Hilda Hernández knows a thing or two about graduate education. She didn’t learn it overnight, either. Hernández arrived at Chico State back in 1981, and starting in fall 1987, she served as graduate coordinator in two different programs—Education and Teaching International Languages (TIL). During that time, she chaired many hundreds of graduate theses and projects. She served on all but a couple of comprehensive exams from the TIL program from its inception in fall 1996 through fall 2014. And more than 50 of her former students have gone on to pursue their doctorates in an array of disciplines.

“These students are having an impact in many fields related to TIL and beyond,” she says.

What, you might wonder, could instill such a work ethic? How did Hernández develop a mind fueled by the curiosity needed to sustain the rapid, indefatigable pace of her work as a scholar and teacher?
Hernández credits family for giving her the drive and confidence to become successful.

“We were brought up with the belief that we could succeed in anything academic and professional as long as we did it well, with effort and perseverance. We were also aware that even though the playing fields were not level, that was not an excuse. We were told to keep working hard and working with passion,” she said. Her mother had dreamed of being a teacher.

“She got her degree in business. The normal school in Mexico City was too far,” she said. Early on her family instilled in Hernández a love of our language (Spanish) and culture. “It was a period when ethnic languages were not valued and maintained,” she said. Hernández turned it into a 46-year career. Her brother, Frank, has been teaching almost 40 years, and is no less passionate about language, culture, and art.

Hernández’s curiosity began at home.

“My father wanted us to see the world,” she says. “He wanted us to see the United States, and the countries our grandparents had come from (Spain), and where my mother’s family had lived (Mexico). Hernández has traveled with her family to all 48 states. She plans to eventually visit Alaska and Hawaii.

“My brother and I joke about where we will go first,” she said. “We’ve traveled through most states in Northern and Central Mexico by car, train, and/or plane. We’ve traveled across Canada, and Southern and Central Europe—Spain (three times), Portugal, Netherlands, France, Liechtenstein Italy, England, Wales, Scotland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Andorra, and Monaco,” she said. Hernández even took her parents along with her to Costa Rica for almost three weeks when she did a two-week educational research workshop in Spanish for faculty at Universidad Nacional in Heredia.

Hernández is not only an avid traveler. She is also an accomplished scholar. She earned her undergraduate degree in Spanish from CSU, Hayward. She also completed her secondary credential program at Hayward, followed by additional coursework for an elementary credential at San Jose State. Not long after, she completed her MA in Spanish at Stanford with an emphasis on teaching. She enrolled in summer quarters over a three-year period while she taught school.

“Stanford allowed me to combine traditional Spanish coursework in literature, language, and linguistics with courses in Education that focused on language teaching,” she said with a smile. “Years later, it provided the model for the MA in Teaching International Languages.”

Along with her MA and PhD from Stanford University, Dr. Hernández also holds five teaching and services credentials, including standard elementary and secondary, community college, bilingual cross-cultural specialist and administrative. She began her long career teaching Spanish to two contrasting audiences: 4th to 7th graders and adults. She also encountered many obstacles along the way.

“When I started my career in 1970, I was unable to even obtain an application for one job I wanted at the high school level. They wanted a man for the position, and women were simply denied applications,” she said shaking her head.

“That same summer, I was one of two finalists for a position at a junior high school. I didn’t get the job because of a requirement that was not on the position announcement—the Spanish teacher had to coach the football team.”
Three years passed before the seductive and often elusive doctorate beckoned her.

“I planned to study in Spain. Our plans changed, and we returned home from our vacation there. I was on leave from my teaching position and the academic year had already started,” she said. She contacted her Stanford advisor from her MA years, Robert L. Politzer, and asked if it was possible to pursue a doctorate in education.

“He told me to start taking classes. They could admit me later,” she said. Stanford is expensive, though, and she expressed her concern about the risk of taking classes without knowing whether she would even be admitted.

“He called me back a day later. He said the committee met. I’d been accepted,” she said. And so she was a Stanford doctoral student. Four years later Hilda Hernández became Dr. Hernández. “I never looked back.”

Hernández wasted no time looking for work. The ink on her Stanford diploma was still wet when she had her first interview.

“I graduated from Stanford on Sunday and interviewed at Chico State on Monday. I was offered the position that afternoon,” she said.

