

PACIFIC

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY | NOVEMBER 2025 | VOL. 38, NO. 2

CALLED to **MORE**

A Life of Service,
Leadership and Faith





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Called to More—FPU as a Launching Pad for a Life of Service, Leadership and Faith

It's hard to believe I've entered my "senior year" (fourth year) at Fresno Pacific University. It has been an incredible adventure—full of both challenges and opportunities that come with this season of life and leadership. Through it all, Beth and I remain deeply grateful for God's ongoing faithfulness to us and to this remarkable institution, now in its 81st year.

While the past three years have brought tremendous progress—including enrollment growth, record-breaking fundraising and significant campus improvements—our mission has remained steady: to transform students' minds and hearts through a Christ-centered education. Even as we celebrate structural and strategic milestones, what we celebrate most is the transformation of students' lives and their pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty in their disciplines, vocations and co-curricular experiences.

The theme of this issue draws from the Apostle Paul's heartfelt exhortation to the Thessalonian church: to "excel even more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1) in their love for God and in how they live out their faith. That call echoes loudly at FPU, where our integration of faith, learning and service—shaped by mentoring faculty and immersive co-curricular experiences—equips students to live with purpose, courage and compassion. They are prepared to be difference-makers in every field and in the community.

One shining example is current FPU student-athlete Brianna Green—a national champion and scholar who truly embodies what it means to be "Called to More." As you read the stories in this issue, I encourage you to reflect on your own calling—and how you, too, might "excel even more."

Thank you, alumni and friends, for believing in what God is doing at FPU—transforming lives, one faithful student at a time. 🏠

André Stephens, Ph.D.
President



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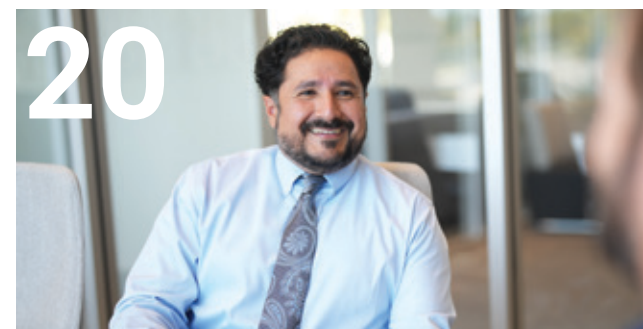
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PRESIDENT
André Stephens, Ph.D.

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
Becky Bradley

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Michael Hammond
michael.hammond@fresno.edu

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT
Morgan Schlesselman

DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE SERVICES
Jared Phillips

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Kabrina Speakman
Daniel Van Gerpen

ATHLETICS
Jim Jeltema

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Cary Edmondson
Megan LeBlanc

Information: 559-453-2000

Advancement: 559-453-2080

CONNECT ONLINE

@fresnopacific

@fpu

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@fresnopacific

fpu.edu/pacific



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

King J. Richter gifts over \$20 million to FPU for scholarships

A longtime friend and supporter of Fresno Pacific University has left the university a transformational legacy to benefit students. King J. Richter has given FPU \$21.9 million to create endowed scholarships for FPU students. The announcement was made to faculty and staff August 12 during the annual Fall Kick Off.

This largest-ever gift to FPU is believed to be the second largest public charitable contribution in Central Valley history, following a \$29.4 million gift to the Fresno State College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology in 2009.

- These endowed scholarships include:
- The Alvina Richter Scholarship Fund, in honor of his mother
 - The Elmer R. Richter Sr. Scholarship Fund, in honor of his father
 - The King J. Richter Scholarship

This gift is just the latest example of the late philanthropist’s generosity to the university and its students. In 1992 he set up the King J. Richter Annual Scholarship to “help high-achieving students receive the life-changing education available at FPU,” according to the description of that scholarship, which is separate from the new endowment. “He grew up in a Fresno home that held Christian values high and understands the importance of responsibility and a disciplined work ethic.”

“King J. Richter’s generosity reflects a deep and enduring commitment to Fresno Pacific and our mission,” said FPU President André Stephens, Ph.D. “This remarkable gift will open doors for countless students—both now and for generations to come—equipping them to pursue their calling and make a difference in the world. My hope is this gift will also inspire others to give in support of the life-changing, Christ-centered education we provide.”

King Richter

The Richter family is deeply rooted in Christian faith and the Central Valley. King J. Richter’s grandfather, Jacob, founded Richter Bottling Works, later Fresno’s Pepsi Cola Bottling Company, in 1895. The company, with King Richter’s brother, Bud, as CEO, ultimately controlled the Fresno-Madera County market and outsold the competition by about 1.5 to one. The company was sold to the Liggett Group in 1975.

After the sale, King J. Richter moved to Beverly Hills, where he set down roots and became a philanthropist. He continued to invest in Christian higher education.

Join the giving

Legacy gifts come in varying amounts, but all are important to the success of the Valley’s only accredited Christian university. Anyone interested in including FPU in their estate plan is encouraged to call Steven Redekop, director of development and legacy gifts at the FPU Foundation, at 559-453-3451. [🏠](#)

New conference, new opportunities for Sunbird Athletics

Fresno Pacific University will join the California Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) at the beginning of the 2026-27 academic year. The CCAA Board of Presidents approved FPU’s application for full membership June 11, 2025. FPU will continue as a full member of the PacWest Conference through the 2025–26 academic year. Both conferences are part of the NCAA Division II.

“The CCAA has a long-standing reputation for competitive excellence and institutional strength,” said President André Stephens, Ph.D. “Joining this historic and respected conference positions FPU alongside highly regarded public universities, enhancing our level of play and deepening regional rivalries that energize our teams and fans.”

The Sunbirds will be the only Christian university currently in the CCAA, which is recognized as one of the nation’s premier NCAA Division II athletic conferences with a record 157 national championships. Established in 1938, the CCAA features 12 institutions across California: Cal Poly Humboldt, Cal Poly Pomona, Chico State, Cal State Dominguez Hills, Cal State East Bay, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Monterey Bay, Cal State San Bernardino, Cal State San Marcos, Stanislaus State, San Francisco State and UC Merced.

With a strong emphasis on leadership, integrity and sportsmanship, the CCAA consistently ranks among the top Division II conferences in community engagement and student-athlete success as well as competition. More at goccaa.org.

“We are thrilled to welcome Fresno Pacific University to the CCAA,” said Allen Hardison, CCAA commissioner. “FPU has a rich tradition of academic and athletic success that will continue to elevate our conference.”

This decision comes after thoughtful consideration, discernment and prayer, according to university leaders. The move will allow FPU to strengthen regional competition, significantly reduce costs and travel demands for student-athletes and increase



visibility for Sunbird athletic programs throughout California. Competing in the CCAA enables Fresno Pacific to invest more fully in student-athlete success both on and off the

field/court. The Sunbirds will leave the PacWest Conference in 2026 after 14 years of membership, during which the PacWest played a key role in FPU’s transition from NAIA to NCAA Division II. Some rivalries will continue in non-conference matchups.

“We are deeply grateful for our time in the PacWest Conference, where we built lasting relationships and competed among mission-driven peers. The PacWest has been an important part of our journey,” said Kyle Ferguson, director of athletics.

“As we look to the future, the CCAA offers a new opportunity to align with public institutions that reflect our region and challenge us to grow,” Ferguson said.

More on FPU’s transition to the CCAA, including answers to frequently asked questions, at fpsunbirds.com. [🏠](#)

Academic support celebrates 30 years of help for every student

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

In 1995, Melinda Gunning was working as an adjunct writing instructor at Fresno Pacific College when she realized the campus lacked a tutoring center.

So Gunning pioneered the creation of a writing lab that, on a weekly basis, served about 20 students from the developmental writing class. Located in the basement of Kriegbaum Hall, not far from the laundry room, a handful of paid student peer tutors conducted business to a soundtrack of spinning dryers and washing machines.

Thirty years later, that campus innovation has evolved into the Academic Success Center (ASC), a full-scale tutoring operation that now serves all Fresno Pacific University student populations. Over the decades, the center—in all its growing incarnations—has supported thousands of students working to improve or maintain their academic footing.

