

PACIFIC

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY | NOVEMBER 2023 | VOL. 36, NO. 2

TOTAL IMPACT

Regional campuses and
continuing education shape
the Valley and beyond





president's message

“Our alumni are indeed rising to the challenges in their communities...”

— André Stephens, Ph.D.

THE IMPACT OF FRESNO PACIFIC

“We’re small but mighty!” were a young alumna’s inspiring words during a community event. Having graduated from FPU nearly a decade ago, she now serves as a project manager in a local nonprofit organization. Her enthusiasm was contagious as she described the numerous alumni passionately making a difference in Fresno and beyond.

One of the main things that drew me and Beth to Fresno was witnessing the work being done through Randy White, Ed.D., Carlos Huerta and the team at the Center for Community Transformation

(CCT). My first lunch in Fresno

took place on the hood of Randy’s car in the

Al’s Ricos Tacos parking lot,

following a morning of touring the city and meeting incredible alumni and friends


transforming communities through business,

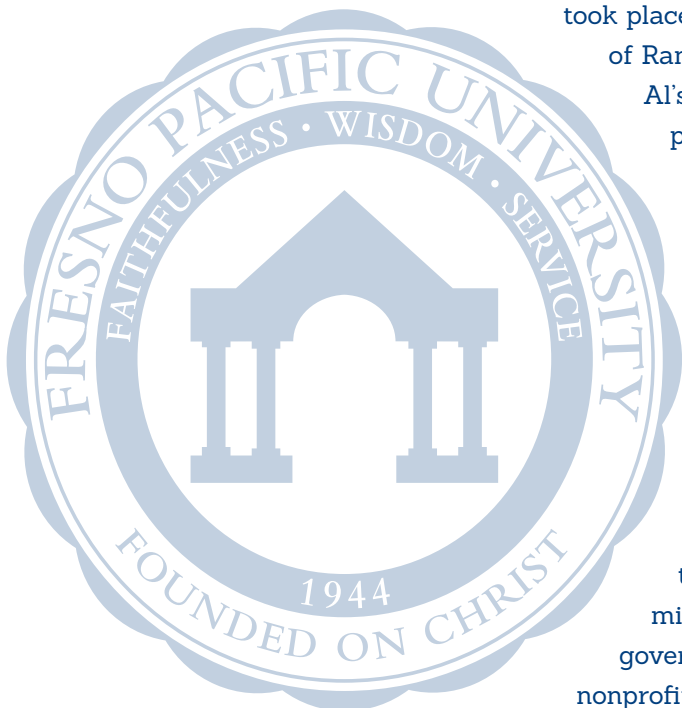
ministry, education, government and

nonprofits.

Our alumni are rising to the challenges in their communities both local and distant; tackling both immediate and long-standing issues. When winter rainstorms caused devastating flooding in Planada, our Merced Campus quickly supported families through substantial donations. This example is just one of many, reflecting the dedication of FPU alumni, donors and friends.

In this issue, we proudly showcase stories of community impact, especially through our regional campuses and the Office of Continuing Education. Our vision is to see every student not just thrive individually, but also transform families, communities and nations. They are modern-day “repairers of the breach,” as prophesized by Isaiah centuries ago.

Higher education serves as not only an “individual good,” but as a powerful force for the betterment of society. As graduates experience personal transformation, their changed lives ripple outwards, to neighborhoods, workplaces, churches and cities. May we be encouraged and echo the Psalmist, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our sight.” 



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AN ISSUE

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Fresno Pacific University develops students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education.



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Pacific is sent to alumni and friends of Fresno Pacific University.

New leaders fill key positions in advancement and enrollment

A pair of key leadership roles has been filled at Fresno Pacific University with the hiring of vice presidents in advancement and enrollment.

Liz Garvin (MA '05) has accepted the position of vice president for advancement, and Brad Camilleri as vice president of enrollment management. Both started work in August.

“Liz and Brad couple deep knowledge and experience in their respective areas of expertise with new ideas for the future,” said FPU President André Stephens, Ph.D. “I am excited to work with them to chart the future of our university through these challenging yet exciting times as we find new ways to support and advocate for our students.”

LIZ GARVIN

In her 20 years of fundraising and nonprofit management in Fresno, Liz Garvin has worked with university administrators and faculty, elected officials and community leaders while building relationships with foundations, sponsors and donors.

Garvin’s most recent position was as a manager III/fundraiser for the Foundation for

Fresno Unified Schools. Since October 2022, she served as the sole fundraiser for FUSD, working in the foundation, developing policies and procedures, overseeing staff and creating giving campaigns.



Prior to her role at FUSD, Garvin was senior director of planned and foundation giving at California State University, Fresno from 2015-2022, where she worked with the university president and top donors as well as managing staff. Other positions have included director of mediation at the Better Business Bureau Fresno office from 2007-2012 and president/CEO of Samaritan Women (Rescue the Children) in Fresno from 2003-2007.

She has an M.A. in Christian Ministry from Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and a B.A. in Communications Studies from California State University, Sacramento, as well as several professional certificates from FPU, United Way of Fresno, San Joaquin College of Law and Pepperdine University in conflict management, mediation and grant writing.

BRAD CAMILLERI

Brad Camilleri comes to FPU from Biola University, where from 2018-2023 he was director of marketing strategy and client services. There he was charged with casting the enrollment marketing vision and strategy across undergraduate, online and graduate programs and extending the reach and influence of the university's marketing and enrollment efforts. He oversaw a team of account executives and client services specialists that connected with key leaders.

“Liz and Brad couple deep knowledge and experience in their respective areas of expertise”

Also at Biola, Camilleri served as director of admissions marketing, data management and research from 2015-2018 and associate director of undergraduate admissions from 2012-2014. Before that he was assistant director of admissions at Asbury University from 2009-2012 and senior admissions counselor at Asbury from 2005-2009. Camilleri has an M.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Kentucky and a B.A. in English from Asbury University in Wilmore, KY. 🏠



RETIREES

Centuries of service, immeasurable commitment

By Wayne Steffen

Pick your image—turning the page, ending an era—all fall short when describing these faculty who retired in 2023 with 200 years combined service and an incalculable contribution to FPU.



Greg Camp, Ph.D. (1984)

Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Associate Dean of the School of Humanities, Religion & Social Sciences

Greg Camp (M.Div., '87, BA '82) loves teaching

the Bible and was willing to try facilities and administration.

The Visalia native comes from a “complex” tribe of siblings, half-siblings and Friends (Quaker) and Methodist relatives—many were ministers, but none were Mennonite Brethren. Pastor Al Kroeker led Camp’s immediate family to Neighborhood Church, “a church plant by people from Dinuba MB that had fewer ‘ethnic’ Mennonites,”

Camp says.

Following a year at College of the Sequoias, Camp studied biblical and religious studies and philosophy at Fresno Pacific. “I was always drawn to the church and the study of the Bible, which made me a bit of an odd child,” he says.

After working in facilities and directing financial aid, Camp became full-time faculty in 1995 and associate dean of the School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences in 2019. Teaching kept Camp at FPU. “One can study

Scripture, pursue other intellectual passions and spend hours in pastoral care for young adults,” he says. “The last years in administration saw that shift to caring for faculty and staff.”

Camp loves the flow of generations. Henry Schmidt and Vernon Janzen, pastors who would serve what became FPU, shaped Camp, who later taught with Schmidt’s daughter, Laura Schmidt Roberts, and Janzen’s son, Rod, and grandson, Chris. “I was able to come alongside my teachers and mentors as one of their colleagues. In turn, I have also seen my own students become my colleagues,” he says.



Steve Varvis, Ph.D. (1985)

Professor of History, Administrator Extraordinaire

Summarize Steve Varvis’ roles at FPU?

Well, he was featured in a 2012 *Chronicle of Higher Education* series on people

having different positions within higher education, while teaching nearly every semester since 1983. He reckons administration, faculty leadership and full-time teaching have each taken about a third of the last 40 years.

Varvis describes himself as “almost a native” since his family moved to Fresno from Southern California 55 years ago. In college he was captured by the Late Middle Ages after reading thinkers who argued the period was the root of either the worst or best of the modern world. “I have been more-or-less working on that kind of question since then,” he says.

Returning to Fresno with wife Teri after graduate school in 1983, Varvis taught adjunct at FPU while working in computer software. In 1985

President Rich Kriegbaum tapped Varvis for seven years as business manager. “After that I went on the faculty,” he says, though his administrative work didn’t stop. He has been undergraduate dean, director of business and civic relations, vice president for enrollment management and provost.

