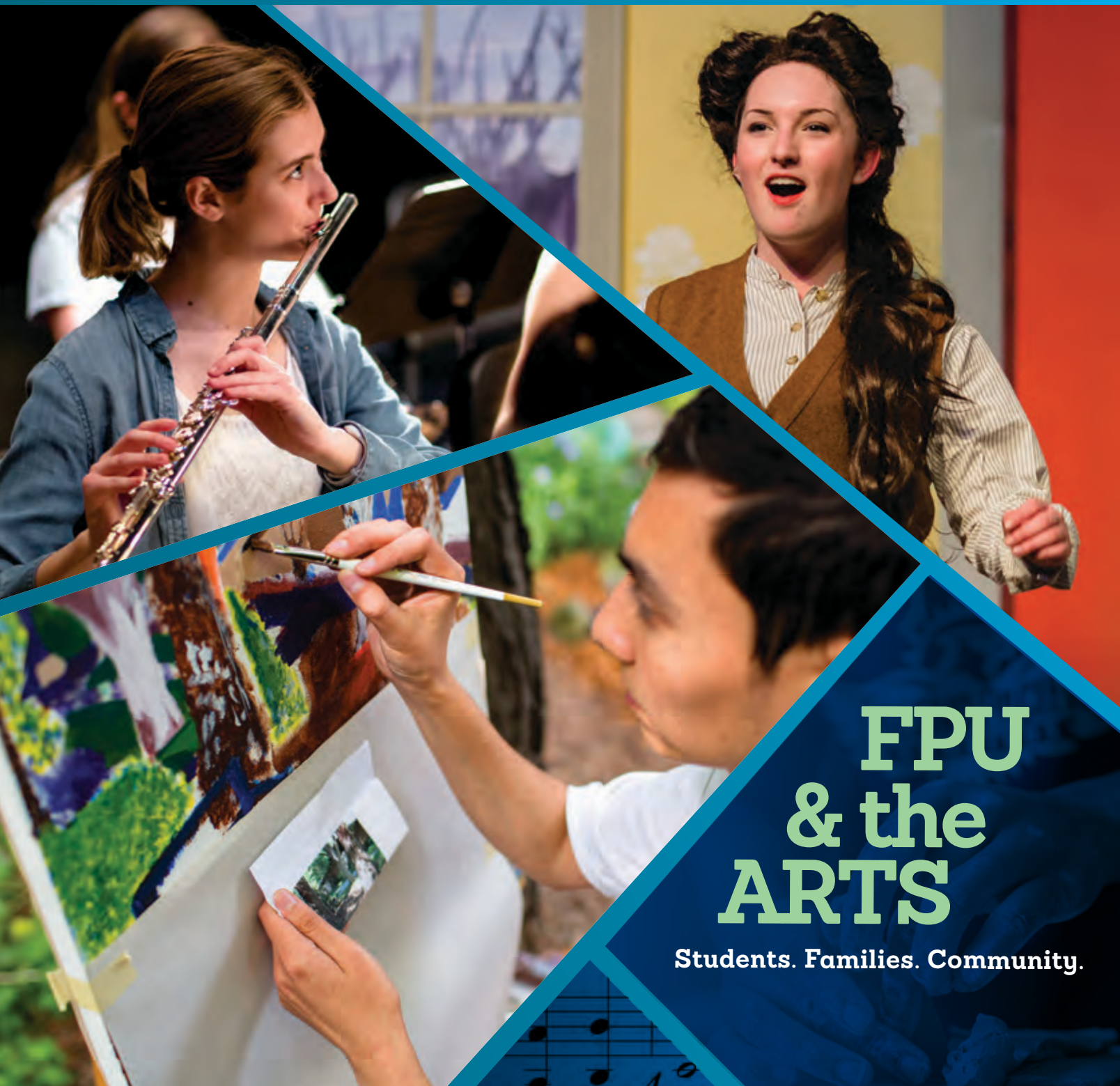


# PACIFIC

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY | VOL. 33, NO. 2



**FPU  
& the  
ARTS**

Students. Families. Community.





## president's message

# THE ARTS ENGAGE THE HEART AND PREPARE THE SOUL

**“Engagement in the arts can speak to us if we listen, direct us if we can see and gift us if we are willing to receive. These expressions are a gift from God sent to empower us to enjoy and share with others.”**

— Joseph Jones, Ph.D.

In this edition of *Pacific* we celebrate the arts. The arts are an expression of our cultures, values, hopes and even our trepidations. They communicate the inexpressible, broaden our imagination, drive us into self-reflection and inspire us to learn.


During my college years I signed up for a class in opera. My background afforded no opportunity to learn anything in these areas, and I must confess that I reasoned I did not like opera because I did not understand it. So, I set aside my prejudice.

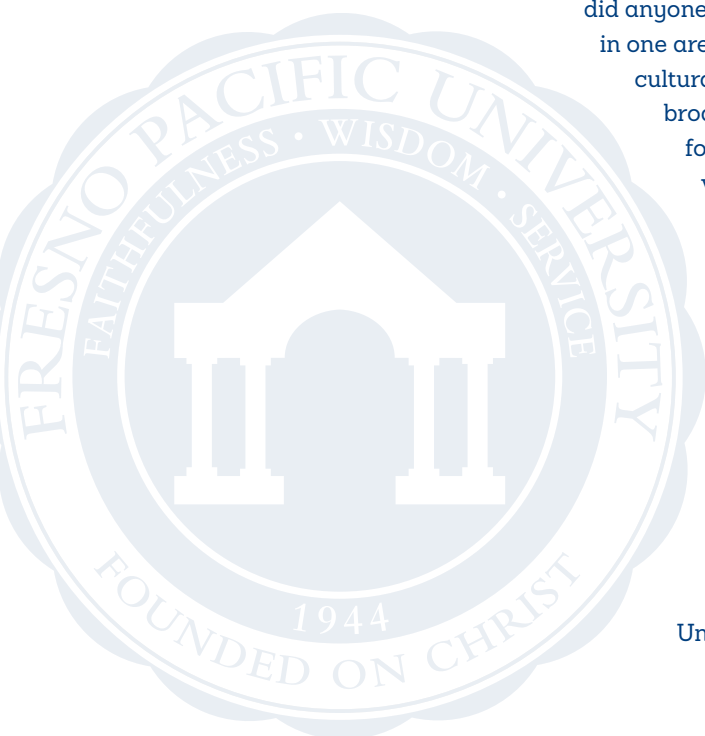
To my surprise the professor decided to teach through performance. I had no vocal performance experience, but neither did anyone else. This step of faith in one area of the arts unlocked a cultural view of the world which broadened an appreciation for other expressions of the visual and performing arts. The experience roused my courage for an imaginative rendezvous with the life of the mind. The shackles that obscured my perception of God and his world no longer limited the possibilities of a future filled with faith and hope.

Fresno Pacific University is launching a

new Culture and Arts Center not only to engage the life of the mind of our students, but as a catalyst for change in the lives of our neighbors. Children with unfulfilled dreams and senior adults with unrealized hopes will join with our students to engage the arts. Our goal is that this union will nurture peace to the soul and deepen faith in Christ's creative power to transform lives.

The university's prophetic vision is to extend the influence of the Kingdom of God through “Engaging the Cultures and Serving the Cities.” The arts engage the heart and prepare the soul while conciliating fears that confine our thoughts. Psalms 19:1-2 says: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.” Our God is the supreme artist, doing wonders beyond our comprehension, but growing in us a reverence for his mighty presence in all the earth. Engagement in the arts can speak to us if we listen, direct us if we can see and gift us if we are willing to receive. These expressions are a gift from God sent to empower us to enjoy and share with others.

This issue features alumni and students who honor God through creative exercises. It also unveils the plans for the new Culture and Arts Center—a place dedicated for service in the arts. 





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NOVEMBER 2020



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## Ratings affirm Fresno Pacific's success in providing a hope and a future

**FPU continues to shine as a best value and a great way for graduates to improve their lives and their communities.**

*U.S. News & World Report* placed FPU at number three in the social mobility category and at 27 in best values among Regional Universities—West in its 2021 Best Colleges rankings released September 14, 2020. *Washington Monthly* earlier affirmed the best value message, ranking FPU at 35 on that list. All three rankings were up from last year, when *U.S. News* rated FPU number four in social mobility and 35 in best value, and *Washington Monthly* listed FPU at 50 among best values.


"We are most proud of our number three rating as a top performer in social mobility because we love seeing economically disadvantaged students being successful and receiving their bachelor's degree. The Central Valley has significantly fewer people with B.A. degrees compared to California as a whole. This ranking shows FPU is very affordable and students graduate quickly coming from either high school or community college," said Jon Endicott, vice president for enrollment management.



The social mobility ranking resonates with FPU's goal to provide a hope and a future to students and California's Central Valley. Research shows that, as a group, people who graduate college achieve more than those who don't on measures from career earnings to public service and family life to charitable donations.

To determine social mobility, *U.S. News* compares the graduation rates of students receiving federal Pell Grants to the rate of students who do not. The family income for most Pell Grant recipients is under \$40,000.

Economically disadvantaged students are less likely than others to finish college, according to *U.S. News*. "But some colleges are more successful than others at advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students."

FPU also climbed in the overall *Washington Monthly* rankings to 77 among master's universities from 135 last year. These rankings analyze a school's contribution to the United States. *U.S. News* rated the university at 37 among Master's Universities—West, after coming in at 31 for 2020 and 39 for 2019. 

## Rising COVID-19 Cases Keep FPU Online for Fall 2020

After spending the summer readying for face-to-face learning, conditions in California led FPU to continue virtual instruction for the fall 2020 semester as COVID-19 cases increased in all counties in which the university operates through the summer and fall.

The summer's achievements will stand FPU in good stead whenever its five campuses may be safely reopened. Modifications were made for social distancing and hybrid instruction, signage and plexiglass shields were installed, cleaning services were increased and

personal protection equipment was distributed.

"In everything we have done and continue to do, we follow local, state and federal directives," said President Joseph Jones, Ph.D. Federal CARES funds financed much of the work.

"We are grateful for everyone's patience, understanding and prayers. As a faith community we will continue to place our trust in the one who has called us to be light in the Central Valley," Jones said.

More at [fpu.edu/coronavirus](https://fpu.edu/coronavirus)

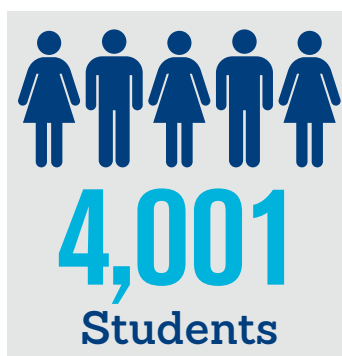


# Fall enrollment exceeds expectations, even with online instruction

**In times when good news seems rare, FPU is celebrating its 2020-21 enrollment.**

The university has 4,001 students as of the 11-day census released September 16, 2020: 1,680 in bachelor's degree completion programs, 1,362 in graduate programs—including 143 at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary—and 959 in traditional undergraduate programs.