“I’ve always believed that learning happens mostly outside of the classroom,” says Gunning, now director of disability access and education. “The classroom is for instruction—the professors are wonderful, but it’s not always where students learn. Students often learn with their peers, with someone who speaks the same language. And also one-on-one tutoring meets the student at the point of need.”

Sarah Micu, director of student success services (and a former tutor in the ASC), believes the center is a crucial part of Fresno Pacific’s service to students.

“I think a common misconception is that students who come to tutoring are students who are struggling, who are about to fail out,” she says. “Sometimes it is

students who are failing and trying to make a last-ditch effort—but a lot of times the work that we do is helping students maintain great grades and just have another support system.”

A program evolves

That support system certainly has blossomed over the few decades leading to this 30-year anniversary. Back in 1995, the writing lab was part of the English department and provided tutoring services by appointment and only to a limited student audience.

After a few years, it grew into the Center for Writing and Learning, gained a part-time coordinator and moved under the director of the Mentoring and Retention Office and the dean of the undergraduate college.

In 2002, the tutoring service moved to above-ground quarters in Marpeck Hall—claiming two small rooms and part of a hallway—and was serving hundreds of students in writing, math and some general education courses.

In 2009, the center acquired its current primary office space in Marpeck 105. Over roughly the past 20 years, the center has received increasingly sophisticated tutor training certifications, added staffing (including professional staff), expanded services and on-line tutoring opportunities for all student populations, began serving regional campuses and changed its name to the Academic Success Center (within the Academic Success Department).

Some current leaders on campus have longstanding relationships with the tutoring program. Kerry Sue Brown, Ph.D., associate dean of student

success—which includes the Academic Success Department—began working in the center in 2013 and eventually headed it for about five years.

Brown was always blown away by the knowledge and training of the tutoring staff. “The Lord always provides really amazing, not only smart students, but really good tutors,” she says.

Helping everyone

One goal of the center has been to normalize help-seeking behavior for all students, ranging from undergraduates to those in adult, degree completion and graduate programs. “A Sunbird is a Sunbird,” Brown says. “If you are an FPU student and need support, come to the ASC and we’ll see what we can do for you.”

Gunning is clearly proud of the ASC and its evolution over the past 30 years. The center meets students one-on-one, and “I think that makes a huge difference,” she says. “Fresno Pacific, we’re a community but we also need to meet students individually. I think the Academic Success Center is where that happens most successfully.”

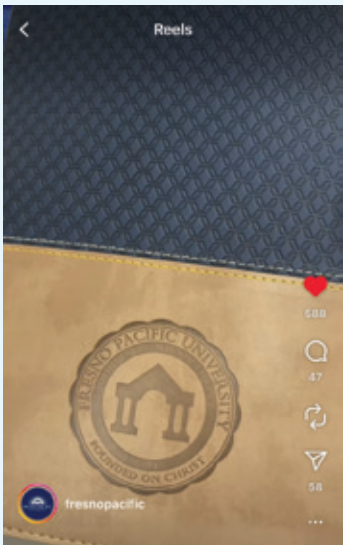
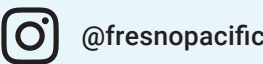
The center’s long run demonstrates its need and value, including as a helping hand for faculty.

“Students are here to learn, they are excited to learn and they need support,” Micu says. “The Academic Success Center is one of the ways that FPU is doing that for students, and reminding students that Fresno Pacific wants its graduates to be strong and ready for the world.”

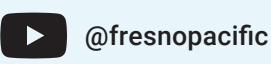
For more information visit fpu.edu/asc

Social Media Highlights

Check out a couple of our top posts from the last few months. Catch all the latest—just hit follow!



A strong foundation begins with God’s Word!



Try not to get caught in the photo.

FOLLOW US!



Anabaptism's 500th anniversary: A global celebration of faith and history

By Christopher L. Scott

A radical religious movement with deep implications for FPU experienced a radical celebration last spring.

"The Courage to Love: Anabaptism@500," commemorated the 500th anniversary of the birth of Anabaptism, which is considered May 29, 2025, in Zurich, Switzerland. The Anabaptist movement, part of the radical wing of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, led to the creation of the Mennonite Brethren denomination, which sponsors FPU, along with other Mennonite, Brethren and Amish groups.

Attending from FPU were President André and First Lady Beth Stephens; Alison R. Noble, Ph.D., provost/senior vice president of academic affairs, and husband Nick; Laura Schmidt Roberts, Ph.D., professor of biblical and theological studies and director of general education, and husband Mark; and Tim Geddert, Ph.D., emeritus professor of New Testament at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and member of the FPU Board of Trustees, and wife Gertrud.

"This experience reinforced that the Anabaptist story is far broader than what we often see in North America. It's a global movement rooted in the spiritual convictions of peacemaking, reconciliation and discipleship. In a time of division and uncertainty, this gathering was a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of those principles," President Stephens said.

During the Reformation, many of Anabaptism's beliefs were illegal and adherents suffered persecution and martyrdom. These beliefs included believer's or adult baptism based on a personal commitment to Jesus; the separation of church and state; nonviolence and refusal of military service; and the right of everyone to read and interpret the Bible.

In addition to workshops and panel discussions, participants enjoyed Anabaptist historical sites around Zurich. "There was a guided tour of many of the important original sites where martyrs were drowned

and where the city council met to make decisions about these things," Geddert said.

A focal point of the celebration, sponsored by Mennonite World Conference, was joint worship among Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Anabaptist Christians. "I was struck by the ecumenical nature of the culminating

worship service," Schmidt Roberts said.

Stephens agreed. "Worshiping alongside people from every corner of the globe felt like a foretaste of Heaven. One of the most impactful moments was a portion of the service dedicated to reconciliation with other denominations—it was sobering and hopeful," he said.

"This was an amazing opportunity to get a glimpse of the global church," Beth Stephens said. "It was encouraging to come together with siblings in Christ from across the world—including Congo, Canada, Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Albania, Paraguay and Colombia." 

“In a time of division and uncertainty, this gathering was a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of those principles.”

– André Stephens, Ph.D., president

A season of gratitude: Peggi Kriegbaum reflects on 33 years at FPU

Peggi Kriegbaum was raised in a Mennonite Brethren home on a farm in Dinuba, shaped by faith, family and hard work. After graduating from Immanuel High School, she attended (then) Pacific College, Reedley College and Tabor College before earning a B.S. in Business Administration from Fresno State.

While in college, Kriegbaum began working at Guarantee Savings, becoming assistant vice president of ATM operations. “I had the privilege of installing the first ATMs in Central California,” she said.

After travel to Southern California became part of Kriegbaum’s role, Guarantee Savings conflicted with her responsibilities as a newly single mother. In early 1992, a church bulletin job posting from Fresno Pacific caught Kriegbaum’s attention, and she began as director of operations in the Professional Development Division that July. She spent 33 years in the department, now the Office of Continuing Education (CE), the last decade as executive director. “Truly, I can say I’ve never had a boring day at work,” she said.

CE has served up to 14,000 students annually with university credit and Continuing Education Units in various professions. Its portfolio has included courses

for everyone from incarcerated youth to graduate-level work for educators.

Serving non-degree students within a degree-focused university can feel like swimming upstream, Kriegbaum admits, but her team has embraced the opportunity. “From the early days of correspondence

courses and phone-in registrations to today’s fully automated, 24/7 online systems, we’ve adapted continuously,” she said.

Looking forward, Kriegbaum’s plans are delightfully simple: unhurried time with loved ones. Eight years old when mom joined FPU, today, Kriegbaum’s daughter and her husband—both FPU alumni—are raising three children. “I am a joyful ‘uber-grandma,’” Kriegbaum said.

Marrying former FPU President

Rich Kriegbaum, Ph.D., in 2001 created a blended family that includes his son, a daughter in heaven, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Coming to FPU was God-ordained. “What began as a job became a ministry, a calling and one of my greatest blessings. I treasure the friendships formed, the opportunity to serve alongside Rich during his second presidency and the joy of working with dedicated, mission-driven colleagues. We are forever Sunbird supporters and fervent prayer warriors!” 🏠



The NINTH Alumni and Friends Tour! Switzerland

June 2026

Tour the great cities of Switzerland, the Alps and contemporary cultural centers. Visit ancient archeological sites like the Neolithic pole dwellings and Roman, Medieval and Renaissance old towns.

