



# Cal Delta Spotlight

USC House Corporation of Phi Delta Theta | Summer 2021 | University of Southern California

Alumni Office | P.O. Box 80828, Atlanta, Georgia 30366 | [www.usephidelt.org](http://www.usephidelt.org)

## President's Corner

Spring 2021

This time of year is one of my favorites, especially at the Phi Delta Theta house on West 28th Street. It's my favorite because the Jacaranda in the front is in full bloom, contrasting the beige walls of the house against its violet hues - one of the most picturesque views on the Row in my opinion.



The Jacaranda blooming means that another year has gone by; however, I think I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that it was definitely a fulfilling, albeit taxing, past year.

Being a volunteer House Corporation President during a time of tremendous uncertainty, evolving rule-sets, and heightened scrutiny has been an incredible learning opportunity for me. I wanted to share some of the most prominent ones with you all:

**1) Quick and Decisive Action, Supplemented, with Constant Communication is Key!** Over the course of the year and a half dealing with COVID, we needed to help tenants remotely store their belongings when they couldn't come back to USC after the original outbreak, we needed to modify lease agreements to maintain social distancing throughout the property through new occupancy requirements from LA County, and we need to instill new policies and procedures for meal preparation. All of these changes required that we make decisions quickly, communicate those updates to tenants, and ensure the new policies were being carried out properly.

**2) Others Want to Help, Don't Do It Alone.** Our dedicated House Corporation Board always provided

**PRESIDENT** (continued on page 6)

## Alumni Spotlight: Tay Vaughn '15



*Editor's Note: For this edition of the newsletter, we're shining the Spotlight on Brother Tay Vaughn '15. After graduating Valedictorian of the Price School of Public Policy with a BS in Public Policy (Urban Planning), Tay went on to work for Walt Disney Imagineering as an Assistant Project Manager on their newest project, Star Wars: Galaxy Edge. After 5 years at Walt Disney, Tay has gone out on his own, launching Tay Vaughn Design + Creative, a full-service design and creative solutions company. In addition to his creative work, Tay loves to travel, traversing the US in his Toyota 4-Runner with a roof-top tent. You can follow many of Tay's travels on his YouTube channel, "How to Travel with Tay Vaughn" [howtotravel.tv](http://howtotravel.tv). Thanks, Tay, for giving back to Cal Delta.*

**Q: What did you enjoy most as an active chapter member?**

My goal as a chapter member (social chair and VP) was to ensure that Cal Delt was the most FUN organization at USC, and to be sure that everyone knew about it. Naturally, that goal made my chapter experience a blast.

**Q: How do you stay in touch with your brothers today?**

Today, I'm on my way back, road tripping, from Austin, TX, visiting my Cal Delt roommate (and chapter president, Calum Hayes), his wife, and their one-year-old. Clearly, it's been a challenging year to stay connected with anyone, but I value the opportunity to spend time, in person, with any of my chapter brothers, whether we reconnect for a drink in LA or whether I'm driving my truck cross-country to spend time with their growing families.

**Q: Why do you feel it's important to remain involved as an alumnus?**

Some of the most important people in my life are my brothers, whether they are professional or personal contacts. I have a great interest in continuing to invest into the community in which I grew during my time at Cal Delt, and I feel a responsibility to reinvest in the institution for future classes to profit the way I have.

**Q: What inspired you to get into design?**

I've always been a creative person—I think that's just something you know about yourself,



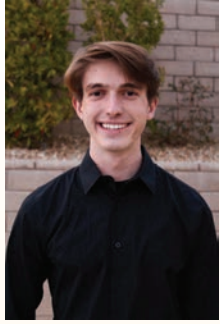
*2020 had Tay on the road somewhere in the US with his Toyota 4-Runner and roof top tent.*

especially at a young age. But, academically, I started at USC (happily, I should add) in a public policy track. Even though I was gobbling up urban development as a student, I was missing my ability to express through music, design, etc. Serendipitously, I took an opportunity to elect a design course in the Roski School of Fine Arts (at that point I wasn't totally comfortable in an art-school environment). I realized through an entry-level course that I had a great alignment of my skills and passion; the course was enriching, fun, and I was totally crushing it.

