



Athletic Study Center *Scholar-Athlete* of the Week

Briana Thai



Recognized for leveraging her signature strengths as a scholar and athlete to enhance opportunities for underrepresented populations within and beyond the university setting. Briana is a silent leader who leans on compassion, trust, and communication to resolve complex situations within the team environment and bring forth meaningful change. Currently, through interdisciplinary research, she is examining academic and athletic stigmas placed upon female minority student-athletes via theoretical frameworks focused on sense of belonging, avenues of access, and holistic achievement. Beyond the classroom, Briana has worked as a coach with the Rose Bowl Aquatics Center developing multiple teaching styles that foster learning at each maturity phase and assess each athlete's skill level to ensure safety during performance. With a keen interest in youth development, she has also served as a volunteer with Oakland Asian Student Educational Services mentoring and tutoring underrepresented students of color, inspiring them to explore their academic curiosity through play.



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Christian Gomez

Recognized for challenging his peers to view obstacles as opportunities for growth and to embrace a mindset of “thinking outside the box” during their Cal journey. Christian is an incredibly gifted individual who plays an instrumental role as a Peer Advisor for the Scholar-Athlete Freshman Transition Seminars. Within both virtual class sessions and small-group engagement pods, he has empowered students to gain a better understanding of self-efficacy within diverse settings; provided them with clear incentives for setting meaningful goals via campus resources; and encouraged them to pursue authentic leadership opportunities. Beyond campus borders, he has served as a Research Assistant and Documentation Specialist and has volunteered with organizations focused on Disaster and Humanitarian Relief projects.





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Ezinne Abba



Recognized for leveraging her strengths and interests to expand her personal and professional pursuits with a disciplined sense of purpose. Ezinne approaches her Cal journey in a multidimensional manner, identifying avenues of growth that optimize her self-efficacy and serve the greater community. Beyond her commitment to academics and athletics, she has enhanced the social media presence for the Black Recruitment and Retention Center as a Public Relations and Data Manager; explored a plethora of healthcare issues affecting underrepresented communities through problem-based learning cases, lectures, clinical experiences, small-group discussions, and research via the Summer Health Professions Education Program at UCLA; and assisted in devising strategic allocation of funds, collaborated in planning philanthropic events, and familiarized youth with healthy practices to sustain proper oral hygiene as a Dental Education Outreach Intern with the Cal Pre-Dental Society. On campus, Ezinne has been an active member of several student, professional, and cultural organizations, offering her perspective and leadership to each.



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Mckenna Vranicar

Recognized for boosting her intellectual identity and skill set via impactful research in her curricular and professional pursuits. In the past year, Mckenna has extended her scholarly interests by serving as an Undergraduate Research Assistant with Haas School of Business, using research methods and technical programs to design and conduct experiments in a social psychology and business lab. Through software-based programs such as Qualtrics, TurkPrime, and Excel she has collected and analyzed survey data presenting results in a clear, informative manner to the lab team. With mindful attention to protocol for conduct studies and data collection, she has collaborated with other lab members and a corresponding lab at Cornell University to transition the research process to a virtual platform.



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Reece Whitley

Recognized for leveraging the Golden Bear scholar-athlete pedestal of potential, beyond athletic and academic excellence, by cultivating accountability for diversity, inclusivity, and advocacy within and outside the Cal community. Reece is truly an emerging leader who leans heavily on his identity to shed light upon shifting the narrative of neutrality in the face of injustice. Through collaborative efforts with USA Swimming and Cal Athletics, he has invoked complicated conversations and offered critical insights upon the injustices that have served as an underpinning in society. He has leaned on actively sharing his own lived experiences, while simultaneously listening to various voices and perspectives. His dedication to empowering others via social change is truly inspiring!



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Sydney Collins

Recognized for applying acquired knowledge toward opportunities within and beyond the academic space, diligently identifying relevant engagements to supplement her intellectual and professional pursuits. As Sydney prepares to begin her journey of postgraduate education at Cal, she is focused on – engaging in meaningful and critical conversations; drawing upon her lived experience and curricular content as a reflective practitioner; enhancing her scope of research within the field of education; continuing to serve youth in the local community via the platform of school and sport; and cultivating a plan to further enhance her marketability by networking with faculty and alumni. As an undergraduate student she has truly embraced owning her experience and paving a path to success within and beyond the realm of academia.