- ▶ Gornergrat open-air cog railway
- ▶ Lindt Home of Chocolate
- ▶ Trachselwald Castle and Mennonite Museum
- ▶ Chillon Castle
- ▶ Visp and Zermatt with view of the Matterhorn (weather permitting)
- ▶ Omega Watch Museum
- ▶ Basel and Bern Old Towns
- ▶ Gruyere cheese tasting
- ▶ Interlaken and Harder Kulm Funicular
- ▶ Optional Heidelberg and Rhine Valley extension

See more at fpu.edu/alumnitours



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Vikings and Sunbirds YEARS?

By Hannah Keeney, Archivist

School colors and mascots are important and even integral symbols of an institution's identity and spirit. While school colors are vital to branding, it's the mascot that is so uniquely uniting. After all, ranging from the realistic to the fantastical, these characters faithfully appear at every athletic event and community gathering. If asked, nearly everyone has at least one story involving a school mascot infused with pride, entertainment, fear or dislike. For the community it represents, the situation may involve a costume issue or a problematic connotation.



How much of the story and related materials documenting the creation and influence of a mascot kept by an archive varies. Here in the Mennonite Library & Archives at FPU, references to both Vikings and Sunbirds appear most often in student newspapers and photographs. There's no record of a mascot before 1960. From then until the 1980s, a Viking ship and helmets appear, as well as a green and white color palette, despite having no ties to California or the ideals associated with a Mennonite school. In the spring of 1981, a shift in name and a community effort brought plenty of play with the words and ideas of sun and birds much more befitting a California Mennonite school led to the creation of the Sunbirds—enter Sunny.

Though (as later discovered) sunbirds are in fact real birds; as with many mascot depictions, Sunny has always leaned towards the more fantastical. There have even been a few iterations across time, and it's fun to see the changes in historical images—from the early days of homemade "nightmare-fuel" caricature, complete with a Viking helmet, to the more official, athletic and brightly colored version seen today. 🏠





Living Out FAITH

Andrew Haussler finds
his career helping families

By Katie Fries

Andy Haussler (MBA '13, BA '01) admits his decision to attend Fresno Pacific University was a bit of a compromise: "My parents wanted me to go to a Christian college, and I didn't want to go to L.A.," he says wryly, noting that at the time, there were no Christian higher education options near his home in Sacramento. "And," he adds, "I loved the idea of being close to Yosemite."

He soon realized there was more to FPU than its convenient location: "The size was just right, the class size was valuable to hold me accountable and I really enjoyed getting to know my professors and fellow students."

One of those professors was (now-retired) Peng Wen, Ph.D. Though Haussler initially thought he might pursue a career in teaching, a first semester economics class with Wen changed his trajectory. “Peng really was a sounding board on a career path,” he says. “He showed me how he intertwined his professional goals with his faith. He was very encouraging in that way.” (Years later, when Haussler returned to FPU for his MBA, he chose it over other schools so he would have another opportunity to study with Wen.)

Haussler ended up majoring in business administration, but his evolving faith also set the stage for his post-college plans. He joined a local church and, during the school year, participated in student leadership teams, outreach projects and mission trips. They weren’t just ways to fill time as a student, but were among the first steps he took

toward a life of service. Summers were spent working at Mount Hermon, a Christian camp in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where he realized, “Faith needs to be lived out in all aspects of life, not compartmentalized.”

A study abroad program in Washington, D.C., to study public policy solidified this idea. Jerry Herbert, one of Haussler’s professors in the program, “asked hard questions about what you want your life to be. He really impressed upon me that you can do anything,

but do it for the Lord.”

His time in that program also led to the realization that he wanted to pursue a career focused on community development. His work seeks to answer the question: “How do we make families’ and residents’ lives better so

they can reach their whole potential?”

That question has directed all his career moves, from an early-career job working for utility provider AES Corporation to working on affordable housing

“Faith needs to be lived out in all aspects of life, not compartmentalized.”

– Andy Haussler

projects for the County of Fresno to his current role as Clovis city manager. He’s been with the City of Clovis for nearly two decades, initially in a position in which he was tasked with securing additional resources for the city in the form of housing, infrastructure and business development grants. In early 2025, after stints as the city’s economic development director and assistant city manager, Haussler was appointed city manager.

Employed by the Clovis City Council, the city manager runs the city’s day-to-day operations, overseeing teams that run city services like the fire and parks departments. “I was really not expecting to be city manager,” he says. “I was pretty happy doing development work. But I feel like God has placed me in this position for a reason. Ultimately, the city is providing a platform for families to reach their full potential, and I’m grateful to be in a position to provide a space for them to flourish.”

Thanks to FPU, Haussler has seen his own family and friendships flourish. A former roommate, **Chris Tavaréz (BA ’01)**, has remained close as they navigate similar career trajectories. (Tavaréz is the interim city manager for the City of Hanford.)

“We’ve been bouncing ideas and issues off each other for the last 20-plus years, and we’re also able to talk about our families and how we’re balancing everything. It’s awesome to have someone with a similar value set and career and perspective on that career to talk through it with,” Haussler says of his long friendship with Tavaréz.

But by far his best relationship to come out of FPU, he says, is the one with his wife, **Lindsay (Lee, BA ’00)**. He recalls growing in faith together, noting that they were among the group of young people who first worshipped at Fresno’s The Well Community Church. Together, they have three children: Joy (20), Jacob (17) and Graham (14). When considering the ways FPU changed his life, he says, “everything else pales in comparison. She’s been a partner in ministry and supports me in my career and raising our family in values that FPU helped to shape.”



Those values, honed over years of service, were apparent to Haussler’s friends even as a student. “Over 25 years of knowing Andy, he has been a genuine person who brings compassion, reason and reliability to our friendship,” says Tavaréz. “I think that’s a strong base for the professional he is today.” 🏠





WHO CAN I HELP?

Yadira Castro works to be the counselor she needed

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

Yadira Castro (MA '20, BA '09) was only seven years old when she started working alongside her dad and siblings in the Central Valley's grape fields. She recalls the responsibility she carried on her young shoulders as a duty to help support her family. Now, she looks back on that duty as a blessing and an accomplishment. "I carry that time with honor," she says through tears. "That experience of having to work so young instilled in me the importance of education and started transforming me for my calling." Growing up in an immigrant family perfectly prepared her to serve the high school students currently walking through the struggles she experienced firsthand, Castro believes. As a bilingual academic counselor

at Fresno High School, she spends each day being the kind of counselor she wishes she'd had. "When my students feel unseen and unheard, I want them to know that I've been there," she says. "I present myself as the school counselor that I wanted — to be purposeful and healing." Castro credits FPU with helping her step into what she believes to be her God-given calling. "FPU deepened the assurance that I could be who I am today," she says. "I felt seen and supported and guided, both academically and spiritually."

Like her students today, Castro describes the high school version of herself as "unseen." She recalls that none of her teachers or counselors believed in

her, and no one expected or encouraged her to go to college. After graduating from Washington Union High School, she went straight into the corporate world and worked at Pelco, makers of security technology, for 13 years. It took ten years for her to earn her associate degree from Fresno City College, and at age 35, she earned her B.A. in Organizational Leadership from FPU. Throughout their 24-year marriage, she and her husband, Juan, whom she calls her biggest supporter, took turns completing college while raising their sons, 13-year-old Juanito and 11-year-old Joaquin.

Laid off from Pelco shortly after becoming a mom, Castro focused on her kids for eight years before returning to FPU to become a school counselor. Her in-person graduation ceremony was rescheduled three times due to COVID, but she finally walked in December 2021 to mark her accomplishment.

Finding a sense of belonging

From her initial visit to FPU, Castro knew it was where the Lord wanted her to be. It was the first time in her educational journey she felt like she belonged, and she prioritizes sharing that sense of belonging with her students. “I wholeheartedly believe having a sense of inclusion helps my personal daily mission,” she says. “I always pray to be a servant of God and that he’ll use me to help kids.”