Whatever he did, Varvis enjoyed good colleagues, students who became friends and working with the FPU Board of Trustees. “Colleges and universities are endlessly complex and fascinating,” he says. “I have been given many opportunities to work in many university areas, and I am grateful for all of them.”

Today Varvis leads FPU Alumni and Friends Tours: fpu.edu/alumnitour



**Tim Geddert, Ph.D.
(1986)**

*Professor of New Testament,
Interim Dean of Fresno
Pacific Biblical Seminary*

**Tim Geddert (M.Div.
'78)** discovered his passion at home in Hepburn, Saskatchewan. “I always

loved the Bible; I spent many years studying it and fell in love with the New Testament,” he says.

That left one choice for his education. “MBBS (Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary) was the only MB graduate seminary anywhere,” Geddert says.

A decade after becoming a student in 1976, Geddert returned to teach. “I stayed because it was always wonderful!” he says. (Though, he points out, his “stay” did include five years of partial leaves of absence to live in Germany.) “It has been a really, really great ministry calling.”

Geddert appreciated the collegial relationships

between faculty, staff and administration and the diverse, engaged student body. “I got to do all the things I love...teach, write and travel,” he says.

Retirement promises a relaxed version of the same, plus his longtime sideline of house painting. Then there’s time with the very extended Geddert family. As a widower with two children, he met wife Gertrud when she came from Germany as a seminary student. “We had four more children together, then adopted our seventh,” he says. “Our children range in age from 11-44, and we have five grandchildren.”



**Rod Janzen, Ed.D.
(1989)**

*Professor of History,
University Distinguished
Scholar*

Rod Janzen (BA '75) was raised at FPU. “When I was very young my father (Vernon Janzen)

studied at the seminary. In later years he was an administrator and teacher.”

While Janzen considered leaving Fresno for Eastern Mennonite, he had a full-tuition scholarship for an in-state school. “Once I moved on campus, I was glad I was here,” he says.

Paul Toews was influential. “After taking one class with Paul I changed my major to history,” Janzen says. Luetta Reimer and Larry Warkentin were also important.

Janzen’s career began at Freeman College and Academy in South Dakota, where he also served as academy principal, continuing at Iowa Mennonite High School, where he was principal while wife **Deb (McKenzie BA '75)** studied library science at the University of Iowa and they began

Retirees continued on page 20



LOVE IS THE SECRET SAUCE

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

Cynthia Smith (BA '20) thought she found a life in nursing—then unimaginable tragedies changed her course.

She lost two teenage children to suicide; the enduring pain and grief nearly crushed her soul. But slowly fighting through tragedy, she began to heal and then pursue a new professional calling through FPU's Bachelor's Degree Completion Program.

Today, Smith is a clinical social worker and mental health and suicide prevention advocate. With the help of the Center for Community Transformation (CCT), she also uses her signature Smitty's Secret Sauce to honor her children and spark conversation and awareness.

"She is a resilient woman," says **Cameia Richardson (BA '20)**, Smith's oldest daughter, who attended FPU at the same time as her mother. "Our family has been through a lot but the greater the fight, the greater the reward is how I look at it."

In 2020, both Smith and Richardson earned bachelor's degrees in social work after studying at the North Fresno Campus, one of four regional

campuses that offer bachelor's degree completion and graduate degrees aimed mainly at working adults. Mother and daughter then earned MSWs through Fordham University in New York.

Both now work in the profession; Smith is a clinical social worker at the Department of State Hospitals-Coalinga, a psychiatric hospital that mainly treats sexually violent predators. Richardson works at Stars Behavioral Health Group, Fresno.

It's been a difficult journey, but today Smith—known also as Smitty or Cyn—is happy, grounded and engaged to be married. She is grateful for the support and lessons at Fresno Pacific that helped heal some fractures in her broken faith.

"I can talk to Him," she says. "I live, live, live my life in gratitude."

SHAMED AND SHUNNED

Smith, 57, grew up on the west side of Fresno as the oldest of four children. She attended Christian schools as a youngster before starting public high school.

At 14, she became pregnant with Cameia, which began the erosion of her faith as she was shunned and told to sit in the back row of her church. That judgment and others, along with the feeling of punishment, left a deep scar.

Though she and the father later married, the union didn't last. Smith worked in summer youth programs, earned her high school equivalency (GED) and began a journey into the health field, first at Fresno County and later at Valley Children's Hospital.

She worked jobs ranging from telephone operator to health unit coordinator, and trained to become a phlebotomist. By her mid-20s, Smith had four children—Cameia, Carla, Crasondra and Carlos—and was building skills to become a licensed vocational nurse.

Soon, this single mom was juggling a new job at Madera Community Hospital with the occasional college class and a busy home life. She began picking up shifts at the women's prison in Chowchilla to help support the family, often taking power naps in the parking lot in between the two jobs.

Smith was about a year into working fulltime at the prison as an LVN when the first tragedy struck. Her daughter, Crasondra, committed suicide two days before her 16th birthday in

2005. Then 18 months later, her 15-year-old son Carlos ended his life.

Devastated, Smith says she was just existing—not living—for many years. Feeling she couldn't go on, she planned a birthday bash so friends and family would have good memories of her to cherish.

But the support showered upon Smith at that 45th birthday party pushed her to take more control of her life. She sought out therapy—anti-depressants also helped—and began the long road back.

"I remember being so angry," Smith says of her first therapy session. "I told him, 'I'm not here because of me, for myself. I'm here because of all the people I don't want to hurt.'"

She calls it "the hardest battle I have ever had to fight. I can say I have gone to hell and stood toe-to-toe with the devil and fought for my soul."

A NEW SEED

In therapy, she also worked on the relationship with her oldest daughter, Cameia Richardson, who was thinking about becoming a social worker after spending years in the insurance industry.

"She planted the seed to even consider the idea of doing something outside of nursing," Smith says.

Richardson enrolled at FPU, but Smith started a different educational path. Smith wasn't really talking to God back then, thinking about the sting of judgment over her first pregnancy and that losing two children was punishment for sin.



"I wanted no part if this was what being a Christian was all about," Smith says. But Richardson spoke so highly of her Fresno Pacific experience that Smith transferred and eventually, they wound up in the same cohort at North Fresno.

Initially, Richardson was a little frustrated. "Not because I didn't want her there—it was because of the little annoying 'mom' things that she would do," she says.

But Smith talked to her about the power of going through the worst and then coming together to achieve something of great magnitude. "It made me change my perspective," Richardson says.

Changing too was Smith's outlook on Christianity. She entered FPU with such conviction of non-belief that she even offered a class presentation titled, "Why I Choose to Not Be a Christian."

"I remember saying that I am going to stand in my truth and I am firm," Smith says. In classes, however, she began to see Christianity also from a literary, historical and academic perspective. She came to view Jesus as the first social worker and saw that his teachings boiled down to "love, compassion, empathy."

Along with her professional education, Smith came away "with an understanding of what Christianity, what Christ was all about."

At the same time, Smith was continuing to make a signature barbecue sauce long beloved by friends, family and coworkers. Food, she says, has always been her "love language."

The sauce now is produced in honor of her lost children, Crasondra and Carlos, and is part of her suicide prevention work. Last year, she found an ally in that work in the CCT, part of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary.

LOVE AND SAUCE

CCT's annual Spark Tank awards, designed to support social enterprises in the Central Valley, provided \$3,500 for Smitty's Secret Sauce. Smith planned to gear up production in summer 2023 in observance of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September); all proceeds benefit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Love without judgment is something Smith appreciates about the center. "I wasn't able to launch right away, and they still believed in my mission," she says.

Spark Tank uplifted her mother at just the right time, Richardson says. "Giving back to the community, figuring out her role in the community—she's still navigating through that."

Also last year, Smith took a job as a clinical social worker at Coalinga State Hospital. It was an immediate culture shock and adjustment, but the new job provided an unexpected blessing as she met her future husband, Michael Montrief, Ph.D., a psychologist. They plan to marry in 2024.

"Things happened really quickly," she says. "I have never been so happy."

Today, Smith remembers to be grateful for the time she had with her children along with the joys of grandchildren, a home and more. "I have to trust," she says. 🏠



THERE IS HELP

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, **call 988** or **text 988 immediately**.

If you are uncomfortable talking on the phone, you can chat on the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988lifeline.org**.

You can also **text NAMI** to **741-741** to be connected to a free, trained crisis counselor on the Crisis Text Line.



