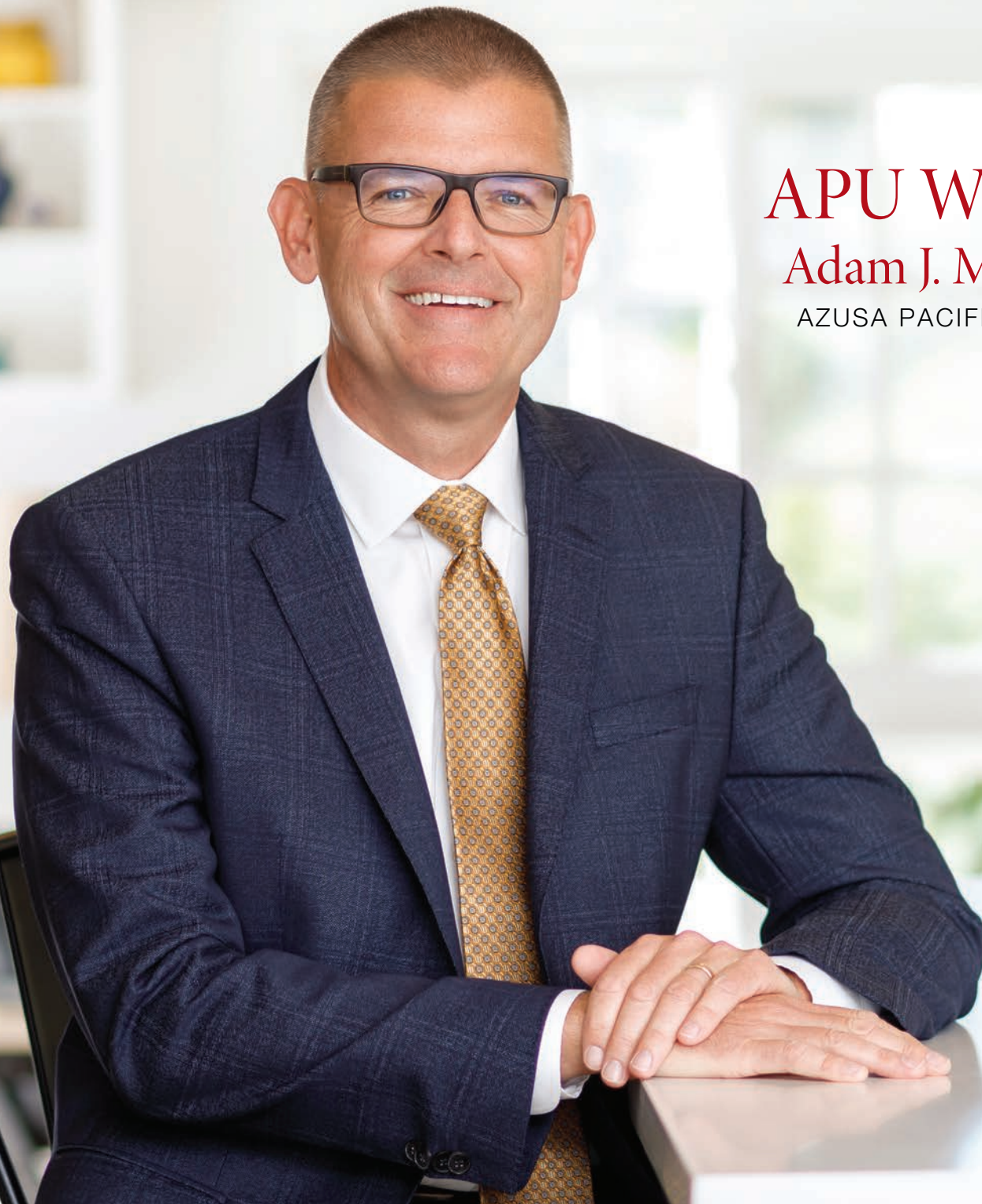


APU LIFE

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

SACRED ENCOUNTERS ■ BASEBALL COACH COMES FULL CIRCLE ■ THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS



APU Welcomes Adam J. Morris, PhD

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY'S
18TH PRESIDENT

God First Since 1899



Greetings, APU Community!