As a child of Mexican immigrants, Castro remembers how difficult it was for her parents to be active participants in her education. Now, she uses her voice to be the voice for her students’ Spanish-speaking parents. She meets with them after school hours, sets up their phones to receive school notifications and helps connect them with the resources they need. “I want to be the counselor that

makes sure families are connected,” she says. “I want to overwhelm them with information.”

Following the American Dream

Last spring, Castro had a student whose undocumented parents wouldn’t attend his graduation ceremony for fear of deportation. She told him she was proud of him for showing up anyway. Her own parents came to the U.S. in search of a better life, but not without roadblocks and setbacks. During their first attempt to settle in the U.S., her dad was picked up for deportation. Because her mom was nine months

pregnant with her brother, the immigration officer allowed them to stay until she gave birth. Two weeks after her brother was born, the family reported to the immigration office to self-deport as instructed, much to the surprise of the immigration

officer. “My family still prays for that immigration officer,” she says, as her brother’s birth in the U.S. paved the way for them to later return and become legal residents.

Before Castro and her twin sister were even a year old, her family left their ranch in Guadalajara that had no plumbing, no running water and no work in the area to support a growing family. Castro’s mom crossed the border with one baby strapped to her front and the other to her back. “My parents really came here for the opportunity to work,” she says. “They came to the U.S. for the American Dream.” Castro and her three siblings were raised with the expectation that if they wanted water to shower, food in the refrigerator and lights that turned on and off with a switch, they had to work for it.

Castro doesn’t lament the hours of her childhood spent working in the grape fields, as that time shaped the work ethic she has today. Rather, she recalls

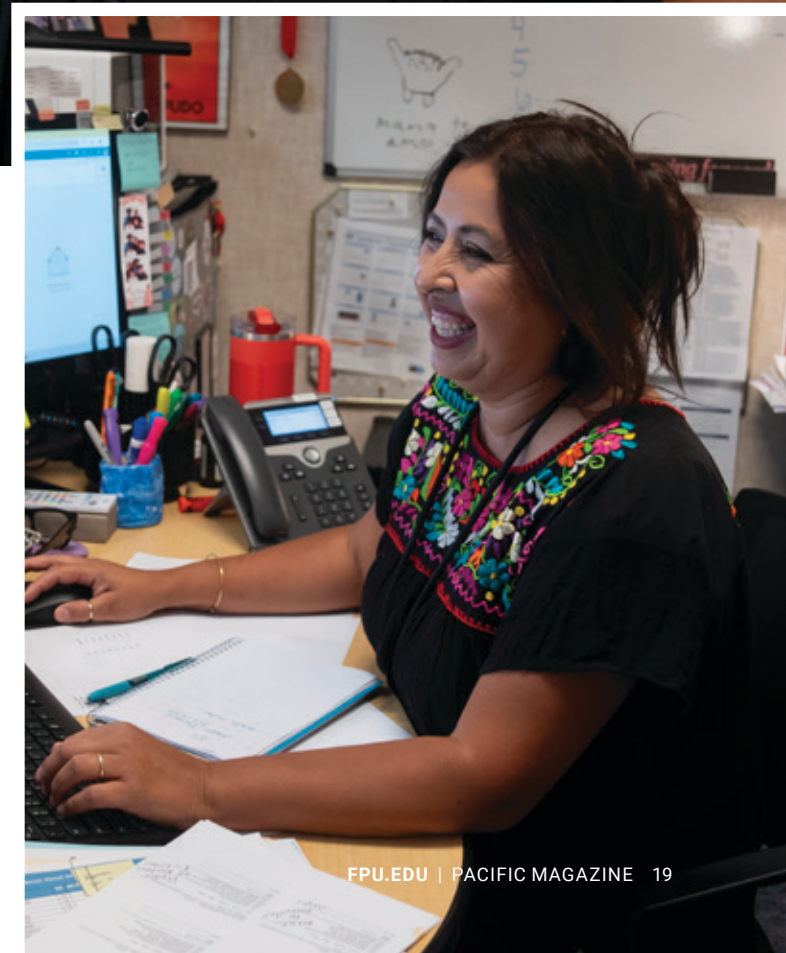
“FPU deepened the assurance that I could be who I am today.”

– Yadira Castro



growing up in a family centered in God’s presence because they had so much to be thankful for. “It made me stronger, more appreciative, more understanding, and I can give part of that to my students now,” she says. “I believe everything happens for a reason and all our experiences have a purpose.” All six members of Castro’s childhood family are now American citizens.

In her roles as wife, soccer mom, Catechism teacher and school counselor, Castro shares her faith with those the Lord places in her path. “Our steps in life are always in God’s presence,” she says. “We cross three dimensions in life: what we learn from, what we grow from and how we use it to help others.” 



A man with dark curly hair and a beard, wearing a light blue dress shirt and a patterned tie, is sitting at a wooden desk. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. His hands are resting on a notebook and a pen on the desk. The background is a blurred office setting with large windows.

Blending Faith, Finance & Service

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

As a pastor's son, **Michael Manjarrez (BA '12)** grew up in the church and the embrace of faith. He developed an interest in finance as a teenager and, with the foundation of a business degree from Fresno Pacific University, ultimately charted the path to become a certified financial planner and investment adviser at Whelan Financial in Fresno.

Today, Manjarrez sees his work as more than a business or just the way to earn a living. "My work is absolutely a service to others," he says.

Manjarrez, 39, is a product of the university's bachelor's degree completion program. He says relationships with faculty influenced his professional outlook.

For example, he tells the story of a professor formerly in the hospitality industry, someone who lived the difficulties of working with the public's various temperaments and personalities. She knew she needed to show care and love for all people to be successful.

It's a belief Manjarrez endorses: "This idea of caring for your clients, especially the ones who are difficult, could separate us from others in the workplace and was a repeatable theme at Fresno Pacific," he says, "I believe one cannot fake this. People can identify a fraud quite easily."

“I often say that I help clients stay on their path.”

– Michael Manjarrez

Learning faith and kindness at home

Manjarrez's journey began in Fresno, where he was born and raised. His father was a pastor and his mother was a teacher. Manjarrez began working in the Valley Christian Center office as a teenager and also volunteered with Young Life, a Christian ministry that he recently began working with again.

After graduating from Buchanan High School, he took classes at Fresno City College for a few years

while working various jobs. He floundered a bit, accumulating loads of academic credits without a distinct plan to earn a degree or advance a career in business: "It just took me a while to get a handle on college," Manjarrez says.

He learned about Fresno Pacific, and its degree completion program, from his piano teacher (a university instructor) along with friends. Manjarrez was in his mid-20s and ready to move forward in life when he enrolled at the university.

The degree-completion program, and its singular focus, provided the academic road map he needed to complete a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in management. He reflects on his time at FPU as a great experience.

"As a student, it was very easy for me to talk to my adviser and the instructors," says Manjarrez, who took most of his classes at the North Fresno Campus.

Fresno Pacific was also an easy transition due to his upbringing. "Because I grew up in the church, it was easy for Pacific to reinforce what I had already grown up with and learned and knew about," he says.

Finding a focus

At the beginning of his career, Manjarrez had a basic investment license and worked for a bank—mainly cold-calling clients to offer investment opportunities. That wasn't the career trajectory he wanted.

So Manjarrez took a detour with a job at a marketing firm, working in the finance area. When the firm struggled, he was laid off—and unemployed for about a year. Then he heard a podcast outlining the role of a registered investment adviser, and that offered the promise of a fresh path forward.

"I learned that not all investment managers were salespeople," he says. While marketing yourself is important, "you didn't have to have the sales quota environment to be successful."

Re-entering finance at a small firm in Clovis, Manjarrez began bringing in clients. In 2021, after earning his certified financial planner designation in a two-year program, he was recruited to join Whelan Financial.

The fee-based firm operates on a fiduciary standard, which is different than the broker/dealer standard. A fiduciary is required to act in the best interest of a client while a broker/dealer operates under a suitability standard—offering investments they think are suitable for clients.

The distinction is important to Manjarrez and his idea of service to clients. His approach comes from a position of caring and knowledge, which sets the foundation for the best advice. That means discussions with clients about family, cash flow, retirement, taxes, insurance, estate planning and more.

