experience during my time at Miller’s, I cannot wait to go again!

Alicia Kuhn- Orangewood Children’s Home, October 5th

I had the amazing opportunity to go to Orangewood Children’s Home with my fellow CASSA members. We spent time with children ages 1 ½ all the way up to 12 years old. All of these children were so eager to spend time with us and were excited to play the games and crafts that we brought for them. We were there to spend time with them and lighten up their day with fun activities; these children ended up lightening up my day with their smiles, energy, and kindness. It was so eye-opening to see the close friendships between the children, as well as how welcoming these children were to accept our friendship. I hope to be able to go back to Orangewood to be able to experience this again!
Community Service & Walks

**Samena Premjee- Orangewood Children’s Home, October 12**

I truly enjoyed volunteering at the Orangewood Children’s Home. My fellow CASSA members brought a bunch of board games and activities to do with the children, which they thoroughly enjoyed. I think that the children really appreciate when groups like CASSA come and spend time with them, because it makes them feel special and valued. Through these volunteering efforts, I feel that you are really able to make a positive impact in these children’s lives. I got to play Jenga and Connect Four with some of the kids, and every time the Jenga pieces would fall over, a huge smile would come on that child’s face. To me, it’s the smile that makes it all worth it. I would definitely recommend volunteering at the Orangewood Children’s Home, because it is a great way to make an impact and spend time with children who really need it. Children, who are in places like Orangewood Children’s Home, just want someone to talk to or play games with. Giving them that time and attention can make such a huge difference in their self-esteem. It’s a great way to serve as a mentor to them as well. I really enjoyed my experience and I hope that I am able to go again!

**Sabrina Flores- Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital, October 19**

I had the opportunity to volunteer at Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital. This was my first time volunteering at the Children’s Center, so I brought the game Jenga as my activity for the children to play with. Other CASSA members brought other interactive and fun activities for the children, such as card games, coloring books, and arts and crafts. As we walked into the Children’s Center, there was only one person. At the beginning, she was very shy and quiet. Every time we asked her a question she would reply with a nervous but friendly smile. When we were playing Jenga, she started to feel more comfortable with us. While playing Jenga, she was a little risk-taker pulling out any block she wanted without tipping the blocks over. On the other hand, all the CASSA members played it safe and tapped on the blocks before committing. We were all having such a great time playing games with our new friend. Without a doubt, I would definitely visit Miller’s again. Nothing felt better than seeing our little friend smile and laugh every time the Jenga tower fell. I really enjoyed this experience and can’t wait to make more new friends next time I attend this event.

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
Community Service & Walks

Katherine Nguyen - Raymond School Festival, October 19

This was my second time doing a carnival at an elementary school. I wasn’t there for the most part, but I fell in love with the environment that this school had offered. I was part of the clean-up crew and did not have to come until the end. I am so glad I came 2 hours early and got the opportunity to see amazing decorations, happy faces from the kids and the adults. The carnival staff and our CASSA crew were amazing! The event was a bit understaffed, but the CASSA crew became superheroes, making the kids and their families enjoy the games to the fullest by showing enthusiasm. I even heard from the staff members how much they just loved and appreciate us. If I could, I would participate in this event again, and I am so thankful that I was given this opportunity.

Diamond Byrd - Muscular Dystrophy Association Walk, October 20

I had such a great experience attending the MDA Muscle Walk on October 20th; it was my second walk of the semester. Not only did I attend this walk to get out and enjoy the sun, but also for the self-rewarding feeling of knowing how much I have impacted the cause by participating in this walk. I was also so glad to be accompanied by my two little cousins who realized the importance and impact they can have on the world by attending events like this walk. They were so excited; they wanted to run the entire way! It was a fantastic experience for all 3 of us and something I will continue to do. Thank you CASSA for enabling these awesome opportunities to pay it forward and make a change!

Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
Community Service & Walks

Cathy Nguyen - Social for Adults with Autism, October 21

This was my first event for the Fall 2018 semester. This was exciting for me because I had once volunteered for this same event, but for another club on campus. Therefore, I had an idea of how the event was going to run. This year, while participating in the event, CASSA was in charge of directing traffic and showing our visitors the way into the event. When greeting our visitors, I was surprised at how many people I recognized from the year before when I participated in this event. This to me mean that the social was important for individuals with Autism. This social was a great way for adults with Autism to get to know other CSUF students. The event had different stations for the participants to engage in. To name a few, there were arts and crafts, billiards, bowling, and many more. Food was also provided for all the attendees and volunteers. The participants were also given raffle tickets to win certain prizes such as movie tickets, books, baseball hats, sweets basket, CSUF gear, and other great prizes. CASSA was also in charge of giving out prizes to the raffle ticket winners at the end of the event. It was so exciting to see so many happy faces when the individual’s name was called out for the winning prize! This made my first event of the semester meaningful, and I am glad I participated in this event.

