

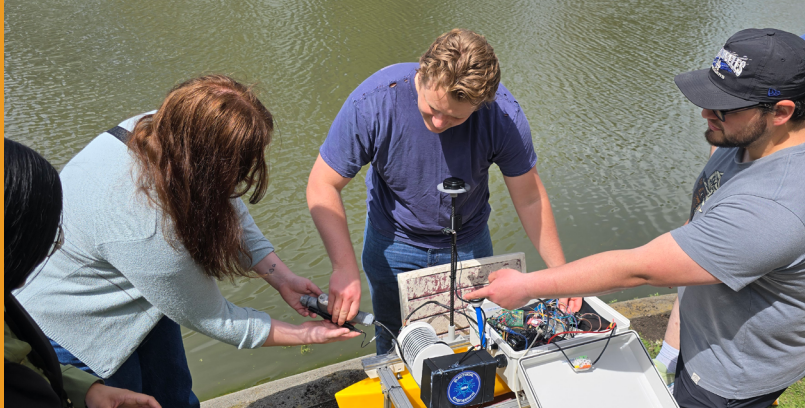


SONOMA
STATE
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
INQUIRY

2025

Education Into Action



Adversity takes many forms, but resilience grows when we engage with each other and the world around us. Inside you'll find stories about how the Center for Environmental inquiry (CEI) is helping overcome adversity of all kinds — environmental, social, economic, political, and emotional — by sharing strategies for **ecosystem** health, **connecting** to find common ground, and creating **pathways** toward meaningful and purposeful careers.

This was also a year of transition. After 16 years as CEI Director, **Claudia** retired from a role that has been her life's passion — building an enduring center that helps students and community see themselves as partners with the living world, and who dedicate themselves to finding solutions when that relationship goes awry.

Stepping in, **Kerry** brings experience collaboratively developing CEI programs, bringing the energy she developed as a Biology graduate student at SSU, and a deep commitment to our mission. Kerry is excited to carry forward CEI's vision, expand its programs, and deepen its impact in our communities.

Claudia Luke

Dr. Claudia Luke, Outgoing Director

Kerry Wininger

Kerry Wininger, Incoming Director




REGENERATING ECOSYSTEMS

Why environmental stewardship is essential

A focus on short-term gains threatens long-term ecosystem health, revealing a critical need for stewardship of the lands that sustain us.

CEI cultivates leaders capable of discerning ecosystem needs and shaping resilient responses. We build coalitions by partnering with neighbors and agencies — and grow skills by weaving applied projects into learning.



Claudia Kamiya Shikina, CEI's Bilingual Educator Student Assistant, teaches English-language learners at Galbreath Preserve about Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). It's an ecologically valuable native tree. But after decades of fire suppression, management is needed to prevent it from outcompeting oaks and making diverse, open habitats dense and uniform, which worsens already altered fire regimes.

REGENERATING ECOSYSTEMS



Wildfire Resilience

Galbreath Wildlands Preserve Logistics Manager Andy Balestracci removes ladder fuels during CA Conservation Corps training to improve wildfire resilience. When Europeans banned Indigenous cultural burning in the 1800s, they attained short-term safety, but disrupted fire regimes that mitigate catastrophic wildfire risk and promote biodiversity and watershed health.

SSU's preserves are living classrooms to address this issue. Thanks to a State Coastal Conservancy grant and agency partners, CEI created fuel breaks at Galbreath to improve emergency access, cleared fuels at Los Guillicos, and reintroduced grazing at Osborn to reduce grassland thatch. CEI embedded these projects into research and training, established long-term student monitoring, and offered workshops on wildfire management techniques.

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/forest-futures

Endangered Coho salmon, once abundant, had not been seen at SSU's Galbreath Preserve since it was heavily logged in the 1950s — until this year, when Coho salmon nests and a post-spawning carcass appeared. For more than a decade, CEI and Pacific Watershed Associates have collaborated to reduce sediment runoff from roads, restore creek flow from springs, and add woody debris to deepen pools for spawning.

In August, the project became a hands-on training ground for ecosystem restoration skills, as students explored complex connections between watershed function, forest health, and fish habitat. We're now collaborating with neighboring landowners to identify salmon-improvement projects along eight miles of the upper watershed.