CAPABLE OF MORE

Suzana Dobrić Veiss knows regional/online grad students can serve in mighty ways

By Doug Hoagland

Air raid sirens screamed as **Suzana Dobrić Veiss (MA '02, BA '99)** ran with her mother through the streets of Osijek, Croatia. Seconds after they reached the safety of their front door, a Serbian artillery shell exploded on the spot they'd just rushed past.

During those dark days of the early 1990s, the-15-year-old Dobrić Veiss saw her people open their homes to strangers caught in the bombing, while others rose every morning to sweep from the streets the glass of blown-out windows. "Those people gave me a glimpse of hope to push forward when there was so much destruction and turmoil," she says.

Thirty years later, Dobrić Veiss, Ph.D., helps graduate students at Fresno Pacific University push forward in

their own lives—transcending the limits they've placed on themselves or accepted—so they can transform others. She prays for them, learns their stories—sharing hers, too—and celebrates their milestones. "You're capable of more than you know," she encourages. Students pursuing a master's degree in leadership find new personal and professional direction, and their changed lives impact families, workplaces and communities for the better.

"I expose all students, believers and nonbelievers, to God's truth and his word because in a world where there are so many voices, it's difficult to find the truth," says Dobrić Veiss, assistant professor of business and director of the M.A. in Strategic and Organizational Leadership program. "I see myself as a mentor who models leadership to students and communicates that each of us has a specific purpose and that we can serve in mighty ways."

Dobrić Veiss teaches through FPU regional campuses in Visalia, North Fresno and Merced, as well as online. The goal is for students to become strong writers and speakers, critical thinkers and problem-solvers so they can be change agents in their communities, Dobrić Veiss says.

A MOTHER'S FAITH

Radical change came to Dobrić Veiss' life when Yugoslavia broke apart and Serbian forces attacked Croatia. Amid the heavy bombardment, she tried to process the chaos and destruction in her diary. One entry captured her dire reality: "all around me are death, destruction and misfortune." Then the direction of her life changed. Six thousand miles away in Visalia, community members came together to host 15 Croatian teenagers so they'd have a year's respite from the war. Her mother insisted that Dobrić Veiss, the middle of her three daughters, go. "My mom had enough faith in her heart to know that I belonged somewhere else," she says. (All the sisters spent some time away from the fighting.) Today, with three daughters of her own, Dobrić Veiss is awestruck at her mother's selflessness and courage.

Dobrić Veiss remained in Visalia for 2½ years (with her parents' consent), graduated from high school (as class valedictorian) and then went home for a summer visit. She returned to begin college at FPU, but her life was soon upended again. Near the end of her freshman year, her mother died unexpectedly. To help with burial expenses, Dobrić Veiss wired to

Croatia the money she'd saved from campus jobs, but she had nothing left for an airplane ticket.

In a memory she cherishes, FPU's campus pastor came to her dorm room with a card she still has. "We want you to go home," it read, and was signed, "The FPU Community." There was money in the card for a ticket, and while travel complications prevented her going, that act of compassion remains a guiding principle for Dobrić Veiss. "I want to love my students the way Fresno Pacific loved me during that difficult time."

A CHANGED LIFE

Devann McClellan (MA '22, BA '15) came to the M.A. in Strategic and Organizational Leadership program with a difficulty of her own. She was ready to leave her insurance job for more fulfilling work with a nonprofit, but she lacked self-confidence because of past failures. "Suzana helped me see that my mistakes don't define who I am," McClellan says. "She changed my life in ways I never knew were possible."

Part of that process was learning to become

vulnerable about her failures and fears, and so she confided in Dobrić Veiss. "Suzana continued to show me love even when I was showing her an awful side of myself," McClellan says, adding that she's not religious, but appreciated

Dobrić Veiss' prayers and scripture verses. Their friendship continued after McClellan graduated and began work at the Tulare County Office of

“I want to love my students the way Fresno Pacific loved me...”

– Suzana Dobrić Veiss, Ph.D.



Education for the California Friday Night Live Partnership, a youth empowerment program. “Suzana helped me step into the light to help others,” McClellan says.

THRIVING IN CRISIS

Dobrić Veiss also uses her leadership principles as a consultant to help organizations better serve their communities. In the fall of 2022, for example, she began work with First 5 Kern, an agency that partners with 39 child-oriented programs in Kern County. First 5 Kern faced internal and external pressures, and Dobrić Veiss conducted staff workshops on leadership development, change readiness and problem-solving. “I can definitely say there was an improvement in communication and team dynamics,” says Executive Director **Amy Travis (MA '23, BA '16)**. As a result, First 5 Kern was ready to serve more children and their families, Travis adds.

Travis’ connection to Dobrić Veiss began as a student in the master’s program, and that’s where Dobrić Veiss’ impact on the wider community always begins—with individuals. That commitment came into focus in 2020 when the COVID pandemic forced FPU to cancel its May commencement. Determined to honor her graduates, she took her husband, Victor, and their daughters on a two-day road trip from Bakersfield to Modesto to visit each student. Maintaining proper social distance, they went to doorsteps (and one workplace) with gifts and balloons, and Dobrić Veiss donned her doctoral robe and cap at each stop to lend an official air to the surprise visits.

Ever the problem-solver, Dobrić Veiss would not let the pandemic deter her. “I wanted to celebrate each individual and their families and make them feel seen. That’s a reflection of what God has done for me. That’s God’s story in my life,” she says. 🏠



SKILLS FOR A CAREER

By Amy D. Fienen

When **Judi Enns Szpor (MA '96, TC '92)** graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, her mom gave her a bottle of Estee Lauder Youth Dew perfume. It was while walking through Gottschalks that Szpor recognized the scent worn by her first-grade teacher and was transported back to Edna Parkinson's classroom at Lincoln School in Reedley. Mrs. Parkinson had a profound impact on Szpor, planting seeds in a little girl that would grow into a career in education that has spanned 34 years. Szpor hoped wearing the same perfume as her beloved teacher would help her have the kind of impact on her students Mrs. Parkinson had on her.

"She smelled good, she was pretty, she smiled and she was happy," Szpor says of Parkinson. "Her room was so comforting and inviting, and she had a loving order to her classroom. I wanted to duplicate that for my students."

Today Szpor is principal/superintendent at Clay School in Kingsburg, where four of the late Mrs. Parkinson's great-grandchildren are students. Now a seasoned educator herself, Szpor has spent her career advocating for her young charges and teachers, striving to create the same

environment as an educator that she experienced as a first grader.

"My mantra is to be a champion and ardently defend people and purpose," she says. "I hope my actions at every school where I've worked reflect an example of Christ's love. I try to demonstrate love through the service of making things and hearts better than I found them."

A CAREER ROOTED IN FAITH

Born and raised in Reedley to Harold and Pat Enns, FPU was part of Szpor's life from the start. Her dad worked there as a coach, teacher and dean of students, later serving on the board. Szpor grew up attending Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church, where she and her high school sweetheart, Bill, were married and raised three sons. Szpor credits Reedley MB and Immanuel High School with providing the faith foundation on which her life is built. She welcomes each day as an opportunity to use her God-given gifts in service to him.

"I was taught to love people as Jesus did. He saw beyond the weaknesses and failures of people and saw the possibilities of leadership, teaching

and service in all he met,” Szpor says. “He went straight to the heart of every individual and saw their incredible value. He called out the goodness he saw in them and taught them, encouraged them to choose better.”

Though she received a scholarship to FPU, Szpor hungered for a taste of life outside the Valley. She earned a degree in liberal studies from Cal Poly, then returned home and taught second grade at Riverview School in Parlier for 18 years.

During her second year as a teacher, Szpor enrolled in her first FPU Continuing Education (CE) course: Lee Canter’s “Beyond Assertive Discipline.” The class encouraged classroom discipline that sets clear rules and expectations applied through positive reinforcement. Expectations are made clear to both students and parents at the onset, and the choice to comply lies with the students.

From here on, CE would provide keys to Szpor’s career, and help her unlock success in others. “The class was foundational for me, and I still use that same method of teaching and teach my teachers to use it,” Szpor says. “It made me take the pressure off myself and use positive reinforcement to get what I need out of the kids. It’s a lot about looking for the good first.”

FPU’s CE program provides continuing education and professional development for those in education and other fields. As many as 8,000 professionals a year enroll in independent study graduate-level courses to expand their knowledge and advance in their organizations.

“Beyond Assertive Discipline” was the first of many CE classes Szpor completed, going on to earn her clear credential and master’s in curriculum and education. Her time at FPU was influential in weaving together her faith and her profession for a greater purpose. She embraced the opportunity

to grow and dig deeper, using her experience to reduce suspensions, introduce new programs and curriculum, increase funding and improve test scores at the schools where she’s worked.

