

# PACIFIC

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY | VOL. 34, NO. 1

## ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURS

Creatively connecting commerce  
and the community





## president's message

### BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

**“ They are proof that we can be light in our communities by how we manage and grow our businesses.”**

— Joseph Jones, Ph.D.

Over the years I have developed an appreciation for those with the entrepreneurial spirit. These are individuals who step out of comfort zones, risking failure while seeking better stewardship of the gifts and opportunities afforded by God. We read much in the parables of Jesus about the wise and faithful stewards who multiply the talents given to them. Our Lord seems to expect to see not only his word multiply fruit in our lives, but also a faithfulness in multiplying the unique talents given to those who follow him.

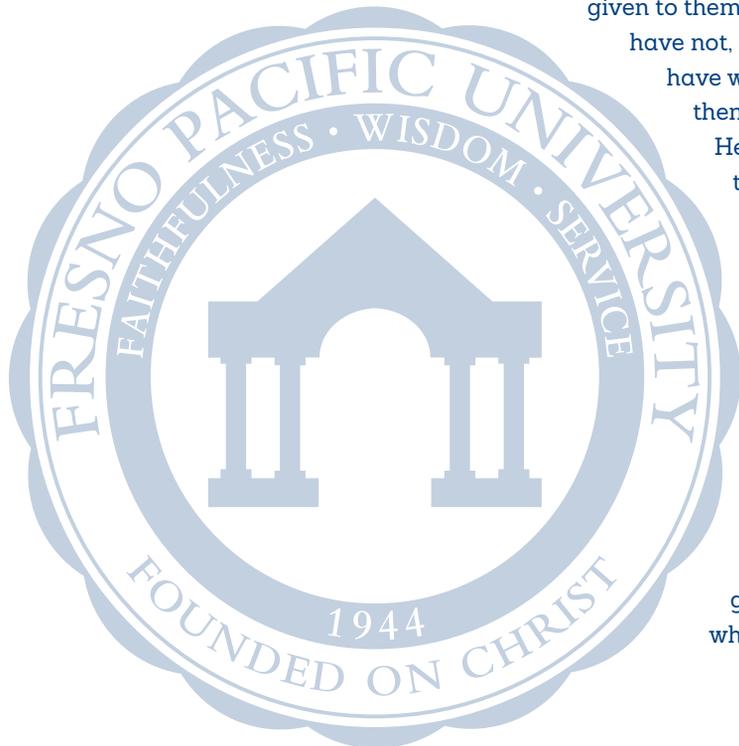
Jesus also espouses a wisdom that can sometimes be puzzling: “those that have, more will be given to them, and those that have not, that which they have will be taken from them (Luke 12:48).”

He communicates this truth in several instances to arouse the listener to appreciate what they have. Life's lenses are often clouded with presumed lack, perceived deficits and looming obstacles. We become blind to the gracious gifts with which God endows

each of us because our eyes are filled with want.

Both my daughters are very successful small business owners with business degrees from a Christian college. Their husbands are also Christian college graduates with MBAs—one a banker, the other a venture capitalist. Yvette and I listen, advise and pray for their wisdom and stewardship because that is the measure of their success, not the amount of money they acquire or the recognition they are afforded. They are blessed with both, but their faith and focus is to honor God with their work and recognize their partnership with God as servants of Jesus Christ.

This issue of *Pacific* features some of our graduates who recognize the importance of integrating their faith into their entrepreneurial ventures. Their success is not defined by world standards but is based on how well they serve others. These are individuals who have each integrated the call of greatness in the kingdom by expanding their service to many. This service is governed by principles of faith that guide their lives. They are proof that we can be light in our communities by how we manage and grow our businesses. 



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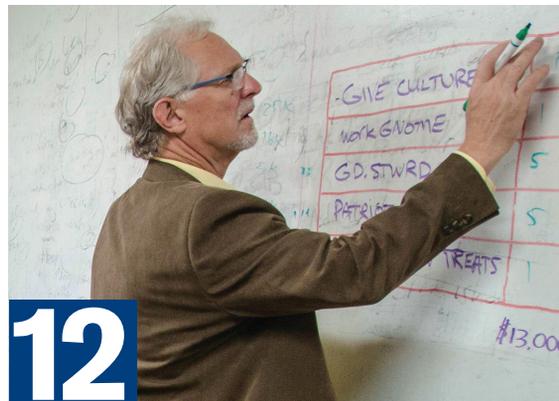
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Fresno Pacific University develops students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education.



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Pacific is sent to alumni and friends of Fresno Pacific University and to members of the Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches.



## “The Arts at FPU” drew fond memories

I sure enjoyed the article and picture (1962-1987) about theater productions (*Brigadoon*) in your last *Pacific* magazine. I was a music student at the time and was part of the *Brigadoon* production. Gary Unruh was an excellent professor who charted new waters. We also performed *Oklahoma!*, followed by *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. Yours truly was *Daniel Webster*—what fun. Some of these events were performed two-three nights with great audiences. Thanks for the memory and article.

**Glen Zimmerman, B.A. '68, Dinuba**

Thank you so much for the wonderful articles in the latest issue of *Pacific* magazine. I have such a long history with *Pacific*, from new college on a sparse campus, to university with a verdant campus.

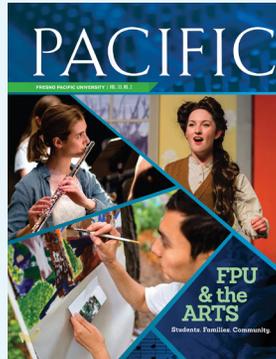
My dad (Donald Braun, emeritus chemistry) started as a science professor at *Pacific* before I was even born in 1959. I can remember seeing *Brigadoon* in the brand new amphitheater in 1966 (I was all of 7 years old). I also have a funny memory of the faculty doing *Fractured Fairy Tales* in the 1960s (Edmund Janzen was hilarious!). I have fond memories of *The Mikado*, *HMS Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance* (the Gilbert and Sullivan period at *Pacific*) and *Fiddler on the Roof*. I think I always got a crush on the lead actor!

Then I became a student in 1976, and I entered the world of *Pacific* fine arts. I was a member of the Concert Choir, under the leadership of Roy Klassen, from 1977-1980. We toured to the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia in 1978, and I was privileged to tour Europe with the choir in the summer of 1980.

Concert Choir was one of the huge highlights of my time at *Pacific*. Roy Klassen was an incredible director. Singing so closely—physically, emotionally and spiritually—with others is a transformative experience! Thanks,

**Denise Braun-Frodsham, B.A. '80, Fresno** 

**Culture and Arts Center update pg. 34**



## Retirees Came for Different Reasons, but Stayed to Benefit FPU

### Terry Brensinger

Terry Brensinger, Ph.D., learned of FPU when a job description popped up during an internet search at a Toronto pastor's conference. "I read over it and sent it to my wife as a lark," he says.

That impulse became a call and Brensinger started as professor of pastoral ministry at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, part-time in 2011 and full-time the next year. "I was passionate about it," he says.

Brensinger had already taught at Messiah College, pastored churches, written or edited four books and trained pastors worldwide. The Allentown, PA, native grew up in Brethren in Christ and Methodist congregations and was inspired by professors at Messiah College and Asbury Theological Seminary. In seminary "I took Hebrew in an intensive six-week course and I knew what I wanted to do after that," Brensinger adds.

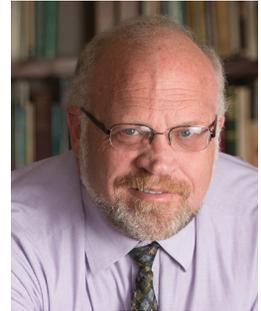
Colleagues and a wide circle of donors are Brensinger's best memories of the seminary, where he was president (and vice president of FPU) from 2013-18. "They were an amazing group of people," he adds.

Even before retiring in December 2020, he and wife Debra moved to Maui while he taught online. The couple will return to Fresno as Brensinger sets up a nonprofit. A fifth book is in the works, and he plans to join Debra as a spiritual director to seminary students.

### Karen Cianci

Connections are important to Karen Cianci, Ph.D., and one led her to FPU. "I was recruited by my friend and mentor, former Provost, Dr. Herma Williams. I was attracted and stayed because of the rich diversity and chance to have a significant influence on growing the sciences," says Cianci, who will retire as dean of the School of Natural Sciences in July 2021 after 13 years.

Cafeteria conversations are something Cianci will take with her. "The food was good, sometimes very good, but the memory is richest for sharing the table with all





kinds of wonderful folk outside of my normal working circle,” she says. Other highlights include student trips to Iceland, China and Vietnam.

Growing up in rural upstate New York, Cianci loved nature and science and was captured by neuroscience. “The brain and its function seemed to bring all

the mysteries of life and reality together,” she says.

For the future, she and husband Terry hope to tour the U.S. and Canada in their RV and travel more broadly. She will also keep volunteering with Bridge2College.

