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Kaela A. Bonafede and Timothy Castro

PRESS RELEASE

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Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus names 2018 outstanding graduates

PALM DESERT, Calif. - Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus has named Kaela A. Bonafede as its Outstanding Undergraduate Student and Timothy Castro as its Outstanding Graduate Student for 2018.

Both will speak at the campus' commencement ceremony on Thursday, June 14, at The Show at Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa in Rancho Mirage.

Bonafede, who lives in Bermuda Dunes, will receive a bachelor's degree in psychology and will graduate summa cum laude, or with greatest honor.

As a Palm Desert Campus undergraduate student, Bonafede has participated in a number of service and leadership activities, including the psychology club, where she currently serves as secretary, the PDC Student Ambassadors Society, a tutor in the student success center, a peer mentor, a psychology peer advisor, a SOAR leader and an assistant teacher at the University Center for Developmental Disabilities.

She also recently presented her research at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and her honors thesis at the Western Psychological Association in Portland, Oregon. She has been on the dean's list every quarter since starting classes at the Palm Desert Campus in 2014.

Bonafede has volunteered with many community organizations. However, her most significant community work is serving as a volunteer side walker for children with disabilities at the Pegasus Therapeutic Riding Academy, where she provides children the opportunity to take lessons and ride horses while offering physical and emotional support to their families.

Bonafede has been accepted to the CSUSB master's program in clinical counseling psychology. After completing graduate school and obtaining a marriage and family therapy license, her long-term goal is to give back to the college community by working in an on-campus clinic and becoming adjunct faculty at the Palm Desert Campus, teaching courses in the psychology department. She believes that her experience as a student at PDC will give her insight into students' needs and provide them with the most effective education.

Castro, who lives in Cathedral City, will receive a master's degree in business administration with a concentration in management. He is graduating with honors.

Castro is the only person in his family to attend college. He served 15 years in the United States Marine Corps and never imagined college was for him. He said that education has become his addiction and he is excited to share the experience with friends.

When Castro first started at PDC, he was homeless and completed his homework assignments at the public library. He said that people suggested that he quit and focus instead on getting a better job, but he did not listen and says that it is now paying off. He is continuously offered jobs with more responsibility and better pay and wants people to know that if he can do it, so can they.

During his time at PDC, Castro founded the Alpha Omega Business Association, recorded more than 200 hours of community service, was a student assistant in the Veterans Success Center and a former president of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

He intends to run for city council in Cathedral City and believes that it is time for his generation to stand up and make a difference. His goal is to obtain a doctorate and return to the Palm Desert Campus to teach.

Located in beautiful Palm Desert, the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus offers bachelor's and master's degrees, a doctorate in educational leadership, and teacher credentials and certificates. With more than 1,400 students, it is the Coachella Valley's four-year public university and plays a vital role in educating and training the region's growing population.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the campus' Office of Public Affairs at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the campus website at pdc.csusb.edu.