While this is less than last year's 4,109, previous estimates had pointed to a larger deficit. "To be just above 4,000 students this fall seemed impossible just a few months ago," said Jon Endicott, vice president for enrollment management. "I am thrilled by the numbers of students who enrolled as we pivoted to fully online instruction this fall. We surpassed last year's graduate total and almost matched the all-time high in graduate programs two years ago." Graduate



enrollment rose by 59 for 2020.

Credit goes to staff in enrollment and campus life, faculty and coaches. "Your efforts have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for going above and beyond," said President Joseph Jones, Ph.D. "We also thank the students and families who kept faith in FPU and recognized that even in our online format we are providing a transformative education." FPU went to virtual instruction at all

campuses due to COVID-19.

Increasing partnerships with community colleges has been a big part of the enrollment success. "This will continue to be our most significant opportunity for growth," Endicott said. Money has ranked FPU number 11 among its 50 Best Colleges for Transfer Students—the highest-rated Christian school on the list. 🏠

## FPU freezes TUG/DC tuition for 2021-2022

Tuition in the traditional undergraduate and bachelor's degree completion programs will remain flat for 2021-2022. "The institution recognizes the many hardships Valley communities have faced in 2020 and we believe keeping tuition flat for the next year will encourage students to pursue higher education in as affordable a manner as possible," said Jon Endicott, vice president for enrollment management and student services. Graduate tuition went up a modest 2.99%. More at [fpu.edu/tuition](https://fpu.edu/tuition).



## FPU Honors the Life of Dr. Fitzalbert "Bert" Marius

Dr. Fitzalbert "Bert" Marius, 98, passed away Friday, April 10, 2020. He was the recipient of FPU's first honorary doctorate, presented at commencement May 4, 2019. Dr. Marius was the first African American to perform open heart surgery in Fresno, and was involved in over 11,000 such surgeries during a 50-year practice before retiring at 91 years old. He and his team became the first African American interns at Fresno County General Hospital (now Community Medical Center). Dr.

Marius remained active in the community through speaking, writing and working with young people. A World War II veteran of the Pacific theater, he was also involved with Hometown Heroes and Central Valley Honor Flight. We pray for his family and many friends and thank God for his life of transformative community service. More about Dr. Marius at [fpu.edu/332-marius1](https://fpu.edu/332-marius1) and [fpu.edu/332-marius2](https://fpu.edu/332-marius2).



A full-page photograph of a man with dark hair, wearing a red short-sleeved shirt, yellow gloves, and a black belt. He is flexing both biceps and has a small microphone clipped to his shirt. The background is a mix of white and light blue with green geometric shapes.

# Alumni in the Arts

By Doug Hoagland

## Bringing the Arts to Life



One evening last March in Baltimore, alumnus Jordan Litz waited in the wings of a packed theater. He was about to debut as a lead in *Wicked*—a big leap in the career Litz hoped for at Fresno Pacific University. “My heart was in my throat,” he says. He was only six years from FPU’s production of *The Sound of Music*—his first experience in musical theater. “You have these dreams, but part of you doesn’t actually believe it’s going to happen the way you dreamed it,” he says.

Litz, who attended 2011-2015, is one of many alumni working in the arts. They’re performers, music teachers, graphic artists, screenwriters and more. Many have their own version of Litz’s story. “Fresno Pacific gave me the opportunity to find who I was,” he says. “I went there with the intention of being an Olympic swimmer, and I came out wanting to be a Broadway performer. I had some amazing teachers and great supporters.”

## Crushing it

Litz sang in choirs growing up in Stockton, but swimming was his passion. He competed for the Sunbirds and went to the 2012 Olympic trials, though he didn’t make the team. Then in 2014, director Bethany Rader cast the vocal performance major as Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. “I wasn’t the most dedicated student, but Bethany believed in me, and she guided and mentored me in what I could do. In musical theater, I found something else I could be passionate about,” he says. Major roles followed in local theater companies. In 2016, Litz left Fresno for Disney World to perform and earn his Actor’s Equity card. By 2020, he was the understudy for the male lead in the national touring company of *Wicked*. Litz goes on, as he did in Baltimore, when the actor who regularly plays the role has a night off. Asked how he did that night, Litz hesitated and then volunteered: “I crushed it.” (COVID-19 put the show on hiatus, but Litz expects to return when live theater resumes.)

## Magical, but practical

EJ Hinojosa (BA ’16) is truly a music man.

- He teaches vocal and instrumental music at Gaston Middle School in Fresno. “I want to be an effective and inspiring educator, remembered by students as someone who made them feel good about themselves and maybe inspired them to a life in the arts.”
- He sings in the Fresno Community Chorus. “Singing is my first love in music. It’s therapeutic and good for the soul. It washes away the residue of daily life.”
- He is music director at Community United Church of Christ in Fresno. “I love my work in this role because it represents an intersection between two important elements of my life: faith and music. It’s a ministry.”
- He composes music across a wide range of genres, from reverent worship songs to snappy television jingles. Commercial composition requires versatility. Clients specify a musical style plus key words and information for the lyrics. “Your job is to take those elements and create something that’s memorable, stylish and informative,” he says. Hearing your music played on television or other media is a dream for many young composers. “But when it happens, you also think, ‘Great, that was one time. Let’s do it again, and let’s do it better.’ The pursuit of better music never stops,” Hinojosa says.



Faculty helped shape Hinojosa, and he's thankful. Erik Leung, D.M.A., former director of bands, stressed having a plan for your career. "A lot of people think being a creative professional is mostly imagination and inspiration," Hinojosa says. "There's magic in music, obviously. But to make a living as an artist means you have to be practical, be a planner and set goals."

## Gospel art

It started for **Alina Walker (BA '18)** when she was old enough to use a computer mouse. She used Microsoft Paint to draw, color and edit pictures. In high school, a computer class introduced the possibilities of Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. Walker was on her way to her business, Alina Walker Design.

She grew up in the Bay Area and attended FPU because it met her love of graphic design and her love of God. Walker majored in art (graphic design emphasis) and minored in contemporary Christian ministries, believing those disciplines complement one another. "It's exciting to think how art can be used to spread the Gospel," she says. Walker describes the art program as "small but mighty." Sam Tekunoff, an adjunct instructor, tried to approximate real-world work situations in graphic design classes. Chris Janzen, M.F.A., assistant professor of art, provided a foundation in the fine art disciplines of painting, drawing and design. And Rebecca McMillen, Ph.D., chair of the

Visual and Performing Arts Division and assistant professor of art, taught a career development course that proved pivotal for Walker. The course, among

other things, asked students to consider their personal priorities and how to balance them with careers. Walker knew family time would always be important, and she wanted the freedom to work with like-minded clients. That pointed toward self-employment as a graphic designer and hand lettering artist.

Walker makes greeting cards, stickers and sticky notes, and she letters drinkware with short messages. "She strives to connect others and bring a little more beauty to the world, one design at a time," according to her website (alinawalkerdesign.com). Most of her sales are online, and her pastel-colored cards have a whimsical quality. Walker also does freelance projects and

works as an assistant for an art teacher at a charter school. She wants to eventually devote all her time to her business and says: "I know I have the tools to go forward—Fresno Pacific equipped me for that."

## Art as business

**Joy Ndombeson (BA '17)** arrived at FPU from his home in the Democratic Republic of Congo as an athlete with a passion for dancing. Breakdancing, to













be specific. "It was a perfect way for my athleticism to meet the artistic world," he says. Ndombeson started as an uncertain music major, explaining: "I had arrived with a strong heart for the arts but no clear direction of where I could go with that." Faculty members, notably Rebecca McMillen, listened and offered counsel. "Every single time I opened up to a professor or adviser about my thoughts, their instinct was to be realistic and encourage me. But they went a step beyond that—they empowered me," he says. Ndombeson switched his major to arts administration with an eye to opening his own business, which he did after graduating. The business is Joy 2 De World, which offers creative services in choreography, directing and screenwriting. He also credits the career development course, which, he says, "really opened my eyes to not just being an artist but a businessman, too."

Since graduating, Ndombeson has choreographed several local productions and created choreography for local video artists. He's also written and produced short films, which he's released on his website (ndombesonjoy.wixsite.com/joy2deworld) and other digital platforms. Quarantining during the pandemic changed his focus, and he sent producers two screenplays, one a science fiction thriller set in a post-war apocalyptic future. "It's an exploration of good and evil in human nature, and the choices we make as a human race," he says. "It's also about how a few people can come together and move us in the right direction."

## Never-ending music

When **Krista Harris (TC '09, BA '08)** and her husband vacationed on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, they held a benefit concert at the only church with an organ. He played the organ, and she played the flute and sang. "We try to make a habit of setting something up no matter where we travel," Harris

says. She started taking piano lessons at age 7 and began the flute at 8. By 10, she was singing with the Central California Children's Choir. As a teenager she yearned to play all instruments so she could teach others. "I was passionate about music, and it's definitely been a wild ride," Harris says. The journey took her to Clovis Unified School District, where she has taught elementary and middle school music for 11 years, concentrating on string instruments.

A music education major, Harris chose the university because she appreciated the gentle counsel of Wayne Huber, M.A., now professor

emeritus of music. Other universities were pushy and boastful when she visited. "Wayne advised me to pray about coming here. It was a humble approach," she says. Roy Klassen, D.M.A. also emeritus of music, was another factor. Harris had sung in a youth choir under his direction, and she knew his expertise and that he made music fun. "He has become like a second dad to me," Harris says. She's tried to inspire her students similarly and has found satisfaction in watching them grow as musicians and connecting to them as people. "The joy of teaching isn't just limited to their

musical experience. It is the human experience," she says. "I do my best to mentor students first and teach music second. When you add the beautiful power of relationships through music, the joy of education is complete."

Harris performs locally in the quartet CASH along with her husband, her sister and her sister's husband. "If I don't perform myself, how can I ask my students to practice as hard as they do before a performance?" she says. "They inspire me." Another group of musicians—adults in the community New Horizons Band and Orchestra—inspire Harris, too. Last summer, she was hired as director of the orchestra, whose members range from working professionals to retirees. "Music never ends," she says. "You can literally play however long you want."