“It has been my honor to have been called to serve at FPU,” Cianci says. “I am grateful for the wonderful colleagues I have in the School of Natural Science and the friends across the faculty, staff and students.”

### Sharon Merritt

The normal path would not have led Sharon Merritt, Ph.D., to FPU in 2013. As she plans to retire in June 2021 as associate professor and education director of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, she’s glad she strayed.

The Sacramento native came to the university after teaching composition at Santa Clara University. She had finished her Ph.D. in Language, Literacy and Culture in 2012, and her direction was changing. “I decided not to follow the traditional route of composition studies, but follow multilingualism and especially ‘dual language,’” she says.

Fortunately, she had reconnected with Linda Hoff, Ph.D., while the head of the Teacher Education Program Division was planning FPU’s MAT program. In the 1980s, the Merritt and Hoff families attended church together in San Jose. “It was a God-appointed thing,” Merritt says.



Merritt’s warmest recollections center on students. “I always enjoy seeing my students complete their degree and get hooded,” she says. She’s also proud of a trip to Finland and Estonia to learn about education systems there and being part of the presidential search committee for Joseph Jones, Ph.D.

Going forward, Merritt will teach as an adjunct and mentor student teachers, while continuing as president of the California Association for Bilingual Teacher Education (CABTE). “It’s been a pleasure and privilege to be part of the FPU community,” she says. 🏠

## Scholarship Honors the Life of Billie Jean Wiebe



The Fresno Pacific University community gathered virtually January 21, 2021, for a service celebrating Billie Jean Wiebe, Ph.D., associate professor of communication and English and director of the communication program.

She died Wednesday, December 23, 2020, at her home in Clovis.

The service, which included memories, music and poetry, can be seen at [fpu.edu/341-Memorial](https://fpu.edu/341-Memorial)

To honor her legacy, the university created the Billie Jean Wiebe Memorial Scholarship to assist qualified students working toward a B.A. in either communication or English. Donations can be made online at [fpu.edu/341-Donate](https://fpu.edu/341-Donate) or by check to University Advancement, Fresno Pacific University, 1717 S. Chestnut Avenue, Fresno, CA 93702-4709.

Born Billie Jean Utting in Hillsboro, KS, December 27, 1951, she graduated from Fresno Pacific College in 1974 and married **Richard Wiebe (BA '74)** that same year. Richard, who taught philosophy at FPU for many years, survives, along with Billie Jean’s siblings Stan Utting (Kathy) and Mary Booker.

Billie Jean earned an M.A. from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University. She returned to FPU in 1992 after teaching at Immanuel High School, Reedley, and was a favorite among students and a respected voice among the faculty. 🏠

# ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURS

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott



**At Fresno Pacific University, Will Dyck (BA '97) built a foundation for a successful career in development, construction and leasing.**

As president of Summa Development Group he has cultivated a reputation as one of downtown Fresno's most passionate revitalization advocates. Dyck traces that professional success, and an abiding sense of giving back, to his Christian higher education.

"Fresno Pacific gave me the building blocks to be successful—it gave me the building blocks of a spiritual foundation that guides decision-making, ethics and honesty as well as an academic background of how to be a good decision-maker," Dyck says.

These sentiments are shared by thousands of FPU graduates carving out thriving careers across the professional spectrum. Alumni entrepreneurs and business owners—like those profiled here—bring more than academics to their professional lives.

**“Fresno Pacific gave me the building blocks to be successful—it gave me the building blocks of a spiritual foundation that guides decision-making, ethics and honesty as well as an academic background of how to be a good decision-maker.”**

— Will Dyck (BA '97)

**SUMMA**  
DEVELOPMENT GROUP



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FROM ALUMNI  
ENTREPRENEURS**

Check out Alumni eNews!  
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# MAKING THEIR MARK

Dyck's parents—both doctors—often joked that they wouldn't push him down any career path. "They said that I could be any kind of doctor that I wanted to be," he remembers with humor in his voice.

Medicine might have been his future, until FPU business professor Peng Wen, Ph.D., urged him to pursue an obvious talent in business. After finishing his bachelor's in pre-health sciences, Dyck earned an MBA from the University of Southern California. "I have more joy and happiness in my life with my career choice than I could ever imagine," he says. "I wake up every day energized and ready for the next challenge. I love it."

Dyck founded Summa Development in 1999, the name a reference to graduating summa cum laude from Fresno Pacific. Part of the company's work is developing and leasing buildings to state and federal agencies. This includes reviving vacant or abandoned historic downtown buildings, such as the old Hotel Virginia and structures along Warehouse Row. Summa has also partnered with Bitwise Industries, Fresno's homegrown technology and innovation hub.

His connection to the community, illustrated by Dyck's work in revitalizing the city's core, is personal. He is the father of three daughters and a member of FPU's Board of Trustees.

"Every alum needs to find their own mission, but the Fresno Pacific community as a whole needs to continue engaging," he says. "The university has the opportunity to transform not just the neighborhood it lives in, but also by producing people that can infiltrate every part of Fresno and every community."

**Before 2009, moving was a "side hustle" for Carlos Torres (BA '19), who didn't even own a dolly when he started.**

"[The client] didn't say 'well done' on my first job but they did say thank you," he recalls.



Today, Well Done Moving Inc. is a growing Fresno-based business. Torres, who founded the company 12 years ago, oversees 15 employees and thinks of his FPU education as the backbone of his success.

"I always knew that business was more than the bottom line, and Fresno Pacific underscored that," says Torres. "We contribute socially and environmentally and that is equally important."

Torres, who earned his degree in business administration, chose FPU because of its Christian

**“Being able to use the business in a way where it can impact change in the community is important to me. That’s one of the top principles that I learned at Fresno Pacific.”**

— Carlos Torres (BA '19)

roots and the opportunity to learn how to combine faith and business. “I remember on my first day of class, our professor opened up with a Scripture reading and then tied it into the lesson,” he says. “It made me hungry to learn more about the Bible and figure out how to apply that to my business.” He was also impressed when a

professor handed out her personal cell phone number on the first day of class.

While COVID-19 has brought face masks, temperature checks and extra sanitizing procedures—these challenges haven’t distracted Torres from his goals. Success is counted in environmental and social contributions as well as dollars and cents. For example, a program that allows struggling families to pay only what they can afford to move is another response to the pandemic. The company also helps families move into Habitat for Humanity homes, and trucks gear for Ronald McDonald House events.





## Josh Bergman (BA '96) makes his living from the cycle of almonds.

The marketing graduate farms about 250 acres of almonds near Visalia with wife **Michelle (Cummings, MA '01, TC '95, BA '94)**, and another 1,500 acres or so for other owners. He also sells trees for Sierra Gold Nurseries—his first job out of college—and is a field representative for Supreme Almonds of California.

"I wear a lot of hats, but they're all related," he says. "I love the almond industry."

Josh relies on communication, networking and competitiveness, skills he honed as a student and basketball player at FPU. It's also where he met Michelle, who was preparing to be a teacher. "Fresno Pacific was very well-respected in the liberal arts and I felt like that really gave me an advantage," says Michelle.

Both Bergmans grew up in the Central Valley and in the Mennonite Brethren faith. Josh and Michelle, who

also farm cherries and operate a fruit stand with their four children, graduated with an enduring belief in community and mission.

"Our mission is basically everyone who comes into contact with us," he says. Their service includes helping plant the Pipeline Church and staying active in their children's school. "Our parents were involved in church and in leadership and we're trying to pass that along to our kids," says Josh.

He believes his career is helped by a family legacy of kindness and generosity. "It's amazing to this day how people will tell me stories of my father or my grandfather," Josh says. "It makes me realize how I act and what I do and how it's going to impact my kids and my grandkids someday."

That's also meaningful for the larger FPU family, he says. "It's important that we pass this on."

**At 21, Sheila (Kamps, BA '04) Frowsing launched her insurance agency with a dose of courage, a financial assist from her parents, and her lessons from Fresno Pacific.**

Those lessons “gave me the tools to run a business,” says the business administration graduate. “I knew I was equipped to do this.”

Today, the Sheila R. Kamps Insurance Agency (which carries her maiden name) specializes in Farmers Insurance, has six employees and is a place with values. “I wasn’t put on this world to be a really good insurance agent—although I would like to do that—but that’s not why I’m here,” Frowsing says.

When clients say they appreciate her attentiveness, “I feel like even if I didn’t communicate the Lord to them, I’m still communicating the Lord,” she says.

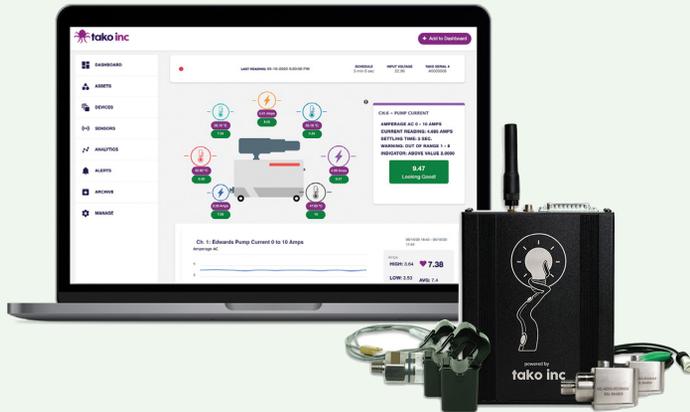
Frowsing came to FPU from the small town of Ripon. She played basketball with her two sisters and threw for the track team. “Being at Fresno Pacific just exposed me to more diversity,” she says. “It strengthened my values and my own thoughts, and also strengthened my ability to love our neighbor in ways that I had never been challenged to do.”