After Riverview, Szpor became an academic coach before holding administrative positions throughout Kings Canyon Unified School District and beyond. While serving as the principal of Howard School (2016-2019), she was named Elementary Administrator of the Year for Madera Unified School District.

GROWING SEEDS FOR THE KINGDOM

Although Szpor made the move from teacher to administrator years ago, she still enjoys implementing effective and relevant teaching techniques. She loves being a guest math teacher in second grade classes.

“As a superintendent, I can jump in and teach a math class using fundamentals that still apply using good, solid instructional methods and techniques,” Szpor says. “I can back up the techniques I’m using as being research-based and good for kids.”

This is thanks to her willingness to embrace the role of student as much as she does that of teacher

“The things I’ve learned have permeated everything I’ve done as a teacher and as a leader.”

– Judi Enns Szpor

by continuing to attend classes, conferences and trainings. “The things I’ve learned have permeated everything I’ve done as a teacher and as a leader,” she says. “I’ve learned foundational values and teachings that I’m still using after 34 years in education.”

Szpor’s most profound teaching moment occurred during the culminating project of her master’s thesis: Ancestor Day, part of a curriculum unit she created called “Coming to America.” For the project, students interviewed their ancestors at school about family history. When interviewing her grandfather, Jack “JW” Enns, Szpor asked what one thing his descendants could do to best honor him. “Grow the kingdom,” he told her. “Whether you work or stay at home with kids, grow the kingdom. That is what we are called to do.” That moment

was pivotal in helping Szpor realize her purpose, whatever her calling.

To honor her beloved grandpa’s wish, Szpor walks daily with the Lord in every classroom, every meeting and every conversation. She strives to serve those she teaches by being the hands and feet of Jesus.

“Most importantly, I hope I help people see their own value and importance in this world,” she says. “I hope that, ultimately, I can model that we need to look at the heart of every human being and trust that there is good inside and do everything we can to find that, foster it and help them be successful. And I hope that through all that, I’ve contributed to the growing of the kingdom with seeds planted under my care.” 🏠



their family; oldest child Chris would join FPU's faculty.

Freeman spurred an interest in Hutterites. "They were right next door," he says. Janzen would later edit the *Communal Societies* journal. Among his nine books would be *The Rise and Fall of Synanon*, a new edition of which was published in October by Johns Hopkins University Press.

Returning to FPU in 1989, Janzen started teaching in 1990. In 2003 he was appointed Distinguished Scholar, and started *Pacific Journal*, the university's research publication, which he still edits. With regard to research, "I've always thought it was important to do the same thing you ask your students to do," he says.



Allen Carden, Ph.D.
(1997)

*President, Professor
of History*

Allen Carden's life took two turns in high school. First, his family moved from Wheaton, IL, to La Mirada, CA, when his professor father went from Wheaton College to Biola University. Second was an honors American history course. "That class made me fall in love with the idea of becoming a history teacher," Carden says. Proving his devotion with a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. in history, he served at Biola 1971-1987, then spent a decade in roles, including president, at Spring Arbor (MI) University.

Carden, wife Denice and their two daughters happily returned to California in 1997 when he became FPU president. He was familiar with both the university and one of its signature programs as part of a Spring Arbor team that marketed degree completion to FPU in 1988.

Returning to the classroom in 2000, Carden found much to appreciate. "The academic rigor, Christian commitment and philosophical basis of the university as embodied in the *Fresno Pacific Idea* are impressive," he says.

Best memories for Carden center on helping launch the liberal arts degree completion program, developing curriculum, teaching and serving as director. "It has been gratifying to see students who thought perhaps they would never complete their college education do so," he says.



Fay Nielsen, Ph.D.
(1997)

*Director of Student Success
and Retention, Associate
Professor of Kinesiology*

Before coming to FPU, Fay Nielsen lived in Visalia with no idea the university existed. Once she got here, however, scholarly research turned up a connection. "Paul Toews found out that my father had been Peter Klassen's doctoral dissertation advisor," she says. "I guess I was meant to be here."

While Nielsen began as director of student success and retention, she kept her hand in teaching as a physical education instructor, leading the Dance Movement class for 20 years. For the last five years of her tenure, she taught full time as the physical education specialist in the kinesiology department. "During my time in kinesiology we were able to send quite a few more PE students to our credential program," she says.

"It has been wonderful to watch the expansion journey of the university over the last 25 years," Nielsen says. "I have always appreciated the camaraderie among the faculty and their genuine care and concern for our students...this is why students come to FPU." 🏠

Making Something You Love a Career

By Christopher L. Scott




Nikki McArron never considered ministry as a career until attending FPU. “I originally thought I was going to do school psychology, and I needed to get a bachelor’s in something so I could get a master’s in school psychology,” she says.

Her passion for ministry started at age 16 when Nikki went on her first mission trip to Costa Rica and recalls, “I absolutely loved it.” She now ministers to sophomore girl high school students at Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church and works one day a week at Multiply, the missions arm of the U.S. Mennonite Brethren Church.

A double major in Christian ministry and intercultural and religious studies, Nikki is part of FPU’s new Bridge to Ministry Pathway, which allows her to learn in the classroom and grow as a congregational leader at the local church level.

“It accelerates the process, saving the student money and getting them to ministry quickly, without sacrificing the rigors of the degree process,” says program director Quentin Kinnison, Ph.D.

Several FPU classes have helped Nikki immediately. “Whatever I learned I got to see if it works,” she says. Nikki realized she could make a difference in ministry not just globally but also locally in her church. She says she’s learning how to listen to people in their unique situations, she’s learning not to always have the answers, and she’s growing in her walk with Jesus through new spiritual disciplines.

Nikki’s already doing now what she wants to do long-term: ministry. But says, “I’m learning to be content doing what the Lord wants me to do right now.” 



EDITOR’S NOTE

Do you know a student who has been transformed at FPU? Contact Wayne Steffen at wayne.steffen@fresno.edu

DJ CRINER IS A PASTOR WITH A COMMUNITYWIDE IMPACT

DJ Criner started his college education at a large state university where he felt invisible. When he joined FPU's Bachelor's Degree Completion Program he experienced something different.

"Coming to Fresno Pacific helped me understand the difference between a larger lecture hall where you're just a number, compared to being at Fresno Pacific where you're actually a person and you have a name," says Criner. That experience at FPU's North Fresno Campus was exactly what Criner needed even before he knew he needed it.

In Criner's second semester he became senior pastor at St. Rest Baptist Church in Southwest Fresno. "Fresno Pacific was setting me up for what was to come," he says. While he had always felt equipped to preach the Gospel, at FPU he learned about other aspects of ministry, and is currently working toward an M. Div. at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary.

"The church is a business Monday through Friday. It's a worship center on Sundays. In order to have a church that thrives, you have to pay the bills," he says. At FPU he learned financial literacy, how to have healthy disagreements and to develop effective leadership staff.



WATCH IT ONLINE

See more about Criner in a video at
fpu.edu/djcriner





Criner's degree increased his impact on his neighborhood by being on task forces, commissions and boards that have improved that community. "Fresno Pacific taught me the importance of economic development," he says.

The 93706 ZIP code is no longer called a "food desert" because Criner's involvement contributed to the creation of a food distribution center. "At this location we give quality food and teach people how to cook that food so they have a longer and healthier life," he says. "We've seen economic growth and economic development. We have a partnership with our mayor to build a Starbucks in Southwest Fresno as well as the first bank (a credit union) in the 93706 ZIP code. We're hoping to build another grocery store."

While Criner has seen positive changes already, it hasn't been enough. He and pastor Brad Bell of The Well Community Church developed an interracial pastor's cluster emphasizing cultural ministry. "This was not pulpits swaps, which is getting a person of opposite race to preach in the pulpit," Criner says "The goal was to establish effective

relationships with one another. To get to know one another. To set up family events and family get-togethers." He says the most impactful part has been doing church events and get-togethers with other congregations of different ethnicities.

Criner's impact extends beyond his church and neighborhood. He's also had an impact on the place that so greatly shaped his life: Fresno Pacific University's North Fresno Campus. He

is a frequent motivational speaker for in-person student orientations at North Fresno, where he talks about how God used specific FPU staff to keep him motivated and engaged while a student. Denise Baronian, former executive

director of regional enrollment, says, "DJ literally brings life into the room the second he walks in. His smile is contagious, and he has a dynamic personality, a deep love for people and a passion for God."

That same love for people and passion for God has led him to pastor a healthy church, to minister to the community of Southwest Fresno and beyond and to give back to the FPU community. 🏠

“Fresno Pacific was setting me up for what was to come.”

