

Awarding Excellence

Students recognized by SAGE Publishing for special edition of Mustang News

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— Cassandra Garibay

Cassandra Garibay wrote an editorial about her experience reporting on race and diversity in the award-winning edition of Mustang News.



in Journalism



Left: The Mustang News team celebrates the SAGE Publishing award.
Right: Editors and reporters in the paper's newsroom.

Last May, 10 students received the SAGE Publishing Student Award for their excellent work in creating a special edition of Mustang News about Cal Poly's cultural climate. The edition, titled "A Year After Blackface," took a deep look at issues of diversity and inclusion at Cal Poly and examined how the campus community was feeling about the university's efforts to make things better.

The work was emotionally challenging for several of the students who worked on the edition. Cassandra Garibay, journalism junior and news editor at the time, wrote an editorial about her experience reporting on race and diversity as a Latina at a predominantly white institution. She said, "I had never written an editorial before, and quite frankly, I was nervous to put my own thoughts out there for others to read, but I knew that was what I asked of others on a daily basis, and this edition was much bigger than my experience alone."

Section editors and reporters produced stories that related diversity and inclusion at Cal Poly in the context of their news beats. For example, a sports reporter wrote a statistical analysis of racial demographics within Cal Poly Athletics, and an arts reporter profiled an art and design student who uses artwork to spark conversation about race and gender.

"Our whole team needed to come together and work the issue from all angles, and I believe we did so very well," said Garibay.

Judges for the SAGE Publishing Student Award — consisting of journalism faculty and professionals — agreed. The annual award, which recognizes Cal Poly students whose excellent published work addresses scientific, statistical, technical or social issues affecting the Cal Poly community, was set up in 2017. SAGE created a \$25,000 endowment to fund the award in perpetuity with a current approximate payout of \$1,000 each year.

Founded in 1965, SAGE is a leading independent, academic and professional publisher. The company publishes more than 1,000 journals and over 800 books, reference works and databases each

year in business, humanities, social sciences, science, technology and medicine. A core value of the company is a belief that engaged scholarship lies at the heart of any healthy society and that education is intrinsically valuable.

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Tracey Ozmina (Journalism, '92) has been with the company for 19 years and believes the award provides one way for SAGE to engage with the future of journalism.

"SAGE supports a number of initiatives that align with our mission of 'building bridges to knowledge,'" she said. "I'm proud to say that championing the social sciences and our long history of philanthropy is very much a part of our company culture and an aspect of our culture that is immensely important to me, personally."

The company has a history of supporting journalistic endeavors and amplifying journalism's unique ability to connect the public with quality, life-improving research. In addition to journalism and mass communication textbooks, SAGE publishes some key journals for the industry.

"I am glad that SAGE chose to award published work that centers around different types of issues that affect Cal Poly because it shines a brighter light on the issues and brings more awareness and attention from the public," Garibay said. "Many of these issues are not easy to cover and often receive a lot of backlash. Students work on these stories around their class schedule and produce quality journalism that often goes unrecognized, and SAGE's award served as a reminder that our work matters."

Garibay's reaction to the honor is exactly what Ozmina had envisioned when creating the award. "I'm sure the monetary gift is always welcome praise to students for their achievements, but I'm hoping the key impact of this award is the recognition and validation of their work and an indication they should keep forging ahead in what is a challenging but critical field," Ozmina said.