Chico welcomed Hernández, and she has been here ever since. Hernández hit the ground running. Anyone who has ever met her knows this is her way—nothing slows her down. She would become the first educator in the CSU system to be awarded a Spencer Fellowship from the National Academy of Education. Her long, successful career was recently bookended by having her student Julie White win the prestigious Outstanding Project Award. Hernández served as chair of Julie’s graduate advisory committee with Patricia Black as a second committee member. The framework used in the project was the model Hernández has developed for teaching culture. This harkens back to the beginning of her career, her doctoral studies at Stanford. Her interest in the area has now gone full circle.

Now that she is retiring from this part of her career, Hernández might want to consider joining the lecture circuit. She could make a fortune giving advice, but she doesn’t need a fortune. She is a teacher to the bone, a woman who was able to turn her passion into play. She is always working, even when she’s not working.

“I was cleaning out my office the other day. Moving a lot of books. I needed help getting boxes into the car,” she said. She saw a young man riding by on his bicycle. She called out to him: “Would you mind helping me?” The young man was glad to help. He went over to her car. They started talking.

“He told me wants to study Chinese formally. He’s been doing it on his own, but he wants to teach accounting in China. We discussed how he might add Chinese to his fall schedule, and I suggested that he look into our graduate programs as he prepares to teach abroad. He said that he would do so.” Only Hernández could turn the simple act of transferring books into an advising session.

When asked if she had any advice to impart, she paused. She looked at the clock; not enough time in the day to streamline 46 years in the field into fortune cookie words of wisdom. She used this moment to impart a deeper yearning, an admission that punctuates her sincere passion and commitment—leagues of love, fathoms of hard work—to the program she built and kept on building.

“I hope that the TIL program continues to thrive. It’s a unique program nationally,” she said. The University would be remiss if it did not keep the legacy alive. And we would all be remiss if we did not keep the legacy of Hernández alive.
Tom Rosenow is the model of perseverance and endurance: he has survived the complex balance of fatherhood, a full-time job, and graduate school.

Tom, a spring 2013 graduate in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program and currently the director of applications and data services here at Chico State, epitomizes the success of Chico State graduate students. However, Rosenow remains humble.

“My story is not one that sets an example of expediency,” he says, “but it is an accomplishment I am very proud of.”

Like all great dramas (and all great graduate students), Rosenow had a moment of what Aristotle called “reversals and recognition” during his days as a graduate student. This is his story.

Rosenow, who was already working on campus and had no intention of ever leaving, says he noticed a trend in both the private and public workforce: “People were going back to school and getting their graduate degrees. I knew that to remain a viable candidate for other opportunities on campus, I had to act sooner rather than later.” Rosenow says that not long after becoming a graduate student, he was promoted to a supervisorial role on campus.

“The administration could see that I was on a good path. I was promoted with the anticipation of completing my degree. There was also recognized campus need for a management position in my area of expertise.”

The hours of Rosenow’s graduate coursework were a perfect fit for his work schedule. “All of my classes in the graduate program were after normal 8 a.m.-5 p.m. work hours. The nights were long. I don’t know if would have done this were I not already a University employee.” Rosenow, though, was resourceful with the opportunities available. “I had a lot of direct benefits from being an employee and a student. I was able to consistently meet with instructors. I was able to obtain release time from work if needed. I also had a fee waiver. And the library was right here when I needed to conduct research,” he said. Rosenow says that the graduate program was just a simple extension of his day, adding that “It also created an opportunity to remain engaged with the campus to gain the perspective of both an employee and a student.”

The greatest challenge Rosenow faced—one that many graduate students must tackle—involved his third and most important job: being a family man. When Tom began the MPA program, one of his children was in middle school and his other child was at the end of grade school.

“I won’t lie. It was tough. I have a very understanding wife who picked up the slack. The kids played Little League baseball, softball, wrestling, swimming, dance—they did it all.”

Rosenow recalls sitting through extra innings of a Little League game in Orland, beneath the lights, and reading organizational theory.

“I had my nose in the book in-between pitches, but I was still spitting sunflower seeds and trying to balance the role of parent and student.” He does admit the difficulty of being able to enjoy the game or the text to its fullest but says that was the balance he had to manage to accomplish the arduous dual role of father and graduate student.