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/galbreath



Habitat Restoration

FORGING CONNECTIONS

How collaborations lead to solutions

To heal disconnection and polarization that breeds decreased empathy and understanding, we must find common ground.

CEI forges connections locally and statewide by building networks across disciplines and sectors working on different pieces of the environmental puzzle. In this way, we motivate and empower people to work together and implement real-world, workable solutions.



As a leader in “The Virtual Field” project, CEI co-hosted a workshop in South Carolina, where science faculty could collaborate with staff from field stations and marine labs around the world to develop and implement new content and tech tools in their teaching.

(NOTE: Sign in background removed with AI generative fill)

FORGING CONNECTIONS



Partnering on Policy

Turning campus ingenuity into applied action isn't easy — differing timelines, jargon, and funding gaps often derail partnerships. With support from the CA Strategic Growth Council, CEI interviewed more than 30 leaders across sectors to understand barriers and highlight practices for success.

Our findings confirmed the strength of CEI's Education into Action model — presented at the 2025 CSU-WATER conference at SSU — as a guide to university-community collaboration. Now, California is advancing this approach as a blueprint for resilient partnerships, with a potential nation-wide ripple effect. In times of adversity, CEI's model shows how student experiences and community engagement can unite to meet urgent environmental challenges.

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/education-action

SSU students from Biology and Art come together to build skills in scientific illustration while investigating biodiversity along Copeland Creek. Together, these students documented plant life at Fairfield Osborn Preserve and on campus.

The Botanical Drawing Series was led by Art Professor Eileen Parent and Biology Professor Wendy St. John. Parent “was motivated by the desire to build stronger connections across our campus. This class gave students from different disciplines the chance to... engage in meaningful academic experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.”

Project funded through a WATERS Collaborative grant.

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/waters-collaborative



Across Disciplines

CREATING PATHWAYS

Fostering impactful environmental leaders

Adversities such as eco-anxiety, financial stress, isolation, and uncertainty about finding a meaningful career can hinder engagement in environmental problem solving.

CEI creates pathways through barriers by getting people outside, fostering inclusive communities, and offering hands-on trainings and green career opportunities that build skills, confidence, and resilience while contributing to solutions.

SSU students hike through Fairfield Osborn Preserve as they participate in a class that introduces them to ways they can apply classroom learning in nature. CEI welcomes, supports, and encourages students in creating new pathways, providing opportunities for them to become stewards and leaders for the environment.



CREATING PATHWAYS



Job Greening

SSU students Garrett Shipway and Melia Zimmerman were struggling. For Melia, it was eco-anxiety, an overwhelming feeling of helplessness about our impact on the planet. For Garrett, it was fear of public speaking and lack of belonging. Both were drawn to CEI's preserves. Melia "completely fell in love," and Garrett "loved all the wonderful things [they] did and saw and could not wait to go back."

As their knowledge, skills, and confidence grew, both became CEI student leaders. "Taking action was actually the cure to my anxiety," said Melia. For Garrett, it was "one of the most rewarding experiences of my life" and "a big reason why I went to graduate school."

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/classes-programs

18 students in the new Forestry Master's program — a collaboration between CEI and Cal Poly Humboldt — hail from backgrounds ranging from computer science to biology, never knowing they could pursue this career. Made possible by a CAL FIRE workforce development grant, the Master's helps green the workforce and meet California's need for 9,400 new forest professionals by 2028.

CEI hosted a week-long field course at Galbreath, where students established carbon plots, practiced safe chainsaw use, learned UTV driving, and studied road-watershed connections with Pacific Watershed Associates. CEI enriched the training with career seminars featuring professionals from Resource Conservation Districts, tribes, CAL FIRE, and the UC.