"Because my job is focused on giving financial advice, I must know and understand my clients on a very personal level, free of judgment, to help them succeed and fulfill their calling," he says.

Staying on the path

Landing on the best strategy is both an art and a science, he believes. Manjarrez meets with clients quarterly and offers advice on course corrections as needed.

"When people ask me what I do for a living, I often say that I help clients stay on their path," he says.

Entwined with this work is a sense of service to others. "We can't be effective if we can't show we care, and we can't be effective if we can't build trust with our clients," he says.



There is crossover between biblical studies and business, Manjarrez believes. Money is a common subject in the Bible.

In addition, he says, "there's a lot to be said about the principle of ethics and morality and following biblical teachings and doing what's right for our clients."

Recently, Manjarrez was one of four Sunbirds named to Fresno's 40 Under 40 class for 2025. BusinessLeaders.TV has assembled the list of young professionals from public and private sectors almost annually since 2007.

Manjarrez is honored to be one of the business professionals recognized for a strong work ethic and emerging leadership. FPU is part of his story and an enduring influence in his life and profession.

The university helped him move forward, he says, and also "nurtured the idea that one could work in the private sector and demonstrate his faith to his clients—even if only indirectly." 

Albertson uses his personal education to lead organizational change

By Amy D. Fienen

Bakersfield Fire Department Chief Kevin Albertson knew from a young age he wanted to be a firefighter. While earning his bachelor's degree in business management at Concordia University in Seward, NE, his pager would occasionally go off during class, and he'd be off to serve as a volunteer with the local fire department. After graduating in 1997, he returned home to California and began testing at fire departments throughout the West. Joining the Bakersfield Fire Department in 2000, he worked his way up to become deputy chief of operations and was named chief in May of this year.

As part of Albertson's commitment to bettering himself and continuing his education, he became an EMT and urban search and rescue instructor and served as a medical unit leader for the South Central Sierra Incident Management Team. In his role as southern section president of the Cal Chiefs Training Officers Association, he started a vendor show at the organization's annual training symposium in Fresno. It was there he met Hannah, an FPU admissions counselor.



For three years in a row, Albertson saw Hannah at the symposium, and each year she encouraged him to apply for FPU's M.A. in Strategic and Organizational Leadership program. The third time was a charm, and Albertson finally gave in and applied for admission.

"It was probably the Lord doing his work," Albertson says of what he now sees as divine timing. During the three-year period it took him to apply, he was promoted to battalion chief, putting him in a position to implement changes at Bakersfield Fire he wouldn't have been authorized to make earlier.

Implementing change, encouraging purpose

Albertson says his experience in the online program brought about significant change at Bakersfield Fire. He credits his professors with teaching him how to implement organizational change, develop critical thinking skills and research data. While writing his thesis on fire department succession, he studied the stressors and factors that were prompting his fire fighters to remain in that position instead of seeking promotion.

"Fire fighters aren't motivated by money, we're motivated by purpose," Albertson says, so he led the department's efforts to implement professional development practices to help his team discover their purpose. Through shortening the training process required to promote from fire fighter to engineer from

six months to two months, changing the promotion requirements and bringing in clinicians to provide counseling for post-traumatic stress injury, Albertson saw a boost in morale and an improvement in culture.

Three years after he graduated, Albertson says all the engineer positions that were empty then have been filled by firefighters who promoted. "I believe the department is in a better spot because of some of the changes we implemented," he adds.



Commitment and faith

Albertson and his wife, Tabitha, have two sons: 3-year-old Rawley and 1-year-old Roosevelt. He recalls the struggles of working full-time while completing his master's during their second pregnancy and the significance of his wife's support. "You and your family both have to commit to the process," he says, but for him, it was worth the sacrifices. "It develops you as a leader, manager and critical thinker. It's not easy, but it shouldn't be if you want to get something out of it."

Having professors with "real-world" experience helped him apply what he learned in the workplace, Albertson says, and as a life-long believer, learning it from a Christian perspective was invaluable. "It's very satisfying to go to a school that shares your values; you feel a part of something bigger," he says. "It makes you believe the Lord is still at work and doing good things in the world." 🏠



GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cristina Gonzalez (MA '25, BA '23) was hired as a school counselor for Exeter Middle School.

Darrin Person Jr. (MBA '23) hosted a basketball camp June 30-July 1, 2025, at Immanuel High School (his high school alma mater). Darrin now plays in the French basketball league, where he is his team's leading scorer.

Taylor Moore (MBA '19, BA '16) is a senior revenue analyst for Samba TV.

Michael Mori (TC '19) was appointed principal of Penngrove Elementary School starting July 1, 2025. The school is part of the Petaluma City Schools District.

Denise Burris-McKendell (BA '18) received her MFA with a 4.0 GPA from Southern New Hampshire University in December 2024 and began teaching English composition at Lemoore College (formerly West Hills College) in January 2025.

Shantay R. Davies-Balch (BA '15), founder of BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center (BWPC), is the recipient of a 2025 Leadership Award by The James Irvine Foundation. The award includes \$350,000 to further BWPC's mission.

Shawn Grieco (BA '13) was hired as head soccer coach at Buchanan High School in June 2025. He has also played for Fresno Fuego FC.

Jason Salazar (MA '13) was named president of the California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA) March 10, 2025. Jason is the chief of police in Visalia and has more than 30 years of experience there as a community service officer, patrol officer, violent crimes detective, member of S.W.A.T. and the Special Enforcement Bureau. He was a captain for four years before becoming chief in 2015. He was appointed to the CPCA Board of Directors in 2021.

Ray Eggert (FS '12) returned to FPU as head coach for the Sunbirds Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving teams in May 2025. Ray has coached at Sanger High School, where he led teams to back-to-back CMAC (County/Metro Athletic Conference) championships, and served as director of swimming at Clovis North High School. As a student-athlete, Ray served as swim team captain, helping the Sunbirds to an NAIA national championship and winning the national 400m individual medley title with a time that is still an FPU record.

A quartet of Sunbirds are among Fresno's 40 Under 40 for 2025:

- ▶ **Steven Baronian (BA '11)**, director of marketing and communications, California Autism Center & Learning Group
- ▶ **Indira Vilchez Salaverri (MBA '13, BA '12)**, marketing and communications specialist, Marjaree Mason Center
- ▶ **Marianela Borbon (BA '07)**, CEO, Uplift Balloon Events
- ▶ **Michael Manjarrez (BA '12)**, investment advisor, Whelan Financial

Dora Briseno (MA '09) and **Natasha McCullough (TC '01)** received Crystal Awards for 2024 from Clovis Unified School District. **Dora** teaches third grade at Tarpey Elementary School and **Natasha** teaches kindergarten at Riverview Elementary School. The Crystal Award is the highest honor a Clovis Unified employee can receive; recipients are nominated by their peers and selected by a panel of judges.

Ken Melban (MA '07, BA '03) was appointed president of the California Avocado Commission in May 2025. Ken has also served as director, issues management; vice president of industry affairs and operations; and co-executive leader. His previous two decades of produce leadership include working with California commodity boards and the National Grape & Wine Initiative. Throughout his career Ken has served with numerous community service organizations as well as the California Department of Food and Agriculture Climate Change Adaptation Consortium and Ventura AG Futures Alliance.

Morgan Doizaki (BA '06) has run the family-owned Central Fish Co. since he took over the 1535 Kern Street mainstay in 2003. He and his business were profiled May 4, 2025, in *The Fresno Bee*.

Jen Paul Schroer (BA '06) was profiled in the April 13, 2025, *Santa Fe New Mexican*.

Sean Hancock (BA '03) was guest speaker at the Rotary Club of Tehachapi in June 2025. Sean is president of Cerro Coso Community College.

Joanne Pacheco (BA '00), of Fresno, was appointed to the Dental Hygiene Board of California in February 2025. She has been director of the dental hygiene program at Fresno City College since 2017. She is a member of the American Dental Education Association, American Dental Hygienists' Association, California Dental Hygienists' Association and California Dental Hygiene Educators' Association.