Service projects like painting curbs or working in kids’ camps opened her eyes to the value of hands-on service. Now, she and her husband, Nathan, (they have three children) are active at the Well Community Church, and volunteer with Rescue the Children at the Fresno Rescue Mission.

That program, which helps turn around the lives of homeless women and their children, “is where we have kind of planted our flag,” Frowsing says. “It’s a blessing to us probably more than it is to them at this point.”

**“I knew I was equipped to do this. (Being at FPU) strengthened my values and my own thoughts, and also strengthened my ability to love our neighbor in ways that I had never been challenged to do.”**

— Sheila (Kamps, BA '04) Frowsing



## Driving home with his father from a job around 3:00 a.m., Alex Beam (BA '17) thought there had to be a better way.

The urgent trip to Southern California was to repair a vacuum pump for one of his father's clients. Anticipating the problem might have spared father and son that late-night drive (and many others).

That thought gave birth to Tako Inc., which creates remote monitoring systems semiconductor companies use to head off problems in manufacturing equipment. It's something like a home thermostat controlled through a cell phone.

With his father, Andy, Beam founded Tako in 2017. A communication major at FPU, he had been looking toward a career in media production when the business idea altered his path.

"Fresno Pacific definitely taught me the value of working hard, of putting your head down and getting the job done," Beam says. Classes pushed him to think dynamically and creatively—skills he taps to run the Patterson-based company.

Just as important is the spiritual grounding offered by FPU, which Beam understands as meaning a person's days belong not to them but to God. "Living in your 24 hours—that is your mission," he says, "you'd better steward that time as best you can."

Beam's mission includes working to uplift the community, and in business, especially during these COVID-19 times, that starts with Tako's seven employees. "We want to make sure that the folks working for us are well taken care of, that they're able to bring home a decent paycheck, that they are able to pay their bills and stay safe," Beam says. "That's where we want to put our focus."



## United in faith and their FPU experience, graduates like these are finding ways to build up the Valley with a message of hope and service.

Fresno Pacific remains a critical part of creating opportunities and business partnerships aimed at growth, innovation and prosperity. These graduates recognize the university is much more than an educational institution.

"It's a family, it's a lifestyle and it is much more than that," says Dyck of Summa Development. "It is a service organization in its own right."

Fresno Pacific trains people to be productive members of society as well as experts in their discipline. "And that translates to everybody's mission, because you have a mission regardless of where you are or what you do," Dyck says. 🏠



## CHECK OUT

Our list of alumni business owners at [fpu.edu/alumnibusiness](https://fpu.edu/alumnibusiness)



By Doug Hoagland

# BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

## FPU-Businesses Unite to Benefit Valley

*Jeff Merritt (BS '11) drove his blue Chevy pickup past the vineyards in the rich San Joaquin Valley soil, bound for another farm to help its owner maximize groundwater and satisfy new state regulations. With roots in farming and a degree in chemistry, Merritt started a company in 2016 that produces fertilizer that unlocks soil nutrients with less irrigation.*



"I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit," says Merritt, who at eight years old operated a tractor on his family's ranch and at 16 took charge of his own acreage. "My goal is to help farmers save money and produce more per acre."

His enterprise showcases a commitment by FPU to strengthen the region's economy that plays out on several fronts:

- ▲ **Graduates start businesses** that provide opportunities for growth, innovation and prosperity.
- ▲ **The university's Center for Community Transformation (CCT) helps entrepreneurs** launch small companies that are the engines of job creation.
- ▲ **Faculty members partner with local businesses** for employee training and advancement to increase family and community stability. "Fresno Pacific faculty equip graduates with the skills and mindset necessary to be change-makers who foster hope and help build a better future for the Valley," says Katie Fleener, Ph.D., dean of the School of Business.

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC BALANCE

Small businesses are vital to broaden the Valley's economic base. "Agriculture is our foundational industry, but it goes through cycles, and we have to balance that out with a vibrant entrepreneurial economy," says **Rich Mostert (BA '01)**. An adjunct faculty member, Mostert directs the Valley Community Small Business Development Center, a partner of the federal Small Business Administration. "We took a hit during the pandemic, but we're beginning to see a resurgence of small business development," he says.

One new business owner is **Maria Eliza Mejia-Ng (MA '17, BA '15)**, who started Radiant Valley Interpreting in Dinuba in 2020, providing interpreting services in English and Spanish in medical, legal and religious settings. The need in the Valley's large Hispanic

population is high, Mejia-Ng says. "We have a lot of first-generation parents and grandparents who work and don't have time to study English in school. It's a blessing to be a bridge that connects cultures." Mejia-Ng displayed an entrepreneurial spirit at FPU, starting College Minions, which she still operates, employing 15 college and high school students as servers at catered events. "It's a great way to empower and teach young people the responsibility of adulthood," she says.

**“The unemployment crisis has generated the need for people to develop alternative sources of revenue for their families.”**

— Randy White, D. Min., Executive Director, CCT

## CENTER FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Meanwhile, Launch Central Valley—a CCT initiative begun in 2020—will assist more than 300 Valley entrepreneurs to get businesses thriving over the next five years, financed by nearly \$1 million from the Lilly Endowment. "The unemployment crisis has generated the need for people to develop alternative sources of revenue for their families," says Randy White, D.Min., executive director of CCT, and associate professor at FPU. "Launch Central Valley provides a micro-enterprise solution for people in need, and the mentoring to pull it off," he says. Participants in the first cohort launched eight new micro-businesses, and the next cohort quickly filled up with others eager to do the same.

Tabitha Sullivan, who started Tab's Bookkeeping in 2020 in Fresno, was in the first cohort. She found it most helpful to learn about marketing, which is vital to success but something she knew little about. "The networking in the cohort was big for me, too," Sullivan says. "You could say, 'I'm struggling with an issue right now,' and you knew the others were dealing with it, too, had dealt with it or would deal with it in the future. It definitely built my confidence."



### CCT boosts the Valley’s economy by:

- ▲ **Helping** more than 50 social enterprises address social problems with business principles.
- ▲ **Training** more than 100 Faith & Finances facilitators to help families stabilize finances.
- ▲ **Training** Work Life curriculum facilitators to teach employment skills.

### FPU REACHES OUT

Fresno Pacific is committed to establishing partnerships with community industries that maximize the benefit for businesses. “Whether it’s long-range or tax planning, workforce education or attracting the right talent, we’re here to help,” says Steven Redekop,

director of foundation development and legacy gifts. In addition, a team of advancement and marketing/communications staff is working with the School of Business to produce short videos on tips and advice for companies and business professionals. This “Business Insights” program also includes roundtables and workshops (see pg. 19).

Meanwhile, two assistant business professors—**Sharon Starcher, D.B.A. (MA '07, BA '99)**, and Michelle Bradford, Psy.D.—provided employee training earlier this year at LiDestri Foods’ manufacturing plant in Fresno. Select employees interested in supervisor jobs participated in eight virtual sessions. Role-playing exercises by Starcher and Bradford portrayed a realistic preview of what managers deal with from employees and peers, says Ron Benedicto, LiDestri’s human resources manager. The virtual sessions allowed employees to

experience online education and see its benefits. The underlying message: “Go to school. Get an education. It’s cool,” Benedicto says. “Maybe it will inspire our folks to take the next step and get their college degrees.”

“Hearing about people from the training getting promotions and other opportunities is rewarding. We’re thankful to work with a company that places a high value on promoting from within,” Starcher says. Bradford adds: “It is a blessing to know that the information we shared was immediately applicable to the workplace environment and supported LiDestri’s vision of employee advancement.”

## ‘TRUE VALUE’

Merritt, who produces the new fertilizer, graduated from FPU intending to attend pharmacy school. But his entrepreneurial spirit led him instead to become his own

boss. “When you own the company, you get paid your true value,” he says. His firm, Axiom Ag in Reedley, CA, has three employees and works with three independent contractors, creating jobs while meeting a local need. “In developing my product, I took what I understood about chemistry and biology to fill a hole in the farm economy,” Merritt says.

At 16, Merritt learned about that economy in a hands-on way. His grandfather gave him total responsibility for 20 acres of stone fruit: fertilizing, spraying, hiring crews and more. The grandfather promised to split the profit at harvest, and a wiser young man collected his share at the end of the season. “I never worked so hard in my life for \$3,000,” Merritt says.