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu/masters-forestry



Student Success

2025 IMPACT

Academic Engagement

1,339 Students + **6,613** Virtually

276 Faculty + **1,654** Virtually

33 Disciplines (incl.: Anthropology, Art, Biology, Business, Computer Science, Cultural Resources Management, Earth & Climate Sciences, Economics, Education, Electrical Engineering, English, Geography, Kinesiology, Math, Music, Nursing, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology)

Community Connections

157 Project Partners (cei.sonoma.edu/people-partners)

1,159 K–12 Students & Teachers

1,251 Community Participants

More details: cei.sonoma.edu/about

CEI PRESERVE PROJECTS

Fairfield Osborn Preserve — 450 acres

- Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Learning Center Interpretation Plan — FIGR
- Spanish language public event series — Donors
- Osborn collaborative grazing project — GRRCD

Galbreath Wildlands Preserve — 3,670 acres

- In-stream habitat improvements for salmon populations — CDFW
- Ten-day on-site Master of Forestry curriculum development course — CAL FIRE
- Fuel reduction for safety & oak woodland conservation — CC

Los Guillicos Preserve — 40 acres

- Monitoring wildfire effects on vegetation — CC

Campus Corridor

- Native Plant Garden — Donors
- Copeland Creek riparian restoration — Sonoma Water
- Regenerative landscaping training & demonstration site — ReScape

FIGR=Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, *GRRCD*=Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, *CDFW*=CA Department of Fish & Wildlife, *CAL FIRE*=CA Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, *CC*=Coastal Conservancy

CEI PROGRAMS

Curriculum Development

- Virtual Field Mentoring & Skill-Building Modules
- Sponsored SSU Courses: Water Research, Plant Propagation, Land & Water Planning
- Faculty Learning Communities

Leadership Trainings

- Land Management Training & Practice
- Environmental Education Training & Practice

Student–Community Research

- ***NEW** Creeks in Common: Campus Corridor as Urban Watershed Demonstration Site
- State Agency Recommendations for Transforming Research into Community Projects
- Rising Waters: Studies in Water Resilience
- Fire Up: Studies in Fire Resilience
- Forest Futures: Studies in Emerging Forest Challenges
- Studies in Preserve Operations
- Grants in Water & Field Research

Green Jobs

- ***NEW** Launched Forestry Master's Program
- CEI Student Jobs: Preserve Stewardship, Outreach & Marketing, Bilingual Education, Restoration, Dual Agency Water Internship

Action for All Ages

- Public Workshops: Dig-Into-Nature Series
- Elementary Schools: Osborn Tours Program
- K-12 Teacher Training Institutes

STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Fire — 5 projects

Water — 9 projects

Biodiversity — 11 projects

Health & Culture — 4 projects

Environmental Learning — 8 projects

More details: cei.sonoma.edu/projects

2026 GOALS

Your help ensures that we can tackle adversities by turning an SSU education into environmental action.

Our goal is to empower every student to apply the knowledge of their discipline toward finding solutions to environmental challenges.

We need your help to:

Connect all students to local ecosystems, including right on SSU's Campus

Reach half of all students with an environmental **skill-building** experience

Give one-quarter of all students an **experience** working on environmental challenges in their discipline of choice

Provide every student with information on **green jobs** and **job greening**

**Please join us
by volunteering,
participating,
or donating!**

Learn more: cei.sonoma.edu



Donors & Volunteers

Thank you to all of our supporters for investing in an environmentally ready generation. (cei.sonoma.edu/about/supporters)

VISIONARIES (Lifetime)

\$100,000 & above

Baron & Budd Public Justice Foundation
City of Rohnert Park
Cotati/Rohnert Park Unified School District
The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Tribal Council
Sonoma County Office of Education
Fred & Jean Galbreath
Robert & Sue Johnson
Marthe & Stephen Norwick
Joan & William Roth
Anonymous

BENEFACTORS

\$20,000–\$99,000

Carol Cole Mitchel & Clark F. Mitchel

PIONEERS

\$5,000–\$19,999

Mike & Paula Aja
Barbara & Jake Mackenzie
Anonymous

EXPLORERS

\$1,000–\$4,999

Tom Cavers & Sol Garay
Nancy & Dale Dougherty
Michelle Friend

Kerry Heise & Adina Merenlender
Susan Norwick Horrocks & Keith Horrocks
Mark & Margot Rawlins
Santa Rosa Garden Club
Cathy & Chuck Williamson
Terri & David Yost
Anonymous

