



2024

PRESIDENTIAL **SCHOLARS CELEBRATION**



Good evening,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2024 Presidential Scholars Benefit. As Langston Hughes shared, “Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.” We are in the business of preventing wings from breaking and mending those that do. Resources that support our Presidential Scholars prevent wings from breaking.

On behalf of California State University, Dominguez Hills, I thank everyone for joining us tonight as we recognize a remarkable group of young people whose academic and co-curricular achievements are noteworthy.

The Presidential Scholars Program is the premier scholarship initiative at CSUDH. The 22 consummate learners being honored today are among the most accomplished students at Dominguez Hills. Each in their own way has demonstrated a high level of academic excellence, community and campus engagement, and strong leadership skills.

It is my hope that, this evening, you converse with our honorees and hear the impact of this scholarship first-hand, as we celebrate the many achievements of this current cohort.

Thank you again for being here tonight and for your commitment to the success of this program and its students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Parham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Thomas A. Parham, Ph.D.

President

RECEPTION PROGRAM

Welcome

Dr. Thomas A. Parham, President

Greetings and Acknowledgment of 2023–24 Presidential Scholars

Dr. Thomas A. Parham, President

Presidential Scholar Emcees

Michael Totten & Taylor Watts-White

Student Scholar Speaker

Bernard “Kofi” Amofa & Jessica Sklar

Alumni Speaker

Mia Leccese

Presentation of Medallions to Seniors

Dr. Thomas A. Parham, President

Dr. Gayle Ball-Parker
Director, Presidential Scholars Program

Recognition of All Presidential Scholars

Closing



MICHAEL TOTTEN

Presidential Scholar Emcee

Michael Totten is finishing up his last semester at CSUDH. This May, he will graduate with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an Entrepreneurship concentration. Michael served in the Army ROTC program and earned an advanced designee scholarship from the U.S. Army. Through his membership in the Trojan Battalion (made up of USC, CSULB, and CSUDH students), Michael completed a research internship at the Army Research Lab in Adelphi, Maryland. He has attended the U.S. Army Cadet Command's Advanced Camp in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Cadet Troop Leader Training in Vilseck, Germany. Upon graduation, Michael will begin his career as a U.S. Army officer.



TAYLOR WATTS-WHITE

Presidential Scholar Emcee

Taylor Watts-White is on track to graduate in 2025 with a degree in Criminal Justice Administration and a minor in Women's Studies. She is passionate about the law, forensics, and investigation. Receiving the Presidential Scholarship has transformed her educational journey and Taylor strives to give back to the community. She serves as a student representative on the CSUDH Philanthropic Foundation board, providing insight into student life on campus and how to help Toro students realize their dreams. Taylor also works with JusticeCorps, assisting members in helping self-represented litigants in navigating legal complexities.



BERNARD "KOFI" AMOFA

Student Scholar Speaker

Bernard "Kofi" Amofa will graduate Summa Cum Laude from CSUDH in May 2024 with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. A first-generation college student from Ghana, Kofi has parlayed his Presidential Scholarship into a string of academic and professional successes. He has presented his work at the Western Psychological Association Conference, as well as being admitted into the National Society of Leadership and Success. Kofi has been accepted into the CSUDH School and College Counseling and will stay on campus to pursue his master's degree.



JESSICA SKLAR

Student Scholar Speaker

Jessica Sklar is graduating with honors from CSUDH in May 2024, having earned a bachelor's degree in Biology with an Ecology and Environmental Biology specialization. Jessica has been an active student researcher in the molecular biology lab during her time at CSUDH and has presented her findings at several national conferences. She spent the summer of 2023 working at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida as a marine biology researcher. After graduating, Jessica will attend the University of South Florida College of Marine Science, pursuing advanced degrees in Biological Oceanography.

ALUMNI SPEAKER



MIA LECCESE

Mia Leccese is a former CSUDH Presidential Scholar who graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology. During her time at Dominguez Hills, Mia was the President of the Kinesiology Student Association, volunteered in the Basic Needs Program, and represented the university in multiple advertising campaigns. She is now a second-year Doctor of Physical Therapy student at the University of Southern California, where she currently serves as President of the Physical Therapy Multicultural Leadership Alliance, volunteers with USC Fit Families, and is a Student Ambassador for the program. Mia is a Town and Gown Scholar of USC with the distinct honor of being this year's Women in Visions Scholar. She will be earning her Doctorate in Physical Therapy with the Class of 2025.

Upon graduation, Mia hopes to specialize as an orthopedic physical therapist, open her own clinic in her hometown of San Pedro, and continue to serve underrepresented communities. Mia plans to continue to be involved in academia, educating the next generation of physical therapists at CSUDH and USC upon graduation.

2023 – 2024

PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Aimee Alberto



Bernard (Kofi)
Amofa



Jaime Cardenas



Jimena Dominguez



Jordyn Frye



Lorelei Fuller



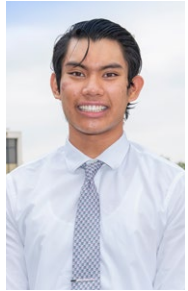
Skai Gibbs



Anne Holub



Zaire Joseph



Alec Magsombol



Max Miller



Brianna Orantes



Joanna Ramos



Michelle Saint



Jerry Salinas



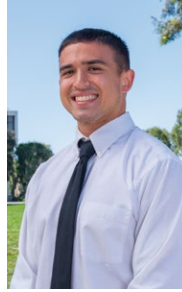
Sahara Sanchez



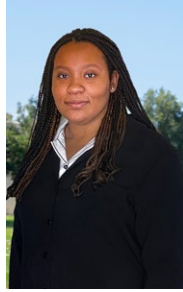
Jessica Scott



Jessica Sklar



Michael Totten



Taylor Watts-White



Kaedyn (Frankie)
Williams



Victor Zamudio

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

John & Gillian Wagner



**Dignity Health®
Sports Park**

Mimi & John Harris

Mary & James Bell

Patricia & John Lang

The Brotherhood Crusade

Denita & Anthony Willoughby

Belinda & Jack Walker

David Lee & Martha Jordan

Laurel & Patrick O'Grady

Kathleen & Len Unger

FOR SUPPORTING THE 2024

CSUDH PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

The Presidential Scholars Program recognizes some of the region's most exceptional high school and community college graduates on the basis of their academic achievements, leadership, and community service. Presidential Scholars receive substantial financial support and a wide range of unique privileges, activities, and opportunities that enrich their experiences at CSU Dominguez Hills and beyond. The university is extremely proud to count many successful and notable professionals in a variety of fields as Presidential Scholars alumni.