A future Fresno Pacific entrepreneur had taken a big step. 🏠

“It is a blessing to know that the information we shared was immediately applicable to the workplace environment and supported LiDestri’s vision of employee advancement”.

— Michelle Bradford, Psy.D.



# FIRST STEPS TO SUCCESS

By Doug Hoagland

**Career prep offers taste  
of the real world**

**Akio Lopez (BA '20) took a deep  
breath and focused on what was  
about to happen in the Career  
Development and Experiential  
Learning Center at Fresno  
Pacific University.**

He walked into the interview room and shook hands with the woman from the accounting firm. Lopez handed her a one-page resume and waited for the classic opening: “Tell me about yourself.”

Lopez spoke about his goal of becoming a certified public accountant. Yes, he said, he had setbacks in college, but persevered. Lopez’s confidence grew as he leaned into the university’s commitment to helping students navigate the journey from classroom to career. “Everything about my education began to feel real,” Lopez recalls. “College had been a long road, but that day I felt like things were finally falling into place. My hard work was finally paying off. That’s why the interview was so important to me.”

At FPU, business majors like Lopez benefit from classroom experiences, internships and career development services as they build their futures. “A key goal for the School of Business is to ensure graduates are prepared for the important roles they will play in their communities,” says Katie Fleener, Ph.D., dean of the school. “We stay true to the business principles we teach, while fostering innovation as we engage in new ways with students and employers.”

## Testing career choices

Connecting students to professionals is a goal for Breck Harris, Ed.D., professor of business. “I want my students to see current, real-world applications,” he says. Harris’ strategy: guest speakers. “A speaker can give students an opportunity to say, ‘Hey, am I good fit for that?’ It’s a fantastic way for students to test their career choices,” he says.

Speakers have included a small-business owner discussing the four P’s of marketing success—product, price, place and promotion—and the owner of a media company discussing digital platforms and omni-channel marketing. Ken Neufeld, a broker associate at London Properties in Fresno and member of FPU’s Board of Trustees, has also spoken to Harris’ students. “They are quite engaging and ask good questions,” he says. Senior Erika Engvall says the speakers in Harris’ advertising and promotions course offered perspective,

provided career tips and answered questions. “Having a real-life perspective allows students to grow in their understanding of an industry and be more prepared for life after college,” she says.

## Career development

Starting in fall 2020, that preparation has included a required internship for all undergraduate business majors. “Faculty members believe that all students require a reasonably relevant and meaningful real-

life exposure to the world of work before graduation,” says Ranjan George, Ph.D., associate professor of business. To assist students in finding internships and jobs, the Career Development and Experiential Learning Center runs the Career Achievement Program (CAP), open to all majors.

**First step: a boot camp of sorts that helps students write resumes, use digital platforms to network with prospective employers and prepare for interviews.**

The interview prep includes etiquette (don’t fidget) and salary tips (don’t talk money until after a job offer is made). “Every student encounters that moment of truth while facing the challenges of entering the world of work,” George says. “This enables them to face interviews with greater confidence and find rewarding and productive work soon after graduating.”

**Second step: interviews with people in their fields of study.**

The pandemic has made virtual interviews a necessity. Some interviews lead to offers of an internship or a job, but all are valuable, says Rose Winn, M.S., center director. “There may not be immediate results. That could come down the road, but the interviews certainly help students with branching out and building networks in their industries.” Moreover, interviews are opportunities for students to learn how they present themselves. Interviewers evaluate each student to “provide qualitative feedback on their strong points and areas for improvement,” Winn says. Faculty

“I’m fortunate to be there, and grateful for all that Fresno Pacific has done to prepare me for this career.”

— Akio Lopez (BA ’20)





**“It’s always a great pleasure to work with clients who have graduated from Fresno Pacific.”**

— Rich Mostert (BA '01)

do a good job preparing students for interviews. “Our students are not walking in blind. They’ve had time to become polished and confident in how they articulate themselves,” she says.

**Third step: networking opportunities.**

The career center hosts a campus luncheon for interviewers and students where they can “mix and mingle,” Winn says. Students may feel more relaxed, and, as a result, establish a more personal connection with interviewers. This spring, the luncheon was also virtual.

**Journeys to success**

FPU business graduates connect across the Valley. Adjunct faculty **Rich Mostert (BA '01)**, director of the Valley Community Small Business Development Center, could be one point of contact. The center—funded by the Small Business Administration—provides no-cost consulting and no-cost to low-cost training to hundreds of entrepreneurs and small business owners in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties. “It’s always a great pleasure to work with clients who have graduated from Fresno Pacific,” Mostert says. “Their business acumen as well as their ethical standards are an excellent foundation for their entrepreneurial success.”

Each of those FPU entrepreneurs takes their first steps in building a career—as Lopez did on the morning of his interview in the career center. He credits Sylvia Kim, D.B.A, associate professor of accounting, for challenging him. “She pushed me, and I’m very grateful for that,” Lopez says.

His path to the interview took some detours. Lopez, 25, attended FPU briefly after high school, but left to work and then attend community college. He returned in 2018, and the following year had his interview. At that point, Lopez was seeking an internship, and the interview with the representative from the Moss Adams accounting firm went well. “I’m usually a little timid to start with, but once I’m able to gauge the other person, I settle in,” he says.

Remembering the advice on how to present himself professionally, Lopez wore dark dress pants, a light blue, long-sleeve shirt and a dark blue patterned tie. Lopez says he gave the interviewer his full attention and came prepared with appropriate questions: What do you look for in a job candidate? What are your grade point average requirements? The interview eventually led to a summer internship, then Lopez returned to FPU for his senior year. While completing his degree, he accepted an offer to work in Moss Adams’ Fresno office. He graduated in December 2020 and was named one of two Outstanding Graduates in the School of Business.

Lopez began his job in January. “I’m fortunate to be there, and grateful for all that Fresno Pacific has done to prepare me for this career. My journey with FPU has been pivotal in developing me personally and professionally.” 



**LEARN MORE**

About FPU’s Student Services at [fpu.edu/341-career-dev](https://fpu.edu/341-career-dev)

# Business Insights

Zooming Toward Professional Development: FPU School of Business and Alumni Office offer online workshops to connect professionals

As the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work and live, it's also changed the way we network. For business, the pandemic has meant having to rethink professional development. That's why the FPU Advancement Office and Foundation have teamed up with the university's School of Business to offer Business Insights—targeted online workshops harnessing the expertise of business faculty to help local businesses overcome a range of challenges. Each edition of Business Insights will be a brief video (3-5 minutes), followed up by a live, online roundtable lunch discussion with the presenter. This flexible format will make professional development accessible to busy professionals, says Ali Sena, director of alumni development.

The breadth of topics the workshops will cover means they can benefit just about any professional, says Katie Fleener, Ph.D., dean of the School of Business. Moreover, some local businesses have begun to work directly with the school for tailored professional development for their staff. "We hope to build a strong connection to our workforce community and offer our expertise for workplace education and training," Fleener says.

Don Griffith, vice president for advancement and executive director of the foundation, acknowledges the pandemic has been hard on everyone, not least of whom business professionals accustomed to frequent social engagements and networking opportunities. Griffith hopes Business Insights will help fill that crucial gap. "The hope is to more broadly and deeply serve and engage the business community," he says.

Sena promises the workshops will continue beyond the pandemic and may evolve to incorporate in-person lunch-and-learn events. Sena says she never stops

looking for ways to serve the community and engage alumni. "I ask myself, 'how can we provide added value to our alumni and community?'" Sena and Fleener also note that a unique feature of FPU's professional development is that it is developed in dialogue with the business community and shaped by what they say they need. 

## Upcoming Business Insights:

### Professional Development and Continuous Learning in the Business Setting

*Sharon Starcher, D.B.A., degree completion program director/assistant professor*

*Virtual Roundtable: May 25*

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# ALWAYS TIME TO LEARN

## School of Business inspires education for life

By Doug Hoagland

Kristen Patterson didn't set out to finish her college degree just to have a framed diploma for her office. "It's not about having the degree," she says. "It's about what I've learned, and how I apply that knowledge to everyday life. I've always believed that by continuing to learn you're able to help those around you also improve and grow."

Patterson achieved her goal through the degree completion program—a time-tested part of Fresno Pacific University's commitment to building professional expertise in the Valley. The net effect: a strengthened economy in the future and enhanced, hopeful lives.

A former degree completion student—**Sharon Starcher, D.B.A. (MA '07, BA '99)**—directs the program for business students. Starcher, an assistant professor of business, has revamped curriculum and instruction methods to increase academic rigor. "They now come to class to engage rather than just listen to a lecture," she says. Degree completion students pursue either a business management or organizational leadership emphasis, and Starcher is adding a third emphasis: emergency management. It will be geared to personnel in police and fire departments as well as those in private business with responsibility for emergency disaster plans. "We continually look for unmet needs in the Valley and how we can respond to them," Starcher says. Katie Fleener, Ph.D, dean of the School of Business, adds: "We have evolved with the times to meet changing needs, whether at the undergraduate, graduate or professional development level."

