

DECEMBER 2022



JOLYNNA DANG

Hi! My name is Jolynna Dang, and I am a fourth year Business Administration major. I enjoy cooking, volleyball, exploring out in nature, and thrifting.

Involvements at UCI:

- Vietnamese Student Association - Vietnamese Culture Night Director (2021-2022)
- Vietnamese Student Association - Treasurer and Fam Head (2022-2023)
- ASUCI - Visions Leadership Mentee (2021-2022)
- ASUCI - Transfer Student Support Commissioner (2022-2023)
- UCI NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) NUFP (National Undergraduate Fellows Program) Fellow (2022-2023)
- NISTS (National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students) National Transfer Student Ambassador (2022-2023)

What has been the most fulfilling experience you have had in a leadership role? What accomplishment are you most proud of?

My most fulfilling experience in a leadership role has been being the Vietnamese Culture Night Director for VSA and being able to execute and plan the show. "From the Ground Up" is something I was proud of and honored to present as this play encompasses the spirit of understanding for the two generations between parent and child to truly embrace their love for one another. The story took the audience on a journey 30 years to the past to follow our parent's lives through the Fall of Saigon and continue onto our present life today. Writing this story made me realize how little I knew about my parent's past & history and it had me asking my grandma and parents many questions regarding their past to gauge a better comprehension of their experiences to write a story that shows their point of view alongside the parallel story of my generation. We each have our own experiences and different perspectives but I wanted to show the connection between the two generations to encourage both sides to better appreciate each other for who they are, and take pride in one's culture and heritage. This culture night was able to bring so many people together from every cast and committee member, to over 400 attendees and I was filled with joy and contentment being able to watch the audience's reactions to the story throughout the show. This experience showed me that without the support and efforts of everyone involved, this show would not have been possible and I hoped for this show to set a precedent for our generation to have that desire and hope to learn more about our beautiful Vietnamese heritage.

Who is your role model at UCI? How have they impacted you?

Stephanie Van Ginkle is a woman in leadership currently serving as the Executive Director and Associate Dean of Students at UCI. I was able to get to know her through a Zoom call after expressing interest in learning more about her background. Her expertise of over 25 years has led to achievements in different sectors, with experience in places such as: hospital administration, service industry, Starbucks management, professional auto racing (international marketing), hotel management, and beauty industry (running a hair salon). Due to her experience, she learned more regarding business-valuable customer service and set the foundation for her future. The economic crash in 2007 was her stepping stones into higher education administration. The recession affected her current luxury position in professional auto racing causing her to prepare for a position she would no longer have and consider UC Irvine. At that time, there was an open position to run the management and advertising team at the New University Newspaper for UCI. Although switching to from a private corporation to a public one was different, her shift to UCI was very natural because of her experience in editing and advertising from her background in international marketing and publications. She began working in managing the New University later that year in 2007 and continued in this position for three years. In the coming years, with the launch of social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, all of the information was so readily accessible online, collapsing the newspaper industry within UCI. To combat this, Stephanie worked to make the digital shift by looking at other campuses such as UCLA to see how auxiliaries were run there. In 2010 she was able to earn the position of the Associate Executive Director and asked the Executive Director to bring the media sector along with her and change it to Student Government Student Media. Stephanie remained in this position for five years and served as the Interim Executive Director for a year when the person went into maternity leave. However, she shifted over to Student Life & Leadership with Student Government Student Media used to lie with Student Affairs Auxiliary Services and made a negotiation with her title to reflect therefore becoming an Associate Dean of Students. This was a strategic leadership standpoint to set the organization she was in charge of in a firm position. The work that I have seen ASUCI accomplish during my time at UCI are attributed to her leadership and guidance which is something I look up to as an aspiring higher education administrator. Confidence and having clear direction was something I could clearly see from Stephanie, and it is something that she has worked to build up despite facing various obstacles in her life. These are things I believe will contribute to a woman being successful in leadership and is inspirational to me in the way I can see how far being sure with yourself can take you. She has shown me that being cognizant with your surroundings and knowing how to portray yourself in different environments without losing your core personality and values is crucial to exude confidence in a position of leadership.

Everyone experiences some form of failure in their life, how have you dealt with it?

Throughout high school, I worked hard getting involved in many clubs, gaining leadership positions, and took many AP courses to make myself a competitive applicant when applying for colleges. When college decisions rolled around in April and I did not get my first choice school, I decided to go to community college to have a second chance at getting in while better preparing myself for a college education. As I had been taking community college classes throughout my senior year of high school, I did not have too many concerns regarding the course load or pace of things since it was fairly similar to what I was used to. However, something I was worried about was being able to be involved with the campus community or finding something meaningful to be a part of that would contribute to my ability to transfer to a university. During a senior campus visit event I attended towards the end of my senior year, I was able to meet a peer mentor who was leading my tour group around campus who told me about student government at the college level and it sparked my interest. Upon further research, I was able to see that there were multiple positions open to run for so I applied for the Vice President of Financial Affairs and was accepted into the position. I was ecstatic to begin my position but nervous at the same time since this was the time period around the beginning of the pandemic and shift to online meetings and classes. The transfer center at Golden West was extremely supportive and helpful during the transfer application process. I was able to attend many open office hours to review my applications and had an advisor review my essays for feedback that allowed me to improve upon it. Later in the spring of 2021, I got my acceptance letters to UCR and UCI but ultimately chose UCI as it was the school I saw a community that I wanted to be a part of. The one year transfer process had allowed me the flexibility with the remainder of my college experience since I would be able to add on another year if there were additional classes I need to take to add on a minor or to graduate a year earlier and have more time to get experience towards my career goals. Though I did not get into UCI right after high school, I used it as motivation to work harder to achieve a one year transfer and continued to stay involved and work towards my passion and interests.



What advice would you give to your first-year self?

Advice that I would give my first year self would be to not be afraid and shy when starting school as a transfer and to put myself out there. Beginning UCI as an undergraduate transfer and commuter student, I faced the challenge of exclusion and found it difficult to find my community on campus. When I started my first quarter, I felt like each week was the same routine with me going to class, occasionally talking to people and making small talk, then leaving and going home. Not being able to dorm or have more of an on-campus presence made it a lot more difficult to make friends and feel like I had a place at school. However I know that this is a common theme among transfer students and that many of them may have felt the same way so branching out to find my community earlier on could have played a role in improving my first quarter at UCI.