## ‘Collective energy’

When **Meg Clark (BA '17)** auditioned for FPU's musical production of *Little Women*, she hoped to get a small role. Instead, director Bethany Rader cast Clark in the lead as the headstrong and outgoing Jo March. Clark had played leading roles in high school and in Reedley's community theater. But as she says: "There was some timidity to me." Rader gave her performers valuable advice: Go big, or go home. "She really pulled me out of my shell," Clark says. "The lessons I learned in *Little Women* have stuck with me through every show I've done since then."

Clark earned a degree in history, and her 60-page senior project combined that interest with her love of theater. Her topic: the history of women performing as Hamlet. After graduating, she performed with several theater companies, and played to acclaim a leading role in the Selma Arts Center's November 2019 production of *Cabaret*. Veteran arts journalist Donald Munro, who covers Valley theater online at *The Munro Review*, said of Clark's performance: "Her giddy, calculated,

naive and forceful characterization is a bundle of contradictions, yet she somehow blends them into a complicated whole." Munro praised the show as one of the Valley's Top 20 cultural events of 2019.



The pandemic found Clark at a crossroads. She was working in the office at Good Company Players in

Fresno, substitute teaching and planning to audition for professional roles in hopes of moving to Los Angeles or New York. COVID-19 threw her out of work and killed her audition plans. But the dream remains. "Working professionally is not a linear career path," she says. Like all performers, she wonders when theater will return, but remains committed. "Musical theater taps into the human experience, and the audience recognizes some basic truth about the human condition," Clark says. "It's dozens of strangers in a room all feeling the same emotion—going on the same ride. I don't think there's anything like that collective energy."

## On his way

At the end of his *Wicked* debut, Litz sprinted onstage for his bow. As he stood alone and applause washed over him, he had "a moment." His goals remained—performing on Broadway, and perhaps television and movies. But on that night, something he'd never forget had occurred. "I had just played my dream role," he says. "Oh my gosh. I'd done it!" Read more of Jordan's story at

[fresno.edu/Jordan](https://fresno.edu/Jordan). 🏠



## KEEPING THE ARTS AFLAME LOCALLY

By Christopher L. Scott

When Californians sheltered-in-place due to COVID-19, they turned on the arts. Movies, music and homemade forms of art illuminated life for people at home. "Netflix, Disney+ and music have been essential. People are singing on balconies and sharing it with others. Creativity through the arts has been incredibly



important in helping people cope with these difficult times," says **Aaron Bryan (TC '04, BA '03)**.

Yet that flame may be extinguished locally by cash-strapped school boards in coming years. Bryan is working to make sure the light of the arts stays on—and gets brighter.

As director of the visual and performing arts at the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Bryan works with various county school districts to coach all teachers on the arts as the most effective way to engage students in creative learning. "Art is a vehicle to help students demonstrate understanding in other content areas," he says. "We help teachers connect all content areas with the arts."

There have long been challenges to arts education in Fresno County, where only 45% of students have




access to arts education, Bryan says, "We are working to remedy that. Some day we may get to 100 percent."

Bryan's passion for the arts started while he was a music major at FPU. He now believes kids must be exposed to all the arts: music, theater, media arts, dance and visual arts. One of many ways kids get access to the arts is through Bryan's work with the *Spark!* initiative which helps "ignite arts programs where there were none before" he says. This program provides essential seed money for school districts to start art programs.

Each summer Bryan organizes the *Stages* theatre project and the Fresno County Youth Choir. Both programs are completely free for high school and college students. Participants write their own play focused on a social justice issue as well as original music, then travel across the state performing in homeless shelters, veteran's facilities and children's hospitals. "These people need the arts the most, and we bring it to them," he says.

Despite all the hands-on community work, the biggest part of Bryan's job is advocacy. "I work at local, state and federal levels with various partners to advocate for the right of all students to arts education," he says. Bryan is a liaison to the John F. Kennedy Center of Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and the Fresno Art Museum.

But the very pandemic that connected people to the arts brought with it an economic downturn that puts local programs at risk as schools, often a cultural center for their communities, face massive budget shortfalls. "Arts may soon be on the chopping block for many districts," Bryan says. "We need voices to rise up and say, 'You're not going to cut the arts from our students,' because the arts provide essential social benefits and college career benefits." 



### STAY IN TOUCH

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**Their goal:  
to nurture  
creativity in  
students studying  
music, art and  
theater—and more.**

“The arts faculty really want to help all students develop their creative confidence no matter what field they go into,” says Rebecca McMillen, Ph.D., chair of the Visual and Performing Arts Division and assistant professor of art. “We believe everyone has the ability to grow their creative skills and creative thinking.” Becoming more creative teaches everyone to focus their effort, recover after failure and perfect their technique, she adds.

One of her goals is to establish art minors in photography (“students are asking for it,” McMillen says), art therapy (“it could be nicely paired with a psychology or social work major”) and creative innovation (“drawing from art and business courses which students in any field could take”). The world needs students who pursue creative disciplines. “Studies label creativity as one of the most important skills in the workplace, and it’s the one that companies need in our unpredictable world. The coronavirus pandemic has proven that,” McMillen says.

## Common good

Art classes challenge students to exercise their brains in new and challenging ways, says Chris

# Nurturing Creative Confidence

*By Doug Hoagland*



Chris Janzen, M.F.A.

Janzen, M.F.A., assistant professor of art. “The nuts and bolts of how to draw or paint still life, landscape or portraiture—that’s the craft,” he says. “But the real challenge of studying anything in the arts is to dig into the heart of the human experience. Making art is a means of focusing on things you don’t understand and trying to empathize with other points of view.”

The new Culture and Arts Center (CAC) will provide space to consider those points of view.



Christine Keenan, M.A.

Its gallery will allow FPU to exhibit students’ work, partner with local arts organizations and host touring art shows. “As our students interact with more diverse artwork, they will be better equipped to face life once they graduate,” Janzen says. “That can only help humanity deal with conflict and find common ground.”

## Focused instruction

The CAC will also open possibilities for instrumentalists, says Christine Keenan, M.A., interim music program director. Fresno Pacific will be able to bring



in outside artists and host high school music festivals. “That will put us on the map as a great option for studying music,” she says. When in-person instruction resumes, Keenan plans to relaunch the university’s Community Music School, where music education majors provide free lessons to middle and high school musicians. More generally, Keenan’s vision is that music students benefit from a well-rounded liberal arts

them. “Sometimes, your performance doesn’t sound good. That’s part of music. You learn how to recover, and that skill is important when you’re working professionally.” Evans tries to impress on students another reality: “You have absolutely no idea what God’s plan is for you.” The best way to prepare is to ask questions because questioning means thinking. “When you learn to think, you can do anything,” Evans says.

goal is attracting non-theater majors to theater classes. “Every workspace you go into is a place of performance,” Martin says. Reading a room. Assessing chemistry between people. Learning to really listen. “These are life skills you can learn in a theater class,” she says.

Wilson wants to commission composers to produce choral works for FPU to premier. “I enjoy exploring and performing great



Christa Pehl Evans, Ph.D.



Brandi Martin, M.F.A.



Jeffrey S. Wilson, D.M.A.,

education while getting focused instruction in the music department.

## Learn to recover

Christa Pehl Evans, Ph.D., assistant professor of music history and theory, works to help students embrace truths about performance and their roles as artists. “The best performers are willing to put themselves out there before people,” she says.

Achieving high levels means taking risks, and Evans tries to help students to overcome insecurities. “Go ahead and sound bad,” she tells

## New horizons

Two new arts faculty started at FPU in the fall: Brandi Martin, M.F.A., assistant professor and program director of theater, and Jeffrey S. Wilson, D.M.A., professor of music and director of choral activities.

Martin has the same short-term goal as her colleagues: resume live shows when it’s safe. The musical *Smokey Joe’s Cafe*—postponed in the spring 2020 quarantine—is tentatively scheduled for spring 2021. A longer-term

music from the past, but also think that it’s important to encourage the creation of new music that reflects our current times,” he says. Wilson believes in exposing choirs to the music of different cultures and unfamiliar Christian traditions. He’s taken that journey himself by studying and teaching in Hungary, Mexico and Burundi. “My job is to enter into the lives of my students and know their music while I help them to expand their horizons,” he says. 🏠



# THE ARTS GROW with Fresno Pacific

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

Dalton Reimer, Ph.D., joined Pacific College in 1960, as the transition from biblical institute to college began.

While his background was communication, Reimer accepted the challenge to build a theater program. "With a small faculty, you did whatever needed to be done," says Reimer, who picked up directing and set construction along the way. He applied carpentry skills learned from his father while leaning on students—and occasionally his wife—to stitch costumes and paint canvases.

One-person departments were common in the early decades. Dietrich Friesen, for example, in music, and Rodney Harder in visual art. Roughly 60 years later, the arts are woven into the tapestry of Fresno Pacific University. Today's students choose from more than a half-dozen majors and minors, take a variety of classes and participate in music ensembles, stage productions and art shows.

The Culture and Arts Center will give nomadic programs a new home. Dedicated space, Reimer and others point out, is among the challenges the arts overcame over the decades.

## Theater

"I am very pleased with the significance of what we did then in building a foundation and building a base for a program," says Reimer.

Theater and music have strong roots in FPU's Mennonite Brethren tradition and academic forerunners. In the 1940s, for example, dramatic sketches were part of campus worship.

Productions ranged from familiar musicals (*Fiddler on the Roof*) to the religious-themed (*Rejected*) and thought-provoking (*In White America*). "We were engaging students with some pretty heavy stuff that raised social and political issues, says Reimer, emeritus communication.

After Reimer became a dean in the early 1970s, other faculty members carried the theater banner. One was his daughter, Julia Reimer, who directed the program from 2002-18 and created the theater major (a minor debuted in the 1980s).

As a girl, Julia Reimer, possibly the first theater minor, watched her father build props on the back porch. The wagon pulled by Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* became a vehicle for childhood imagination.

Once on the faculty, she found it sometimes challenging to attract serious theater students with only a minor. The program's roaming existence was another hurdle as productions cycled in and out of a variety of venues.

She tackled the academic issue by creating a major, and added a few part-time positions. Now she is optimistic the new Culture and Arts Center will finally anchor the program.

"I think all the pieces are in place for a thriving theater program," says Julia Reimer, who continues to teach at FPU. "Theater teaches about the imagination and creativity. There are many reasons why a university—and a Christian university—needs to have a theater program, and I think we are well set up now."

## Music

Music has been an unmistakable presence in each incarnation of Fresno Pacific. Former faculty call Dietrich Friesen instrumental in improving that tradition as the Bible institute became a college, particularly by building up the choir.

Roy Klassen, D.M.A., music emeritus in (choral), attended Fresno Pacific in the 1960s. "Choral music was a big part of the school when I was a student," he says. "In fact, when the choir went on tour the school would close down...They couldn't have classes because everyone was on tour."



