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PRESS RELEASE

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The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows Program celebrated its inaugural pinning ceremony at the California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus on Aug. 13.

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus celebrates inaugural pinning ceremony for Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows

PALM DESERT, Calif. — The [Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows Program](#) celebrated its inaugural pinning ceremony at the California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus (PDC) on Aug. 13, honoring twenty-eight students from both the Palm Desert and San Bernardino campuses who completed the requirements to advance from Ford Fellow Candidate to Ford Fellow during the 2025–26 academic year.

To earn their official pins from the Ford Leadership Forum, an initiative of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, students completed a course of study and engagement built around a four-pillar framework: Civic Education, Civil Dialogue, Public Service and Ethical Decision-Making. These four pillars reflect the core principles that guided the lives and public service of President Gerald R. Ford and Mrs. Betty Ford.

The students who advanced to being named Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows are (listed with their majors):

- Laura Aban - hospitality management
- Micaela Angleyn Sese - pre-nursing
- Demian Arcos Mendez - accounting
- Esteysi Ayala - accounting
- Adrianna Brown - nutritional science
- Monica Buck - psychology
- Monica Calvillo - marketing
- Jay Carrillo - global studies
- Shekinah Daffon - kinesiology
- John Gamez - health services administration
- Bianca Garcia -communication studies
- Christian Hernandez - cybersecurity
- John Lamont - social work
- Moises Leon - single subject - social science credential
- Zarai Lopez-Martinez - liberal studies - pre-credential
- Albert Martinez - liberal studies - pre-credential
- Abdiel Morales - communication studies
- Isabella Ortiz - biology
- Ayden Perales - history
- Dante Ramirez - social work
- Jose Ramirez - cybersecurity
- Amanda Reigle – educational leadership - Ed.D. program
- Daniela Rodriguez - liberal studies - integrated track
- Alyssa Rossi - criminal justice
- Judah Rubin – entrepreneurship
- Victoriano Esteban Sanchez - criminal justice
- Andy Vasquez – cybersecurity
- Regina Vasquez - cybersecurity

During the ceremony, Jeff Polet, executive director of the [Ford Leadership Forum](#), presented Edna Martinez, associate vice president and administrator in charge of the Palm Desert Campus, with a plaque recognizing the official founding of the Ford Fellows chapter at PDC.



The Palm Desert Campus chapter is one of only four Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows Program chapters in the U.S., joining existing chapters at the University of Michigan, Hope College and Middle Tennessee State University.

The event drew campus and university leadership, including CSUSB President Terri Gomez and members of the CSUSB President's Cabinet. Provost Rafik Mohamed spoke on behalf of the university, congratulating the students on their achievement. Kevin Grisham, inaugural faculty advisor for the PDC chapter, also addressed attendees and personally presented each Ford Fellow in attendance with a pin from the foundation. Additionally, each student was presented with certificates of special recognition from Senator Adam Schiff, Congressman Ken Calvert (41st District), Congressman Raul Ruiz (25th District), CA State Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh (19th District) and CA Assemblyman Greg Wallis (47th Assembly District).

Jose Ramirez, president of the PDC chapter, spoke on behalf of the new Ford Fellows, reflecting on the significance of the program for the Coachella Valley community.

"Programs like this exist because people believe in students, open doors for them and give them opportunities to grow into leaders," he said. "My hope is that years from now, students will want to become Ford Fellows at the Palm Desert Campus not simply because of the name or the prestige, but because of what this program has come to represent in our community."

Grisham echoed that sentiment, pointing to the deep roots the Ford family has in the region.

"The strength of a community is based on the commitment to education they provide to their citizenry," he said. "The Coachella Valley community's support of this program would make President Ford and Mrs. Ford very proud of this place they called one of their two homes."

A week prior to the pinning ceremony, Grisham and five elected officers from the PDC chapter – Jose Ramirez (president), Judah Rubin (vice president), Amanda Reigle (treasurer), Regina Vaquez (tribal affairs officer) and Alyssa Rossi (social affairs officer) – traveled to Grand Rapids, Mich. to participate in a retreat with the officers of the other chapters of the Ford Leadership Forum/Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows Program. The retreat, which was held at the [Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum](#), included two days of in-depth education about President Ford and Mrs. Ford and discussions about how to make each chapter more effective in achieving the four pillars of the Ford Leadership Forum. Planning for public events at PDC sponsored by the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Fellows Program also occurred.



For more information about the Ford Fellows Program at the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, including sponsorship opportunities, contact Kevin Grisham at kgrisham@csusb.edu.

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The [CSUSB Palm Desert Campus](#) is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

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

Additional pinning ceremony photos:



