



PRESS RELEASE

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CSUSB Palm Desert Campus student interns enjoy coffee and conversation with City of Palm Desert officials at Desert Kid Coffee in Palm Desert. From L to R: Assistant City Manager Richard Cannone, Caleb Gagnon, Edith Alcala, Yazmin Rios, Gina Morales, Angel Hernandez Acevedo, City Manager Chris Escobedo.

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus students gain hands-on experience through City of Palm Desert internships

PALM DESERT, Calif. – The California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus and the City of Palm Desert have launched a yearlong, paid internship program designed to connect

students with hands-on professional experience in local government while strengthening opportunities for education, community service and career development in the Coachella Valley.

The program grew from ongoing conversations between the city and CSUSB about expanding their longstanding partnership beyond buildings, land and facilities. The collaboration has created a direct pathway for students to learn about municipal government and explore careers in public service.

Five CSUSB Palm Desert Campus students are participating in the inaugural program: Caleb Gagnon, Edith Alcala, Yazmin Rios, Gina Morales and Angel Hernandez Acevedo. During the fall semester, the interns rotate through city departments, gaining exposure to the many functions of local government, including finance, economic development, planning, public works, capital projects, elections, the City Manager's Office, the library and community services.

In the spring semester, each student will select a department for a more focused internship experience aligned with their interests, strengths and career goals.

The program allows students to apply academic knowledge in a professional setting, develop practical skills and gain a broader understanding of how local government serves the community. It also introduces students to the wide range of career opportunities available in the public sector and encourages them to consider public service as they plan for their futures.

"We are excited to expand our partnership with Cal State San Bernardino through this hands-on internship program," said Chris Escobedo, city manager for the City of Palm Desert. "CSUSB is an important educational partner in the Coachella Valley, and welcoming these talented students into City Hall creates a meaningful opportunity for everyone involved — the students, the city and our community. By giving students firsthand experience in local government, we hope to develop the next generation of public-sector professionals and inspire more talented individuals to consider careers in public service."

The program also provides students with a cohort experience that includes onboarding, orientation, ongoing coaching and individualized department placement during the spring semester.

"The paid internship program in partnership with the City of Palm Desert provides CSUSB Palm Desert Campus students not only with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience but to hone their strengths and develop skills employers are looking for across industries, such as professional communication, critical thinking and leadership within a government setting," said Tiffany Bitting, director of the CSUSB Career Center. "This program is very intentional and will serve as a model within the Coachella Valley region."

For the students, the internship has offered an opportunity to connect their classroom learning with the needs of the community.



Hernandez Acevedo, has rotated through Development Services, Economic Development and the library. His responsibilities have included preparing daily finance reports, shadowing inspections and employees in various departments, and attending city events such as the State of the City.

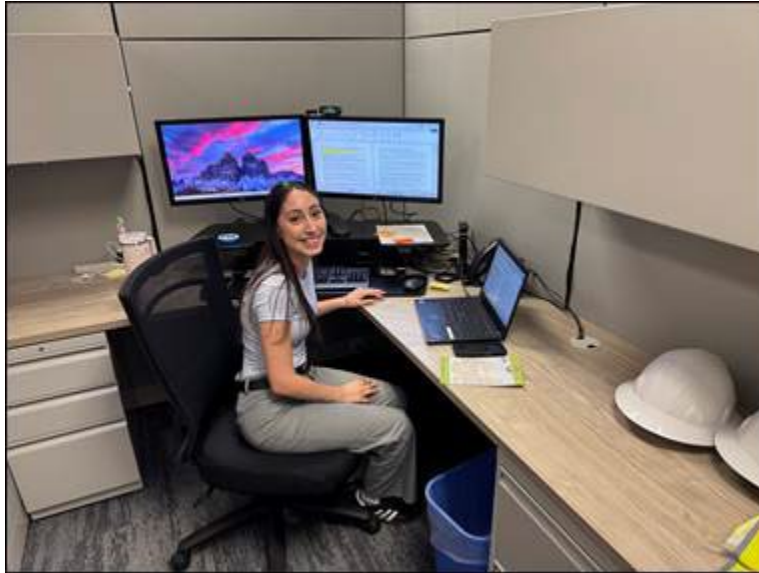
“I have applied the accounting fundamentals I learned at CSUSB by preparing daily finance reports,” Hernandez Acevedo said. “Working for the city has shown me that strong communication is one of the most effective ways to accomplish goals and serve the community.”

Hernandez Acevedo said the opportunity has also strengthened his communication skills and helped him become more comfortable asking questions, listening carefully and interacting with professionals. Meeting the mayor was another memorable part of the experience.