## Reconnecting to God

Degree completion courses aim to integrate faith with leadership, and Starcher has upgraded discussions to focus on books specific to that process, enabling students to consider God's call on their lives as leaders. That faith component changed **Heather Aceves (BA '20)**. Aceves, airports personnel manager for the City of Fresno, says she's now a stronger writer and better communicator at work. And spiritually? "I came to Fresno Pacific appreciating the good vibe of the university, but I was not prepared for what happened. I reconnected with God," she says. "I was not expecting to become vulnerable with the other students in my cohort or become a champion for others in their vulnerability. I had a front-row seat in the lives of others, and I learned that leading like Jesus is the only way to go." Hearing such experiences has brought Starcher to tears. "It's exciting and emotional to see how students make applications to the real world from what they learn and experience in their courses," she says.

## 'Rich discussions'

Another program—the M.A. in Strategic and Organizational Leadership—has students analyze and propose solutions to systemic challenges in businesses and organizations, says **Suzana Dobric' Veiss, Ph.D. (MA '02, BA '99)**, assistant professor of business and director of the program. "The focus is on problem-solving, and the students almost serve as consultants to the organizations," she says. Students often choose to analyze their workplaces, collaborating with organization managers. The program attracts a wide variety of professionals, including police officers, medical personnel and employees of nonprofits and for-profit businesses. "Because of such varied backgrounds, the sharing in class discussions is rich," Dobric' Veiss says.

The School of Business also offers a master's degree in business administration that challenges students with projects applicable to their life goals. Aspiring business owners can write detailed plans about building

an enterprise from the ground up. Others can conduct in-depth analysis of organizations where they plan to remain. "We want to make the learning relevant to individual students," says Michelle Bradford, Pys.D., assistant professor of business and director of the program. MBA students also get global business perspectives. During the pandemic, for example, they virtually visited Malaysia, Morocco, Peru, Singapore and Spain to discuss global economic issues with entrepreneurs and business leaders.

## Self-improvement

All students in the School of Business bring stories to their educational journeys. Patterson—the degree completion student—says "life happened" after she graduated from high school in the late 1990s and started community college. "I got married and had kids and found myself too busy to go back full-time,"

she says. Four years ago, she joined GC Roofing, a woman-owned construction firm, first as a dispatcher, later becoming a project manager, partner and chief operating officer.

Patterson started the degree completion program in 2017, choosing the all-online option, and is scheduled to graduate in May 2021. "Even though I've been an online student the entire time, engaging with my cohort has been constant. I know some of my classmates really well since we've gone through each class together." Patterson says she benefitted from both the program's faith ("I developed a closer relationship with the Lord") and academic content. "The knowledge I've obtained has helped me grow as a person and has helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses, both professionally and personally. It's been a constant journey of self-improvement," she says. 🏠

**“We continually look for unmet needs in the Valley and how we can respond to them.”**

— Sharon Starcher, D.B.A (MA '07, BA '99)  
Program Director



## LEARN MORE

About how the FPU partners with business at:  
[fpu.edu/partnerwithus](https://fpu.edu/partnerwithus)

# Gaining Confidence to Speak Out for Christ

By Christopher L. Scott

When Ruth Martinez arrived at FPU, she says she was shy about her faith. “Even though I grew up in a Christian home, I didn’t have a strong relationship with Christ,” she says. Her experiences here, however, would transform her from uncertain to outspoken.

As a freshman transfer, Ruth began a three-hour-a-week job in FPU’s Office of Spiritual Formation and Diversity (OSFD). As a communication major she had always loved media and creating graphics, and soon she was creating media graphics for OSFD’s weekly events and running slides at College Hour. Those were jobs she felt comfortable doing. But that small role stretched her to become a student chaplain in OSFD.

As a chaplain Ruth soon found herself talking about faith with people regularly. “It was certainly because I felt the obligation to do so,” she admits. Several months of experience at OSFD strengthened her faith. “Working in a ministry field allowed me to bloom. As time passed, I started speaking up about my faith because I enjoyed it and felt a sense of peace doing so,” she says.

Her various roles at OSFD gave Ruth the opportunity to serve on the Fresno-Clovis Prayer Breakfast Committee as media relations assistant. Seeing how her experience in media combined with her newly strengthened faith could be used in a greater capacity, Ruth decided to double major and add contemporary



“Working in a ministry field allowed me to bloom.”

Christian ministry. “I was able to combine love for media and ministry. I love the church. It was a huge connection that I saw in my life,” she says.

Now Ruth describes herself as an “outspoken Christian.” She says this includes “sharing my thoughts on Scripture, sharing God’s word with others, talking about our relationship with God and praying in group settings.”

A strengthened faith combined with ministry experiences at FPU helped Ruth see how God could use her passion for media within his kingdom. For the future, she hopes to find a church or non-profit Christian organization where she can continue the ministries she started at FPU. 



## EDITOR’S NOTE

Do you know a student who has been transformed at FPU? Contact Wayne Steffen at [wsteffen@fresno.edu](mailto:wsteffen@fresno.edu)

## ‘Hairapy’

By Amy D. Fienen

As anyone with a relationship with their hairdresser can attest, in the stylist’s chair struggles are shared, decisions are made and friendships are formed. This “hairapy” is as important as the physical transformation of a fresh ‘do.

**Steven Sanchez, Jr., (BA '10)** says his decade as FPU student and employee helped him become a salon owner who nurtures connection with his clients. “Going to FPU was one of the best decisions of my life,” he says.

Growing up in the farming community of Riverdale, Sanchez is a first-generation college graduate. Looking only for a day off from high school when he attended an FPU Preview Day, once on campus he had a powerful feeling he was where he was meant to be.

Sanchez jumped into leadership, serving as a student senator his freshman and sophomore years and being elected student body president his junior year against two seniors. The communication major played sax in the Community Wind Ensemble, was on the student activities board and worked four years in the Advancement Office. “I lived and breathed Fresno Pacific University,” he says. “You can’t beat the sense of community on that campus. It was truly a family.”

After graduation, Sanchez worked for five years in the Communications and Marketing Office, and felt the love and support stay with him when life offered a new direction. He’d been cutting friends’ hair since high school when a hairdresser friend saw a photo of a recent haircut and told him hair was his calling.

At his interview at Paul Mitchell The School Fresno, Sanchez felt the same reaction as his first visit to FPU. “I had a gut feeling this was the environment I was supposed to be in,” he says.

In 2013, Sanchez began attending classes four nights a week for two years at Paul Mitchell while continuing full-time at FPU. His first salon was The Dandelion Salon + Barber Shop at Sierra Vista Mall, where he spent almost five years. The blessing of that job was that the owners were believers who eased his transition from



what he describes as the “FPU bubble.” “I learned that I could still carry my own faith,” he says.

In May 2020 COVID-19 closed The Dandelion. On December 1, Sanchez opened UNCO | Unapologetic Coterie in downtown Fresno’s Peerless Building. The name wasn’t random. “Unapologetic” was his theme word for 2020, and “coterie” describes a group of like-minded people who share exquisite taste. And that’s what Sanchez wants UNCO to be. “Essentially, I want it to be a place where we can do what we want and celebrate creativity,” he says. 🏠



### EDITOR’S NOTE

Check out Steven at UNCO | Unapologetic Coterie. Visit [stevensanchezjr.com](http://stevensanchezjr.com), or [#styledbysteven](https://twitter.com/styledbysteven)

# IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI



## » DEBBAS CREATES SWEET MUSIC

Debbas Gourmet, a Fresno-based chocolatier partly owned by **Max Debbas (MA '17)**, has launched a new line of packaged treats inspired by Max's love of music. The A'cappella line of chocolates bring fun and enjoyment to bite-sized desserts. [fpu.edu/341-Debbas](http://fpu.edu/341-Debbas)



## » MADERA COUNTY HONORS MCCORD

**Andrea McCord (TC '14, BA '13)** was named Madera County Teacher of the Year. Earlier she was among 26 teachers honored as "Distinguished Teachers of the Year" by Madera Unified School District, and Teacher of the Year at Martin Luther King Middle School, where she teaches history. [fpu.edu/341-McCord](http://fpu.edu/341-McCord)

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**James Collins (MA '19)** is the director of football/medical services for the Los Angeles Chargers.

**Maribel Torres, MSN, FNP-C (MS '19, BS '17)**, has joined Adventists Health Medical Office – Hanford Specialty. She provides gastrointestinal, diabetes and hypertension consultation and treatments. [fpu.edu/341-Torres](http://fpu.edu/341-Torres)

**Aaron Chambers (BA '18)** earned his Master of Accountancy from National University in July 2020.

After graduating with his Master of Public Administration with a certificate in city management from Villanova University, **Nick Valla (BA '17)** is assistant township manager of Middletown Township in Bucks County, PA.

**Tannisse Tuttrup (BA '18)** teaches special education for the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools.