As a designer, creative thinker, thought partner, imagineer... I think there is something innately human about our ability to share a story and to use expression to engage, engender emotion, and inspire.

**TAY** (continued on page 5)

## President's Message



Fellow Brothers of California Delta,

My name is Josh Rana, and I am the current president of our chapter. As a member of last spring's Phikeia class, the majority of my time in this house has been during the pandemic; however, my Executive Board and I did not let the mostly online nature of our semester stop us from keeping the chapter active (safely of course) and ensuring a bright future for this organization.

We are happy to announce that our newest Phikeia class— Alpha Eta—was initiated this semester, with a small in-person ceremony being held this month (everyone vaccinated and social distanced of course). Though the majority of their semester was online, I am extremely proud of the bonds these 16 young men have made with each other and the rest of the chapter and look forward to their contributions as active members.

Due to the online semester, our activities have been extremely limited; however, this has not stopped our Brotherhood Chair, Joseph Antonello, from keeping brothers close with events like online poker, sports viewing and even a covid-safe early movie viewing of the new King Kong and Godzilla movie (picture attached, page 4).

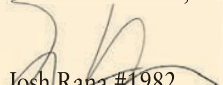
Another exciting aspect of the chapter is our two new positions— Career Chair and DEI Chair. Alex St. Jean, our career chair, is working on connecting alumni and brothers more easily in order to utilize the vast connections and networking opportunities that our alumni possess. If you are on LinkedIn and have not yet been invited to our new networking group, please add Alex so that we can include you in this exciting development! Our DEI chair, Alex Oliva, will be working with IFC and FSLD to help our house progress along with IFC's mission to make the row more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

With most of our members now fully vaccinated and USC returning to in-person classes in the fall, we look forward to the return of in-person events and the ability to commune with our entire chapter, as well as the rest of the USC community.

Despite our continued membership and enthusiasm, we are not unaffected by the pandemic. This year the effects of deferred rush finally took their toll on the chapter, with 3 pledge classes graduating this semester. Online rush also caused a decrease in new member numbers, with only 8 new members being initiated in Fall 2020 and 16 members this Spring. At the beginning of Fall 2021, the majority of our membership will be seniors. While a larger than normal rush will help fix this, it will cost the chapter a large amount of money in housing costs, as completely filling the house to its quota is very unlikely next year. We also charged very little dues this semester, in order to ensure the financial security of our members whose families may be struggling at this time. Any alumni help in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

As we hopefully near the end of this pandemic, it is California Delta's goal to return to USC in the fall with even more fervor and enthusiasm than when we left last spring. Fight on!

Yours in the Bond,

  
Josh Rana #1982  
Chapter President



## Congratulations to our 2021 Graduating Seniors!

- |                   |                     |                    |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| David Cooper      | Nick Gima           | Henry Hiemstra     |
| Adam Owens        | William Alpert      | Emad Askar         |
| Aidan Cusack      | Tobias Leitao       | Kasen Furtado      |
| Dylan Field       | Spencer Paulsen     | Jack Salva         |
| Matteo Mendoza    | Stewart Kirkconnell | Christian Labertew |
| JC Heckman III    | Austin Bohnett      | Ryan Fawwaz        |
| Mark Nishida      | Dane Dominguez      | Matthew Higgins    |
| Samuel McNamee    | Grant Thomas        | Tyler Jensen       |
| William Nedelman  | Gabriel Katz        | Henry Funderburk   |
| Quinn Cunniff     | Jeffrey Martin      | Sahil Kothari      |
| Robert Dileo      | Nicholas Boveri     | Samuel Lee         |
| Jack Lulich       | Dawson Dayhoff      | Jack Janett        |
| John Miggins      | Kareem Danan        | Lucas Martinez     |
| Samuel Cartwright | Jarrod Baltikauskas | Ryan Nishida       |
| Philip Bliss      | Clayton Forsee      |                    |
| Brendan Semien    | David Molz          |                    |