-DJ Criner

IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI



»» MANIBOG-GATEWOOD JOINS NEW TEAM

Danae Manibog-Gatewood (BA '22) earned two medals at the Philippines National Championship in March 2023, placing second in the 400 meters and third in the 200 meters. Her times qualified her for the Philippines National Team.



»» TUTTRUP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Tannisse Tuttrup (TC '21, BA '18) was the recipient of the Tri-Valley SELPA's Make a Difference Award in April 2023. Tri-Valley SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) assures the provision of special education and related services to students with disabilities ages 0-22 residing in east Alameda County, CA. Tannisse was nominated by a family because of the difference she made in their child's life.

»» GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shania Burrell (BA '23) is a credential and retirement technician for the Tulare County Office of Education.

Elizabeth (Wilson, TC '23, BA '21) and **Seth (TC '23, BA '22) Garcia** are teaching in Kern County. Elizabeth is at Bimat Elementary School, and Seth is a history teacher at Haven Drive Middle School. They reside in Shafter, CA.

Spring 2023 Outstanding Graduate Award recipient **Gabriel Vasquez-Salinas (BA '23)** is an ELA teacher at Pioneer Middle School in Porterville, CA.

Birgitta Eggertsdottir (BA '22) is a marketing assistant for Central Valley Fuego FC.

Outstanding Graduate Award recipient **Luke Colvard (BA '22)** accepted an offer at UCLA Law School where he is one of five Graton Scholars in the Class of 2026. The Graton Scholarship provides a three-year, full tuition award to students interested in Native American law and connects students to a network of students, professors, alumni and legal professionals working on the cutting edge of the fields of tribal law, federal Indian law and international Indigenous rights.

Maricarmen Mata-Nunez (BA '21) is a victim advocate for Centro La Familia Advocacy Services in Fresno.



» TORRES WINS MURROW AWARD

Leonard Torres (BA '15) won an Edward R. Murrow Award in May 2023 for “After the Weather with Spencer Christian,” a podcast Leonard helped create as well as edit and produce for ABC 7 (KABC-TV) in Los Angeles. Leonard is the marketing and brand strategy producer for KGO-TV in the Bay Area.



» TOVAR NAMED EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Efraín Tovar (MA '06, BA '95) was selected a 2023 CUE Educator of the Year. This award recognizes a classroom teacher and CUE (Computer-Using Educators) member who has made a noteworthy contribution to educational technology in the classroom. Efraín is a newcomers teacher at Abraham Lincoln Middle School in Selma, CA. “Newcomers” are students from other countries.

» GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shivjit Thind (MBA '22) started as an entry level buyer/procurement specialist at Pana-Pacific Corporation on May 22, 2023. Pana-Pacific provides entertainment and communication products to U.S. commercial vehicle manufacturers. Based in Fresno, the company is part of the Brix Group.



Deshonda Williams (MA '21, BA '17) is a counselor at El Diamante High School in the Visalia Unified School District.

Former Sunbird Volleyball player **Carley Bock (BA '19)** is the director of operations for Arizona State University's Sun Devil Volleyball. Carly led the PacWest Conference in kills per set her senior year, made the Pac West All-Conference team and was named FPU Senior Athlete of the Year.

Tim Cardascia (BA '19) works at Radio by Grace in Amarillo, TX, as the marketing and programming director. Radio By Grace is a 77-station network with a Christian talk/teaching format.

» **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS** (CONTINUED)



» **GUTHRIE GETS SUPER PRIZE**

Marcy Guthrie (MA '97) was appointed principal of Gardnerville (NV) Elementary School beginning in the 2023-24 school year. She previously served as the superintendent at Chawanakee Unified School District near Fresno, where she was named Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Region 2 Superintendent of the Year in 2021.

» **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS** (CONTINUED)

Brian Moll (MA '19) was a speaker at the Mennonite Church USA National Convention in July 2023. He is pastor of Cincinnati (OH) Mennonite Fellowship and earned his M.A. in Ministry, Leadership & Culture at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary.

Joy Rubio (BA '17) is a counselor at Golden West High School and resides in Visalia, CA.

Shantay Davies-Balch (BA '15) founded Fresno's Black Wellness and Prosperity Center (BWPC) to improve Black maternal and infant health through advocacy and education. Kaiser Permanente awarded BWPC Black Doula Network a \$95,000 grant. Doulas provide non-medical support to pregnant women and their families during pregnancy, birth and post-partum.

Dan DeGeer (MA '15) was named head coach of the San Jose Earthquakes II, the development squad for the San Jose Earthquakes MLS team, after a stint as interim head coach in February 2023.

After earning his Ph.D. in Classics from Bryn Mawr College, **Daniel Crosby (MA '13, BA '10)** is now assistant professor of classics and chair of humanities at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, PA.

Kyle Gerdts (BA '13) has joined Pinnacle Claims Management, Inc. as vice president, sales and account management.

Matthew (BA '13) and **Klara (Shahaff, BA '14) Gilbert** were named coach and assistant coach, respectively, of the swimming and diving teams at Midland University in Fremont, NB.

Michael Dills-Allen (M.Div '06), Ph.D., has been named registrar at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA.

Christina Morris Whalen (BA '06) earned her MBA in May 2022 from Cal State Monterey Bay and a Senior Certified Professional credential through the Society for Human Resource Management in December 2022. She is now HR director/administrator for Valley Fitness, which operates 15 Central Valley gyms. She and her husband also bought a house in Madera, CA.

Michael Young (BA '06) is a financial advisor for Edward Jones and lives in Visalia, CA.

Mark Fowler (BA '05) has been named chief of secondary education for Richmond (IN) Community Schools.

Robin Perry (MA '03, TC '99), Ed.D., director of the preliminary single subject credential program, and **Darrell Blanks (MA '04)**, director of the preliminary multiple subject credential program, wrote "Partnering for Teaching Performance Assessment Support" with Gisela Cruz-Hawley and **Allyson Maldonado (TC '12)**, both of Fresno Unified School District, for the Spring/Summer 2023 issue of *Connections*, the magazine of CASUP (California Association of School-University Partnerships).

Beatriz Chaidez (MA '02), Ed.D., was selected as interim chancellor of San Jose-Evergreen Community College District in July 2023.

Darren Duerksen (MA '00), Ph.D., associate professor and director of the intercultural and religious studies program, published *Christ-Followers in Other Religions: The Global Witness of Insider Movements*. In his book Darren analyzes the ways in which God's Spirit may be creating new understandings of and witness to Christ that challenge, expand and de-center prevalent Western understandings of Christian mission and discipleship.

Wendela Whitcomb Marsh (MA '00) has published eight books since retiring from public schools in 2016. *Recognizing Autism in Women and Girls*, took first place in the Chanticleer International Book Awards. She is currently writing a book series, *Adulting While Autistic*. Wendy is also the founder and CEO of Adult Autism Assessment & Services, a neurodiversity affirming telehealth group practice serving clients nationwide. Find her at WendelaWhitcombMarsh.com or AdultAutismAssessment.com.



Christopher Brownell, (MA '99), Ph.D., began work as chair of the Pratt Institute Department of Mathematics and Science July 1, 2023. A full-time FPU faculty member from 2000-2022, he came to Pratt from a post as head of instruction for the National Museum of Mathematics in New York City.

Felipe Hinojosa (BA '99), Ph.D., was appointed by Baylor University as the inaugural Jackson Family Chair for Baylor in Latin America on August 1, 2023. Felipe came to Baylor from Texas A&M, where he served as professor of history, assistant provost for Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) initiatives and director for the Carlos H. Cantu Hispanic Education & Opportunity Endowment. A civil rights historian, his research focuses on Chicana/o and Latina/o studies, American religion, race and ethnicity and social movements. Felipe was also Spring 2023 commencement speaker at Goshen (IN) College.

Steve Watkin (MA '98, BA '91) was appointed acting president of Bakersfield College in March 2023 by the Board of Trustees of the Kern Community College District. Steve joined BC nine years ago to establish an outreach program at the college, and most recently served as associate vice chancellor of enrollment management for the district.

Jaime Ramirez (MA '96, BA '81), head men's soccer coach, was inducted into the Fresno County Athletic Hall of Fame.

Cheryl Dueck Smith (BA '93), D.Arts, assistant professor of marriage and family therapy, published the article "My Guest, Anxiety" in the March/April 2023 *Christian Leader*, the magazine of the U.S. Mennonite Brethren Conference.