“I knew that to remain...viable...

I had to act sooner rather than later.”

Rosenow found the graduate school experience enriching—a perfect blend of the theory he was learning in his classes and the practice of his day job.

“I loved the discourse and discussions that went on at the graduate level. In the MPA program, many of the students were also currently employed at some
form of public agency. Hearing all of their experiences really opened my mind.” He says the readings in his coursework were all practical to the everyday work he was performing on campus. Meanwhile, the timing of his work and school experience was perfect.

“The campus was starting to make small pockets of transition,” he said.

Rosenow’s position on campus put him in the ideal laboratory to watch and even participate in playing out the theories he was learning in his coursework.

“Organizational structure. Supervision. HR policy. Public policy. It all applied to my daily thoughts and interactions. The classroom discussions kept me engaged, interested in my work, and motivated me to want to make the campus a better place,” he said.

Rosenow urges other campus employees to follow his lead—despite the difficult challenges—and offers valuable advice: “You must commit. It’s going be hard, but it’s all worth it when you walk across the graduation stage at the graduation ceremony.” Rosenow took two classes a semester and finished his coursework within two years. He warns, though, of certain pitfalls and challenges that he encountered.

“I, well, kind of stalled when it came to writing my paper for graduation. I had already been promoted. Work had become increasingly busy and complicated. My kids were asking me not finishing and coming up with excuses not to continue.” One evening, though, it all changed. Rosenow, with the help of his family, turned his disappointment and seeming defeat into victory.

“We were at the dinner table. I got a good swift kick in the rear. My children were heading off to college. What kind of example was I setting by not finishing the degree that I was so close to finishing?” Rosenow couldn’t let his children see him quit. He reached deep within and relit the fire that had been burning so fiercely when he first entered the graduate program. He would endure. And he did.

“One of my proudest moments and senses of accomplishment in my life was walking across the graduation stage with my family looking on.”

Rosenow draws inspiration from President Barack Obama’s 2012 acceptance speech: “If you’re willing to work hard, it doesn’t matter who you are or where you come from or what you look like or where you love. It doesn’t matter whether you’re black or white or Hispanic or Asian or Native American or young or old or rich or poor, able, disabled, gay or straight, you can make it here in America if you’re willing to try.” Rosenow says this is something he truly believes in.

“You must commit. It’s going be hard, but it’s all worth it when you walk across the graduation ceremony.”

It’s no wonder Tom’s children have inherited his work ethic. Long before his days in the world of data services, he grew up on Vashon Island, Washington, where there were only 14 other homes. He would later work in Alaska on a commercial fishing boat.

“I was never certain if I’d be coming home or not.” Rosenow not only came home but he created a new home here in Chico.

“You must commit. It’s going be hard, but it’s all worth it when you walk across the graduation ceremony.”

“Do the work and you will be rewarded. I see this work ethic in my kids today as well.”

Rosenow’s children—now young adults—are living proof. His son will graduate From Cal Poly, SLO this December with a degree in materials engineering. He is currently entertaining several opportunities in the space industry. His daughter is currently a sophomore at San Diego State where she studies mechanical and biomedical engineering with an interest in prosthetics. Rosenow’s wife continues to teach at Pleasant Valley High School in the Math department (where she also serves as Chair). It’s no wonder Tom’s children have inherited his work ethic. Long before his days in the world of data services, he grew up on Vashon Island, Washington, where there were only 14 other homes. He would later work in Alaska on a commercial fishing boat.

“I was never certain if I’d be coming home or not.”

Rosenow not only came home but he created a new home here in Chico.

“I’ve lived here for 30 years. CSU, Chico will always be a part of me. I’d like to think I’m a small part of the Chico Experience.”
GRADUATE SCHOOL CORNER:
HANGING WITH ROBERT ALVAREZ

How old are you?
I am 25 years old.

Where are you from?
I grew up in Rancho Cordova but moved to Yuba City freshman year and went to high school there.

What is your discipline?
Political science

What does being a graduate student mean to you?
It means I’m on the right track. I know my family is proud of what I have accomplished to this point, but being a graduate student is just a part of the process. To my knowledge, we don’t hand out gold medals to participants. Right now, I’m just a participant. I want the diploma. When I get it, then I’ll pat myself on the back. Until then, I’ll be in the library.