Savannah Caraway - Orange County Zootacular, October 27

We arrived at the park around noon and went through a small gate into the zoo which is private from the rest of the park. The volunteer staff was extremely friendly and helpful; they provided snacks, drinks, and clear instructions about what we needed to do and where to go. I was one of the volunteers at the third scavenger hunt table: the porcupine table. At this table, the children needed to answer a question: “which animal has over 30,000 quills?”, and their answer was to be “North American porcupine.” For our younger friends, a hint was perfectly acceptable. On the table, the children also learned about the beaver; there were rubber molds of the front and back feet of the beaver, pelts, porcupine quills, and the best of all - candy. The children were so wonderful to talk to, and their families seemed to enjoy learning more about the beaver and porcupine. I had a lovely afternoon, and it was great to see the creativity of the costumes. At the end of the afternoon, the zoo staff even brought out a real porcupine for us to see!

Pictures courtesy of Lesley Almaraz & Executive Board
Community Service & Walks

Bethany Castillo, Orangewood Children’s Home, November 2nd

I have only been to Orangewood once before, in Fall of 2017, and I’ve been eager to come back. That visit was with school-age children. This time we were going to be visiting 12-18 year-old girls. I had no idea how this was going to go. The other CASSA members and I brought board games, card games, and different craft supplies to engage in with the girls. It was going really well, but during this time of crafting and games, there were a few girls who were eager to get a game of basketball going. After awhile, they convinced a few of the CASSA members to play with them, but they wanted more people. I had initially said “no thank you” and explained that I didn’t know how to play basketball. After some pressing, I and few other members finally agreed. It ended up being a REALLY fun game, with approximately four or five people on each team. My team lost (twice), but we had fun doing it! I was laughing so hard almost the whole time for a couple of reasons: 1) it was actually really fun to play with those girls and the other CASSA members (half of whom knew how to play, while the other half winged it like me), and 2) I felt super awkward not knowing how to play, and I laugh a lot when I feel awkward. The girls didn’t care that we didn’t know how to play; they were just happy that we joined in their game.

Regina Cortez, Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital, November 3rd

My name is Regina, and I attended the Miller Children’s & Women’s Hospital in Long Beach on Saturday, November 2nd. The playrooms provide structured and unstructured developmental activities, multimedia entertainment and offer children diversional and therapeutic activities or toys for patients of all ages. The playroom is open seven days a week, at specific times, and were lucky to find one patient and her father sitting at the table working on an activity. We introduced ourselves and admired her artwork that she was working on; meanwhile, we asked about her age, what grade she was in, and what she was designing. Two other members and I brought activities which consisted of a card game called “Speed,” beautiful/fun coloring pages & markers, and probably the most popular activity by the patient, “Jenga!” I would have to say that the patient’s favorite part of the game was watching the pieces fall, knowing she beat us. My favorite part was watching us lose too because observing her reaction was priceless! The patient smiled from ear to ear, followed by hysterical laughter. I knew during those moments that she was genuinely engaging at the moment and enjoying herself. I am thankful for the opportunity to volunteer and will not forget meeting such a strong young girl who is making the best of her situation.

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
Community Service & Walks

Christopher Valdivia- Orangewood, Children’s Home, November 16

I had a great time playing with the children at the Orangewood Children’s Home! This experience made me very appreciative! CASSA waited at the basketball court until the kids arrived to play basketball with us. I brought Jenga (wooden blocks game), so everyone could play with me since the game requires three or more players to participate. Before starting the game, I played with a supervisor and a boy, before a couple of other kids came to play. We had a fun time building up the wooden blocks; it was fun pulling them out, one by one, until a person finally made everything collapsed. At the end, the CASSA members took a picture before heading home. There is me, in the middle, holding the Jenga game.

More memorable Pictures from Community Service Events and Walks

All Pictures courtesy of Executive Board
**Conferences**

**Emily Villegas- Road to Teaching Conference, November 17**

The Road to Teaching conference at Santa Ana College was an inspirational event that offered attendees the opportunity to learn from other educators about the teaching profession. The highly anticipated keynote speaker, Joe Dombrowski, has been featured on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, and is well-known for his witty Instagram content revealing the comical realities of life as a teacher. Being strictly a Title I teacher, Dombrowski offered an innovative outlook on creating community within the classroom, and making school a place where students feel at home. At the conference, attendees also learned about the importance of fluency in young readers, cultural pluralism, effective means of classroom management, engagement techniques, and how to involve parents in their child’s education. This conference was especially beneficial for CASSA members because many of CSUF professors were speakers at the conference, and they were able to share their experiences in their area of expertise. The involvement that CSUF displayed at the Road to Teaching Conference showed the intent, and dedication that the university has for future teachers.