Don Morris (M.A./M.Div. '91) announced he will retire as national director of the United States Mennonite Brethren Conference in August 2024, following Gathering 2024, the USMB national meeting. Don was appointed national director in August 2016, after two years as interim lead national staff. Before that, he directed Mission USA, the conference church-planting ministry and served for 13 years as lead pastor at Pine Acres Church in Weatherford, OK. USMB is the denomination with which FPU is affiliated.

Bruce L. Thiessen (BA '82), Ph.D., published the book *Where Two Are Gathered: Christ-centered Counseling Revisited* with Rogationist Publications. He is the senior author with Bruce Narramore, Ph.D. Bruce Thiessen is a licensed clinical psychologist and a singer-songwriter known as Dr. BLT. More at drbltmusic.com

Susie Knight (BA '78) chairs the Vacaville Christian High School Fine Arts Conservatory Department.

Sybil (Blaauw, MA '99, BA '97) Kolbert has written a personal narrative on the tale of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. *Finding Home: Embracing God's Promises and Rebuilding Your Life* bridges the ancient wisdom of Nehemiah and the challenges faced by individuals seeking to rebuild their lives today. It is available on Amazon.



» WEDDINGS



Samantha Diaz (MA '23, BA '21) married Nicholas Diliberto on June 24, 2023, in Reedley, CA. The couple lives in Yucaipa, CA, where Samantha teaches first grade in a new dual immersion school, Palm Innovation Academy.



Erin Clarke (TC '18, BA '15) married Ryan Baker in Fort Worth, TX, on November 19, 2022. She gained two daughters through the marriage: Addison Faith (11) and Harper Hope (8). Erin is a middle school social studies teacher and girls athletics coach in Irving, TX, and Ryan works as a mail handler for the United States Postal Service in Fort Worth.

» BIRTHS



Valerie Claustro (BA '22) welcomed first child Elijah Cisneros on December 3, 2022. He is a future Sunbird, according to his mom.



Trey (BS '19) and Megan (Renna, BA '21) Sena welcomed Holden Stephen on June 1, 2023. Trey is in the physician's assistant program at A.T. Still University, and Megan is a kindergarten teacher for Heart Christian Academy. The family resides in Fresno, CA.



Ethan Ruffino was born in 2020 to **Noel Ruffino (BA '19) and Karla Moreno (BA '19)**. The couple met at FPU's North Fresno Campus while completing B.A. degrees in Criminology and Restorative Justice.



Tori (Sena, BS '16) and Connor Burns welcomed Payton Grace on June 1, 2023. Payton joins big brother Jace Cooper. The family resides in Germantown, TN, where Tori is a nurse.



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ADVISE & mentor students fpu.edu/Sunbirds-Can

» BIRTHS (CONTINUED)



Jasmin Marie Caraballo Smith was born to **Evelyn (Smith, TC '18, BA '17)** and Joel Caraballo on March 5, 2023.



Adam Juarez (TC '05, BA '03) welcomed his fourth daughter, Averie, in 2021. Adam works as an ed tech and integrated studies consultant for the Tulare County Office of Education

» DEATHS

Dava Nicholi Hash (TC '03, BA '02), 69, died on March 20, 2023. A Merced native, she worked in banking and taught sixth grade. Survivors include husband Rick, daughter Kat, son Danny and daughter-in-law Angela, two sisters and four grandchildren.

Angelina Rodriguez De Torrez (TC '94), 75, died on May 9, 2023. The Fresno native was born on December 30, 1947, later moving to Lemoore. Over 25 years, she taught in Del Rey, Huron and Avenal as well as Corcoran State Prison. Survivors include husband Daniel, son Andrei and daughter-in-law Christine, son Alex and daughter-in-law Beverly, two brothers, two sisters and four grandchildren.

Samuel Bergen (FS '67), 90, died on April 19, 2023.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

It's so easy to let your classmates and friends know what's happening in your life—job, marriage, children, new address and awards. **visit** fpu.edu/alumniupdate



NEW MEMBERS OF THE FLOCK

Recently had a baby? Let us know—we'd love to send you one of our cute little Future Sunbird baby t-shirts, like Rowyn Henry is wearing, pictured here with dad **Brennen (BA '13)**.

JOIN the LinkedIn
FPU Alumni Assoc.

LIKE or comment
@FPUalumni



LIFE

The sixth and seventh Alumni and Friends Tours! Mediterranean Bound

Barcelona, Southern France & the Italian Riviera

June 9-24, 2024

- ▶ Gaudi's famous cathedral
- ▶ The Medieval fortress at Carcassone
- ▶ Arles, the home of Van Gogh
- ▶ The lavender fields of Provence
- ▶ The Principality of Monaco
- ▶ Milan with optional trip to Lake Como
- ▶ Optional extension to Florence



Greece

September 21-October 7, 2024

- ▶ The Ancient Acropolis and Parthenon
- ▶ Delphi – home of the Oracle
- ▶ The Island of Corfu
- ▶ Olympia and the Temple of Zeus
- ▶ Follow Paul's travels in Athens and Corinth
- ▶ The amphitheater and ruins at Epidaurus
- ▶ Optional extension to the Islands of Santorini

More at fpu.edu/alumnitour





From
the
Archives...

1970-1980

By Kevin Enns-Rempel, Director, Hiebert Library

THE SAN JOAQUIN COLLEGE OF LAW

When several Fresno-area judges and attorneys decided to establish a law school in Fresno in 1969, they lacked a campus, so San Joaquin College of Law went in search of facilities. Conversations between Judge (and SJCL dean) Dan B. Eymann and Pacific College President Arthur J. Wiebe, Ed.D., led to an agreement on January 8, 1970, allowing SJCL to lease classroom space on the PC campus.

Law school classes began in the fall of 1970 with 59 students, and enrollment increased steadily over the next few years. While the space provided by Pacific was adequate for classrooms, SJCL was hampered by a lack of offices and a dedicated law library. To address this, SJCL

offered to help finance construction of an addition to the east end of Hiebert Library. Construction began in September 1972 and was completed the following year.

While the library addition helped alleviate SJCL's space needs, it did not completely solve them. As early as 1974, SJCL proposed a new law school building on the PC campus, but Pacific was unwilling to give up so much of its limited acreage. SJCL made similar overtures over the next few years, including construction along Willow Avenue (where the FPU track and soccer field now stand) or purchasing land on Peach Avenue owned by Pacific.

By 1979, however, Pacific had decided to again enlarge Hiebert Library and noted continued classroom use by SJCL hampered development of new academic programs. SJCL, meanwhile, was negotiating to acquire a new campus site. For those reasons, Pacific notified SJCL it would terminate its lease on June 30, 1980. Construction on the Hiebert Library addition began in fall 1979, and SJCL opened on Shields Avenue in 1980, moving to Clovis in 1996. The Hiebert Library project was completed about the same time, and the former law school library and offices became the Mennonite Library and Archives. 🏠



KYLE FERGUSON BRINGS FRESH PERSPECTIVE, WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

By Marina Garnica

Kyle Ferguson doesn't always measure a win by the numbers on a scoreboard. Instead, the new director of athletics measures a win by his four pillars for a successful college program: spiritual growth, academics, programs and community.

To Ferguson, the higher purpose to those "wins" is the opportunity to share Christ. "Our top priority is ministry," he says. "If we win multiple national titles, but students aren't growing spiritually, I believe we failed at our jobs."

Ferguson comes to FPU from seven years at Lewis-Clark State in Idaho as assistant professor of communication arts and chair of the Humanities Division. He also left his mark on San Diego Christian College, where, for roughly eight years, his career focused on athletics and athletics communication.

His resume is loaded with knowledge and experience in administration, admission and as a faculty member.

But he's no stranger to Fresno—his wife, Lori, is from Fresno, so being closer to family made perfect sense. "There's so much potential and good we can do here, and I'm excited to be a

part of that," he says. "As I prayed about it more, I really left it open, saying 'God I'm fine if you close the door, but at the same time, if you want me there, we'll go.'"

For Ferguson, the love of game came young. He played sports as far back as he can remember, but baseball captivated his heart. Although his college career was ended by injury after a year, his administrative career evolved naturally, as he took on leadership roles. And FPU's mission fit hand-in-glove.

"I am passionate about community," Ferguson says. "We live in a world that is incredibly divided, and that division can be attributed to

a lack of community. We are created to be in community with God, and with others, so I'm super excited about this opportunity to be at a place where that is not only expected, but encouraged."

Ferguson earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from York University and a Master of Arts in Communication from Spring Arbor University. He is studying for an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration at Idaho State University. One of his dreams is to step into the classroom at FPU. "I love to teach," he said. "There's something about being in the classroom with the

“I’m here to find ways to provide for my staff, and to serve our student-athletes...”