Larry Warkentin, D.M.A., music emeritus (piano and composition), attended a recital at Pacific Bible Institute as a boy. He joined the faculty in the 1960s and “the music program, and especially the choir, was an attractive force,” he adds.

An award-winning composer, before retiring in 2002 Warkentin wrote for the choir, directed musical theater, created the folk opera *Crazy Quilt* and composed other pieces performed both on and off campus.

For about a decade he also directed the choir, which toured the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, East Coast and occasionally Europe. Klassen, who retired in 2010, took over in the late 1970s and has fond memories of those days and students. “Sitting on a bus with them for seven hours when you’re going on tour certainly either bonds you or separates you,” he says.

Wayne Huber, music emeritus, estimated one in five or six students were involved in music during his tenure, which began in the 1970s. “Music has been a large part of the campus, as it is in the church,” says Huber, who taught music theory and trumpet and led several ensembles before retiring in 2014.

Students are drawn to the choirs, Crosswind (singers and instrumentalists performing contemporary Christian music), the Symphonic Band, Pacific Brass and Pacific Bronze (handbells). Adjunct faculty have supplemented the teaching ranks.

In 2008, FPU began a summer music camp for ages 11 to 19. The camp combines a study of music with a love for Jesus Christ.

According to Walter Saul, D.M.A., music emeritus who started the tradition, the camp has helped with recruiting and brought together diverse students. “We have had people from incredibly different backgrounds come and not just get along, but really love one another,” he says.

Building on Huber’s groundwork, Saul established the Pacific Artist Series, welcoming musicians from around the area and country. Last September, in a farewell performance, Saul opened the series with his original work *From Alpha to Omega*.

## Visual art

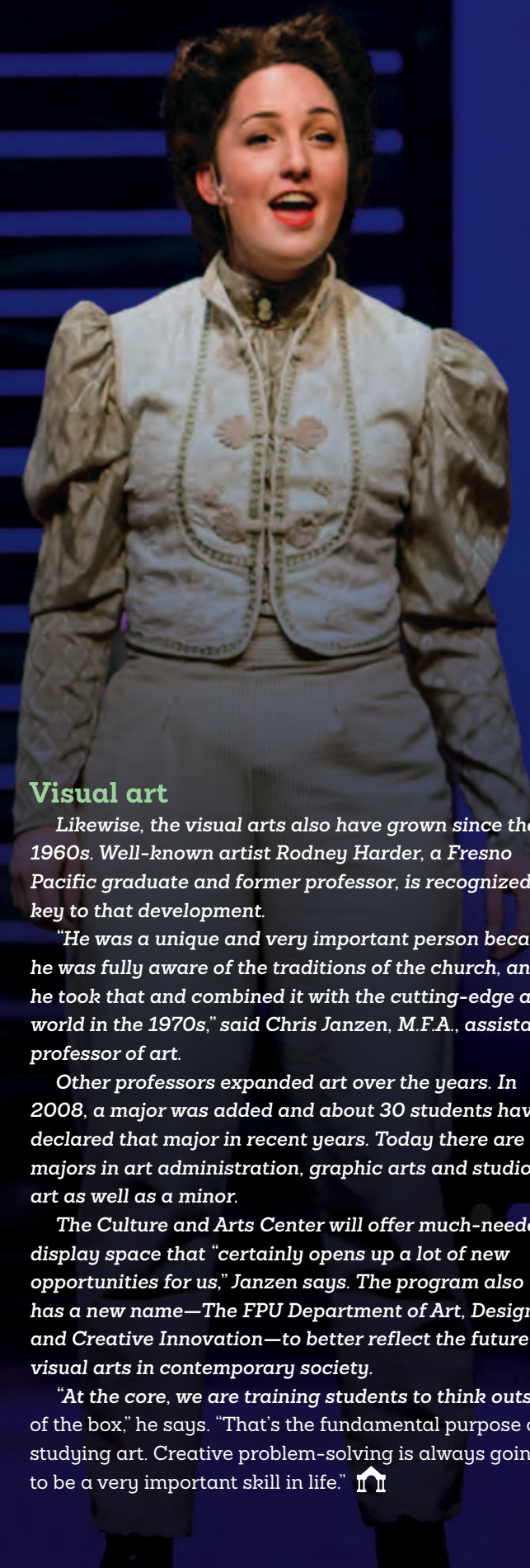
Likewise, the visual arts also have grown since the 1960s. Well-known artist Rodney Harder, a Fresno Pacific graduate and former professor, is recognized as key to that development.

“He was a unique and very important person because he was fully aware of the traditions of the church, and he took that and combined it with the cutting-edge art world in the 1970s,” said Chris Janzen, M.F.A., assistant professor of art.

Other professors expanded art over the years. In 2008, a major was added and about 30 students have declared that major in recent years. Today there are majors in art administration, graphic arts and studio art as well as a minor.

The Culture and Arts Center will offer much-needed display space that “certainly opens up a lot of new opportunities for us,” Janzen says. The program also has a new name—The FPU Department of Art, Design and Creative Innovation—to better reflect the future of visual arts in contemporary society.

“At the core, we are training students to think outside of the box,” he says. “That’s the fundamental purpose of studying art. Creative problem-solving is always going to be a very important skill in life.” 🏠





# Leaving our prints in the

By Katie Fries

## “In the beginning, God created...”

The first verse of the Bible is an origin story for life itself, but if you read between the lines you'll find it also contains guidance for all of us.

“It's the first verse of the Bible and we hear about the ultimate creative one, and that is God,” says Rebecca McMillen, Ph.D., chair, Division of Visual and Performing Arts at FPU as well as assistant professor and program director of art. “If we are made in the image of God, we are also given the ability to create. Not on the same level, but as human beings. We teach that we're free in Christ to use our talents and skill to bring him glory.”

Like many colleges and universities, Fresno Pacific University offers courses and degrees in the arts, along with programs that—while learning experiences for student artists—benefit the community as a whole. The Central Valley has a diverse and thriving arts community, and higher education institutions like FPU play an important role in getting art to the people.

Donald Munro has covered the Valley's arts scene for more than 25 years, first as an arts reporter at *The Fresno Bee* and now for his website, *The Munro Review*. He said universities like FPU provide a valuable service in cities like Fresno, where there are fewer options for those wanting to engage with art. “The universities fill this really crucial need for us for live arts, for culture,” he says. “In San Francisco, people probably pay very little attention to what's going on at San Francisco State or UCSF or even at Cal. It's because there are so many professional opportunities and it's a world-class city. [But] in many cities, and Fresno is no exception, universities are kind of a lifeline to people craving these experiences.”

He cites the university's 2016 theatrical production of *Little Women* as an example. Not only did it feature strong vocal performances, he said, but it featured two young actors, **EJ Hinojosa (BA '16)** and **Meg Clark (BA '17)**, who have continued to impact Fresno's arts scene. Hinojosa, a music educator and composer, has championed area musicians by programming a concert series featuring the original music of local composers.

Clark has since performed in productions with Good Company Players, StageWorks Fresno and Selma Arts Center.

Indeed, artists affiliated with FPU have left fingerprints all over the Valley's arts scene. Janette Erickson and Laura Porter, principal flutist and harpist, respectively, with the Fresno Philharmonic, are both music instructors at FPU; art professor Chris Janzen has participated in Fresno's monthly ArtHop events.

“I think that like other teaching institutions they have developed a good reputation for offering accessible programs for people who have an interest in the fine arts,” said **Lilia Chavez (MA '08)**, executive director at Fresno Arts Council. The university's involvement in community-wide events like ArtHop, she added, has “made the public more aware of the offerings it does have.”



Rebecca McMillen, Ph.D.



Donald Munro



# VALLEY ARTS COMMUNITY

Rei Hodota, who has been music director for the Fresno Philharmonic since the 2017-18 season, said the philharmonic has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with FPU-affiliated musicians, including Walter Saul, D.M.A., whose compositions have been performed by the orchestra. "I really appreciate his enthusiasm for the things we've been trying to do to reach out to the community," she says. "He's been to every concert, brought students from his classes. That's the way we need to work as arts organizations, is to really pull each other up."

Hodota also praised the way FPU alumni who are now educators work to instill an appreciation of the arts in students in grades K-12, noting that the Fresno Philharmonic partners with the Fresno County

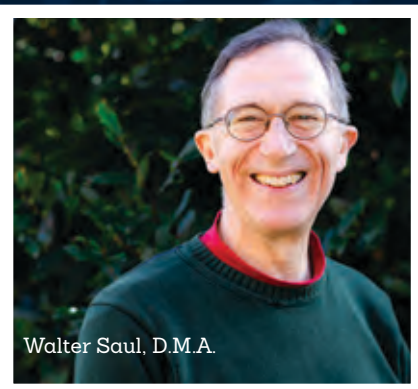
Superintendent of Schools Office to participate in Carnegie Hall's Link Up program. The national initiative provides hands-on orchestral and vocal music education, and the opportunity to perform in a concert with the philharmonic, to students in 120 elementary schools throughout the Valley.

"Teachers from FPU are so well prepared that they're really going out into the community and teaching the students in a way that is nurturing, active and proactive," she says. "I've met with some of these teachers in preparation for these concerts and they're inquisitive and engaged, and it's great to see that."

This is, noted McMillen, the result of an educational philosophy that emphasizes teaching beyond the technical skills and encouraging students to think about their discipline in terms of a broader picture. "Some of our

kids go on to be educators and will be able to teach not just what to learn, but how to learn," she says. "Arts help students develop a wide variety of skills. There are other studies that conclude creativity is the most important skill today. When organizations need to pivot, businesses that can adapt and pivot are the ones that are surviving. Creativity should be at the top of the list of skills that schools are including. We see ourselves as equipping students with creative confidence, not just in their art skills but in the way they think and innovate."

And when these students head out into the world, whether as working artists like Hinojosa and Clark, or as educators, the entire community benefits. 🏠



Walter Saul, D.M.A.



Lillia Chavez



Rei Hodota

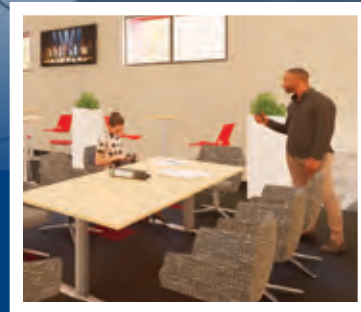
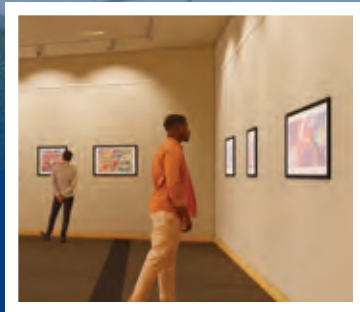


Janette Erickson





The CAC will face south. It will be visible from Butler Avenue just east of its intersection with Chestnut Avenue.