**Maribel Diaz- OCAEYC Conference, November 17**

I have been with CASSA almost 2 years and have done many different volunteer opportunities in different locations. This year’s Orange County’s Association for the Education of Young Children (OCAEYC) annual conference event was one of my favorites events so far to help volunteer in. Not only was I able to learn basic information about a child’s development, learning comprehension, and how to help them better focus on learning; I was able to hear John Parra opening speech. John Parra was a guest speaker for this year’s annual event (an illustrator that has done children’s books like *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos*). I am a double major in graphic design/illustrator so I was very excited to hear what he had to say. It was an ultimate surprise to find out an illustrator was speaking and the type of work he reproduces was a representation of my Mexican culture. I was even lucky enough to be able to volunteer on the same room where he was having his workshop. While assisting people and answering their questions on my booth, I was also able to hear important information about the process of creating his illustrations. I was blessed enough when he sold me one of his autographed pieces, and I even took a photo with him. I had an amazing time with CASSA at this conference! I gained important knowledge, and I would definitely recommend others to attend to OCAEYC next year.

*Pictures courtesy of Maribel Diaz & Executive Board*
Interview by:

Marilena Cristea & Tania Rodriguez

Undergrad and graduate education

San Diego State University - Psychology B.A. Degree
UCLA Developmental Psychology, M.A and Ph.D Degrees

Favorite class to teach
I like teaching any classes that focus on adolescence because that’s the developmental period that my research focuses on. I enjoy teaching CAS 325B, which is Age 9 through Adolescence, also CAS 330: Adolescence and Early Adulthood.

Interesting fact about you
I am a pretty cautious person in life, so most people would be surprised to know that I’ve done some risky things, like hang gliding in Brazil, and parasailing. I always said I wanted to go skydiving, and that’s still on my list.

Was working in higher education always your goal? What was the turning point that made you realize you wanted to pursue a career in higher education?
Working in higher education was not always my goal. Growing up, I had a lot of ideas of what I wanted to do, ranging from being an author, a social worker, a party planner or a clinical child psychologist. As a junior in undergrad, I was a research assistant in a lab that focused on dating violence and school bullying and I got to work with Dr. Hokoda who ended up being my mentor. I got to see what her day looked like, what it meant to be a professor. Seeing the way she impacted my life made me realize I would love to be able to do that for students. I also was able to see all the other aspects that go into being a professor: the research, the teaching, the service.

What do you like best about teaching at CSUF?
I love being back at a Cal State University, because my undergrad was at a Cal State University in San Diego, I always wanted to come back to CSUs. I love the diversity of our students, in term of ethnicities, family backgrounds, career goals, so I love meeting with our students, learning from our students, and hopefully being able to guide them in a meaningful way.
What is your background (origin, family, school etc.) and how did your background influence your career goal?

I am Mexican-American, I am a first-generation college student, I am a child of immigrants and I grew up in San Diego and I went to my local Cal State University campus. All of this has influenced my career goal because I always felt a sense of wanting to give back to my community. I wanted to be a professor at a university where I could help first generation college students from diverse backgrounds. I understand what it is like to have parents who do not fully the educational system in the US, and so given some of the challenges of growing up in that kind of household -- really supportive, but lacking some of the knowledge -- I want to be able to help and guide students who might be in a similar position.

Describe a situation in which you did “the right thing” and were still unsuccessful. What did you learn from that experience?

My first year of graduate school at UCLA was challenging. I went straight from undergrad to graduate school and moved from a teaching-focused university to a research-focused university. Being a first year PhD student was challenging and I had a lot of self-doubt. There were times when I thought, “maybe this just isn’t for me, I am not like these other students who came from NYU or Berkeley, and whose parents are professors, I am very different from them and maybe I shouldn’t be here”. Even though I was studying a lot and I felt like I was putting in more effort than everyone else, I felt like it was harder for me than it was for them. But what I learned is just to keep at it. So that became a philosophy – to work harder than anyone else to keep up. And at some point, that paid off, because it turns out, a lot of us were feeling that way, but we were just hiding it and masking it, but for the six years of grad school, I worked really hard. I ended up earning prestigious awards and fellowships and excelling as a student. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves to put in the effort and just keep going, even when we’re doubting ourselves, just keep on working hard.

