Coachella Valley woman dedicated to education and supporting domestic violence victims to receive honorary doctorate at CSUSB 2023 spring commencement

PALM DESERT, Calif. – California State University, San Bernardino has announced that Mary M. Heckmann, (BA English ’95) will receive an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at its spring Commencement, scheduled for May 20. She will be honored at the 9 a.m. ceremony for the College of Arts and Letters and the James R. Watson and Judy Rodriguez Watson College of Education.

“Conferring an honorary doctorate upon Dr. Heckmann, in recognition of her profound impact and dedicated service to California, would be a great honor for CSUSB,” stated university President Tomás D. Morales. “As an anchor institution in the region, we would be remiss not to
recognize her long-lasting contributions to education and the well-being of domestic violence victims and their children in the Coachella Valley.”

“I am truly thankful for this wonderful accolade from President Morales and Cal State San Bernadino,” Heckmann said. “To receive this incredible tribute is inspiring and reinforces my commitment to the tremendous importance of education at all levels so that our children can succeed, be safe and grow into society’s leaders.”

Heckmann, Ph.D., is a philanthropist and occasional writing instructor at Cal State San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus. A Coachella Valley resident for 40 years, she is one of the area’s most prolific leaders in education.

Heckmann is a member of CSUSB’s Palm Desert Campus’ Advancement Board and has served on its executive committee since 2016. She has previously served on the University of California, Riverside Foundation Board, the University of Washington Foundation Board, the Pepperdine University Foundation Board, the Board of Mothers Against Prescription Drug Abuse (MAPDA) and Executive Board of the Shelter from the Storm.

After she served on its board of directors for a decade, The Mary Heckmann School was established on the Shelter from the Storm campus. Shelter from the Storm provides services to victims of domestic violence through professional, ethical and compassionate programs, and is the only comprehensive domestic violence shelter in the Coachella Valley.

In 2000, Heckmann and her ex-husband (divorced 2004), the late Dick Heckmann, generously gave a $6 million gift that helped establish The Richard J. Heckmann International Center for Entrepreneurial Management at UC Riverside’s Palm Desert campus. Dick Heckmann was a water treatment entrepreneur. Originally intended as a teaching and research hub of the A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management, the center offered an Executive Master of Business Administration program.

Heckmann received her bachelor’s degree in English literature from CSUSB in 1995, and her graduate and doctorate degrees from UC Riverside.

**About PDC:** The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees, a doctorate in educational leadership, teaching credentials and certificates. Serving more than 2,200 students, it is the Coachella Valley’s four-year public university and plays a vital role in educating and training the region’s growing population.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Strategic Communication at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.