**Julie Wright (BA '17)** and her work in Kenya were the subject of an article in *ExBulletin.com* November 25, 2020. [fpu.edu/341-Wright](http://fpu.edu/341-Wright)

**Kristina Chamberlin (BA '16)** is director of the City of Fairfield's Parks and Recreation Department. She has over 25 years of public-sector experience, including serving as assistant director of Fresno's Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services Department (PARCS).

**Taylor Poisall (BA '16)** received the 2020 Serve Award from FLYP (Fresno's Leading Young Professionals). FLYP aims to attract and retain young Valley professionals.

**Nikki Donnelly (MA '14, TC '13, BA '08)** received an OSEP Early Childhood Intervention Doctoral Consortium Fellowship award to pursue a Ph.D. in special education through the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



## » BRYAN NAMED ADMIN OF THE YEAR

**Aaron Bryan (TC '04, BA '03)** won Fresno County's Administrator of the Year honors from the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. Aaron is director of the county visual and performing arts department. [fpu.edu/341-Bryan](http://fpu.edu/341-Bryan)

**Brandon Dorman (MA '13, TC '07, BA '05)** is director of skills content at EmPath ([empath.net](http://empath.net)).

**Bobby Ramirez (BA '13)** was appointed to the board of the Livermore (CA) Shakespeare Festival. [fpu.edu/341-Bramirez](http://fpu.edu/341-Bramirez)

**Matthew Crater (MA '12)** is athletic director for Moorpark College in Moorpark, CA. Previously Matthew served as athletic support coordinator, assistant head football coach and kinesiology instructor at College of the Canyons. He has worked in college athletics for 15 years.

**Jon Craig (MA '12)** has been promoted to principal of Harry S. Truman High School in Levittown, PA. [fpu.edu/341-Craig](http://fpu.edu/341-Craig)

**Kurt Willems (SEM '12)** is a pastor, church planter, writer and host of the Theology Curator podcast. His book about hope, pain, trauma and Jesus is titled *Echoing Hope*. [fpu.edu/341-Willems](http://fpu.edu/341-Willems)

**Aaron Walls (BA '11)** is head of school at Lakeview Christian Academy, a prekindergarten-12th grade school located in Duluth, MN.



## » GONZÁLEZ-PIÑA LEADS MCC WEST COAST

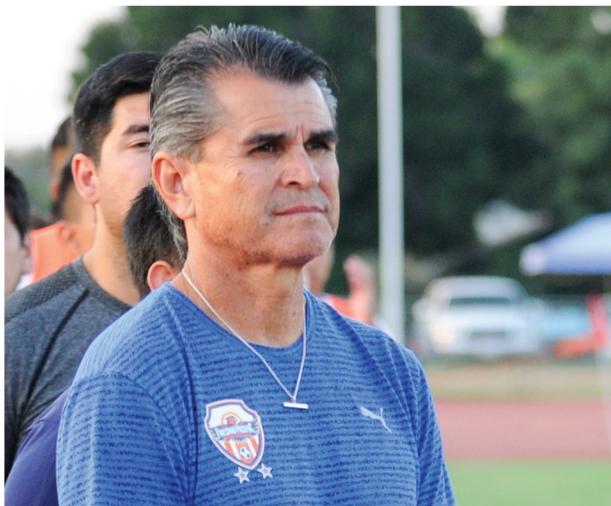
**Dina González-Piña (MA '98, BA '90)** started as executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) West Coast January 4, 2021. Before taking the leadership of the West Coast region of the Christian international relief organization sponsored by Mennonite denominations, Dina was national ethnicity and gender equity specialist for MCC. [fpu.edu/341-Gonzalez-Pina](http://fpu.edu/341-Gonzalez-Pina)

**Jennifer Beccera (MA '09, TC '06, BA '02)** is learning director for curriculum and instruction at Woodlake (CA) Unified School District.

**Perry Huang (BA '09)** is assistant coach of the Seattle Storm, winner of the 2020 WNBA Championship. [fpu.edu/341-Huang](http://fpu.edu/341-Huang)

**Wonjoun Park (BA '06)** is the operations manager at Ohana Depot, a patio furniture company, during the day. His main job is worship leader at Seattle Hansarang Church. He has been married to Rachel for eight years and they have three children: Asaph, 6; Abigail, 4; and Asher, 1.

In October 2020, **Adam Juarez (TC '05, BA '03)** published *The Complete EdTech Coach: An Organic Approach to Supporting Digital Learning*. The book, co-authored with his wife, Katherine Goyette, is geared for EdTech coaches, but is beneficial to all educators looking for ways to integrate technology in a manner that empowers learning. [fpu.edu/341-Juarez](http://fpu.edu/341-Juarez)



## RAMIREZ WINS COACHING AWARD

**Jaime Ramirez (MA '96, BA '81)** won the 2020 Latino Coaches Award for Excellence from the United Soccer Coaches Latino Advocacy Group. Jaime was also appointed sporting director of the new Fresno Fuego soccer team as he continues as head coach of the Sunbird Men's Soccer Team. Jaime was the inaugural coach of the previous Fresno Fuego team. [fpu.edu/341-JRamirez](http://fpu.edu/341-JRamirez)

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Todd Tremper (FS '03)** is a literacy tutor at Monrovia (CA) Public Library.

**Rici Skei (MA '05, BA '02)** opened her Lowell neighborhood church to help children learn during the pandemic, offering mentorship, meals and socialization. [fpu.edu/341-Skei](http://fpu.edu/341-Skei)

**Carlin Buhrman (SEM '04)** and **Cheryl Dueck Smith (BA '93)** co-lead a Lead Pods podcast series, hosted by the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (USMB). Their November 5, 2020, session was "COVID's Impact on Mental Health." Cheryl is an instructor in the M.A. in marriage and family therapy program at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, and Carlin is an alumnus of that program. [fpu.edu/341-BuhrmanSmith](http://fpu.edu/341-BuhrmanSmith)

## ALUMNI WRITE FOR CHRISTIAN LEADER ISSUE ON RACISM

Several alumni contributed to the January/February 2021 *Christian Leader* (the U.S. Mennonite Brethren magazine) issue on racism in the MB church and its institutions:

- ▶ **Dina Gonzalez-Pina (MA '98, BA '90)** former assistant dean of multicultural ministries and now director of West Coast Mennonite Central Committee (MCC): "An Invitation to Understand Racism."
- ▶ **Mike Rea (BA '03)**, learning coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee: "A Mennonite Tesseract."
- ▶ **Mark Isaac (SEM '93)**, former vice president of advancement at FPU and senior staff member at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and now pastor at New Life Community Church (Dinuba MB): "She's Difficult."
- ▶ **Darren Duerksen (SEM '02)**, Ph.D., associate professor of intercultural and religious studies: "God's Blessing or White Privilege?"
- ▶ **Jamie (Porter, BA '99) Mack**, current student at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary: "The Power of a Good Story."

More at [fpu.edu/341-Christian](http://fpu.edu/341-Christian)

**Darren Duerksen (SEM '02)**, Ph.D., associate professor of intercultural and religious studies, has been awarded a \$1,000 Christian Leadership in a Multifaith World Grant, sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) and Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) to help pilot and evaluate a new curriculum called Christian Leadership in a Multifaith World.

**Doug Noll (MA '02)** was the subject of an interview on emotional intelligence posted November 24 by *Authority Magazine*. [fpu.edu/341-Noll](http://fpu.edu/341-Noll)

**Suzana Dobric Veiss (MA '02, BA '99)**, Ph.D., assistant professor and director of the M.A. in strategic and organizational leadership program, presented twice at the International Leadership Association Global Conference, November 5-9, 2020. She presented the paper "Paul's Intercessory Prayer: Motivating Language" in the symposium "Three Functions of Effective Communication in Critical Leadership Moments in Early Christianity" on November 7 and co-presented the workshop "Thriving on the Edge: Four Activities for Self-Renewing Leaders" on November 9. [fpu.edu/341-Veiss](http://fpu.edu/341-Veiss)

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FPU Alumni Assoc.

**ADVISE** & mentor students  
[fpu.edu/Sunbirds-Can](http://fpu.edu/Sunbirds-Can)

## WEDDINGS

**Sharyl Kay Lawson (MA '99)** is a special education teacher in Adams 14 School District in Commerce City, CO.

**Michael Despain (BA '96)** has been named interim fire chief of Piedmont, CA. [fpu.edu/341-Despain](http://fpu.edu/341-Despain)

**Angulus Wilson (BA '89)**, former university pastor, received the 2020 G.L. Johnson Award from the Christian Business Men's Connection (CBMC) in Fresno. This award is presented to the man or woman in local ministry who exemplifies the special Christian characteristics of Pastor G.L. Johnson—being a servant leader, serving others and our community.