It is a joy and honor to write this inaugural letter as I begin my tenure as APU's 18th president. My wife, Faith, and I are so excited to join you in the great work of Christ-centered higher education at Azusa Pacific University. I have long held APU in high regard as a true powerhouse Christian university with its time-honored commitment to mission, esteemed faculty, rich diversity, strategic location, breadth and rigor of academic offerings, and quality of students at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. APU has long served as a top Christian university in the nation and we couldn't be more excited to help bring leadership to this *God First* institution, *for just such a time as this*.

My heart was filled with optimism participating in APU's May Board of Trustees meetings. I wish you could have been there. Our days were marked by rich times of prayer and deep reflection on God's Word. We heard the exciting news of recent graduates whose lives were transformed at APU—alumni who are going on to do great things in the world for the cause of Christ. We heard about the dozens of APU students who were baptized during the spring semester and the hundreds of students who are in discipleship groups across campus. And we heard the exciting news that 12 student-led missions trips will depart this summer to places such as Thailand, Guatemala, and Uganda to serve God's people and bring the saving message of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet heard. Clearly, God is on the move!

I was equally inspired by the hours of deep and focused conversation we had as a board on the topic of *mission faithfulness*. We reflected on what it means for a 123-year-old institution to embrace its Christ-centered identity and hold firm to our core convictions as we navigate the complexities of our culture and the changing landscape of Christian higher education. This was at the center of my inquiry during the presidential search process and will be at the forefront of my agenda as I begin my presidency. I can tell you with certainty that the board and I are aligned on mission, and I look forward to sharing more with the APU community about what it looks like for us to truly live this out. I believe that as we remain faithful to God's call on APU, His favor and blessings will follow.

As I look to my first year of service at APU, I am incredibly excited for our future! Alongside advancing our Christ-centered mission, I am eager to strengthen APU's financial position, begin building a post-pandemic strategic plan, modernize the internal APU infrastructure, align our academic offerings with the jobs of the future, support our world-class faculty—including leaning into our R2 research status, provide clarity of vision and direction, and serve the ever-increasing needs of our diverse student body. I'm also looking forward to spending concentrated time with many of you—listening to your perspectives and experiences so that, together, we can help position APU to be all God calls us to be.

I am grateful for God's clear call to join APU at such a strategic time. We can't wait to meet many of you as we begin this epic adventure together. Thank you for your prayers and support.

In Christ,

Adam J. Morris, PhD
President

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APULIFE

SPRING/SUMMER 2022



FEATURES

12 APU Welcomes Adam J. Morris, PhD, Azusa Pacific University's 18th President

16 Sacred Encounters throughout APU's History
by Abigail Reed

20 Pathways to Leadership: Equipping California's Superintendents for Success
by Anita Fitzgerald Henck

22 Baseball Coach Kirk Nieuwenhuis Comes Full Circle
by Nathan Foster

26 A Platform for Faith
by Jordyn Fouts

28 Undergraduate Research: Training the Next Generation of Scientists
by Megan Prosser

30 Building Community through Music
by Nathan Foster

Cover photo by Dana Attebery, MA '17

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** President's Letter
- 6** Campus Close Up
- 24** Cougars Sports Roundup
- 25** Alumni News and Notes
- 31** Around APU



Accompanied by sunny skies and joyous celebration, approximately 1,600 graduates crossed the Azusa Pacific University commencement stage during two spring 2022 ceremonies on May 7. A spirit of gratitude imbued this special day, APU's first full spring commencements in two years, as family and friends filled the Cougar Stadium bleachers and rows of seats on Franson Field to witness this significant milestone and cheer on their loved ones. These new difference makers now boldly advance toward their future, ready to shine Christ's light on the world.



