

John Gomes Bio

John was raised in Gustine, CA, a rural farming community on the west side of the valley in Merced County. Initially, he grew up on a dairy farm (where he learned the importance of hard work and what he would NOT like to do as a career) and later moved into town when his father sold his herd. In town, John was able to participate in community activities, including his passion, playing baseball, where his father coached his little league teams. John continued this tradition helping to coach his son, Jordan's, baseball teams. He attended OLM Catholic School, Gustine Elementary School and Gustine High School.

John always knew that he would go to college but had no idea how his parents could afford it with seven children. He just figured that he would have to pay for it himself. John learned from a high school counselor that there was a pathway to a four-year degree if he went to a Junior College first and took general education classes that would transfer directly to a California state college. This is the route he chose, which led him to Fresno State, as it was affordable and allowed him to work and go school at the same time.

Upon graduating from high school, a family friend asked John what classes he would like to take in college and he responded "I think I would like to learn about banking but computers are the up and coming thing and I would like to learn about that too." Today, John works for Fiserv, a multi-national Fortune 500 company that provides technology to the financial services industry. This was all made possible by the opportunities provided by Fresno State.

While attending Fresno State, John took finance and business classes from Dr. F. Lee Hull and Dr. Robert Piersol who taught him about the theory of money and its impact in banking and use of computer simulation in business, both subjects that John still leans on heavily today. He also joined a business fraternity, Alpha Kappa Psi, which had an affiliation with focal businesses that supported student career aspirations through a program called "Half-day on the Job." Since John was interested in banking, he chose to spend his time at Guarantee Savings, then a mainstay in Fresno and the central valley.

At Guarantee, John was able to make connections with the executive of human resources, who gave him an opportunity to work part-time while attending classes. John was fortunate to be assigned to the downtown main office where Guarantee's executive team was located, including chairman and CEO, Lewis S. Eaton. This afforded John the opportunity to learn first-hand about the intricacies of banking while listening to Guarantee's senior leaders discuss current-day topics around the lunch table.

Guarantee Savings was a very forward-thinking company in the 1970's, as it was the first to introduce mobile banking in California (not on a smart phone like today, but literally an RV made up to be a branch that went up and down the valley providing banking services to rural communities) and a "Money Machine" before ATM's were even available. John also learned that Guarantee owned its own computer system and offered services to other banks and was looking to expand, as the use of online systems in banking was becoming prevalent. This was the exact career opportunity that John was looking for and upon graduating from Fresno State, he was offered a full-time position in the bank's fledging Corporate Systems group.

At Guarantee Savings, John got a banking education of a life-time, as he was able work on projects and with industry leaders during the tumultuous financial services deregulation of the early 1980's. In addition at Guarantee, John learned first-hand about the value of community give-back and the importance of Fresno State to the community and the central valley -- and he was able to learn it from two of the best in Fresno, Lew Eaton and Mildred Huddleston. John watched as Mr. Eaton and several

other community icons led the charge to build Bulldog Stadium (now Valley Children's Stadium) and the many other programs that Guarantee supported for Fresno State, including the "Half-day on the Job" program, from which John benefited. Something he also learned while watching his Guarantee mentors was that you don't have to make a lot of noise to make a difference. He observed that Lew and Mildred always seemed to work behind the scenes but always got the job done.

It was also at Guarantee that John first became affiliated with the Fresno State Alumni Association, as his direct manager, Mike Luckin, was named FSAA president and in charge of the alumni membership drive. Of course, Mike asked all recent Fresno State grads to join the alumni association and for John to assist him with the campaign, which he obliged and promptly purchased a Life Membership. Later on, when Fresno State's School of Business wanted to start an alumni group, Guarantee asked John to be the bank's representative on the founding board, a role that he felt honored to accept.

In 1987, Guarantee Savings was sold to Glendale Federal Bank and the computer company that it owned was acquired Fiserv, a newly formed technology services company for banks. In 1988, John left the bank and took on a role at Fiserv with the stipulation that he could retain his School of Business alumni board position. John continued serving on this board and helped to elevate the group to FSAA chapter status. This involvement led to John being asked to serve on the FSAA board where he developed a program to reinvigorate FSAA's chapter organization. Following that, John served on many committees and in many leadership roles, including on the executive committee and chairs of the Chapters, Marketing and Finance Committee (twice) and president.

John was also member of Fresno State's initial Comprehensive Campaign Committee, where \$200 million was raised for the university and was asked to participate in the President's Commission on the Future of Advancement at Fresno State. This commission led to a recommendation to restructure the Fresno State Alumni Association from a dues model to an all-inclusive donor model. As a result of this recommendation, John was asked by the FSM board to lead a task force to develop a plan to effect this transition and to establish the funding model to support it, which now exists today.

In 2016, John was voted to be Fresno State's representative to the CSU Alumni Council. As a member of this council, he has been named to several executive committee positions and is a member of the Chancellor's Graduation Initiative 2025 committee, which recommendations were submitted last year and are now in process of execution. John continues his role as CSU representative and actively represents Fresno State's alumni at the system level.

Recently, John led a drive to adopt a new FSAA initiative to establish the Alumni Career Connection, which will help alumni/recent graduates fulfill their career aspirations in the same way he was able to realize his, using community business connections and technology. This program was approved and launched last year and is now in the execution phase and is targeting a "soft launch" by the end of 2023.

John's story is like many others in the central valley of California: first generation college graduates with modest means that are able obtain a high-quality education from Fresno State, which leads to fulfillment of their career dreams. Fresno State's contribution to that is consequential and life-changing and John's passion to give-back and serve FSAA is to ensure that the same opportunities he received are afforded to others in similar circumstances.

John has two degrees from Fresno State, a B.S. in Finance (1978) and an MBA (1994). He has been married to Erin for 37 years and they have three children, Matt (also two-time graduate from Fresno State) Jordan and Brianne (a 2021 Fresno State graduate).