# Chapter Spotlight: Rohan Daniel

*Editor's Note: Featured in the Chapter Spotlight is Rohan Daniel. Rohan is a Junior from Kansas who serves on the IFC as VP of Health and Wellness. He also serves as the director of events for Trojan Awareness Combatting Overdose (TACO). Prior to being elected to the IFC, Rohan served as Cal Delta's New Member Mental Health Chair. When not helping fellow students with their health and wellness, Rohan is working towards a degree in Biomedical Engineering at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.*

**Q. What sparked your interest and desire to work with students on mental health and wellness?**

When I was pledging Phi Delta Theta my second semester of Freshman year, I could not keep up with school, pledging, and other commitments I had at that time. With my poor time management, I saw my mental health break down, and I needed to seek help. Luckily, I had a great support system within the fraternity; therefore I was able to access the right resources and get my life back on track. I soon realized not everybody in Greek Life was as fortunate as I was, and I believed that everyone deserved a support system that can help them cope with mental health. Therefore, I joined IFC to implement mental health chairs in all of the houses to guarantee that at least two brothers in each house knew how to get struggling brothers to correct resources to get professional help.

**Q. You helped found TACO. What does TACO do and how does it better the USC community?**

TACO was founded in June 2020 and stands for Trojan Awareness Combatting Overdose. We are a public health 501c3 non-profit whose work is supported by scientific data. Our research team reads scientific peer-reviewed journals and conducts neuroscience research on the effects of drugs on

the body and mind to make graphics, presentations, and other media to aid young adults in making informed decisions when participating in recreational drug activity. We also provide free access to Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) which have been shown by studies to decrease deaths and overall drug use.

The USC community has experienced numerous tragedies due to overdoses, and all our members have been personally impacted by these deaths. We are extremely passionate about reducing the amount of drug related deaths and accidents, and we are very proud to say that the 2020-2021 school year was the first in over a decade where nobody died from an overdose at USC. We are expanding to other campuses, and if anyone is interested in having TACO work with students at their university/local community or is interested in donating to our cause, please contact us at [uscaco@gmail.com](mailto:uscaco@gmail.com) and/or DM our Instagram @tacoinc\_.



**Q. How did you end up at USC from Kansas? What was the deciding factor that took you out west?**

My father immigrated from India to do his PhD at the Marshall School of Business at USC back in the 1990s. Since it was the only American university I had a family tie to, I grew up a die-hard Trojan football fan. Senior year of high school, I applied to my dream school and when I got accepted, I knew

**ROHAN** (continued on page 4)

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services

### Consent

**Consent must be an affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement.** It is positive cooperation in act and attitude made with knowledge and agreement to the nature of the act.

**Unwanted sexual activity without consent is violence.**

**F**reely given  
**R**eversible  
**I**nformed  
**E**nthusiastic  
**S**pecific

USC Student Health  
Keck Medicine of USC  
University of Southern California

*New Member Wellness Day: Discussed Hazing Prevention, Mental Health Awareness, Drug Education with TACO, and Bystander Intervention*



Rohan, 3rd from the right, along with the other 2020 IFC Officers.



# Rohan (continued from page 3)

where I was going for college. I was actually born in Los Angeles, and we had plenty of family friends in the area, so my parents felt comfortable shipping me off half-way across the country.

*Q. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges that today's students face that alumni may not think about or have experienced when they were in college?*

Mental Health is a relatively new issue that is openly discussed. Brothers are finally able to seek help without being judged and improve their lives with the correct resources. It is a big deal to realize that you need help; therefore having a proper support system is more important now than ever.

*Q. What do you do for fun? How do you deal with stress and pressures from school work, volunteer work?*

Free time is rare with my rigorous course work and work commitments, but when I am in Los Angeles, I love to go out and try different types of food. Growing up in Kansas, the famous barbeque restaurants would be the only ones worth going to; therefore I am trying to take advantage of Los Angeles to try all types of cuisine. I also try to stay fit by playing pickup basketball or tennis with my friends.