# Together We Build

## Realizing The Dream

**Warkentine Culture and Arts Center Connects  
Fresno Pacific University with Communities of All Kinds**

*By Wayne Steffen*



The newest building at Fresno Pacific University will take the university's calling to "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities" to its highest level.

The Warkentine Culture and Arts Center, set to open in late fall 2021 or early 2022 on the north side of FPU's main campus, will empower students, faculty and staff with a top-shelf space to learn about, explore and share music, theater and visual arts. But that's only the beginning. The CAC will also serve as an outreach to the rich cultures of the Southeast Fresno neighborhood around the main campus, the city and the Valley—home to one of the country's most diverse collections of people, backgrounds and customs.

"This center is an asset and a resource and therefore a blessing to the community," says Don Griffith, vice president of advancement and executive director of the FPU Foundation. "It will enhance the student experience and more."

With its mainstage theater, black box theater, grand foyer and art gallery, the CAC will bring together the arts at FPU, which have moved through a series of improvised venues over the years, to the benefit of students and faculty involved in music, theater and visual arts, as well as their audiences. It will also welcome community members and events of all kinds. Flexible spaces allow for multiple uses: the mainstage theater, for example, seats 400 for a staged concert or play, but movable seating

creates opportunities for dinners, lectures, holiday celebrations and other uses. "We could do anything from a fundraising dinner to a wedding," Griffith says.

Attracting conferences and professional events is imperative. "We just don't currently have the sort of venue we can use to engage with the business and professional community," Griffith says. "One of the significant keys to FPU's success going forward is we need to be engaged with, and embedded in, this group of leaders."

Connections that begin at the CAC could result in internships for FPU students and employment for graduates. This goes for other kinds of contact, as well. If an elementary school has its holiday event at the center, or a high school its baccalaureate ceremony, "it gets students and their parents on campus, which might be their first experience of FPU," Griffith says, "it might get them to apply down the road."

The approximately 26,000-square-foot center is named for Al and Dotty Warkentine, both longtime friends of Fresno Pacific. Al is a retired dentist, businessman and member emeritus of the FPU Board of Trustees. A harpist, Dotty has been a patron and participant in university arts programs.

Al Warkentine has been a faithful donor through a long process. "Throughout he has never lost hope," Griffith says.

A previous building campaign got caught in the Great Recession, but talk of an arts center has an even longer history. "Dalton Reimer showed me a letter from the 1960s discussing this," Griffith says.



Daytime parking will be to the south and east and nighttime event parking in the lots at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and McDonald Hall.





Reimer, Ph.D. (former dean and emeritus faculty), is another longtime supporter. Griffith also gives special thanks to emeritus music faculty Larry Warkentin, D.M.A.; Roy Klassen, D.M.A.; and Wayne Huber; community leaders Bill and Jerry Lyles; and former FPU Presidents D. Merrill Ewert, Ph.D., and Richard Kriegbaum, Ph.D. Current President Joseph Jones, Ph.D., reenergized the process with his community focus.

With so many to thank for FPU's success, Griffith hesitates to start naming people because he knows he can't include them all. "It's all of the donors who have been involved, those who are still around and those no longer with us," he says.

The building cost is about \$14.6M, and as funding allows the university may make some enhancements during construction. Those enhancements plus providing furnishings would result in a total expected cost of about \$15.1M. So as the first earth is moved, opportunities still exist to give. "We're looking for the Lord to raise up faithful additional folks to come alongside us," Griffith says. 🏠



## Together We Build

**There's Still Time to Give!**  
Support students, the arts and FPU's calling to "Engage the Cultures and Serve the Cities" with a gift to the Together We Build Campaign for the Culture and Arts Center at [fpu.edu/togetherwebuild](http://fpu.edu/togetherwebuild)





# A PASSION TO HELP

By Christopher L. Scott

A seven-day camp turned into a lifetime passion when a friend from her congregation, Sequoia Church in Fresno, asked Nikki Campos if she'd consider volunteering for Young Life's "Capernaum" ministry at Lost Canyon Camp.

At that time Nikki was a junior in high school planning to attend Cal Poly and become an architect. But a week at Lost Canyon changed her direction. Seven days as the "buddy" and best friend of a girl with cerebral palsy showed Nikki she wanted to help people with disabilities. Not only did the girl teach Nikki how she could help someone with a disability, she taught Nikki she enjoyed it. "The girl was in a wheelchair. She could not feed herself, clothe herself or anything like that," Nikki says.


Changing career goals meant Nikki had to find another plan for school. She did some research and applied at schools that would serve her new passion. "I was up to four or five colleges," she says. "I relied on Jeremiah 29:11 to help me which says, 'For I know the plans that I have for you, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope'" (NASB).

And God provided direction. First, through Brian Davis, a member of her church and campus chaplain at FPU, who told

her about degrees at the university that would prepare her for a career helping people with disabilities. She also visited the main campus. "The environment, the people and the community leaders were my kind of life as a Christian. That is what I wanted to be surrounded with while going to college," she says.

Now Nikki's a junior at FPU pursuing a degree in kinesiology with an emphasis in pre-occupational therapy. She also plays

the piano as a music minor and this year will serve as editor-in-chief of *The Syrnix* student newspaper.

When asked how she would like to look back on her life 20 years from now, Nikki said, "I just want to love people with disabilities and want others to see them as just another individual." 

**“I just want to love people with disabilities and want others to see them as just another individual.”**



## 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)



# THE SECRET LIFE OF STUDENT-ATHLETES

By Katie Fries

Soccer superstar Megan Rapinoe plays guitar. Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald is a photographer. And former Chicago Bears linebacker Lance Briggs has written comic books. Though better known for their accomplishments on the field, when it's time to unwind from high-stakes athletic competition these athletes turn to other—often unexpected—pursuits. Hobbies provide an escape, says FPU freshman basketball player and artist Lydia Manu, “Sometimes amidst high competition, one needs a break from the pressures and stress.”

## Jaime Ramirez



Jaime Ramirez thinks his affinity for working with leather must be in his blood. As a child in Mexico, the FPU head men's soccer coach wore cowboy boots and played with a leather soccer ball.

When he came to the United States to live with his grandparents, Ramirez had to choose a high school elective each year. “One year I took home ec. and another year mechanical drawing,” he recalls, “and in my junior year I decided to take a leather class. It was a semester, but I loved it so much I took it for a full year. I really took a liking to the idea of working with my eye-hand coordination in designing something.”

Eventually Ramirez crafted leather wallets and other small items for family members. He put the

hobby aside after high school until, teaching elementary school in the late 80s, he had the opportunity to sign his class up for a two-week leather course with an outside instructor. It reignited his interest and inspired him to purchase supplies and kits and learn enough about the craft to teach his students himself.

In the mid-90s Ramirez, now full-time at FPU, was inspired to pick up his tools again, to craft keychains with the university crest for his soccer players and superhero-themed keychains for his children. It's been about 25 years since Ramirez started making yearly presents for his team—keychains, bag tags and other small items stamped with graphics designed in coordination with FPU's graphics department. He also makes bookmarks for his non-athlete students and gifts for others on campus. “It's one of my ways of sharing something I love to do with my students and my team,” he says.

He shares his hobby with his family, as well. “My grandkids, they come over and they'll go, ‘Papa Jaime, can we go make leather?’ It's a lot of fun. They'll take a piece and carve whatever they want; they really are an inspiration to me and I get to—at least for right now—have that experience and hopefully pass it on,” he says.

## Raine McKeython

Like many of us, Raine McKeython learned to cook by watching his parents. The basketball player, who transferred to FPU from Florida's Stetson University, recalls watching his father, who, he says, could “make anything without using a recipe,” but admits he wasn't necessarily interested in cooking for himself. That changed when he got to college and saw many of his teammates choosing fast food.

“Growing up I didn't get a lot of fast food,” he says. “I kind of wanted a home cooked meal.” McKeython began experimenting, finding recipes and putting his own spin on them.

Eventually, he began sharing his kitchen creations with his roommates, then other teammates. His specialty? McKeython says his family loves it when he makes steak, but his favorite type of food to cook is







**IN STEP WITH  
THE SUNBIRDS**

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Italian.

"I get creative by using all different types of noodles, all different types

of sauces. You can put your own spin on it where it may not even be Italian anymore. I like making my own meatballs and that's really fun because you can just put anything in there you want. You can use old bread that's kind of stale and if you put enough flavor in there it'll be good. It kind of all comes to me when I'm thinking about it," he says.

McKeython is pursuing a degree in finance, and says he'd also like to play basketball overseas. For now, cooking remains a hobby his friends and family appreciate. "I think it's fun and if it works you can always cook it again," he says.

## Lydia Manu

Basketball is a family affair for Lydia Manu, whose father coached her high school team and whose siblings and cousins play as well. Art, however, she discovered on her own.

Manu recalls loving drawing as a child, and even sold her drawings of video game characters on the elementary school playground. Just as with sports, the more she practiced, the better she got. And like many, she finds inspiration in favorite stories and media. "A lot of my artwork stems from the shows I watch," she says. "My siblings and I watch anime, so I tend to draw characters from those shows." Her favorite piece is a pencil sketch of the character Itachi from Naruto.

And while basketball may be the family's "thing," it turns out Manu's way with pencil and paper may be inherited, too. "A couple years ago I found out my mom was a talented artist," she says. "I told her to draw me something, anything, and she handed me a picture of a beautiful mask. Seeing how talented she was inspired me to continue this hobby, because the results were simply beautiful."

Like Ramirez and McKeython, Manu uses her hobby to relax and engage her mind in a different way.

"Drawing gives me an opportunity to let loose," she says. "I'm free to create whatever I want. Every time I look at a drawing, it brings back memories and makes me smile." 🏠



## Men's Tennis Returns for 2021-2022

Men's tennis returns to FPU for the 2021-2022 season with a Central Valley native at the helm.

George Rodriguez will be head coach, bringing more than 20 years coaching experience, including stints at Premier Athletic and Tennis Club and at NCAA Division II Grand Valley State, both in Michigan. At GVSU, he was named the ITA Midwest Region Assistant Coach of the Year in 2019.

"I am extremely excited and honored to be a part of the FPU Department of Athletics as the tennis program's head coach," Rodriguez said. "FPU tennis has an extremely strong tradition of producing great players and teams, but more importantly, I look forward to working with, developing and shaping the leaders of the future."