SEE MORE OF COMMENCEMENT

Scan the QR code to watch our undergraduate commencement highlight video, featuring the festive sights of graduation day.

APU Awarded Silver Medal Military Friendly® Designation



DANA ATTEBERG, M.A. '17

Azusa Pacific University has received a silver-medal designation as a Military Friendly® University for the 2022-23 year. This award affirms APU as a top-tier destination for military-connected students, scoring within the 30th percentile of the 10 highest-ranked institutions in multiple categories. APU is 1 of 750 schools to be honored, and one of 70 schools to earn the silver award status.

APU has 385 military-connected students, and the university's Office of Military and Veteran Services is committed to providing comprehensive services to a diverse population of military-connected students and families. The office strives to help military-connected students successfully navigate and integrate with collegiate life and community while bolstering the holistic success of students.

"APU is a top destination for all military-connected students," said Everette Brooks, executive director of military and veteran services. "With this designation, as well as other

enhancements within our military and veterans program, we are excited for the opportunity to expand top services to our community."

APU is **1 of 750** schools to be honored, and **1 of 70** schools to earn the silver award status.



Recently, Brooks secured a \$445,816 grant from the Department of Education, enabling APU to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success on campus, enact a veteran student support team, secure a full-time project coordinator, and build a comprehensive plan to sustain high-quality veteran resources and programs. Since receiving the grant, the Office of Military and Veteran Services has conducted a survey of military-connected students at regional locations and the Azusa main campus to gauge effectiveness in delivering services and ease of transition into academic programs. From the data, the office is working to identify areas to help boost success, ensuring that APU's military-connected students thrive.

Professor Sings on Golden Globe- and Oscar-Winning Film *Dune*

Star Wars, *Star Trek*, *I Am Legend*, *X-Men*, *Men In Black*, *Jurassic World*—just a few of the many major motion picture scores that Michael Geiger, MFA, associate director of APU's Men's Chorale, has performed on throughout his 40-year musical career. Recently, Geiger's vocals were featured in the film and soundtrack of the latest cinematic adaptation of Frank Herbert's 1965 novel, *Dune*, directed by Denis Villeneuve. Geiger worked with a team under the direction of award-winning composer and arranger Hans Zimmer, who received a Golden Globe and an Oscar for his work on the project. In *Dune*'s end credits, Geiger was acknowledged as a featured vocalist and a cowriter with Zimmer on the piece "Sardaukar Chant." Geiger noted his excitement and appreciation to be a part of such a monumental project, "I have had the privilege to work on Grammy- and Emmy-nominated projects before, but nothing to this scale."

As a professional vocalist and musician in the Los Angeles area, Geiger has performed with prominent groups such as the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Los Angeles Opera Chorus, as well as for film

score composers on more than 200 feature films. Geiger is a session singer and voice-over actor represented by the Screen Actors Guild, as well as a faculty member teaching voice science/pedagogy and applied voice at APU.



"I pray every day that I would be able to show up to work behaving like Jesus in how I treat others and witnessing to the Gospel when the opportunity presents itself."

MICHAEL GEIGER, MFA

Over a long and successful career, Geiger has maintained an outlook of humility. He attributes his success to his long-standing faith: "I'm thankful for my family instilling an 'unshakeable faith' in me from a young age. I pray every day that I would be able to show up to work behaving like Jesus in how I treat others and witnessing to the Gospel when the opportunity presents itself." Beyond the studio, Geiger is most appreciative of the opportunities to teach and coach student musicians at APU.

Symposium Assists Young Scholars

This spring, Azusa Pacific University participated in the Young Scholars Symposium, a collaboration between Glendora and Charter Oak unified school districts to provide 70 homeless and foster youth and their families with the opportunity to learn more about resources and support offered by the school districts and how to apply for and attend college. "Our partners did an incredible job building relationships with some of our most at-risk students and their families," said Eric Osborne, executive director of student and family support services for Glendora Unified. "These students have so many resources available to them, but often do not know how to access them."

