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Western CUNA Management School Recognizes Students and Alumni Discuss Crisis's Impact on Credit Unions

Western CUNA Management School (WCMS) honored those students who excelled in their completed projects during a virtual ceremony held on Nov. 20. Following the conferring of honors, the school hosted its first ever virtual roundtable with distinguished alumni discussing the impact of the pandemic on credit unions. Both events are currently available on the school's website for interested credit union professionals.

For Project 1—completed between the student's first and second year and focused on a critical evaluation of the student's credit union and membership—23 received honors and 11 high honors. For Project 2—completed between the second and third year and featuring financial projections, strategic plans, and a business plan for future credit union operations—23 students received honors while 14 received high honors. Abiy Selassie, branch manager at SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union in Santa Ana, CA, received the Rick Craig Prize for Excellence in Project 2 recognizing excellence in the second-year project, the school's highest award for the project.

Through these projects, WCMS students are required to take academic concepts from the classroom and apply them to the reality of the credit union experience, said Dean and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Michael D. Steinberger. Both Project 1 and 2 takes about 100 hours to complete.

"Students completing their projects this year are to be commended given the increased challenges and responsibilities brought on by the pandemic," Steinberger said during the virtual ceremony. "You represent the future leadership of the credit union movement."

Following the announcing of honors, the school welcomed three distinguished alumni to discuss the impact the pandemic and recession are having on credit unions. Diana Dykstra '92, President/CEO of the California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues and President of Western CUNA Management School, Erick Orellana '98, President/CEO Comunidad Latina Federal Credit Union and Former Deputy Commissioner Credit Union Division of the Department of

Business Oversight (DBO), and Matt Stephenson '08, Executive Vice President, Rogue Credit Union Medford Oregon, joined the panel moderated by Steinberger.

The alumni panel focused on the need for adaptability and innovation on the part of credit union leaders to weather the crisis. "Just keep moving forward, you are the next generation," counseled Dykstra. Orellana and Stephenson implored the students, respectively, to "Make sure you are passionate about who you want to serve," and that "Your careers, your members and the movement will all benefit from (your actions and leadership)."

The full virtual 2020 Project Honors Ceremony and Alumni Panel is available on the WCMS website at: <https://www.wcmspomona.org/>.

Below is the list of all the awardees:

Project 1 Honors

Gil Amundsen, TwinStar Credit Union (Washington); Meagan Barrett, Northern Colorado Credit Union (Colorado); Dana Bedwell, Otero Federal Credit Union (New Mexico); Jaime Campanella, Numerica Credit Union (Washington); Mark Cardella, Pacific Service Credit Union (California); Tina Covington, Altura Credit Union (California); Brittany DeVries, Clearwater Credit Union (formerly Missoula FCU, Montana); Erica Espinoza Doi, SESLOC Federal Credit Union (California); Marisa Howard, Xceed Financial Credit Union (California); Angie Knips, Rogue Credit Union (Oregon); Monica Lauber, Wauna Federal Credit Union (Oregon); Kelly Mobley, Vantage West Credit Union (Arizona); Carl Murphy, Colorado Credit Union (Colorado); Amen Oviasogie, Xceed Financial Credit Union (California); Rony Peraza, Los Angeles Federal Credit Union (California); Maia Pinnow, CUNA Mutual Group (Wisconsin); Sarah Roman, Orange County's Credit Union (California); Farren Shumate, Washington State Employees Credit Union (Washington); Matthew Stringham, America First Credit Union (Utah); Crystal Terwilleger, Canvas Credit Union (Colorado); Christine Turner, Vantage West Credit Union (Arizona); Thomas Von Eschen, Frontwave Credit Union (California); Vanessa Wagoner, Red Canoe Credit Union (Washington)

Project 1 High Honors

Amera Aiello, SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union (California); Ryan Brown, Canvas Credit Union (Colorado); Jordan Gray, LBS Financial Credit Union (California); Christopher Hibbs, Alaska USA Federal Credit Union (Alaska); Jessica Jamison, SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union (California); Gina Jorgensen, Rogue Credit Union (Oregon); Cheryl McCarthy, Rivermark Community Credit Union (Oregon); Benjamin Metzger, Canvas Credit Union (Colorado); Tiani Moses, HFS Federal Credit Union (Hawaii); Aaron Pitroff, Members 1st Credit Union (California); Ian Wiggins, Wauna Federal Credit Union (Oregon)

Project 2 Honors

Katie Adams, Valley First Credit Union (California); Adriana Alexander, iQ Credit Union (Washington); Ariana Balch, UNCLE Credit Union (California); Jethro Casinas, Maui Federal Credit Union (Hawaii); Kevin Cole, Mid Oregon Federal Credit Union (Oregon); Lori Fink, Unitus Community Credit Union (Oregon); Grace Flores, Pacific Service Credit Union (California); Laura Hansen, Rogue Credit Union (Oregon); Emily Hawkins, Mission Federal Credit Union (California); Erick Kniestedt, TwinStar Credit Union (Washington); Ellie McIntyre, Numerica Credit Union (Washington); Andrew Murawa, First Entertainment Credit Union (California); Douglas Newell, Inspirus Credit Union (Washington); Kim Ngo, Patelco Credit Union (California); Rachel Nielson, SESLOC Federal Credit Union (California); Aprylle Odlum-Chang, Patelco Credit Union (California); Antoinette Olivas, Guadalupe Credit Union (New Mexico);

Heather Padget, Centennial Lending LLC (Colorado); Laura Patterson, Mountain America Credit Union (Utah); Susan Rice, Bellco Credit Union (Colorado); Dustin Rohde, SnoCope Credit Union (Washington); Austin Schock, Glendive BN Federal Credit Union (Montana); Aaron Sugimoto, CU Hawaii Federal Credit Union (Hawaii)

Project 2 High Honors

Brodie Cook, America First Credit Union (Utah); Kevin Davies, SESLOC Federal Credit Union (California); John Granato, Sandia Laboratory Federal Credit Union (New Mexico); Jonathan Holland, Spokane Teachers Credit Union (Washington); Jess King, Coast Central Credit Union (California); Nina Myers, Fitzsimons Federal Credit Union (Colorado); Athar Nazir, Alaska USA Federal Credit Union (Alaska); Diana Nellis, America First Credit Union (Utah); Andrew Reding, BECU (Washington); Kent Richard, Blue Federal Credit Union (Wyoming); Abiy Selassie, Schools First Federal Credit Union (California); Corey Suraci, Connection Credit Union (Washington); Bradley Tichenor, Partners Federal Credit Union (California); Neal Weber, Blue Federal Credit Union (Wyoming)

About Western CUNA Management School: *WCMS serves credit unions in the 13 western states and is sponsored by the leagues and associations for those credit unions, including the Alaska Credit Union League, California Credit Union League, Credit Union Association of New Mexico, Hawaii Credit Union League, Montana Credit Union Network, Mountain West Credit Union Association, Nevada Credit Union League, Northwest Credit Union Association, and Utah Credit Union Association, in cooperation with Pomona College in Claremont, CA. Graduates who have developed their skills and knowledge at the school occupy positions of leadership and responsibility at some of the nation's leading credit unions.*

PHOTO CAPTION: Abiy Selassie, a branch manager at SchoolsFirst FCU, received the Western CUNA Management School's (WCMS) Rick Craig Prize for Excellence in Project II recognizing excellence in the second-year project, an endeavor that usually takes each student more than 200 hours to complete. WCMS President Diana Dykstra and SchoolsFirst FCU President and CEO Bill Cheney presented Selassie with his award.