The Sunbird program gets a fresh start after compiling a record of 190-38 from 2006-2014, winning NAIA's Golden State Athletic Conference league title five times and national championships in 2009 and 2011.

Two seasons ago FPU relaunched women's tennis, which has returned to national prominence.

More at [fpu.edu/332-tennis](http://fpu.edu/332-tennis). 🏠



# IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI



## » PRINCE FINISHES ANOTHER RACE

**Joe Prince (BA '77)**, retired from teaching special education at Sahuarita High School, near Tucson, AZ, but will continue as track coach. A nationally ranked runner, during his childhood Joe was placed in special education classes due to a learning disability and at FPU he battled cancer before eventually running in Europe with Athletes in Action. [fpu.edu/322-prince](http://fpu.edu/322-prince)



## » ZIYADINOV LEADS AMERICAN RED CROSS CHAPTER

**Nuriddin Ziyadinov (BA '16)** is executive director of the Northern California Chapter of the American Red Cross, serving 14 counties and 1.2 million residents from the Nevada state line to Pacific Ocean and from the Oregon state line to Colusa County, north of the Bay Area.

## GENERAL » ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Catherine Jalomo (BS '20)** is pursuing a Ph.D. in the materials chemistry program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Alisen Moore (BA '20)** is an education specialist for Visalia Unified School District and earning her special education credential at FPU.

**Darian Sagasar (MA '20, BA '14)** is a sixth-grade teacher at Cottonwood Creek Elementary School in Visalia, CA.

**David Brown (BA '19)** was included in KFSN TV (ABC 30)'s July 21, 2020, coverage of California Health Sciences University's first medical school class. [fpu.edu/332-dbrown](http://fpu.edu/332-dbrown)

**Payton Miller (MA '19)**, published "John 9: A Question of Healing or a Question of Allegiance?" in the fall 2019 edition of the Journal of the Christian Institute on Disability. [fpu.edu/332-miller](http://fpu.edu/332-miller)

**Carmen Moreno (TC '19, BA '09)** is a teacher at Monson Sultana School in Sultana, CA.

**Brian Semsem (BA '19)** is the subject of a July 14, 2020, article in *ACES Connection*. Brian is director of recreational resilience programs for Every Neighborhood Partnership. [fpu.edu/332-semsem](http://fpu.edu/332-semsem)

**Kerry Thompson (MA '19)** is the director of sports performance at Grambling State University.

**Melissa Bergen (SEM '18, '09, BA '04)** organized a campaign to keep the Shafter Public Library open, helped by **Katie Wiebe (TC '05, BA '04)**. [fpu.edu/332-bergen](http://fpu.edu/332-bergen)

**Taylor Moore (MA '18, BA '16)**, an accountant auditor for the County of Tulare Auditor-Assessor, was accepted into the Master of Professional Accounting Program at Colorado State University.

**Rebecca Murphey (MS '18)** is a certified nurse practitioner at Adventist Health. [fpu.edu/332-murphey](http://fpu.edu/332-murphey)





## » RIZO MAKES MARJAREE MASON TOP 10

**Aileen Rizo (MS '13)** is an honoree at the 37th Annual Top Ten Professional Women and Leading Business Awards by Fresno's Marjaree Mason Center. Rizo is associate director PK-12 at the AIMS Center for Math and Science Education. She is also an adjunct faculty in the School of Natural Sciences and the School of Education. [fpu.edu/332-rizo](http://fpu.edu/332-rizo)

**Anthony Velarde (BS '18)** is playing his second season with the Pittsburgh River Hounds of the United Soccer League. [fpu.edu/332-velarde](http://fpu.edu/332-velarde)

**Tyler Hodges (TC '17, BA '16)** is a teacher at Crossroads Christian School, Madera, CA.

**Donte McDaniel (BA '17)** demonstrated drumming as healing in a March 4, 2020, Selma Enterprise article. [fpu.edu/332-mcdaniel](http://fpu.edu/332-mcdaniel)

**Amanda Toste (BA '17)** is executive officer of the Merced County Superior Court. [fpu.edu/332-mcdaniel](http://fpu.edu/332-mcdaniel)

**Maxton Viera (TC '17, BA '16)** was selected KSEE 24 (NBC-TV) Teacher of the Week in February 2020.

**Leanza Garcia (BS '16)** will receive her M.S. in Behavioral Psychology from Pepperdine University in 2020.

**Renato Bustamante (FS '15)** coaches men's soccer at College of the Sequoias. [fpu.edu/332-bustamante](http://fpu.edu/332-bustamante)

## FOUR ALUMNAE HONORED AS "BLACK MAGICAL WOMEN"

Four graduates were among those honored for Fresno's first Black Magical Women Award, presented during Black History Month to African American women doing meaningful community work.

**Karla Kirk (MA '10, BA '07),  
Kimberly Tapscott-Munson (BA '10),  
Laneesha Senegal (BA '12),  
Shantay Davies-Balch (BA '15)**

Kizzy Lopez, Ed.D., assistant professor of social work, was also among those selected. [fpu.edu/332-women](http://fpu.edu/332-women)

## ALUMNI SELECTED TO FRESNO POLICE REFORM COMMISSION

Three alumni were named to the Fresno Commission on Police Reform. **David J. (D.J.) Criner Jr. (FS '17)** pastor at Saint Rest Baptist Church; **Marcel Woodruff (SEM '12)**, community organizer at Faith in the Valley; and **Simon Biasell (SEM '16, BA '12)**, pastor of Woven Community at Westminster Presbyterian Church, joined FPU President Joseph Jones, Ph.D., on the panel appointed by Fresno Mayor Lee Brand to present recommendations to the city council. [fpu.edu/332-reform](http://fpu.edu/332-reform)

**Kenneth Burchard (SEM '14, BA '09)** was promoted to executive director of the Lake Taylor Transitional Care Hospital Foundation, Norfolk, VA. [fpu.edu/332-burchard](http://fpu.edu/332-burchard)

**Brandon Croft (BS '14)** was selected in March 2020 for a residency in internal medicine in the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine's Fresno program. [gwire.com/2020/03/23/ucsf-fresno-announces-newest-medical-residents-and-they-are-prime/](http://gwire.com/2020/03/23/ucsf-fresno-announces-newest-medical-residents-and-they-are-prime/)

**Hannah (Mendes, BA '14)** and **Levi Gill** started Arrowhead Forestry Mulching (AFM) in January 2017.

**Stephanie Liuba (BA '14)** earned her master's in clinical counseling from California School of Professional Psychology in 2016 and will earn her Ph.D. in clinical psychology in 2021. [fpu.edu/332-liuba](http://fpu.edu/332-liuba)

**Fabricio Nazare (BA '13)** is head coach (U13) for Cruzeiro Esporte Clube Academy in Minas Gerais, Brazil.



## » GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Lynne Ashbeck (MA '12)** was featured in "The Women Who Shaped Clovis" March 18, 2020, in the *Clovis Roundup*. She is a long-time member of the city council and former mayor of Clovis. [fpu.edu/332-ashbeck](http://fpu.edu/332-ashbeck)

**Marcel Woodruff (SEM '12)** wrote the opinion piece "A missed opportunity and tragic loss of life as Fresno's gun violence remains constant" in the April 27, 2020, *Fresno Bee*. [fpu.edu/332-woodruff](http://fpu.edu/332-woodruff)

**Mark Ottusch (MA '11)** is athletic director at New Fairfield High School, New Fairfield, CT. [fpu.edu/332-ottusch](http://fpu.edu/332-ottusch)

**Vicencia Abundis (BA '10)** is community outreach coordinator for the Lowell Community Development Corporation and is earning her Master of Arts in Community Leadership and Transformation at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary.

**Kelly (Mitchison, BA '10) Amend** was appointed coordinator of the Tulare County Human Trafficking Task Force, August 14, 2020. [fpu.edu/332-amend](http://fpu.edu/332-amend)

**Todd Brown (BA '10)** stepped down as Kingsburg High School boy's basketball coach in May 2020. [fpu.edu/332-tbrown](http://fpu.edu/332-tbrown)

**Brandon C. Benziger (BA '08)**, Th.M., M.Div., co-edited *A Charitable Orthodoxy: Christian Perspectives on Emotions in Multifaith Engagement*, published in 2020 by Pickwick Publications. Brandon is director of ministry operations at Community Bible Church, Waterford, CA. [fpu.edu/332-benziger](http://fpu.edu/332-benziger)

**Efrain Tovar (MA '06, BA '95)** was a panelist in the June 2020 California Teachers Association webinar "Elementary Educators: Communicating with Families of English Learners During Distance Learning."

**Matthew Blythe (BA '05)** is a field scout for Sun Pacific Farming.

**Andrew Johnson (SEM '05)** is director of admissions at the University of Arkansas—Fort Smith. He formerly directed admissions at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and undergraduate admissions at FPU. [fpu.edu/332-johnson](http://fpu.edu/332-johnson)

**Rici (Bell) Skei's (MA '05, BA '02)** plea for support of restaurants owned by African Americans was the subject of a May 31, 2020, *Fresno Bee* article. [fpu.edu/332-skei](http://fpu.edu/332-skei)

**David Bacci (BA '04)** is regional vice president of the non-profit Hospital Council of Northern and Central California.

**Dave Highbaugh (MA, '04)** retired in June 2018 after 42 years teaching in the Campbell Union High, Riverdale High and Selma Unified School Districts. At Selma, he coached the Academic Decathlon team, was Teacher of the Year four times and had two yearbooks dedicated to him.

**Sean Hancock (BA '03)** is president of Cerro Coso Community College. [fpu.edu/332-Hancock](http://fpu.edu/332-Hancock)

**Christa Wiens (TC '00, BA '99)** published "Labels" in the May/June edition of *Christian Leader* magazine. [fpu.edu/332-wiens](http://fpu.edu/332-wiens)

**Ty Amundsen (BA '98)** was featured in "Millennium, Lakers coaches push app to help players train amid coronavirus pandemic" in the March 26, 2020, *Arizona Republic*. [fpu.edu/332-amundsen](http://fpu.edu/332-amundsen)

**Kathryn Smith Derksen (MA '98, BA '95)** is program manager for SADRA (South African Development and Reconstruction Agency) Conflict Transformation.

**Ryan Tos (TC '98, BA '97)** was named California Interscholastic Federation Central Section commissioner July 1, 2020. [fpu.edu/332-tos](http://fpu.edu/332-tos)

**Johnny Baltierra (MA '97)** is a provisional member of Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) and provides a college access program (Bridge2College) for high school students from underrepresented groups.