– Kyle Ferguson



opportunity to see the light bulb go on.”

A passion for higher education, athletics and public speaking allows Ferguson to be a voice for staff, coaches and students. “I’m here to find ways to provide for my staff, and to serve our student-athletes, whether it be spiritually, academically, physically or emotionally,” he says. “We’re all in this together, and it’s all about our students.”

Since starting work in July, Ferguson has worked to understand the FPU landscape so he can lay out a clear vision for success, both on and off the field. “We have a really good team in

athletics, from administration down to coaches,” he said. “God has sovereignly placed everyone here for this time, and we’re on the cusp of something great.” 



**IN STEP WITH
SUNBIRDS**

fpuathletics.com

Scoring the Ultimate Goal: Instilling Faith, Confidence Through Youth Sports

In the early 1990s, **Jaime Ramirez (MA '96, BA '81)**, Fresno Pacific soccer coach, had a vision to reach youth in the community through soccer. The program he imagined would offer free and low-cost coaching support to predominantly underserved youth, while developing FPU's future recruits. By the late 90s, Ramirez' longtime friend, Silvestre Arias, took notice. "He's been like a brother to me ever since arriving from Mexico," says Ramirez. The two played together and Arias knew the value of investing in youth sports.

Arias, a board member of the Bertha and John Garabedian Charitable Foundation and

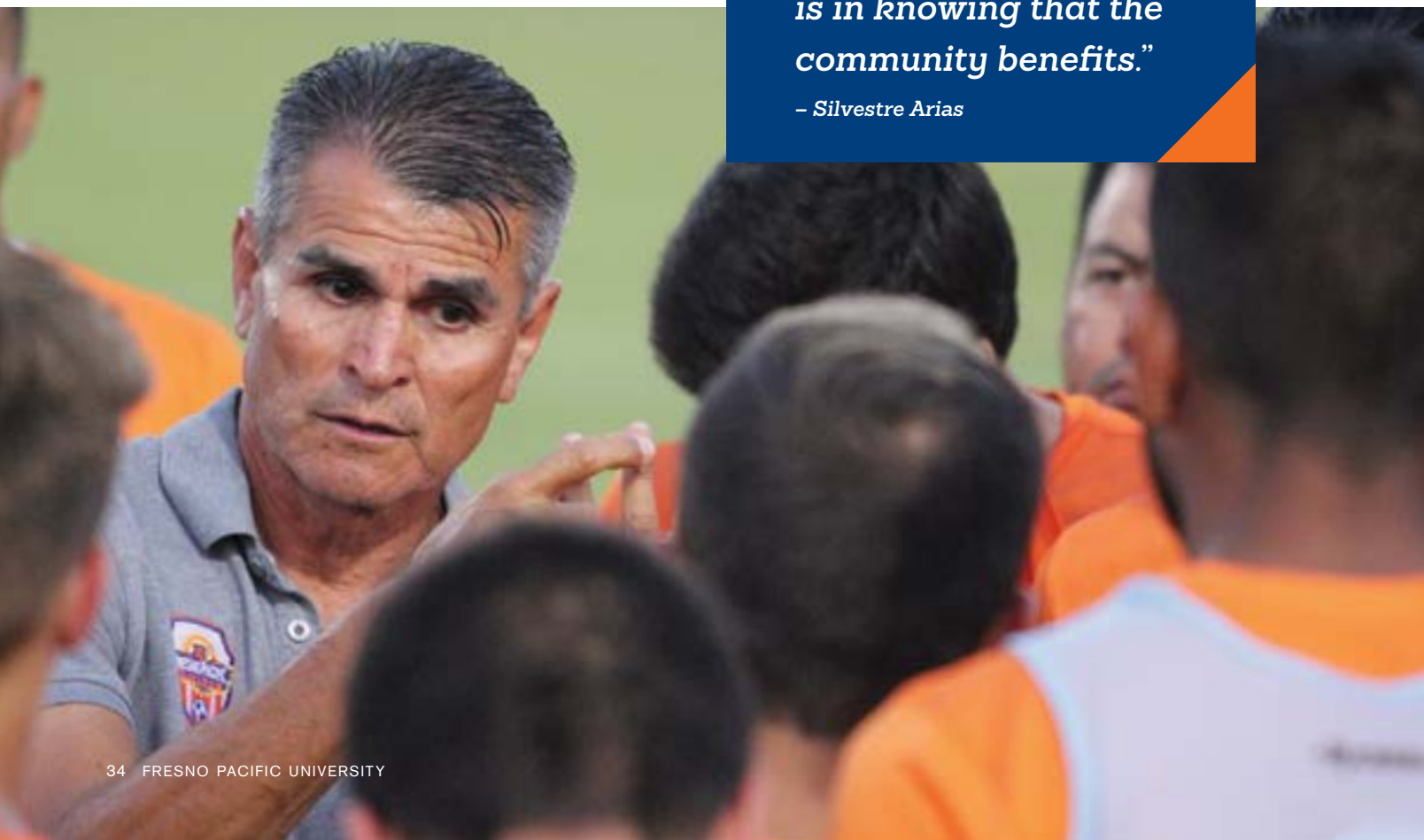
father of an FPU player, advocated with the foundation to provide funding for the youth program as a way to impact the local community.

And impact the community it has.

The foundation has donated more than \$170,000 to FPU since 1998. Those funds have allowed local kids to participate in clubs and clinics, advance to tournaments and even compete for state cups. The support has also offset coaching and education fees.

“The satisfaction is in knowing that the community benefits.”

– Silvestre Arias




Several FPU players who benefitted from the foundation's generosity have gone on to head coaching positions at local high schools, with some winning CIF championships. "It was no question for me to support Jaime's efforts," Arias says. "The satisfaction is in knowing that the community benefits. These kids go on to become better citizens, and many have the opportunity to go to college through soccer scholarships."

A lover of the game, Arias still plays at age 70. "When you love a sport, you keep at it," he says with a laugh. "As soon as I'm in my cleats and on the field, I'm ready." Arias knows the game instills integrity, grit and teamwork. And he loves that FPU teaches soccer skills with an emphasis on faith. "[My faith] shaped how I played and how I was perceived as a player," he says.

When Ramirez reflects on the Garabedian Foundation's 25 years of partnership with FPU in youth sports, he recalls his early days as a student-athlete and instructional aid for Calwa Elementary School. Ramirez would go outside and play with the kids during recess. "I had so much fun with them," he remembers. "I could see how much they loved the game, even at that age and it just planted a seed in my mind."

That seed grew as Ramirez became head coach at FPU and invested in son Orlando's school soccer team; it came to fruition when Gary Nachtigall, then the athletic director, gave Ramirez the go-ahead to run a couple of youth soccer teams as an outreach. That program grew from two teams to 12, with boys and girls ranging in age from 11 to 19.

"It was about giving back to the community; giving an opportunity to families who couldn't afford it otherwise," Ramirez says. "As far as the monetary investment? The return far surpasses monetary value. The value is exponential." 

SUNBIRD GOLF CLASSIC

Monday, April 15, 2024
Sunnyside Country Club

The 29th Annual Sunbird Golf Classic is a time to fellowship on the course while supporting Fresno Pacific student-athletes and the FPU Department of Athletics.

The scramble-style play means your birdies get you closer to sweet prizes, while your mulligans help keep the Sunbirds soaring.

Sunnyside Country Club is once again the home of the Sunbird Golf Classic and your registration includes green fees, FPU athletics apparel, prizes, food, soft drinks and more!

Register your group today or reach out about other business partnerships by contacting Matt Mazzoni at 559-453-3613 or email matt.mazzoni@fresno.edu

fpuathletics.com/golf



tiny seeds, BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

When **Dennis Falk (BA '75), D.D.S.**, thinks about what his passion to give back has yielded, he thinks of the parable of the mustard seed. Tiny seeds, one planted in Fresno in a young student from Canada, and another in a young Guatemalan woman years later, that have borne kingdom fruit.

Falk grew up Mennonite in central Canada and wanted to attend college, maybe see the world. Fresno Pacific was ideal—located in sunny California, far away but not too far, and affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren.

Once enrolled, Falk, shy and introverted, was coaxed from his shell by newfound friends and caring professors like Albert Pauls and Wilbert Reimer. Gifted in science, Falk looked to medicine and dentistry. “After observing in dental offices and prayerful consideration, I chose dentistry,” he says.

When Falk looks at his Fresno Pacific years, he sees the mustard seed. “It instilled in me a greater yearning for missions, which didn’t really come to fruition until years later, but the seed was planted.”