*Q. You are working towards a degree in Biomedical Engineering, what do you see yourself doing after graduation? In 10 years?*

I am studying Biomedical Engineering with an Electrical Engineering Emphasis at the Viterbi School of Engineering at USC. I really want to work in the Medical Device industry. I always knew that I wanted to help others in my profession, and working with medical devices allows me to possibly help millions of people every second across the globe. My father had a heart attack my sophomore year of college, and it was a stent-injection system that saved his life. It would be extremely rewarding for me to give back to this industry as it has done so much for my family.

Eventually, I would like to unlock my entrepreneurial spirit and try to start my own medical device company and possibly have a device that I can put my



name on (figuratively).

*Q. What hobby or skill would you like to master in the next 5 years?*

Hopefully, I will still be in Southern California after graduation, so hopefully I can pickup surfing. Freshman year I went surfing for the first time, and I got stung by a stingray. Before that, it was very difficult, but it was also very fun with a thrill that I haven't felt before.



Cal Delta brothers enjoy an early viewing of the new King Kong and Godzilla movie.





# Tay

(continued from page 1)

**Q. You left Walt Disney to start your own company. What prompted you to do that? What have been the challenges? Rewards?**

- Simple answer: the Imagineering lost about half of its staff due to the pandemic (interesting time to be working in Theme Park design AND Cruise Ship development). Not a healthy time to be in the industry.

BUT - without a little shove out of the nest, I don't think I would have given myself the opportunity to explore my entrepreneurialism. I came from a highly creative (but highly corporate) environment: now that I'm building my own practice, I have the chance to professionally define as exactly what I want to be. And - I no longer have a limit or a lid to what I can pursue and accomplish.

**Q: Which achievements are you most proud of?**

Life has a funny way of reinventing itself in cycles; for some reason my cycle seems to be four years. I feel particularly proud of leading my class across the stage as valedictorian of my school in 2015, I'm proud of joining hundreds of my project partners to welcome our guests into Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge as an imagineer in 2019, but call me poetic: I'm most excited about whatever I have to be proud of in 2023. Let's go!

**Q. You worked on Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge. What was it like working on this project from an amusement park perspective and from the perspective of this iconic brand called Star Wars?**

This is an enormous answer! Even though I wasn't a major Star Wars fan before I started my role with the Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge team, all of my team members and I developed a high sensitivity to the brand, language and storytelling of the entire Star Wars universe BECAUSE our land(s) exist within the story fabric of ALL Star Wars

stories (stories that happen in the land corroborate stories that happen in ANY Star Wars film, and vice versa).

I will say... I remember watching a few of the Star Wars film premieres while we were designing and building Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge; even though our teams at Imagineering didn't work directly on the films, I remember feeling enormously proud of the opportunity to contribute-to (and to build upon) the intellectual property that has been so special and important to our fans' lives (for the last four and half decades). Likewise; it was a remarkable experience to welcome our first guests to the lands on opening day to watch decades-long fans see the REAL Millennium Falcon for the first time ever.

**Q: Where do you see the future of advertising going?**

I'm less of an ads guy, more of a communication design guy, but we are beyond the point of democratizing communication: social media, DIY internet advertising, media everywhere. What I find interesting is the opportunity to find new ways of communicating with the market. When I work with



Left side: Mexico, right side: US / Rio Grande in Big Bend National Park, TX

clients, I am always most excited to push boundaries in terms of unique, innovative, and sometimes weird strategies to deliberately express a brand's message.

**Q: Outside of work what do you do for fun?**

Travel! It's been an interesting time to be a travel enthusiast. But, during 2020 I spent most of the year traveling across the country in a Toyota 4-Runner with a rooftop tent. And we made videos about it!