Kimberly Vargas Agnese (BA '86) published *Kadupul Flower*, a book of original poetry, in October 2025. The collection's overriding theme is dignity, while individual entries address poverty, homelessness, racism, sexual assault and ecological justice. Kimberly lives in the Central Valley in the Meadow Arc young food forest. Her work has appeared in *Anacua Literary Arts Journal*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Rappahannock Review* and *Awakened Voices*, among others. Her first full-length collection, *Red String on a Saguaro Cactus*, was a finalist for the 2022 Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize, awarded by the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame. More at kimberlyvargasagnese.com

Steve Taylor (BA '85) retired as Rocklin (CA) High School boys' basketball coach in April 2025. The school's first basketball coach, he compiled a 499-254 record, with several league and section championships and one state championship appearance.

Rose Marie Caglia (BA '80), received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award from Who's Who in America. Rose has been a public school history and music teacher, manager of Warnors Theater in Fresno and business executive. She is a member of the Fresno Parks, Recreation and Arts Commission and is or has been involved with the San Joaquin River Parkway, the National Education Association, Hinds Hospice and the Marjaree Mason Center, among other organizations.

Rev. Richard Miles (BA '72), came out of retirement in October 2024 to pastor part-time at St. John's Episcopal Church (St. John's Chapel) in Monterey, CA. He and his wife, D'aun, now split their time between Monterey and Kenai, AK, and other places populated by grandchildren.

MARRIAGES



Faith Brunt (BA '24) married Christian Sweet August 5, 2023.



Magda Solis (BA '23) married Anthony Fengthong November 11, 2023.

BIRTHS

Levi Garcia was born June 25, 2024, to Elizabeth (Wilson TC '23, BA '21) and Seth Garcia (TC '23, BA '22). He is their first child.

Lincoln Dennis Oxford was born on February 1, 2025, to Abigail (Taylor MA '23, TC '17, BA '16) and Ryan Oxford.

Sofia Schmidt was born August 29, 2024, to Madisen (Moore MA '23, TC '23, BA '21) and Jake Schmidt (TC '15, BA '14). She is their first child.



Noami Coronado (BA '22) married Miguel Santana in October 2024 in Exeter, CA. They purchased their first home, which was to be completed in October 2025. She is in her fourth year as a preschool teacher for Central Valley Christian Schools in Visalia.



Ryanne Luchau (MA '21, BA '19) married Chandler Ball March 20, 2021.

Yadira Covarrubias (BA '22) gave birth to a baby girl, Olivia, on her birthday, October 9, 2024.

Ryanne (Luchau MA '21, BA '19) and Chandler Ball had Avery Lyn Ball June 5, 2022, and Carsyn Paige Ball May 16, 2024.



Rowen Malachi Diliberto was born to Sam (Diaz BA '21) and Nicholas Diliberto May 26, 2025. He is their first child and weighed 8 lbs., 6 oz. and was 21 inches long.



Kalene (Null BA '20) and Phata Chanthavisouk had Emmeric Wade on July 4, 2022, and Edwin James on May 14, 2024.

Baker Grace Medeles was born April 25, 2025, to Joshua (TC '20, BA '16) and Allison (TC '17, BA '16) Medeles.

DEATHS

Sandra Denham Islas (BA '04), 64, died April 15, 2025. Born April 8, 1961, to Roger Alfred Denham and Florence Ann Denham, she married Eddie Islas in 2012. Sandra graduated from Hanford High School and was in the top 5% of her class at FPU. She attended Koinonia Church and later New Beginnings Church, both in Hanford. Survivors include her husband, parents, brother Gary Denham and sister Pennie Denham; children Alfred Tamayo III, Reanna Diaz and Roman Tamayo.

Maria Fatima Milton (MA '00), 71, died May 7, 2025. Born on the island of Santa Maria in the Azores, her family immigrated to the United States when she was 10. After graduating from Hanford Union High School, she completed her B.A. from Fresno State and her M.A. from FPU. Her career took her to Kings County Office of Education, Soquel Elementary School District, Kings Canyon High School and Lemoore High School. Survivors include husband Abel Ramirez and son Tyrus Milton; sisters Natalie Fontes, Adelia Soares, Reis Soares and Madeline Medeiros Taylor; and brothers Eddie Medeiros and Adam Medeiros.

Brett Franklin Kaufmann was born June 21, 2024, to Montana (Lowe BA '17) and Steven (TC '18, BA '17) Kaufmann.

Michaela Lanie Baker was born February 9, 2025, to Erin (Baker BA '15) and Ryan Baker. Delivered eight weeks early via emergency C-section, she spent five weeks in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). She joins half-sisters Addison and Harper.

Nathan Benjamin Solis was born December 20, 2024, to Cinthia (Gordillo BA '14) and Andres Solis.



Norma Jean Zorrilla (MA '93), 91, died May 5, 2025. Norma overcame polio at 19, relearning how to talk and walk. She earned a bachelor's from Western Michigan University and an M.A. in English as a Second Language from FPU. After working in Colombia, Costa Rica, California and Spain, she taught at John Muir Elementary School, McLane High School and Older Adult Social Services (OASIS), all in Fresno. She and husband Carlos Hugo Zorilla, a former FPU faculty member, were members of Willow Avenue Mennonite Church until moving to Pennsylvania. Survivors include Hugo and children Ruth Henry (Scott), Andres Zorrilla (Amy Boydell) and Ana Zorrilla (Carlos Diaz).

Kelly Marcia Davis (MA '84) of Farmington, MN, died May 15, 2025. Born in Albany, CA, she taught in Tulare and later in the Farmington (MN) School District. She taught both special education and general education students, with a passion for sixth grade language arts. In Tulare, she married naval aviator Craig Davis, who preceded her in death. At The Well Church in Rosemount, MN, she served in numerous capacities and volunteered at the Simpson Shelter in Minneapolis. Survivors include children Ashley (Seth) Bohlken, Trey (Jessica) Davis, Trevor Davis and Averi Davis.

Oliver Chukudi Ezenwugo (FS '81-82), 65, died February 21, 2025. A native of Nigeria, he came to the U.S. in 1981 and played soccer at FPU before transferring to Fresno State. Oliver served as the manager of Universal Health Network and Systems in Fresno, providing health education and counseling, and was active in the local Nigerian community. He earned a B.A. from Fresno State, a master's degree and a Ph.D. from Northcentral University. Survivors include wife Tochi; sons Brian, Sidney, Sean and Brandy; his mother and siblings.

Samuel Michael Pack (MA '80), 75, Fresno, died March 17, 2025. Born in San Antonio, TX, he went by his middle name "Mike." He taught sixth grade at Vinland Elementary School in Fresno for 19 years, beloved for his spirit and encouragement. He was also a dedicated violinist and bodybuilder. Survivors include sister Sharon Bailey and brother Jay Pack.

Doris Jane Harder (PBI '52) died July 12, 2025. Born in Fairview, OK, she was a successful secretary and a loving housewife, mom, grandma, and a wonderful partner during husband Henry's many years of pastoring and ministry. Survivors include son John Harder (JoAnn); sister Luella Dick; brother David Karber (Elaine); and brother-in-law, Leo Franz.

Anna Rachel Enns (PBI '46), 99, Reedley, CA, died March 15, 2025. Born in Paxton, NE, her family moved to Reedley when she was about 9. Ann was part of the first graduating class of Pacific Bible Institute. She and husband David Enns ran Kings River Grocery. Survivors include son **Greg Enns (BA '73)** and his wife, **Debbie Enns (BA '74)**; grandchildren **Jennifer (Enns TC '01, BA '00)** and her husband, Phil **Ogden**, and **Julie (Enns BA '03)** and her husband, **Dana Doris (BA '03)**; and four great-grandchildren.

Susan Elaine Ludekens Cox, 70, died April 29, 2025. She was adjunct instructor in the FPU School of Business and interim director 2016-17. Susan worked in human resources with the Tulare County Planning Department, the City of Visalia, Visalia Unified School District and the County of Tulare. Survivors include husband David H. Cox and sons Phillip Ray Cox (Megan) and Stephen Robert Cox. Susan also considered **Suzana Dobric Veiss (MA, '03 BA '99), Ph.D.**, assistant professor of business, a surrogate family member, along with her husband, **Victor Veiss (MA '04)** and their children.