**Charlene Klassen Endrizzi (MA '87, BA '78)**, professor of education at Westminster College, Wilmington, PA, is featured in a January 22 article in the college newspaper, "Preservice teachers use 'hidden stories' to connect with students." [fpu.edu/341-Endrizzi](http://fpu.edu/341-Endrizzi)

**Richard Rawls (BA '87)**, Ph.D., professor of history at Georgia Gwinnett College, earned the college's Outstanding Teacher Award September 24, 2020. Richard was lauded for his ability to immerse students in their studies. Richard is a former director of Hiebert Library and history faculty at FPU, and his wife, Janita, a former dean of the FPU School of Business, is an associate professor of management and assistant dean of the school of business at GGC, part of the University System of Georgia.

**Alice (Bennett, BA '86) Smith** is the accounting manager for Students International, based in Visalia, CA.

**Marilyn Shepherd (MA '84)** was selected interim superintendent of Selma Unified School District. [fpu.edu/341-Shepherd](http://fpu.edu/341-Shepherd)

**Judith L. Roth (BA '81)** released *Hiding Baby Moses* in April 2021. The picture book is published by Flyaway Books and presents a poetic retelling of the story of baby Moses from the perspective of his sister Miriam. The story captures the bond between siblings and conveys family intimacy and a sense of an ancient time and place. More at [fpu.edu/341-Roth](http://fpu.edu/341-Roth)

**Ron (BA '67, emeritus faculty) and Roxanne (MA '04, BA '89) Claassen** have published a second edition of *Discipline that Restores: Strategies to Create Respect, Cooperation, and Responsibility in the Classroom*. The book describes ways to replace the punitive discipline system with discipline that improves learning. The new edition includes updated information. [fpu.edu/341-Claassens](http://fpu.edu/341-Claassens)



**Emily Weller (TC '20, BA '18) and Christian Acosta (TC '20, BA '18)** were married on November 21, 2020. They completed their bachelor's degrees and multiple subject teaching credential programs together at the Visalia Campus.



**Channie Hans (MA '19, BA '16)** married David Gonzalez on October 10, 2020.



**Lora Whitaker (BA '16) and Angel De Leon (BA '17)** were married on September 20, 2020, in Sanger, CA. Each earned a M.S. in Educational Counseling with a P.P.S. credential at National University. They live in Lodi, CA. Angel is a high school counselor in Stockton, CA, and Lora is a long-term substitute counselor for Madera Unified School District.



Former Sunbird athletes **Savannah Vasquez (basketball, BA '15)** married **Kevin Richey (water polo, BA '16)** on October 10, 2020. Savannah is a clinical counselor and Kevin is a special education elementary teacher. The couple resides in Fresno.



**Nathan Anderson (BA '14)** married Sara Berlinger on April 30, 2021. The couple resides in Phoenix, AZ, where Nathan is working in retail and Sara is completing studies at Grand Canyon University.



**Emily Lyons (BA '10)** married Scott McLaughlin on July 18, 2020, at Bethany Church in Long Beach, CA.

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## » BIRTHS



**Melissa Lo (BS '20) Wouley** announces the birth of son Wesson Bear Thik on December 2, 2020.



**Brianna (Soto, BA '19)** and **Diego Trujillo** announce the birth of daughter Camila Rose on October 21, 2020.



**Irma Bailey (BA '18)** announces the birth of son Kristian on March 8, 2020.



**Elena (Rodriguez Romero, MA '18, BA '13)** and **Matthew Vincent** announce the birth of daughter Audrey Natalia on April 7, 2020.



**Dan (BA '10)** and **Melody (Whitaker, SEM '12, BA '07) Kruse** announce the birth of daughter Emma Marieson on November 21, 2020. She weighed 7 lbs., 4 oz. and was 22 in. long.

**Doug Kulungu (BA '10)** and wife **Patience** announce the birth of son **Eric Hanson** on November 19, 2020.

## » DEATHS



**Curtis Henry Funk**, 76, music professor from 1967-1984, died September 17, 2020, at his home in Vancouver, BC. At FPU he developed several ensembles and taught music education. He spent the rest of his career at Wheaton College. Survivors include wife Lois and three children.

**Barbara Jean Grimes (BA '19)** died March 7, 2020, after a brief illness.



**Laurene Alice Peters (PBI '54)**, 86, died October 18, 2020. She had been living at Palm Village Retirement Community, Reedley, CA. She worked in accounting for over 30 years at Fresno Pacific College and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, while also typing thesis and dissertation

papers for generations of students. She and husband **Burton Peters** attended North Fresno MB Church for nearly 50 years. Survivors include two children.

## » DEATHS



**Emeritus Music Faculty Larry Warkentin, D.M.A.**, 80, died April 5, 2021. Serving FPU from 1962-2002, he was a professor, composer, pianist, choral conductor and church musician. Survivors include wife Paula, son Richard, daughter **Rhonda (Warkentin BA '92) Langley**, son-in-law **Silas Langley (BA '93)** and two grandsons. Major compositions include the *Fresno Pacific University Song*, sung at commencement for more than 30 years; *Academic Variations* for piano, winner of the California Teacher's Association state competition; *God of the Eagle*, winner of the Winnipeg College hymn contest; and *Sonata No. 2 for Piano*, a tribute to his native Reedley, CA. He received American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) awards each year for more than a decade. Larry earned his B.A. at Tabor College, M.A. at California State University Fresno and doctorate at the University of Southern California. More at [fpu.edu/341-Warkentin](http://fpu.edu/341-Warkentin)

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**More information at [fpu.edu/alumnitour](http://fpu.edu/alumnitour)**

# “CAMPUS HOMESITES” MADE TODAY’S FPU POSSIBLE

# 1955

By Kevin Enns-Rempel, Director, Hiebert Library

In 1955 the Pacific Bible Institute board purchased 53 acres near the corner of Chestnut and Butler avenues in Southeast Fresno at what is now the main campus. There the members intended to create PBI’s first true campus. Since its founding in 1944, PBI had conducted its operations only in single buildings. This property would, board members hoped, make possible the development of a more expansive liberal arts curriculum.

The board envisioned a 20-acre campus with a 3-acre plot for a Mennonite Brethren Church. The “excess property” would be subdivided and made available for building sites. This residential development would be known as “Campus Homesites.”

The subdivision included 82 lots on Butler, Townsend and Heaton avenues, between Garden Avenue on the west and Willow Avenue on the east: 70-foot lots, located south of Townsend and north of Heaton to the west of Winery Avenue, sold for \$1,800; larger 100-foot lots in other parts of the subdivision sold for \$2,250.

This plan addressed two realities as understood at that time: First, there was no money to construct buildings on the land that had been purchased. Subdividing and selling the 82 lots would provide those funds. Second, the board assumed that PBI would never need more than 20 acres for its campus. Thus, the subdivision plan seemed the perfect way to move forward.

By 1956, 39 lots had been sold, most to Mennonite Brethren investors, and house construction began almost immediately. Over the next few years enough lots had been sold to make possible completion of a classroom building on the new campus (now known as Sattler Hall) in 1959.



By the 1970s it was evident that the board’s assumption about 33 acres of “excess property” had been incorrect. In 1977 the college purchased 18.5 acres southeast of Winery and Hamilton, mostly for use as athletics facilities. Only nine years later the college purchased back the first Campus Homesites lot. By 1989 it had purchased five lots on Townsend and Heaton avenues. Today the university owns almost every lot on Butler, Townsend and Heaton west of Winery, and even a few to the east of Winery. In 2020 four Campus Homesites houses were demolished to make room for the new Culture and Arts Center.

Was Campus Homesites a good idea? In retrospect, we might wish that the board had been more expansive in its vision for the institution’s future. But given the fiscal realities of that time, it may have been the only means for PBI to develop into the university we know today.



# Athletes of Color Alliance MAKING SPACE FOR ALL

By Katie Fries

## It started with a tweet.

Last year, track and field athlete **De’Jshon (D.J.) Maxwell-Garcia (BA ’21)** was frustrated when Black History Month came and went and he was not aware of any mention by Fresno Pacific University.

Maxwell-Garcia saw this an example of the university’s seeming indifference to issues important to students of color, such as himself: “So I tweeted about it.”

His tweet caught the attention of head men’s basketball coach **C.J. Haydock (BA ’10)**. Maxwell-Garcia had tapped into something close to Haydock’s heart: the events and issues that matter to the student-athletes he coaches, many of whom are students of color.

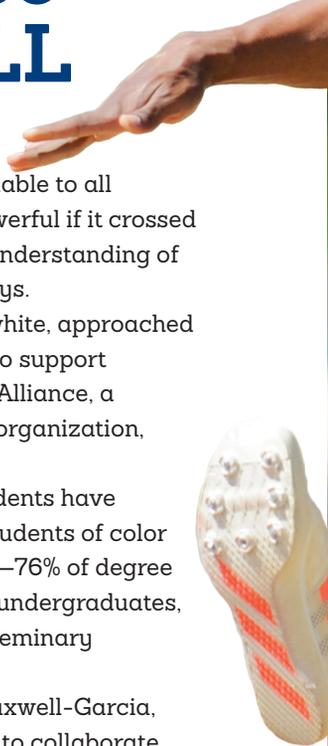
Haydock and his players frequently discuss these issues on van drives to and from games. “Because we have so many young men from minority backgrounds, we have come to this understanding that my experience is different from many of my students,” he says.

