



Louise Shakarian Ukleja

*President, Ignite Cultural Solutions Foundation
Businesswoman, Educational Visionary, and Philanthropist*

A spirit of entrepreneurship and personal mission “to ignite potential in the lives of others” inspired Louise Shakarian Ukleja to formalize her legacy by founding Ignite Cultural Solutions Foundation (ICSF) in 2017. The mission of ICSF is to transform the lives of disadvantaged and underserved populations through education, training and mentoring – empowering them to find their path to become productive, engaged and successful members of society. As founder and president of ICSF, Louise has been instrumental in fulfilling the foundation’s mission through philanthropic gifts to a multitude of organizations.

Louise considers her transformative gift of the establishment of the LEADS Initiative (Leading, Educating And Developing Students) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) to be her philanthropic debut. A game-changer for underserved students with significant life challenges, LEADS is housed on campus within The Shakarian Family Student Success Center. LEADS’ programs and services remove barriers, enabling students to rise up and achieve their academic and lifetime goals.

The LEADS initiative follows Louise’s ongoing passion for creating public awareness of the importance of reaching at-risk children in extraordinary and profound ways. When her daughter was diagnosed with multiple learning challenges, Louise dedicated her life to creating an educational environment where her daughter could thrive.

In 1990, Louise founded and gave leadership to Opportunity Schools, a pioneering effort that provided programming and training that enabled private schools to educate students with learning and social challenges. Under Louise’s dedicated leadership for over 30 years, thousands of students have achieved academic competency and now have a brighter future.

Louise earned her B.A. in Business Administration from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. In 2023, she was presented with an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the Trustees of the California State University system during a commencement ceremony for CSULB. It was a memorable occasion! Louise is a resident of Long Beach, California.