During the symposium, an 11th-grade student who had experienced several placements within the foster care system over the past few years expressed his interest in going to college. "He didn't know the process or that there were funds available to support his dreams. I introduced him to a few partners who plan to continue to support him and ensure his college dreams come true," said Osborne.

There are more than 60,000 children in the California foster care system and 85 percent of foster youth aspire to go to college, but only a small fraction ever complete a degree. "Foster youth are serviced by multiple agencies, including the Department of Children and Family Services and local school districts," said foster and adoptive parent Robert Duke, PhD, who is APU's interim associate provost for faculty affairs. "If they want to go to college, it takes all of those groups working collectively to help make sure those students succeed." Duke represented APU at the event. Alongside Citrus College, the two institutions demonstrated their commitment to offering a supportive environment for these students to thrive in college.

"If they want to go to college, it takes all of those groups working collectively to help make sure those students succeed."

ROBERT DUKE, PHD



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Azusa Pacific Hosts Worship Summit

Leaders from 130 churches gathered on the Azusa Pacific University campus for the third annual Angeles Worship Summit on January 29, 2022. Funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., the annual summit is part of APU's Angeles Worship Initiative, which provides bridge-building, encouragement, challenge, and training for those in artistic and pastoral ministry. A performance by the APU Gospel Choir opened the event, followed by a keynote address from recording artist, worship pastor, and author of *The Reset*, Jeremy Riddle. Riddle gave an inspiring message, challenging attendees to seek authenticity and purity in their worship. The 200 conference participants engaged in workshops, seminars, and panel presentations offering tools and practical training on a number of vital topics, including sessions on musicianship, artistry, preaching, visual arts, worship ministry, and leadership, and a roundtable discussion focused on equipping leaders for the future of worship.

In June, APU hosted the Worship Lab, a weeklong lab experience for teen worship leaders and their mentors to grow together by learning from one another in this creative process of worship design and innovation. The Songwriting Academy, an intergenerational opportunity for songwriters and musicians to explore songwriting in a creative, collaborative, and theological approach, takes place August 20-21 at APU. Participants will learn from experts and songwriting coaches and grow their own artistic tools for writing more memorable and impactful songs, and will have the opportunity to perform in a live showcase. Cost is \$75. To register, visit apu.edu/arts/angeles-worship-initiative/.

Through Lilly Endowment, APU's Angeles Worship Initiative continues to expand its efforts, providing new opportunities for the creative and vital work needed in the worshiping life of the Church. Grant funding will support new cohort member churches, develop resources for ministry partners, and fund a qualitative study on equipping leaders.



Leung Center for Financial Accountability Opens its Doors

APU faculty, staff, and students recently gathered with local civic leaders to celebrate at the ribbon cutting ceremony of the university's Leung Center for Financial Accountability. Through the center, APU accounting students provide free tax preparation services to local

Continued on page 8



Azusa Pacific Classified as Carnegie R2 Institution

Azusa Pacific University is the only university in the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) now classified as a Carnegie R2 research institution. As a doctoral university with high-research activity, APU students at all levels have access to important research opportunities that can advance their education and marketability in the workplace.

This designation was again awarded to APU earlier this year by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, the most influential ratings organization among colleges and universities. To earn this classification, APU met stringent standards. Carnegie evaluates universities that offer doctoral programs and analyzes their commitment to research based on data provided by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Carnegie gives each a designation of R1 or R2. To qualify for the two top levels, universities must have awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees and had at least \$5 million in research expenditures.

At R2 institutions like APU, faculty members are deeply engaged in original research, but still teach their own courses and often involve their students in their research projects. APU students are learning closely from accomplished faculty with current and relevant research in the field. Professionals often seek out research universities, knowing that their innovative approaches, methodologies, and insights will be met with institutional support. By pursuing and supporting high-level research, APU and its students have a voice in discussing the world's most pressing issues.