Alumni couples return for diamond anniversary

Six couples, and friends, from the class of 1965 returned to the main campus for a 60th reunion June 14, 2025. The dozen were part of a group of 16 students—nearly a fifth of the entire 1965 student body of what was then Pacific College—who served in one another's weddings shortly after graduation. Their graduation year was also the year Pacific was first accredited as a college.

While group members stayed in touch over the years, the next time they were all together was for a 50th reunion in June 2015.

Galen and Jonell (Guenther) Harms

Galen was a teacher and school administrator and Jonell was a registered nurse.

Paul and Judy (Garner) Neufeld

Paul was a general contractor and founder of a Christian school, and Judy taught elementary school.

Garry and Lois (Bartel) Schmidt

Garry worked in special education and Lois was an elementary teacher. Both were also missionaries.

Roy and Paula (Payne) Klassen

Roy was a music professor at FPU for over 30 years, and Paula was an elementary school teacher.

Gene and Geri (Martens) Sperling

Gene was associate pastor at New Hope Community Church, Clovis, and Geri was a medical receptionist.

Lloyd and Mary (Neufeld) Gardner

Lloyd was a junior high and high school teacher, coach and pastor while Mary was an executive secretary for schools and medical facilities.

Your Central Valley (KSEE 24 NBC/KGPE 47 CBS) reported on the event: yourcentralvalley.com/news/local-news/fresno-couples-60th-wedding-anniversary 🏠



(from left, husbands standing behind wives): Galen and Jonell Harms, Paul and Judy Neufeld, Garry and Lois Schmidt, Roy and Paula Klassen, Gene and Geri Sperling, Lloyd and Mary Gardner. (FPU photo)

SOLVE a Mystery and SPARK a Memory



Welcome to *Pacific's* newest feature!

Take a look at these vintage photographs from deep within the vaults of Fresno Pacific, Pacific College and Pacific Bible Institute. See anyone you know—maybe your mom or dad? Were you present for any of these adventures?

If you know anything about these photos, or if they spark a memory of Sunbirds or Vikings past, please share by scanning the QR code, or follow the link fpu.edu/mystery. We will highlight some of the responses in the next issue of *Pacific*.



RESPONSE FROM LAST ISSUE



Submitted by: Enslow McSweeney

I glanced quickly at the pictures and immediately thought I recognized the guy in the front of the boat. I verified with my husband when he got home from work, and he agreed that it was him. He believes it was taken during a freshmen orientation activity in September of 1972 at Hume Lake! Tom McSweeney has gone by the nickname of Mac since the end of his college days. He graduated in 1976. We met in a marriage and family class where we were assigned to be “married” as part of a class project. I graduated in 1978 from Fresno Pacific, and we have just celebrated 47 years of actual marriage.

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



New Members of the Flock

Recently had a baby? Let us know—we'd love to send you one of our cute little Born to Soar baby t-shirts, like the one pictured here.





GREEN & BENSON

top national academic and athletic podiums

By Katie Fries

Brianna Green and Tatum Benson are fueled by the same drive to excel academically as well as athletically.

Both Sunbirds have been named to the Academic All-America Second Team by College Sports Communicators. The award recognizes students who maintain a minimum GPA of 3.50 while also competing in a majority of their sport's meets or games. Green was named to the Women's Track and Field/Cross Country team, while Benson was named to the Women's at Large team for her participation in water polo.

Discovering scholarship

The pair chose FPU for the opportunity to participate in sports, neither initially seeing themselves as a scholar.

"My first year was rough," says Green, who transferred from College of the Redwoods. "I was balancing all my classes and the homework. I struggled a bit, but my teammates helped me stay on top of things; my head coach said that if I needed help with academics, he would definitely help me."

Benson, for her part, admits her high school grades "weren't that impressive." A friend and

teammate, **Rosemary Chapman (BS '23)**, helped shift her perspective. "Rose is probably one of the best students you will ever meet," she says. "She inspired me to give a little more effort towards my academic work, and as a result my grades improved. I realized that I would get a lot more out of my degree if I went a little beyond the requirements and challenged myself."

And challenge herself, she did. After receiving her bachelor's degree in 2023, Benson remained at FPU for her master's. She graduated in May with a 4.0 grade point average.

Both Green and Benson overcame physical challenges as

"I felt it was partially my responsibility to uphold the FPU track and field culture."

—Brianna Green



fledgling Sunbirds. Green spent part of her first season injured; she says it took some time to figure out which events she excelled in. Benson struggled with limited lung function due to area wildfires, and also tore the labra in both shoulders, which required intense physical therapy to manage.

Despite those setbacks, FPU provided space for them to spread their wings—as academics, as athletes and as leaders.

Overcoming uncertainty

Green, who says she went through a period of uncertainty as she struggled to overcome her injuries and find her place on the track team, says coaches Ray Winter and Robert Foster encouraged her to be a team leader, a role that didn't come naturally. "I can be shy and timid," she says, "but Coach Ray said that he sees the Fresno Pacific track and field culture in me, the aspects of a leader. With [others] leaving, I felt it was partially my responsibility to uphold the FPU track and field culture, so new people don't feel lost or left out or scared."

"Every place you turn at Fresno Pacific, you are encouraged to take part in something that gives you the opportunity to serve others," adds Benson. "The university's programs prepare you to be a servant leader wherever you find yourself in life. The call to serve others will forever be engrained in my mindset. This summer, I volunteered to be the logistics coordinator for an event at my church, which I felt prepared to do because of the experience I gained at Fresno Pacific." 



Flourishing through mentorship

By Christopher L. Scott

The fast-paced life at Fresno Pacific University often brings new challenges to incoming freshmen, but Gavyn Cirricione was able to flourish due to help from a mentor.

Gavyn's mentor was Jordan Greynolds, discipleship and outreach coordinator in the Office of Spiritual Formation and the main leader of Fellowship, an FPU-based group with the goal of helping young men grow in their faith. "He took me under his wing," says Gavyn. "He helped me grow in my understanding of God and was there for me when I had questions." Most important, Gavyn often prays with Jordan, helping him through difficult times of stress, distraction and busyness.

"It's been a pleasure getting to do ministry with Gavyn," Jordan says. "He has a heart for reaching others with the Good News of Jesus and he carries himself in such a way that all who encounter him encounter the love, care and patience of Jesus. It's an honor to get to pour into him because you know that when you do, your efforts will be multiplied by all those he is going to pour into as well."

While being guided Gavyn is also guiding others, becoming a peer mentor his sophomore year. "Freshman year of college is not easy at all and can be scary, so I want to be able to be there for freshmen and help them in any way I can," he says.

Gavyn enjoys being a mentor because of the positive influence he can have on the lives of others.



"I can be a light and example to them for God. He put me on this earth and gave me this opportunity for a reason, so I want to glorify him through my mentoring and show the freshmen that Jesus is the only way," he says, "I was a freshman once in their position, so I feel like I have experience that can help guide them through their first year of college."

As Gavyn reflects on his work with new students, he says: "So far, I have seen growth in those I mentor, and it has been fun to be by their side as they figure out their way through their different journeys." Gavyn enjoys mentoring others and wants to continue to serve other students just like Jordan Greynolds helped him. 

EDITOR'S NOTE

Do you know a student who has been transformed at FPU? Contact Michael Hammond at michael.hammond@fresno.edu

New fund enables real-time response

In 2024, Al and Dotty Warkentine generously provided the seed gift to establish the President's Discretionary Endowment at FPU. Their vision created a fund designed to help advance the university's mission.

Ultimately, the President's Discretionary Endowment is an investment. "It is a vote of confidence in leadership and ensures the university can remain agile, relevant and prepared to lead for generations to come," said Matt Mazzoni, major gift officer.

This endowment will enable FPU to:

- ▶ **Seize opportunities** – launch bold initiatives, attract exceptional faculty and support scholarly research
- ▶ **Address urgent needs** – support unexpected priorities that arise in the fast-changing higher education landscape
- ▶ **Fuel innovation** – pilot new programs, renovate learning spaces and launch transformative student initiatives
- ▶ **Provide a safety net for students** – manage crises such as medical emergencies, natural disasters or economic hardship

"This fund allows us to respond in real time to the needs of our students," Mazzoni said. "Contributing to this endowment directly strengthens the lives and futures of students."