“It feels rewarding to know that my work can positively impact people in the community,” he said. “I am grateful to be part of something larger than myself, and I make sure to give my best effort so residents and businesses can continue to thrive in this beautiful city.”

The internship has also helped Hernandez Acevedo see local government as a possible career path.

“The Coachella Valley has given me the opportunity to attend college and access valuable resources, so I would like to give back to the community by pursuing a career that allows me to serve and support the people who live here,” he said.



Morales said rotating through city departments has helped her understand how municipal projects move from an idea to reality. Interns spend approximately two weeks in each department before selecting a department to shadow from January through May.

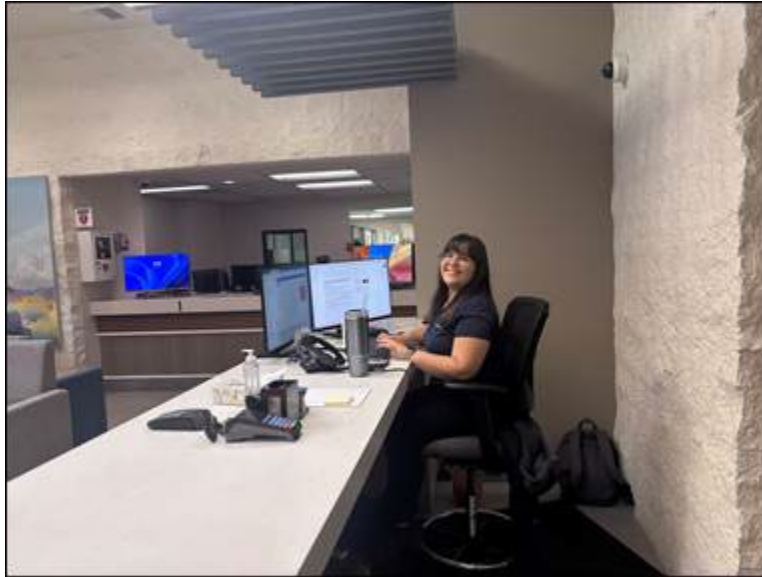
“So far, I have attended department meetings and helped with drafting contracts, staff reports, monthly presentations and ideas for future events,” Morales said. “The most memorable part of the internship has been taking part in the process of projects and seeing how everyone works together to get them going.”

Morales said the internship has allowed her to apply concepts from her finance courses, including income statements, invoices, policy, accounts payable and accounts receivable, in a real-world setting. She has also strengthened her communication, adaptability, work etiquette and Microsoft software skills.

“The City of Palm Desert employees have been extremely welcoming and helpful,” she said. “If you ask anyone for help, they drop whatever they are doing to help you with any challenge that you may be facing.”

The experience has influenced Morales’ career goals and encouraged her to consider a future in local government.

“Before this internship, I was indecisive about whether I wanted to work for a private company or a local government,” Morales said. “The City of Palm Desert’s work environment has made me lean toward working for a local government that prioritizes the public and is transparent with them.”



Alcala said the rotations have exposed interns to both expected and unexpected aspects of city work. Her experiences have included helping create a step-by-step brochure for the city's community gardens and participating in tobacco permit inspections.

"We truly learn something new each day," Alcala said. "This opportunity helps me see how the skills I have learned in the classroom can be applied to a career after graduation. It helps me see how the dots connect from the classroom to a real-life job."

Alcala has strengthened her customer service, organization, time management and communication skills through office-based and field experiences. She also has used programs such as Excel, Canva and Adobe, which she learned through her academic program.

"The City of Palm Desert employees have supported my learning and professional development by giving me new tasks I have never done before, giving me advice from their experiences and overall learning from them in many ways," she said.

As a Coachella Valley native, Alcala said gaining professional experience in the same community where she attends college has been especially meaningful.

"It feels rewarding to know that the work I am doing can benefit the people in my community," she said. "I am learning and gaining professional experience while at the same time positively impacting my community."

The five inaugural interns have selected areas of focus that align with their academic studies and career interests. Alcala, a hospitality, marketing and sports and entertainment marketing major, and Rios, a business management major, are focusing on city government and economic development. Gagnon, a political science major, is focusing on city government and the City Manager's Office, while Hernandez Acevedo, an accounting major, is focusing on city

government and information technology. Morales, a finance major, is focusing on city government and finance.

Through this internship program, CSUSB and the City of Palm Desert are preparing the region's future workforce and investing in the next generation of Coachella Valley professionals, while demonstrating the value of collaboration between higher education and local government. The experience will help students build connections, strengthen their résumés and better understand how their academic preparation can translate into meaningful careers serving their communities. By connecting students with local employers, partnerships like this create pathways from college to meaningful careers while encouraging graduates to contribute their talents to the Coachella Valley.

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.