



The concept of *The Chico Experience* has emerged over the years out of statements made by the institution, its faculty, its staff, its students, and its constituents about the nature and content of the living and learning environments *at* and *in* Chico. A sample of such statements would include:

- In his letter to President Manuel A. Esteban, Ralph A. Wolff, Executive Director, wrote: *“On the issue of residentiality, the voices of students were eloquent about the character of **“the Chico Experience.”** The University should be justifiably proud of the recognition students give to faculty and staff for their care and support, and of the beauty of the campus to support student learning and an overall positive experience.”*
- In its Report of the Comprehensive Site Visit of California State University, Chico, the Visitation Team wrote: *“Students and alumni refer to their **Chico experience** and not their CSU, Chico experience.”*
- In the Fall 1997 Chico Statements, Pat Everett, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Chico Parents, shared a letter from Emilyn A. Sheffield, Department of Recreation and Parks Management, because she thought it reflected the **“Chico Experience.”** Professor Sheffield had written: *““After moving all of my life, I have found a home at California State University, Chico. In Chico and Northern California, I discovered much more than an academic home. I discovered superb outdoor recreation, heritage from across the ages and the globe, a vibrant arts and entertainment scene, and an unparalleled vista from which to view the future. Bidwell Park, the third largest municipal park in the United States, provides space for active learning as well as respite from the rigors of academic life. Bidwell Mansion, now a State Historic Park, was the home of Chico's founding family. Only a short walk from the center of campus, the mansion tour and visitor center provide glimpses into the past and preserve Chico's heritage for new generations. And, of course, what is a college town without a downtown filled with boutiques, restaurants, coffeehouses, bakeries, and nightspots? Chico has all this and more.”* Ms. Everett finishes the column with: “I

encourage you to attend Parents Day on Saturday, October 18, visit with your student, and have the **Chico experience** for yourself.”

- In the Spring 2002 issue of Chico Statements, Professor Cris Guenter, Professor of Education, writes about her visit with Professor John Killeen of Dublin City University (formerly St. Patrick’s College) at the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Ireland Exchange Program. Reminiscences of students who have participated in the program included one from Finbarr Sloan who said “*At Chico I was able to take a lot of statistics courses (pure and applied) and to begin to combine my interests in mathematics, mathematics education, schooling, sociology, and behavioral methodology,*” he says. *His only regret is finishing the course of study as quickly as possible—and missing out on more of the **Chico experience**.*”
- The mission statement of the Chico Alumni Association reads: “*Enrich the **Chico experience** by supporting alumni, students, and the University to ensure a lifelong connection and enduring legacy.*”
- In welcoming new freshmen, the First-Year Experience program writes: “*A hallmark of the **Chico experience** is a residential learning environment where faculty, staff, and administrators work together to support student success, further academic excellence, and promote a spirit of community service and engagement. Explore this Web site to find out more about what we offer first-year students. Welcome to our community!*”
- In welcoming Parents, Chico notes: “*One of the hallmarks of the **Chico experience** is a small-town, residential environment where students can feel part of a community of learning.*”
- In attracting student-athletes to CSU, Chico, Athletics and Recreational Sports note: *The appeal of Chico State athletics is the opportunity for student-athletes to compete at a high level while pursuing a quality education. The overriding factor in our athletic success is **the Chico experience**: an almost undefinable mood which makes the student-athlete perceive Chico as ‘home,’ not just a place to go to school. This factor, along with excellent coaching and fine facilities, has contributed to Chico's reputation of one of the top NCAA Division II athletic programs in the nation.*”
- Similarly, Summer Orientation writes: *We strongly encourage you to attend one of our one- or two-day Summer Orientation sessions designed to introduce you to the CSU, Chico community and to prepare you for your university career. The Summer Orientation staff is here to help you build a strong foundation for a successful **Chico experience**.*”
- The Chico Summer Orientation Programs contains a segment entitled Insiders’ Panel which is described as “*Several of our students and campus administrators will team up to answer any questions you have about the **Chico Experience**, in an open*

question and answer format.”