Anyone can contribute to the fund goal of \$1 million. Every gift—no matter the size—builds a permanent fund the president can use to benefit students and the university.

For more information,
contact Matt Mazzoni
at 559-453-3613. 



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Real Estate – You can donate property outright for tax savings or create a life estate which gives you a tax deduction today while you retain the right to live in it for life.



Give Appreciated Stock – FPU receives the present value of the stock, while you pay no capital gains tax and receive an income tax deduction.



Charitable Gift Annuity – Create income and possible capital gains benefits, while receiving fixed payments for life.



Charitable IRA Rollover – Pay no income tax on the immediate transfer. You may fund a Charitable Gift Annuity or Trust from your IRA (once in a lifetime).



Charitable Remainder Unitrust – You choose who and what the trust pays, and how long it will last, while leaving a legacy for Christian higher education.



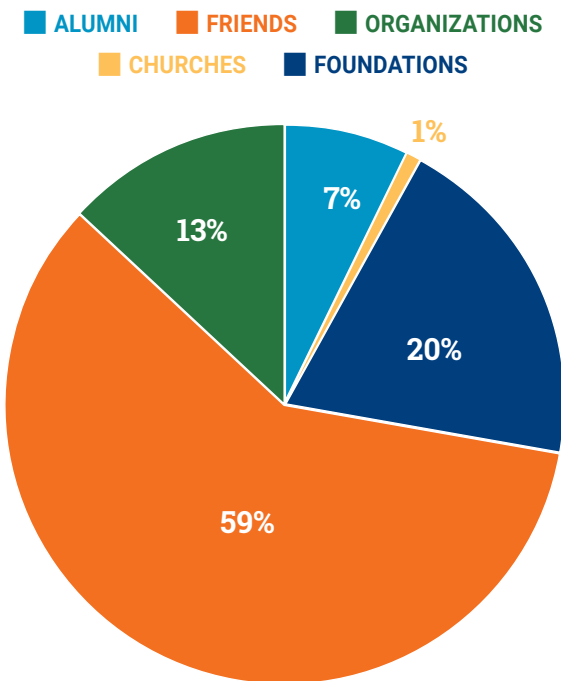
Your Estate – Let us help you create or update your estate plan—and unlock a legacy that blesses students for generations.



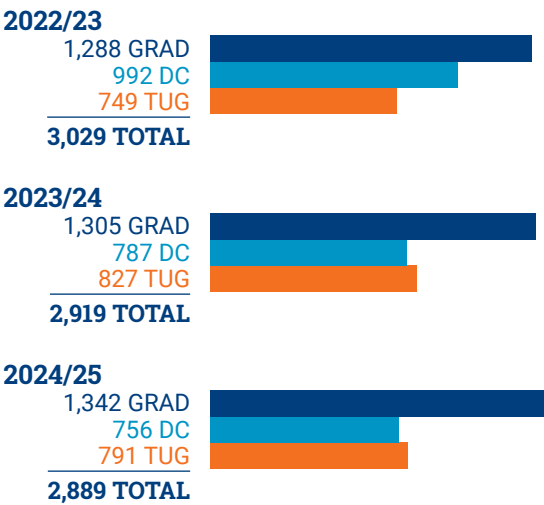
For more information on setting up your own gift annuity, charitable remainder trust or other planned giving strategy through Fresno Pacific University, contact Vice President/Executive Director Liz Garvin or Director of FPU Foundation Development and Legacy Gifts Steven Redekop.

elizabeth.garvin@fresno.edu | 559-453-3485
steven.redekop@fresno.edu | 559-453-3451

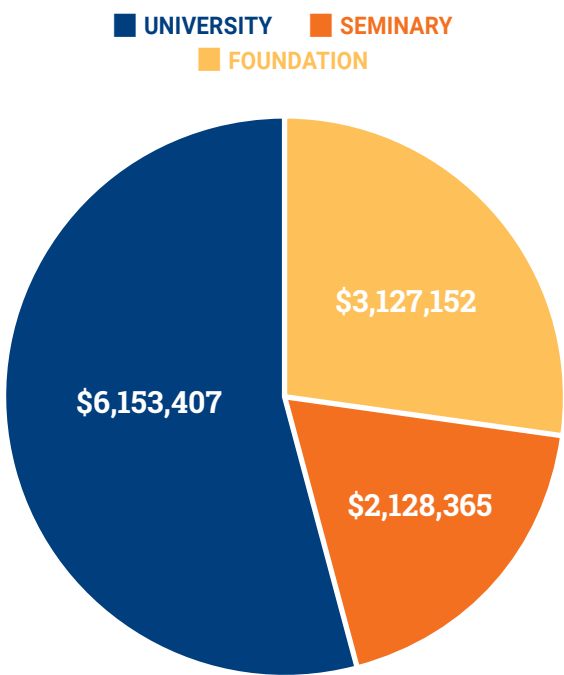
GIFTS BY DONOR GROUP



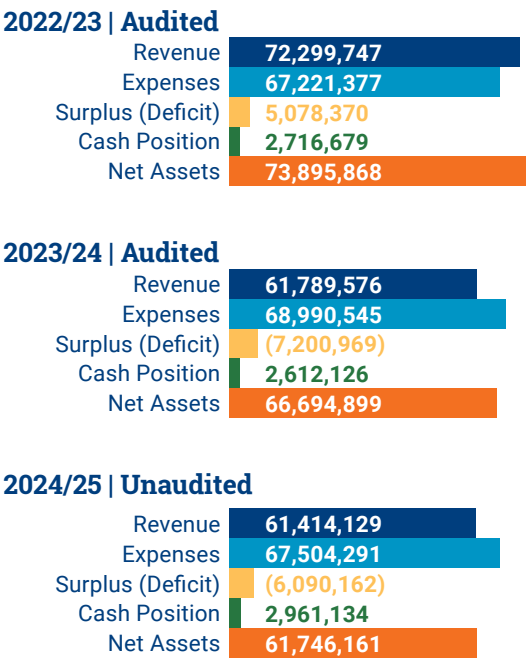
ENROLLMENT



2024-25 GIVING SUMMARY



REVENUE & EXPENSES



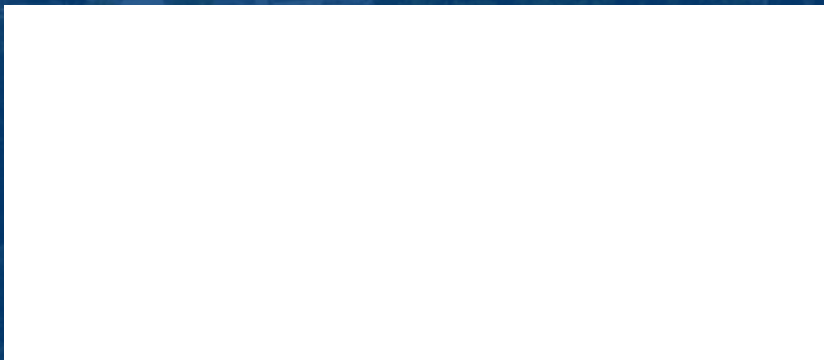
Fresno Pacific University Consolidated Financial Information.
The above numbers include operating and non-operating activities
for Fresno Pacific University, FPU Foundation, MBBS-US Inc.



1717 S. Chestnut Ave.
Fresno, CA 93702-4709

Parents of Alumni:

If your son or daughter no longer maintains a permanent address at your home, please notify the Alumni Office of their new mailing address by emailing alumni@fresno.edu. Thank you.



ONE DAY. ONE MISSION. ONE FPU.

Be part of a story where education changes everything.

Giving Tuesday 12/02/25

Your generosity empowers students to pursue their calling.

- ▶ Make a gift
- ▶ Share on social media
- ▶ Invite others to give
- ▶ Each act of generosity moves the story forward

“Receiving a scholarship has been a tremendous blessing. It has alleviated financial burdens and allowed me to focus on my education.”

– Sean Nealon Lino

fpu.edu/givingtuesday