GUIDES

\$25–\$999

John Branscome
Annemarie & Matt Brown
Ruth Burke
Carol Carr
Thomas Cooke & Marianne McKinley
Edward Culberson & Elizabeth Lotz
Douglas Emery & Molly Eckler
Nancy Evers Kirwan
Linda Geiger
Kandis Gilmore & Albert Longboy
Adrienne & Ray Grechman
Paula Hammett & Robert Hope, III
Jonathan Hayden & Dominique Bayart
Happy Platypus Fund of Fidelity Charitable
Diane Hichwa
Heike Hiss
Sharon & A.J. Janulaw
Karen Johnson

Sachiko & Michael Knappman
Charlene & Michael Lennon
Howard Liebman & Ilene C. Weitz
Johanna Luke
Nicole Myers
Diane Paleczny-Stevenson & Hugh Stevenson
Bruce Peterson & Cynthia Starkweather Peterson
Mary K. Praetzellis
Bruce Reinik & Mary Roberts
John Sheehy & Laurie Szujewska
Robert J. & Barbara Sherman
Mamoru Shimokochi & Anne Reeves
Whitney Sparks
Kirsten & Steve Tellez
Warren & Janis Watkins
Richard Whitkus
Kerry Wininger
Ella Wong
Anonymous

LEGACY & ENDOWED GIFTS

Fred & Jean Galbreath
Marthe Norwick
Georgette Skellenger
Anonymous

Nicole Myers joined CEI in September as our Program & Outreach Specialist. Nicole developed a passion for understanding Earth from a childhood fascination with rocks and volcanoes and pursued Geology degrees from the Universities of Oregon and Texas. She also teaches Geology at SSU and SSU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), and at Blue Door Yoga and Wellness, while offering community education through her business Appreciating Earth.



Operations

Revenue

- 36% SSU/CSU
- 42% Corporate Partners and Agencies
- 14% Individual Donations
- 7% Endowments

Total: \$913,952

Expenditures

- 73% Programs
- 6% Operations
- 15% Lands & Facilities
- 6% Communications

Total: \$983,866

Staff

Gina Baleria, EdD,
Strategic Communications
Andy Balestracci,
Galbreath Operations Lead
Suzanne DeCoursey, MS,
Education Manager
Aline Fromme,
Administrative Analyst
Chris Halle, PhD,
Project Development Lead
Claudia Luke, PhD,
Director (*ret. 06/2025*)
Nicole Myers,
Program & Outreach Specialist
Cali Pearce,
Preserves Manager
Margot Rawlins,
Galbreath Program Coordinator
Kerry Wininger, MS,
Outreach & Project Development Lead;
Director (*as of 07/2025*)
Julie Wittmann, MS,
Community Naturalist Coordinator

Project Employees

The Virtual Field Project: Gina Baleria, Riva Bruenn, Caprice Disbrow, Sara Kassiss, Claudia Luke, Adriel Velasquez, Audrey Vergnialt, Kerry Wininger, Kaylee Yarkin, Melia Zimmerman

Student Assistants: Maddie Baytosh, Celecia Hernandez, Kat Johnson, Julien Johnston, Chloe Madison Knights, Matthew Lizarraga, Nick Lopez, Seth Machado, Sam Mishra, Janis Phillips, Kaylie Richards, Claudia Kamiya Shikina, Jesse Schmieg, Mandy Staal, Millie Strawn, Tessa Thompson, Audrey Vergnialt, Ray White, Chloe Winsemius, Selena Xayavong, Kaylee Yarkin

Photographers: Gina Baleria, Richie Cross, Scott Gibson, Saba Khalid, Kerry Wininger, James Wirth. (*Coho Salmon Photo courtesy: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife*)

We are saddened to share the passing of **Bob Johnson**, a tireless champion of environmental learning and land stewardship, and a longtime CEI friend and benefactor. Bob and his wife Sue were committed conservationists and philanthropists whose vision helped establish the Galbreath Wildlands Preserve — now a vital SSU research center, living classroom, and active field station. CEI Director Claudia Luke said, “Bob and Sue’s generosity, encouragement, and quiet leadership helped make so much of our work possible.”



Turning Education into Action

All programs are supported by contributions



cei.sonoma.edu