What’s the typical day like in the life of Robert the graduate student?
A typical day might include an 8 a.m. meeting with the Academic e-Learning subcommittee. They love to get an early start. Then I’m on my way to my office to get some reading done for org theory. At 10:30 a.m. I have office hours for any students needing extra help with their Town Hall assignment. By the time noon arrives, I’m deciding whether it’s too soon to have another cup of coffee. From noon to 1 p.m. I’m at a course-planning meeting with my POLS 155/ENG 130 team working the kinks out of the upcoming week’s schedule. Finally, a moment to recharge. Celestino’s is calling my name at this point. After a quick bite, I might head over to the COGS office and chat with Levi, our treasurer, or Huston, our VP, regarding upcoming events. With my 4 p.m. seminar just around the corner at this point, it’s back to the library for some more reading before heading to the Arts building to cap off my night with Sharon Barrios in org theory. By the time discussion ends at 7 p.m., I’m tasked with deciding whether to squeeze some time in for basketball at the WREC or march down Ivy Street to my warm, cozy home and catch the latest episode of “Last Week Tonight” before hitting the hay.

How do you unwind from the pressures of being a graduate student?
It may sound counterintuitive to suggest that studying helps me unwind from the pressures of being a graduate student, but that is exactly what it does. There is a sort of calming effect that takes place knowing you are getting ahead of the curve by studying. Reading ahead or starting an assignment early goes a long way toward reducing stress. Other things that help me unwind are playing chess, shooting hoops, and talking politics with friends.

What is your role as COGS president like?
My role as president has allowed me to test styles of leadership, communication, and organizational structure. It has been such a rewarding experience. I think the biggest test for me has been learning how to manage a group of people with different personalities. Some officers are outspoken while others are introverts. Some like to plan ahead and others are procrastinators. Tuning COGS to just the right key has been taxing, yet at the same time the most exciting part of the job. I am a people person, so interacting with such articulate and intellectual people on a regular basis has done a lot for me in terms of keeping me motivated to improve not only myself but the organization as a whole.

How has your experience as a TA been?
Rewarding. I have seen students that started the year poorly go on to make drastic improvements. I have seen students latch onto a research topic and fall in love with it. I have seen the effectiveness of small-group, discussion-heavy, project-based learning. And most importantly, I have seen students enjoy their first-year experience.

What other organizations are you a part of?
I volunteer with One Mobile Projector Per Trainer (OMPT), a local nonprofit that uses technology to combat poverty in the developing world. I use Wordpress software to update its website on an as-needed basis. I also volunteer with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). This December, I will complete my training to become a facilitator. I am hopeful that by the middle of next semester, I will be leading workshops.
both here in Chico, and in High Desert State Prison in Susanville.

What are your research interests?

Public policy. In particular, I am interested in prison reform policy and the end goal of reducing recidivism.

Why?

I feel that, as a nation, we need to reevaluate what the goal of incarceration is, and if the policies currently in place are helping us to or deterring us from reaching that goal. For if the goal is to rehabilitate the incarcerated population, our policies need to better reflect that. If the goal is to punish the incarcerated population, well then, we are doing just fine. A critic of my position would say those are both goals; a realist would agree while also understanding that it is never an even split. We must choose a side, and I am on the side of rehabilitation.

You have mentioned to me about being a first-generation college student. What does this mean for you?

It means my brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and younger cousins will know that someone just like them graduated college. If I could do it, so could they. It means my mother and father can look at their son and be proud that he accomplished something only they thought he would. I used to think negatively about the idea of being a "statistic." Being a first-generation college student, however, changed my perspective. I am proud to be the right kind of statistic.

What motivates you? What inspires you?

I am motivated and inspired by the lives of my parents. Their resilience, perseverance, and commitment serve as beacons for me during times of hardship.

How have you persisted when so many others in your family (based on what you told me) have not?

I was constantly absorbing, watching, listening. Maybe I was able to persist because I was aware of what was happening around me, and realized that I wanted something different. When you are stuck in a cycle it is hard to recognize it. I think what allowed me to persist was being conscious of my surroundings and taking the steps necessary to improve them.

Do you have any favorite quotes or heroes? Why?