- The College of Natural Sciences has an active Alumni Recognition Program that states: *“Each year the College of Natural Sciences, together with the University, recognizes one of its outstanding alumni. These individuals serve as role models for students of today by highlighting how the California State University, **Chico experience** has made a difference in their lives.”*

In his inaugural address, newly elected President Paul J. Zingg greeted invited guests with:

It is wonderful to see all of you here today, some who are visiting Chico for the first time. I hope the first-time visitors among you, in particular, will discover other nice reasons to return again to this special place. For it is that. This is an extraordinary community, defined by physical beauty, a shared sense of history and identity, and a strong commitment to civic values and virtues.

... I can acknowledge a faculty and staff whose unequivocal bottom line is student learning and success. I can praise a town/gown relationship that is seamless in its identity and mutually respectful and supportive in its character. I can celebrate a service mission that is focused on being more than a presence in the North State, but being a positive force for economic development and the improvement of the quality of life for all who live and work here. For my experience with Chico State is now a lived experience, not just an assumed one; it is an engaged experience, not just an imagined one.

It is also an evolving experience. An inauguration signals a start, of course, but it is not an abstract moment. You start from somewhere, someplace, and the starting point provides both reference and foundation.

In its May 2006 update of its Strategic Plan, Chico incorporated many of these *Chico Experience* elements in its [Vision Statement](#) which now reads:

California State University, Chico sees its distinctive residential context as an opportunity to create an active, diverse, healthy, caring, innovative, and green learning and working environment. We aim to create a vital and collaborative living and learning experience for students, who will appreciate and embrace the local, regional, and global communities of which we are all a part. We have a well respected and dedicated faculty, a superior staff, and committed leadership together with cutting-edge learning and information resources.

All of these assets are placed within a beautiful and engaging physical environment. We are a place devoted to the academy's most fundamental tenets: reason, respect, civility, and community. We are a place where the passion of our commitments and clarity of our values find expression every day in the community of learning and serving we have fashioned.

As surely as we are a special place of people and ideas, as boldly as we are the "*University of the North State*," we aspire to be the "*University of Choice*" for all those who wish to share our vision and values.



Editorial: How to enjoy the Chico experience

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Ask any of the thousands of new students at Chico State University why they chose Chico and a similar answer is heard.

The majority of students from out of the area came here on the advice of others. Perhaps one or both of their parents attended Chico State, or a sibling is going to school here or recently graduated. Maybe a friend told them about Chico. Or a friend of a friend.

Whatever the reason, they're all here this week getting accustomed to a new town. They're moving in this week and school starts Monday. We have some advice for them.

All of the things you've heard about Chico are true. It's a friendly place, where strangers smile and say hello. It's a fun place, too. But there are also some things you probably haven't heard. Here's a little local knowledge.

Though some locals bellyache about "those darn students," don't take it personally. Most local people love having the university and its students here.

Since it's now your town, treat it as such. What ticks the locals off is when students come to town and act irresponsibly, with the attitude that they're just visitors for a short time. Take ownership. Better yet, pretend your parents are still looking over your shoulder. Realize that if you step out of line, the local police, university officials and the community at large has a low threshold of patience for criminal behavior.

Peer pressure works great. If you see someone acting like a jerk, tell them.

That whole party-school thing? It's so '80s. Seven years ago, after a string of four drinking deaths in five years, students, the university, police and community members had seen enough. Things changed. Yes, students still party, but no more than college students at any other large residential campus.

Students have also learned to take care of one another. Follow their lead. If a friend has too much to drink, get them home safely. There are opportunistic people who will take advantage of drunks, by stealing from them, assaulting them, or worse.

Now that it's your community, get off campus and enjoy it. Go swim at the One-Mile before the weather cools. Go take a hike in Upper Park at sundown. Go enjoy a Friday night concert downtown. Go enjoy the downtown market on Thursday night. Go check out the Sacramento River at River Road. It's all free, which fits into any student's budget.

Chico State encourages students to volunteer in the community, so start looking for organizations that need help and fit your interests. There are plenty of them, and they all appreciate the energy of young volunteers.

Most of all, enjoy the Chico experience. When students graduate from Chico State after four (or so) years here, few want to leave Chico. It's a special place. So drink it in. Explore the town and try everything at least once. You'll be surprised at how quickly four years can fly.