These conversations should be available to all student-athletes. “It would be more powerful if it crossed over teams, for everybody to have an understanding of the injustices in the world,” Haydock says.

With this in mind, Haydock, who is white, approached Maxwell-Garcia about starting a club to support athletes of color. The Athletes of Color Alliance, a university-sponsored and student-led organization, became official in September 2020.

Since the fall of 2012, most FPU students have been people of color. As of fall 2020, students of color made up 72% of the overall enrollment—76% of degree completion, 75% percent of traditional undergraduates, 66% of graduate students and 59% of seminary students.

The purpose of the alliance, says Maxwell-Garcia, is to be a platform for student-athletes to collaborate on social justice issues on campus and in surrounding communities, as well as a safe space for student-athletes of all racial backgrounds. Members include





student-athletes from a variety of sports, as well as non-athletes and allies. Maxwell-Garcia served as president, with Haydock as sponsor.

Baseball player **Esteban Lizaola (TC in progress, BA '20)**, says the alliance has given him the opportunity to help empower other students of color to acknowledge and appreciate their heritage. As one of only a few Hispanics then at Immanuel High School, and one of its only athletes of color, he says he attempted to fit in by refusing to embrace or acknowledge his culture. This included allowing fellow students who found his name difficult to pronounce to call him by “easier” nicknames. Things changed, he says, when he was a freshman at CSU San Bernardino and “I wasn’t seen as anyone but myself, Esteban Lizaola,” he says.

When Lizaola transferred to FPU he met Maxwell-Garcia and reconnected with Haydock, his Immanuel coach. Their willingness to be open about tough issues further inspired him. “D.J. is very outspoken and very blunt,” Lizaola says. “I started gravitating more towards the truth. When they were telling me about the club, about wanting to start something since FPU wasn’t doing the greatest job of empowering students of color, I said ‘I’m definitely in.’ I accept my culture, I’m very proud of my culture. I want to help others to understand their culture is theirs; it’s something for them to be proud of.”

Diamond Hollis, a volleyball player, transferred to FPU in 2020–21. The Athletes of Color Alliance “provides a mental health check for athletes of color,” she says. Demanding schedules don’t always leave student-athletes room for engagement with other students outside their own sport, she says.

“You can say, ‘Hey I’m going through something,’ but if you have a game tomorrow, you’re playing the game. You have homework. There are things that happen that you want to talk about, but you don’t have the time or resources to talk about it,” Hollis says.

“It’s a really good time out from your schedule as an athlete to talk about your experience, how you’re feeling. It’s getting to know people with similarities and having that safe space to openly talk about not being okay, and that it’s okay to not be okay, even if you’re an athlete,” Hollis says.

Everybody involved with the alliance stresses that non-athletes and people of all races are welcome. “It does not exclude people that aren’t of color,” Maxwell-Garcia says. “I’ve had people reach out to me that aren’t. There’s ally-ship in that.”

“I want to encourage others to not be afraid just because the title is Athletes of Color Alliance,” adds Lizaola. “If we have the support of all ethnicities, it makes it a lot easier for us to get our message across.”

Sometimes universities identify students of color only as athletes, Maxwell-Garcia says. “This isn’t so we can rebel against the majority culture of FPU, it’s so we have space to be people of color.” 



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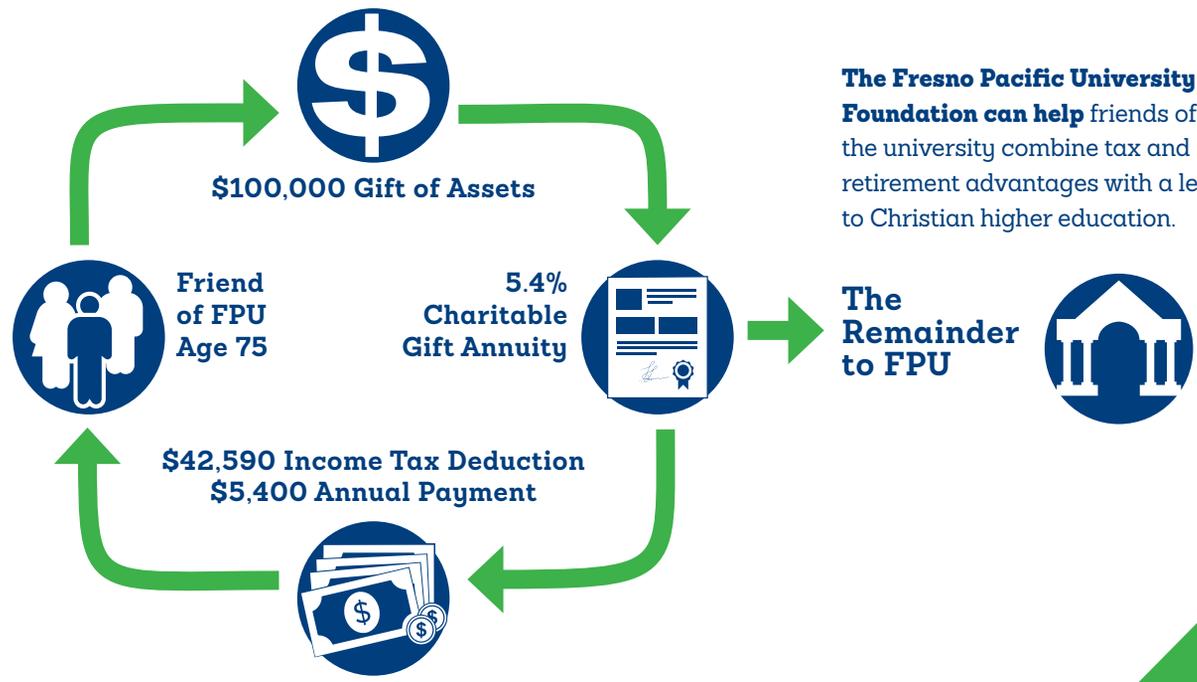
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# CONGRATULATIONS

## FPU's Outstanding Graduates Spring 2021

### School of Business

Matthew Wilfong

B.S. in Management /B.A. in  
Contemporary Christian Ministries

Clint Harris

MBA

### School of Natural Sciences

Joshua Jones

B.S. in Kinesiology, Pre-PT/OT emphasis

Brittany Nielsen

B.A. in Pre-Health Sciences

### School of Education

Byan Younes

B.A. in Liberal Arts/B.S. in Kinesiology

TJ Ryan

M.A. in Administrative Services

### School of HRSS

Marvin Santos Aquino

B.A. in Spanish

Kassandra Klein

B.A. in English: Secondary Teaching  
and Intercultural Studies: TESOL

### Seminary

Connie Nicholson

M.A. in New Testament

Pam Yang

M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy



# Together We Build

## A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH:

Culture and Arts Center to be FPU's Crown Jewel

It may look like dirt to the average passerby, but to **Bethany Rader (MA '11)**, the site along Butler Avenue between Chestnut and Winery avenues looks like a dream come true.

This will be the home of the Warkentine Culture and Arts Center (CAC). The building has long been a dream of performers, alumni, faculty and students. Now, thanks to the generosity of the donors, construction is well underway. While it's not much to look at just yet, says Don Griffith, vice president for advancement, progress is clipping along with the securing of permits and the rerouting of power lines.

Rader, director of the Tulare County Office of Education Theatre Program, directed several shows for Fresno Pacific as an adjunct instructor, and she knows first-hand the power of a performance space. "There is a special sense of pride and ownership that happens when you can perform a play, or song or musical piece that you have worked so hard on, in your own space," she says. "Having a space to gather for any performer is a very special thing."

Likewise, for the building's project manager, Joe Bogart of Quiring General LLC, the expansive lot is a diamond in the rough. Bogart sees the CAC as a crown jewel for the university and community. This project has special meaning for Bogart given his "family ties to the legacy of FPU." Bogart's sister, **Andrea Cole (BA '03)** participated in the theater arts program. "What a treat it is to carry on the family investment in FPU and their community outreach," he says. "Most rewarding of all for me is to join with FPU and their generous donors who believe in the ministry of the arts. God created in us voices, instrumental talent and other expressive means to display our response to the tugging of the Spirit in our hearts."

Throughout construction, Griffith says there will be continued opportunities for community investment and participation through donations to purchase equipment and furnishings, as well as audience seating. For more information about progress and opportunities for investment.

[visit fpu.edu/togetherwebuild](http://fpu.edu/togetherwebuild)



## Construction Timeline

Underground Utilities	Winter-Spring 2021
Foundation	Winter-Spring 2021
Parking Lot	Spring-Summer 2021
Building the Structure	Spring-Summer 2021
Interior Construction	Summer-Winter 2021
Landscaping	Fall-Winter 2021
Final Inspection	Winter 2022

## Occupancy Winter 2022

Summer	= June, July, August
Fall	= September, October, November
Winter	= December, January, February
Spring	= March, April, May





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# Together We Build



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