“Si se puede” [“Yes, you can”] — Cesar Chavez & Dolores Huerta

If I had to choose a hero I would choose my mother. She is the strongest person I have ever met, and I mean that. When I say strong, I don’t mean physical strength, though she certainly has that, too. I mean she is a survivor, a fighter, and brave beyond imagination. She inspires me and challenges me to be a better man than I was yesterday.

What advice do you have for undergraduates who might be considering graduate school? What advice do you have for current graduate students?

To undergraduates considering graduate school, I highly recommend it. It has been everything I expected and more. It has been challenging, demanding, exciting, fun, and illuminating. Each seminar taught me something about myself, whether it was where I stood on controversial issues or what I was most passionate about. I went into graduate school knowing I was interested in a career in public policy, but not knowing what specific area I was drawn to. I soon realized prison reform was my issue. Just because you don’t know exactly what job you want or exactly what research you are interested in doesn’t mean graduate school isn’t for you. In many cases, graduate school can help crystallize your career interests and help you understand more about the issues that are important to you. To current graduate students, make time for leisure activities and networking. It is easy to get caught up in trying to be the best student you can be. Don’t forget to take breaks! Enjoy Bidwell Park or the farmer’s market with friends, join a campus organization, or treat yourself to a play at the Blue Room Theatre. I want to emphasize networking. Graduate students often have a hard time building social networks due to their workload, but it is important not to isolate yourself. At the very least, try to get to know students from your program. If you are finding it difficult to network, contact the Council of Graduate Students and encourage it to host a mixer or a research-sharing event so that grad students have a place to mingle.

Anything else you’d like to add?

Go Wildcats!

Where do you see yourself after Chico State? What about 10 years from now? Twenty, even?

After Chico State, I plan to move to Sacramento to get some experience working as a policy analyst. I’m hoping 5 to 10 years from now, I’ll be part of a team working to influence California’s prison policies with the end goal being to substantially decrease our recidivism rate, reconfigure incarceration spending, and address prison overcrowding. In 20 years, I can see myself returning to my alma mater to teach criminal justice part time, or running for a seat in state office.

“...challenging, demanding, exciting, fun, and illuminating.”
Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management

Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management made the difficult decision to furlough its graduate program for several years. In 2007, its graduate program reopened enrollment. The four individuals in the photograph at right joined the program after the furlough; they graduated together in 2010. Three of these four students were in the first post-furlough class, half of whom went on to complete doctoral programs. All four are currently tenure-track professors in the United States. The graduate program continues to thrive as a hybrid collaboration with San Francisco State and Sacramento State.

From left: Kevin Lin, Pennsylvania State University; Erik Luvvas, University of Idaho; Jeremy Jostad, University of Utah; Susan Barnett, Indiana University

Computer Science

Jaime Raigoza has helped four MS graduate students in computer science get their papers accepted at a prestigious conference in Las Vegas scheduled for this December. Several of Raigoza’s students will also be presenting at a conference in Boston this spring. Another student will be making the trip to India for a conference. Raigoza has more than a dozen MS computer science students whose papers have been accepted both internationally and in the United States—all in the past few weeks. Let’s hope everyone is having as much fun at work as Raigoza!
Business Administration (MBA)

MBA Director and Graduate Coordinator Matt Meuter has taken the MBA program to new heights. Earlier this fall, he and a group of about 25 Chico State MBA students gathered together for a leadership training course in Paradise.

The MBA students themselves faced daring heights as their leadership and team-building skills were challenged through a ropes course designed to test their individual and collaborative confidence. MBA Director Matt Meuter partnered with Lain Hensley from Odyssey Teams Inc., to give MBA students a real-world learning experience while challenging them in ways not taught in the classroom.

Yes, the MBA students are flying high—as witnessed in this photo of Chris Small. Leaping from a 60 foot telephone pole is an apt visual metaphor for this cohort of graduate students.

To learn more about the MBA program, and to read more about this wonderful day in the life of an MBA student, please visit this link: http://www.csuchico.edu/cob/news/index.shtml

Xeng Thao (left) and Omkar Sali (right) are bonding as they help each other walk across a high wire for the “Flying V” challenge.

If you have any faculty, student, or alumni announcements to make, or if you have a burning idea about a story you’d like us to tell, please contact Thesis Editor and Advisor Carson Medley at cmedley@csuchico.edu or 898-5392.