Anything else you would want to share with us?

Students should keep in touch with their professors! Just because you graduate doesn’t mean we don’t want to keep hearing about all the great things you’re doing. And it turns out you always need letters of recommendation, so it’s good to try to stay in contact with a couple of people from college.

Picture courtesy of Marilena Cristea and Tania Rodriguez
Socials & Fundraisers

Presley Moffet- Potluck Social, September 16

I attended the CASSA Potluck at Craig’s Park. This event was a great way to kick off the year and get to know new faces! One thing I learned is how important it is to make connections early on and to get involved. As a new member of CASSA, I was so excited for this chance to be able to meet others who share a passion for working with children. We found a nice spot at the bottom of a hill and set up our table. There was a variety of food being served from macaroni and cheese to veggie dumplings. After we all got food, a group of us gathered around in a circle and started talking. I met so many people with interesting stories to tell. I loved hearing about everyone’s career goals, ambitions and hobbies. I’m so glad I was able to come to this event. I felt so welcomed and happy to be apart of the CASSA family. I can’t wait to attend other events in the future!

Johannah Choi- Pupperz Social, October 14

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon and as soon as I arrived, I knew it was going to be a good time. There were quite a few more CASSA members than there were dogs, and I was one of the dog-less attendees. Nonetheless, there were plenty of dogs to make this social event really fun, interesting, and eventful. I was so thankful for all the people who brought dogs and let everyone pet and play with them. There were all shapes, colors, sizes, and temperaments and I developed some favorites. Overall, it was a wonderful time of meeting new faces and bonding with other members. Although I didn’t have my own dog to bring, I thought it was really important to show up and take this opportunity to build relationships with other members. I think that when we see each other at volunteering opportunities, there’s a deeper sense of camaraderie and teamwork because of these fun experiences. Thanks again to all the dog-owners and attendees who made this experience fun and exciting! I hope to see you all at our next Pupperz Social!
Hello CASSA :)! I LOVED attending the HHD-ICC Bowling with the Boards! Christian, Jennifer, Melissa, Susan, Vivian, and I were the Board members in attendance representing CASSA. We had the opportunity to meet amazing students involved in other HHD student organizations, and we even pitched them the idea of collaborating with CASSA during our signature event, “What If Week” (this event will take place in the Spring). This was my first time in bowling, so I was quite excited! All the CASSA Board wanted to bowl (they did great), and we all cheered for each other. At first, my ball kept going to the gutters, but my CASSA team kept cheering me on (thank you all!). My favorite part of the night was when Susan gave me some pointers, which allowed me to hit 8 out of the 10 pins! (thank you Susan)! I am so happy that I was able to attend this event, and I encourage you all to attend any of the CASSA socials :)!

This fall, CASSA provided such a great opportunity: members participated in an event hosted by Best Buddies. “The Fall Masquerade Formal” is about inclusion and encourages everyone to make new friends, including those with special needs. When I walked in, I was amazed by all the décor, people’s attire, and masks. I met up with my fellow CASSA members, and we were paired up with our new buddies. My buddy and I enjoyed dinner and bonded over our love for Harry Potter. We had a fun time talking to friends and got a group caricature done! We all had such a fun time that our next stop was the photobooth and dancing. The night flew by! I hope I can participate in another event similar to this.
This event was the last CASSA fundraiser for the Fall semester, which helped CASSA receive extra funds for the club's needs. The *Mom* TV taping took place at the Warner Bros. Studio, and it was a fun-filled, laugh-out-loud event. Anna Farris and Allison Janney star in this show, which is about a mother-daughter duo who go through life's struggles together. Both characters are recovering addicts, but they find happiness in their crazy, emotional, inspiring and hilariously messy life. This was a "feel great" kind of event; before the taping started, we were in a waiting area, which allowed CASSA members to talk and get to know each other. Since it was a small space, we had the opportunity to be inclusive and speak to each other with no hesitation. The cast and crew were so polite and lively; they even started waving, dancing and cheering with the audience. This was such an interactive experience, and it was great. There was a comedian on site doing standup comedy for the entirety of the taping. However, the best part was when Juan, CASSA Board member, volunteered for a trick and CASSA cheered him on. That goes to show how much of a close-knit community CASSA is, which is the point of these socials.

More Memorable Pictures from Socials & Fundraisers

Pictures courtesy of Johanna Choi & Executive Board
CASSA MEMORIES

Pictures courtesy of Alexis Flores & Executive Board
CASSA MEMORIES

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Next Newsletter Issue: Spring 2019