TAY (continued on page 6)



## President

(continued from page 1)

an amazing sounding board for decisions we needed to make by bringing a wealth of industry knowledge to the problem (e.g., property management, legal, finance, etc). The Board would help to align on a well thought out action plan for any problem we encountered. Additionally, while some of us were busy reacting to COVID regulations and their impact on California Delta tenants, others of us (cough Bill Mitchell and Kevin Fohrer cough) dove in head first to ensure events like our Annual Alumni Reunion could still occur. I thank everyone who has helped out over the past year and a half; we wouldn't be here without you

3) **Get Creative, Get Outside of your Comfort Zone!** Now that this is my 5th year acting as House Corporation President, many of the contracts, protocols, procedures, and the like are some-what "standard" and we have been using them for a while. However, during the past year and a half we had to "shake things up". An "All Virtual" Alumni Reunion where we ship whiskey to everyone's doorsteps? Why not. Contracts which allow Residents to rent double rooms as a single because of their preference? Let's try it! Creating a new website and then using it to host digital versions of our newsletter in 2021 and send out emails to all Alumni? Why don't we give it a shot. We have tried many new things this year due to the circumstances and I'm sure some of them will stick with us in the future.

I was going to start this "President's Corner" by saying that we are "almost back to normal" or something to that effect -- you know, whatever I am saying on my Zoom calls nowadays to colleagues. However, that didn't seem right.

While the Jacaranda might be blooming again in it's annual cycle, some might think this symbolizes normalcy - a return to the way things were, before the pandemic. However, I disagree - the Jacaranda has grown a lot over the past year. It may have shed some branches, grown new ones, or more firmly planted its roots down at the corner of Hoover and 28th Streets (maybe all of the above). Much like this example, as we get back to society, I encourage everyone to take some of the lessons we learned during quarantine with us. I think we all learned valuable lessons in empathy, grace, Brotherhood, and a whole lot more. I hope we don't want to "return to normal" but we bring these lessons with us as we make 2021 even better than if we were returning to "late 2019, pre-pandemic" normal.

With that being said, let's grab a beer! It would be amazing to see some of your faces now that breweries and restaurants are open again. We certainly have a lot of catching up to do. Speaking of catching up, **be on the lookout for more information in August about our 3rd Annual Alumni Reunion, it is sure to be a blast!**

As always if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to us at [housecorp@uscphidelt.org](mailto:housecorp@uscphidelt.org). We appreciate hearing from our Alumni!

Quick reminder: we are looking for individuals to join the House Corporation Board. I will be stepping down as President in December 2021 (after a 5 year term) and we would like to have individuals on the Board who may be interested in taking over the reigns. Please don't hesitate to email me directly at [housecorp@uscphidelt.com](mailto:housecorp@uscphidelt.com). It has been an absolute honor and pleasure to serve in this capacity for the past five years.

Fight On!

*Brenton J Caldwell*

Brenton Caldwell



## Capital Campaigns: Thank You!

For those who may not be familiar with our previous capital raising efforts, Phi Delta Theta California Delta has had 2 Capital Campaigns since 2007. The "Restoring the Legacy" campaign was our initial campaign which was kicked off in 2007 in order to help to source the capital required to rebuild the property at 1005 West 28th Street. That campaign was officially closed in 2017. The "Securing our Future" campaign kicked off in 2011 with the primary intention to pay down our mortgage balance to ensure our mortgage debt could be serviced at a reasonable rate based on revenue provided from rental income. We are currently working to close out all pledged balances for this second capital campaign by the end of this year.

Our successful Capital Campaigns, a direct reflection of the financial generosity of our alumni, are one of the main reasons that California Delta has been able to weather financial hardships from COVID-19 in the past year and half. The Capital Campaigns are also the reason why we have been able to establish a favorable financial position with only ~\$900K left outstanding on our mortgage balance.

The House Corporation wanted to extend a tremendous "Thank You!" to all of our donors. We have made a virtual donor board, which mirrors the physical donor board at the property, on our website at: <https://www.uscphidelt.org/giving-back>.

## Tay

(continued from page 5)



Mount Rushmore, mid-pandemic July 2020

In my witching hours, I spend my time storytelling by creating travel videos on my channel, *How to Travel* ([www.howtotravel.tv](http://www.howtotravel.tv)).

**Q. In your travels this past year, what was the most amazing experience you had?**

We had the chance to visit SO MANY amazing places across the country (places I never thought I'd get the chance to visit, places I didn't know existed, places I always wished I could visit again)... but I think the most amazing experience was learning that we COULD.