After graduation, Falk went on to run a successful dental practice, providing the means to give back. “I knew that I had been incredibly blessed



and just felt led to share with those less fortunate,” he says. “I had been interested in doing some sort of short-term dental mission for some time and an opportunity arose through Christian Dental Society. They placed me in contact with an older dentist who had been doing dental mission trips for about 10 years and he was an awesome mentor.”

Falk’s first trip to Guatemala in 1989 inspired him to another 26 short-term missions to Guatemala, Honduras, Romania and Siberia. “I have discovered that dentistry can be a great complement to evangelism,” he says. Medical missions have

“It is so exciting to see God at work.”

– Dennis Falk, D.D.S.

been an opportunity to serve vulnerable people in developing countries. “It is so exciting to see God at work.”

During that first trip, a 14-year-old Mayan girl assisted the dentists. She was bright but lacked resources to pursue an education. Falk felt led to cover her expenses. “She graduated university and has been working within the school system in that area of Guatemala to promote educational opportunities to motivated students. She has also worked with the government on women’s issues,” he says. “She has been able to make a much greater impact in her country than I ever could.”

Falk has also contributed significantly to the Samaritan Scholars, a private scholarship for undocumented students in the U.S. under the Dream Act. “I am so appreciative of the experience I had at FPU and the opportunities it has afforded me in life that I want others to have a similar opportunity,” he says. “I cherish the relationships that have developed over the years through the Samaritan Scholarship.”

Falk is the kind of donor that inspires Kathy Herms, assistant director of donor engagement. Herms loves when alumni connect their giving to their passion. “You just have a sense that he cares deeply about humanity,” she says. “It’s in his nature to give back, to serve.” 🏠



more news

NEW FACULTY EMERITI

The following faculty have been honored with emeritus status by the FPU Board of Trustees:

- **Greg Camp, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies
- **Allen Carden, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Professor of History
- **Larry Dunn, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Professor of Peacemaking and Conflict Studies
- **Ron Pratt, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Associate Professor of Math and Physical Science
- **Rod Janzen, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Professor of History
- **Steven Varvis, Ph.D.**
Emeritus Professor of History

CORRECTION

The information in a caption on page 34 of the May 2023 issue of *Pacific* (Vol. 36, No. 1), in the article on the new Casa Pacifica dedication, is incorrect. The names should be Carrie Carey and Rob Carey, FPU Director of Independent Studies. It was also incorrectly stated that the Careys were married at the old Casa Pacifica, which is not the case. We apologize for the error and any inconvenience it caused.



WANT MORE?

Check out what else is going on at FPU at fpu.edu/news or scan the QR code.



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For more information on setting up your own gift annuity, charitable remainder trust or other planned giving strategy through Fresno Pacific University, contact Director of FPU Foundation Development and Legacy Gifts Steven Redekop or Senior Advisor and Gift Planner Mark Deffenbacher.

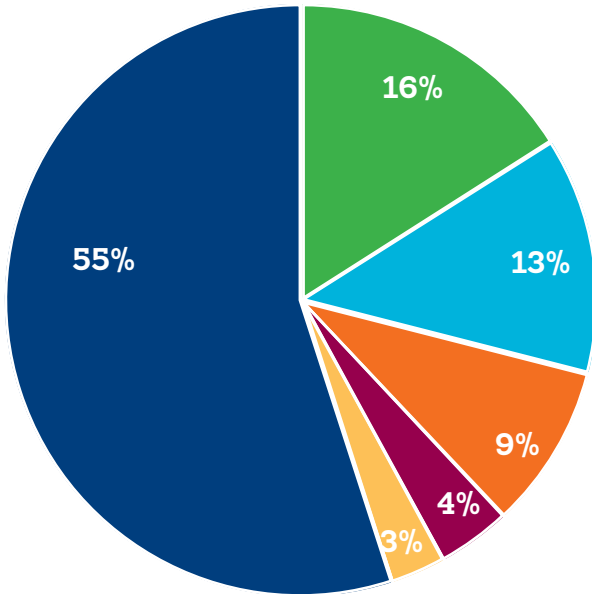
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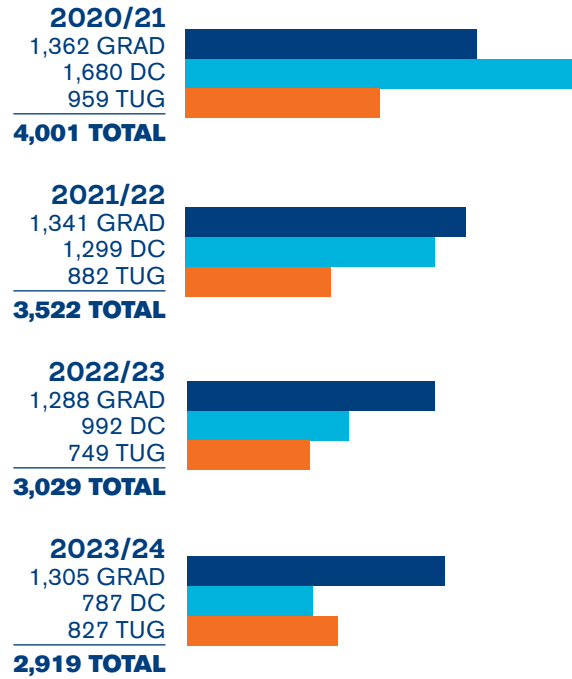
Annual Update 2022-23

GIFTS BY DONOR GROUP

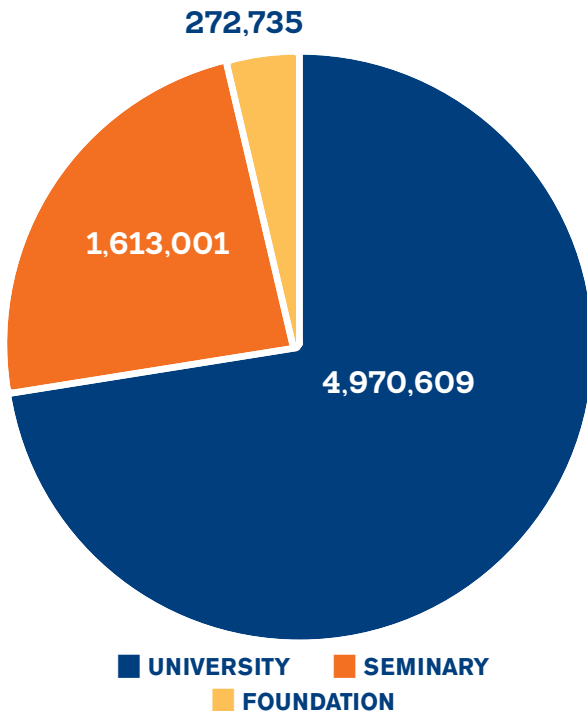
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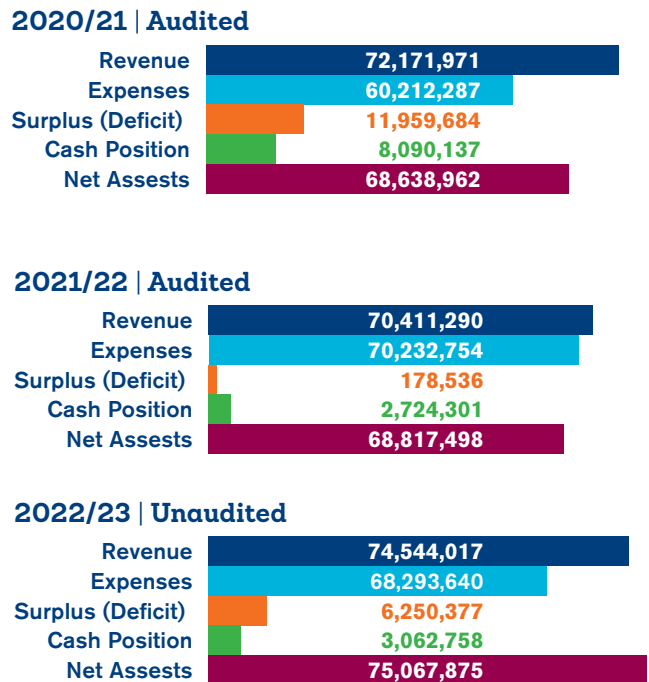
ENROLLMENT



2022-23 GIVING SUMMARY



REVENUE & EXPENSES



Fresno Pacific University Consolidated Financial Information
The above numbers include operating and non-operating activities for
Fresno Pacific University, FPU Foundation, MBBS-US Inc.



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