**William White (MA '94)** was promoted to superintendent of Williams Bay School District in Wisconsin. [fpu.edu/332-white](http://fpu.edu/332-white)

**Dina Gonzalez-Pina (MA '98, BA '90)**, former assistant dean of multicultural ministries at FPU and now ethnic and gender equity specialist at Mennonite Central Committee, contributed to "Moving Past Theory" in the spring 2020 issue of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities magazine. [fpu.edu/332-g-pina](http://fpu.edu/332-g-pina)

**Terry Collier (BA '84)** is a partner at EFG Architects in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

**Efren Iglesia (BA '72)** retired as a Monterey County Superior Court judge May 22, 2020. [fpu.edu/332-iglesi](http://fpu.edu/332-iglesi)

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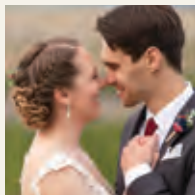
## » WEDDINGS



**Samantha Witt (BA '20)** married Seth Jordan on May 24, 2020, in Fallbrook, CA. Sam and Seth met at FPU in Mark Baker's Theology of Missions class. Seth is in the M.A. in Community Leadership & Transformation program at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. The couple plan to enter missions.



**Joel Hignojoz (BA '17)** married Amelia Faye Alford on May 2, 2020. They plan to move to Texas next year so Joel can complete his Master of Science in Supply Chain Management at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. Currently he is a process development specialist at a local winery and distillery and plans to become a continuous improvement manager for a large company.

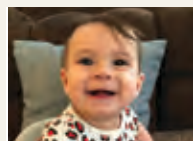


**Amy Ordway (BA '13)** married Titus Morikawa in Sanger, CA, on April 17, 2020. Amy works at Clovis Community Medical Center as a cardiac nurse and Gurnick Academy of Medical Arts as a clinical nursing instructor.

## » BIRTHS



**Hannah Rufert (BA '20)** announces the birth of twin daughters Brittany and Brooklynn on March 4, 2020. They joined big brother Mason.



**Amanda (Richardson, MA '17, BA '09)** and **Albert Bernabe (BA '13)** announce the birth of daughter Emma Elizabeth on August 29, 2019.



**Hannah (Mendes, BA '14)** and **Levi Gill** announce the birth of daughter Hayden Rose in September 2018. Hannah and the fifth-generation cattle rancher of Exeter, CA, married in March 2016.



**Brian Fast (TC '11, BA '09)** and wife Sarah announce the birth of daughter Avery Rose on April 12, 2020. She weighed 7 lbs. and 9 oz. and joins their son, Owen.



**Stephanie (Wall, BA '11)** and **Trent Voth (SEM '12)** announce the birth of son Darien Phynix Voth on May 3, 2020 in Toronto, ON, Canada.

## » DEATHS

**Jennifer Downs (TC '13, BA '08)** died August 25, 2020. Jennifer taught special education at Pioneer Middle School in Hanford, CA. She leaves behind her husband, Jeff.

**Myeisha Felisha Neal (BA '15)**, 39, Lemoore, CA, died April 13, 2020. She worked at Wood Brother's Land Leveling and as an assistant teacher at West Hills College Lemoore. Survivors include husband Edward and five children and her parents. [fpu.edu/332-neal](http://fpu.edu/332-neal)



**Tom Munoz (SEM '86)** died May 13, 2020. Tom's Master of Arts in World Mission equipped him to promote positive activities through skateboarding in Modesto, CA.

**Arthur James Penner**, 95, died August 1, 2020. Owner of Furrow Farms, Art served on the then-Fresno Pacific College Board 1977-1984 and was a member of Shafter Mennonite Brethren Church. Survivors include **Donna (PBI '47)**, his wife of 73 years, and their children, son **Stephen (SEM '79, BA '71)** and wife Glenna; daughter **Susanne (BA '72)** and husband **Mark Franz (BA '72)**; son **Randy (BA '74)** and wife Pam (**FS '73**); daughter **Sharon (BA '79)** and husband **Bob Wiebe (FS '77)**. [fpu.edu/332-penner](http://fpu.edu/332-penner)

**Wendy Wakeman, Ph.D., 71**, died June 12, 2020. She was dean of the graduate school and the school of professional studies from 1997-2006. Survivors include husband David John Balzer. [fpu.edu/332-wakeman](http://fpu.edu/332-wakeman)



### WHAT'S GOING ON?

Let your friends know what's happening in your life. visit [fpu.edu/alumniupdate](http://fpu.edu/alumniupdate)

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES: MUSICAL THEATER 1962-1987

By Kevin Enns-Rempel, Director, Hiebert Library

In 1966 Pacific College staged *Brigadoon*, directed by music professor Gary Unruh. While not Pacific's first musical (the one-act opera *Amahl & the Night Visitors* was produced in 1962 and 1963), *Brigadoon* was by far the most elaborate theatrical performance ever attempted at the fledgling college. The 30 actors (roughly 13 percent of the student body) were supported by other students in the production crew as well as the Roosevelt High School orchestra and the McLane High School bagpipers and dancers. Such a production was only possible with the 1965 construction of a large outdoor amphitheater, where AIMS Hall of Mathematics & Science now stands.

### From the Archives...



*Brigadoon* began a remarkable era of musical theater performances at Pacific. From 1966-1987 the college produced musicals at least every other academic year. Highlights included Gilbert & Sullivan (*The Mikado* in 1970 and 1982, *H. M. S. Pinafore* in 1971 and *Pirates of Penzance* in 1975), as well as *Fiddler on the Roof* in 1974 and 1984, followed by another in 2007.

Before 1982 all musical theater productions were in the amphitheater. In his program notes for the 1982 *Mikado*, director Jim Becker noted the move from a quarter to semester calendar that year might mark the end of outdoor musical theater. Quarters allowed for productions during the generally trustworthy weather of late May, but semesters would shift them to late April. Fortunately, musicals moved indoors. The Special Events Center hosted the 1984 and 2007 productions of *Fiddler*, as well as *The Music Man* (1986) and *Oklahoma!* (1996). Other locations were Alumni Hall, Ashley Auditorium and Memorial Auditorium in downtown Fresno. A few productions still braved April outdoors, including *Into the Woods* (2000), the last before the amphitheater was demolished.

Musicals became less frequent after 1987, generally taking place only about every four years, even as the student body grew significantly. The ability to produce musical theater at the scale it did during the 1960s and 1970s was yet another example of Pacific College "punching above its weight." 🏠



# Saul's HIGHER MISSION

Walter Saul found his place when then-President Merrill Ewert called Fresno Pacific University an engaged Christian university of high commitment to Christ and high community engagement. "I wanted to be a part of that community right away," Saul says.

In the spring of 2020, Saul, D.M.A., music emeritus, completed 17 years as a professor of music, teaching music theory, appreciation, piano and his first love—composition. He also doubled his list of published works to 300 and added to his award shelf, which holds 24 ASCAP prizes and numerous composer of the year honors.

Music came early to Saul. The Philadelphia native grew up in Chevy Chase, MD, building on the musical foundation his mother provided from age 2, and starting to write music after joining a boys choir at All Saints Episcopal Church at 7. Piano lessons followed at 9 and theory and composition study at 11.

So did success. At 13, Saul wrote a Communion Service that attracted a full-page article—"A Boy of Note"—in the *Washington Evening Star*. Two Broadcast Music, Inc., Student Composer Awards followed. As a Duke University undergraduate he won three Henry Schuman Music Prizes, and published his first music while earning his master's and doctorate at Eastman



School of Music.

Saul joined FPU in 2003

from Warner Pacific University. Larry

Warkentin, D.M.A., professor emeritus of music, was Saul's entrée through their membership in the Christian Fellowship of Art Music Composers. "FPU truly loves its students, and I have treasured being part of that ethos," Saul says.

In turn, Saul felt valued as he started the Summer Music Camp and the Pacific Artist Series. Colleagues and students requested compositions, and his work was performed at Carnegie Hall, by the Fresno Philharmonic and recorded on Naxos. He also wrote music for three FPU presidents. "This has truly been the Lord's call on my life," he says.

For all his achievements, Saul seeks no honors. "My mission as a composer is to create musical icons, windows of sonic light, that usher listeners into the presence of Jesus Christ," he says. More at [waltersaul.com/index.php/about-2/about](http://waltersaul.com/index.php/about-2/about). 🏠

## 2021 Alumni and Friends Trip TO FRANCE

Spend 11 days touring the rich historical and cultural sites of Paris, Normandy and the Loire Valley of France with Stephen Varvis, Ph.D., professor of history. There is also an optional three-day extension to Chamonix and Mont Blanc in the French Alps.

### June 15 to July 27

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



# A HOPE AND A FUTURE



For Don Griffith, vice president of advancement and executive director of the FPU Foundation, creating a culture of philanthropy is about more than simply raising money, it's about seeing the community as inter-connected. That means that if students succeed, then so do families, businesses and the whole Central Valley.

This concept is the foundation of a new campaign, "A Hope and a Future," that seeks to energize donors, the professional community and students to see the value of education as a catalyst for community development. Prior to his current post, Griffith chaired



## PROVIDE

A Hope & A Future for the Central Valley!  
Check [fpu.edu/ahopeandafuture](http://fpu.edu/ahopeandafuture), email [jessi.weaver@fresno.edu](mailto:jessi.weaver@fresno.edu) or call 559-453-3450.

## A BOLD NEW VISION for Mutual Benefit

the FPU Board of Trustees. During that time, he was stunned by the high percentage of students whose family income was below \$40,000 per year. Most of these students would be first in their families to earn a bachelor's degree. Knowing a degree could mean a world of difference in the income-earning potential of that generation inspired Griffith to develop a bold new vision for advancement: to engage donors to support these students financially, certainly—but even more to engage the whole community for mutual benefit.

Griffith knows students need internships and community service opportunities to help launch their careers. He also knows FPU is a treasure trove of training and education resources. And, as a former businessman himself, Griffith knows that the professional community needs both a strong talent pool as well as continuing education. Improving the lives of students through an FPU education and internships— as well as offering local businesses services from professional development workshops and well-trained interns to individualized consulting—could mean success for everyone. "We're all members of this community called the Valley and human capital is the best resource the Valley has to offer," says Griffith, whose plan taps the potential of people first and foremost. "When we rise, we rise together."

Alumna Jennifer Cibrian is a prime example. Throughout her college years, the accounting major took any opportunity she could get for professional development: participating in clubs, working as a student assistant in enrollment and interning at Gary Istanbulian, CPA. Cibrian kept her eye on the prize of becoming a professional accountant and today works at Istanbulian as a bookkeeper while preparing for her CPA license. "Having a hands-on experience changed my perspective of what it would be like to work in the field," Cibrian says.