During this time we had to learn on the fly, not only how to work on the road, but honestly how to actually travel (again) during a moment in which travel wasn't really a possibility. And I'll tell you: it's pretty freeing to be able to just go... to be motivated by the excitement of exploration, to no longer have any reason to NOT visit family, friends, new places. Last count: 31 states and 35 National Parks. Travel on!

## Alumni News

**Fred Hoepfner '55** — One of my long-term avocations has been music, specifically ragtime composition. Contemporary classic ragtime has an emotional side which I often try to invoke. This year the West Coast Ragtime Festival was virtual--8 concerts over 3 days, videoed and webcast. During the festival Norwegian pianist Morten Gunnar Larsen performed a sensitive reading of my "Lucille's Rag Arabesque," which I composed a few years ago for a contest honoring the late Dr. Lucille Salerno of the University of Missouri. To hear it, visit my Facebook page where I have posted it. You can also enter "West Coast Ragtime Festival 2020 Saturday afternoon" in the You Tube search box. My composition comes on at about 51:40.



**Joel Van Boom '83** — We have expanded to TN and I am now a resident there. I still have our factory and home in CA but most of my time is spent in TN. We expanded to TN because we are growing. Most of our product ships to destinations east of the Rockies, and shipping from TN saves our customers a lot of money. We also looked at TN's favorable attitude toward businesses and that they have no state income tax on individuals. Those were important factors for us and our employees.

### *We Want to Hear From You!*



Send your personal updates, accomplishments, adventures, and photos to our alumni engagement team at [info@elevateims.com](mailto:info@elevateims.com). We want to share it in the next issue of the *Cal Delta Spotlight!*

## Chapter Grand

We are saddened to have learned of the passing of the following Cal Delta brothers since the last issue of the *Cal Delta Spotlight*. We extend our sympathies to their friends, families, and their loved ones:

**Donald Daves '55**

**John Knight '55**

**Walter Tavis '60**

## Leave A Legacy!

Consider a lasting gift that will support Phi Delta Theta long after you are gone. By including the USC Phi Delt House Corporation in your estate plans, you ensure the long-term health and success of our fraternity. To inform us of your gift, or for more information on how you can contribute to the USC Phi Delt House Corp., contact the California Delta House Corporation at [housecorp@uscphidelt.com](mailto:housecorp@uscphidelt.com).

## Shifting to Digital Newsletters for 2021

This is the first edition of our "Cal Delta Spotlight" which will be delivered only in a digital format. That means, we need your help! Before the distribution of this newsletter we have worked to collect updated demographic information (including email addresses) for all of our Alumni; however, we know that we likely missed some. That's where you come in!

It would mean a lot to us if you could help us keep our Brothers connected

and informed with what is occurring at California Delta. In order to do this, if you are in contact with Cal Delt Brothers today, please ask them if they have received this communication. If not, feel free to forward our website, or our email including the newsletter link, to them.

If you didn't receive this communication and had it forwarded to you (or if you stumbled upon it), please update your contact information by emailing your new

contact information to: [recordsmanager@elevateims.com](mailto:recordsmanager@elevateims.com). Then next time we send this, you'll receive it.

We look forward to 2022, in which we will be printing and mailing our newsletters again but in order to reduce overhead expenses and ensure the stability of our balance sheet, both of our publications this year will be online-only.

## Reminder: USC Phi Delta Theta Website: Our Virtual Home

As we mentioned in the Fall 2020 Newsletter, the House Corporation, alongside the Chapter and some dedicated parents and alumni, has overhauled our website to serve as a place to keep us all connected in this increasingly digital time. Our new website can be viewed at [www.uscphidelt.org](http://www.uscphidelt.org).

Our new digital presence includes:

- **Alumni Newsletters & Events** — check out digital copies of our newsletters and upcoming alumni events.

- **Wall of Donors** — donation recognition for all who gave generously to the two Capital Campaigns. This mirrors our donor wall which is physically present at the chapter house.
- **House Corporation Updates** — an overview of the historical significance of the house and information on what projects the House Corporation is currently tackling.

- **Parent Information** — details for parents who are considering having their son join California Delta.
- **Recruitment Forms & Event Overviews** — information for potential new members looking to join our chapter.

