

WE DEFINE THE *Future*



PRESS RELEASE

5-12-26

Contact: Mike Singer

(760) 341-2883, ext. 78107

msinger@csusb.edu



Brenda Franco Alcala

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus names 2025-26 outstanding student

PALM DESERT, Calif. – California State University, San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus has named Brenda Franco Alcala its Outstanding Student for 2025-26, recognizing her academic excellence, leadership and dedication to her community.

Franco Alcala, who lives in Cathedral City, is currently pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in business administration with concentrations in accounting and hospitality management at the Palm Desert Campus. She plans to graduate in Spring 2027 after recently extending her academic timeline to complete both concentrations.

“While I was initially on track to graduate earlier by pursuing only the accounting concentration, I decided to add a second concentration in hospitality management,” she said.

“This allows me to connect my education to the Coachella Valley, where the industry plays such a vital role. Although I have been maintaining an accelerated course load of six to seven classes per semester, adding the dual concentration has slightly extended my timeline. However, this path allows me to complete both concentrations within a four-year timeframe while gaining a more well-rounded education in two fields I am passionate about.”

Franco Alcala chose her major as a reflection of both her upbringing and career interests. Growing up around family-owned businesses inspired her passion for entrepreneurship, while her interest in math and financial management led her to accounting. Encouragement from a high school teacher further solidified her path.

Throughout her academic journey, Franco Alcala has engaged in coursework and research assignments exploring accounting principles, financial practices and hospitality industry applications. She plans to continue her education through CSUSB’s Master of Science in Accountancy (CAPE blended program), an accelerated pathway that allows students to earn both a bachelor’s and master’s degree. Following completion, she intends to pursue CPA licensure and build a career in public accounting, with interests in tax or auditing.

Franco Alcala credits her parents as her greatest inspiration. “As immigrants, they faced many challenges, yet remained resilient and committed to building a better life for our family,” she said. “Their perseverance motivates me to work hard and pursue my goals.”

She also recognizes the mentorship of hospitality management program director Joseph Tormey and assistant professor Michelle Russen at the Palm Desert Campus, who helped shape her leadership and professional development. Through her internship experience and involvement in the Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP) club, where she serves as vice president, Franco Alcala developed skills in leadership, communication and initiative.

One of her proudest accomplishments was helping plan and execute the 2025 Monte Carlo Gala as part of her hospitality management internship. She coordinated marketing efforts, supported event operations and managed more than 25 student volunteers—all while balancing a demanding academic schedule and leadership responsibilities.

“Balancing up to seven classes, internships and leadership roles was challenging,” she said. “But it helped me develop strong organizational and time management skills and taught me how to perform under pressure.”

Despite these challenges, Franco Alcala remained focused and disciplined, learning to prioritize responsibilities and seek support when needed—skills that have contributed to her academic and personal success.

Franco Alcala says the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus has played a vital role in defining her future by allowing her to stay connected to the Coachella Valley while pursuing higher education. Through internships and partnerships with organizations such as Agua Caliente Casinos and the TEAM GPS Foundation, she gained valuable real-world experience and built a strong professional network.

“The Palm Desert Campus has allowed me to combine my education with real-world experience in my own community,” she said. “It has truly shaped my goals and prepared me for my future career.”

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The [CSUSB Palm Desert Campus](#) is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.