Likewise, Gary Istamboulian calls hiring and mentoring FPU grads like Cibrian a positive experience. Istamboulian enjoys giving interns real-world experience and says he looks for the kind of traits FPU grads bring: loyalty, an eagerness to learn and a long-term view. Moreover, business owners like Istamboulian can help FPU identify gaps in curriculum to better prepare graduates for careers in their field.

These are the kind of partnerships A Hope and A Future seeks to expand throughout the Valley. They get Director of Alumni Development Ali Sena, excited: “The Hope and A Future campaign is bigger than FPU—it’s about the Valley and our alumni communities.” Sena knows the impact internships make in the lives of students and she’s eager to inspire alumni to get involved. “I hear from alumni who say that their internship was so valuable and was one of the most important parts of their education,” she says.


For Griffith and his team, the sky is the limit when it comes to expanding community partnerships. They are looking for donors, professionals and community members they can serve through workshops or consulting, and who want to invest in students through funding scholarships, offering internships or providing pathways to employment. “We are seeking to engage people where we are,” says Griffith. “We see ourselves in service to the community. That’s our passion. That’s our goal with this campaign.” 

## Thriving TOGETHER with Purpose

*Steven Redekop, director of foundation development*

The Central Valley business and professional community is committed, passionate and resilient; both in innovation during this present season of challenge and in pressing forward toward the fruit of a hopeful future. Likewise, as the Fresno Pacific University community and the FPU Foundation seek to come alongside businesses in this present context, there is cause for great optimism and excitement as collaboration and innovation form a hopeful future for our great Valley!

FPU is Founded on Christ. This Christ-centered reality informs our understanding of legacy and our motivation for and philosophy of partnering with others for a prosperous future together. We want to represent FPU and Christ well as we cultivate hope alongside businesses in the Valley. We want to be faithful to our call, and are inspired by the Psalmist in Psalm 1 who states, “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season...” (v. 3a, NIV). This spurs us on to develop transformative relationships with the business community, helping businesspeople navigate key elements of succession planning/strategies and family dynamics and develop a legacy plan. We also contribute community value by cultivating relationships with Valley businesses through FPU business faculty-curated trainings/workshops and supporting the business community’s recruitment of top talent via FPU interns and alumni.

Together we can create an environment that stimulates personal, professional and business growth benefiting the future of our shared home, the Central Valley. A future Founded on Christ and filled with hope, optimism and growing partnerships with the business community will create a legacy worth pursuing and be reflective of a growing faith in every season. 



### LEARN MORE

About how the FPU Foundation can help your business thrive at [fpu.edu/partnerwithus](https://fpu.edu/partnerwithus).



# 2019-2020 Annual Report Reveals More Than Numbers

Each year, *Pacific* magazine publishes the university's Annual Report. These numbers provide a snapshot of the university's vitality, while they reflect the stories of hundreds of students who receive scholarships.

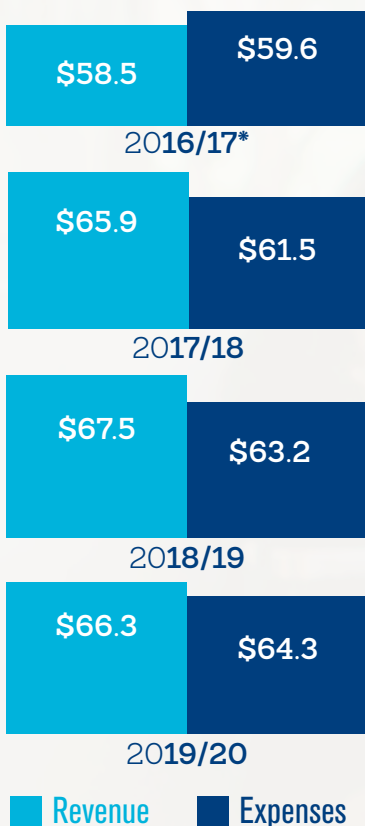
Scholarships reward students' hard work in academics, athletics, the arts and other areas to make a Christian college education possible. "Donor dollars matter in lives impacted," says Don Griffith, vice president of advancement and executive director of the FPU Foundation.

Most students who receive scholarships are the first in their families to complete a bachelor's degree—students like Nico Chavez, high school valedictorian and aspiring nurse. "I wouldn't be here without scholarships," he says. For Chavez, the choice to attend FPU was about community: the donors who provided his scholarships, the professors who challenge him academically, the staff who became his mentors and the classmates who became his lifelong friends. "Faculty and staff are able to know us and help us develop holistically for long-term success," he says.

Fellow student Jesus Gomez, echoes Chavez. "During my first visit at FPU I felt welcomed and

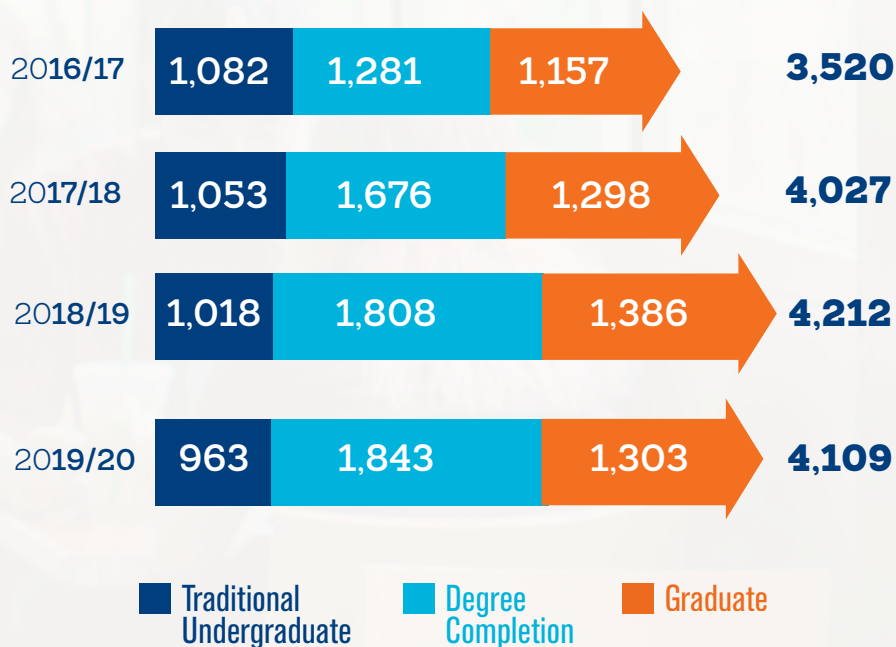
## Revenue & Expenses

Numbers in millions



\*\$1.5M one-time write-off/bad debt expense.

## Enrollment





very comfortable with the environment, which immediately made me envision my future here. Besides the hospitality, FPU has offered me great opportunities through the scholarships it provides, and the care that the professors have for the students," he says.

Gomez, a political science major and first-generation student, credits FPU for helping him realize his leadership potential. "I used to think that being a Valley student limited my chances and opportunities in the 'larger world,' but at FPU I've learned that the 'larger world' starts here and that I, too, can make a difference in it."

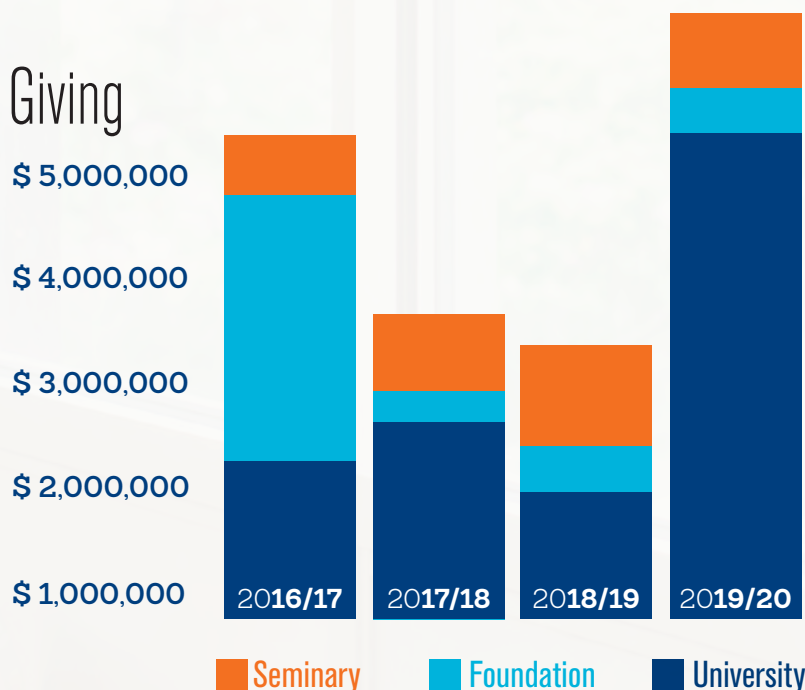
At FPU, Chavez, Gomez and their classmates are more than a number. They are an integral part of the community. They are the mission of the institution. 🏠



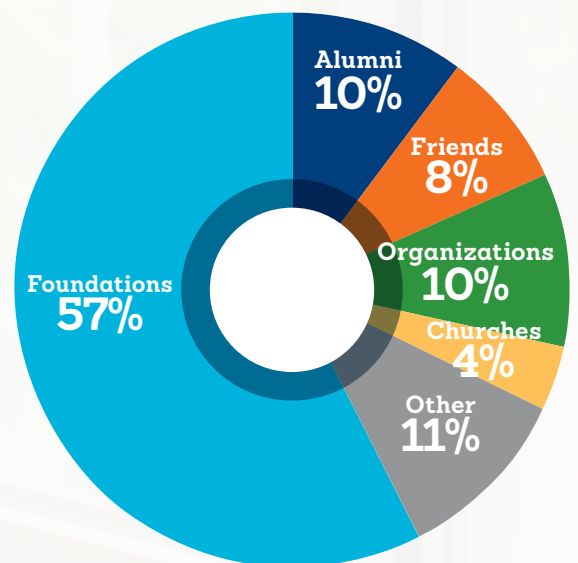
**“I wouldn’t be here without scholarships.”**

*Nico Chavez, Biology*

## Giving



## Donor Groups







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# MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT

## FPU CHRISTMAS DRIVE-THROUGH EXPERIENCE

*Save the Date:* **December 4-5 | 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

President Joseph & First Lady Yvette Jones invite you to a special Christmas drive-through event on the main campus, from the safety of your car, featuring:

- Music
- Amazing light display
- Special holiday treats
- Greet Dr. Joe & Mrs. Yvette Jones
- Family friendly
- Greetings from faculty, students, alumni and staff

RSVP by November 23 at [fpu.edu/MakingSpiritsBright](http://fpu.edu/MakingSpiritsBright) or call 559-453-3450