Continued from page 7

residents. Students who earn their IRS certification work with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, under the supervision of faculty, to prepare taxes for low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

“During COVID, a lot of VITA centers had stopped serving the community; we received calls from senior centers and libraries looking for free income tax preparation, so we decided to expand our services to help more people,” said Roxanne Helm-Stevens, DBA, interim dean and professor in the School of Business and Management. “We’ve seen a huge influx of people from the surrounding communities. It’s working really well.”

The Leung Center for Financial Accountability also offers financial planning services. “Our goal is to provide people with solid financial fundamentals,” said Helm-Stevens. “Most people don’t learn financial literacy in school, so we’re focused on teaching the basics like paying off debt, saving for a house, and improving credit.” The Leung Center for Financial Accountability has approximately 30 student employees who receive credit hours and professional experience in exchange for their work at the center.

College of the Arts Holds Industry Spotlight 2022 at Warner Bros. Studios



After nearly two years of isolation, mask mandates, and conducting classes outdoors, Azusa Pacific University’s College of the Arts (COTA) emerged from COVID-19 with a spectacular year-end showcase. An Industry Spotlight at the historic Warner Bros. Studios

in Burbank, California, on May 5, 2022, featured three significant events that featured theater, animation, and cinematic arts. Graduating students and their families and friends, along with industry leaders, experienced students’ capstone work, APU’s Studio Orchestra playing live-to-film, video games created by Games and Interactive Media students, and more. The evening provided a point of connection between industry VIPs and students as they prepared for their first industry jobs.

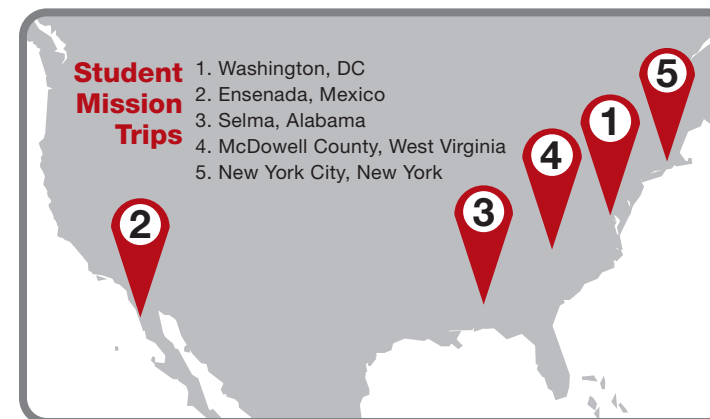
“The APU Arts Industry Showcase celebrates our rich artistic culture, which has continued to thrive throughout the lockdown, remote education, and coming back to our in-person community,” said COTA dean Stephen P. Johnson, DMA. “All the arts throughout L.A. have experienced monumental disruption. Bringing our industry-facing arts areas together (animation, cinema, design, games, studio orchestra, and theater) for a fully immersive experience underscores how the arts have thrived amid the pandemic, the learning we gained, and our vision moving forward.”



Student Mission Trips Return

After more than a yearlong pause, Azusa Pacific University students began mission work again through the Center for Student Action (CSA) during the 2021-22 school year. According to Karen Rouggy, DMin, director for the Center for Student Action and campus pastor, COVID presented a difficult obstacle for missions. “We weren’t able to engage with our community partners and hosts in the conventional way, but I think it reminded us that God is so much bigger than we are and He was still moving even when we couldn’t.”

In the fall, APU students traveled to Washington, DC, and in the spring, 55 students participated in four mission trips to Ensenada,



“APU was the first school on the West Coast dedicated to training men and women for Christian service.”

KAREN ROUGGY, DMIN

Mexico; Selma, Alabama; McDowell County, West Virginia; and New York City. “Students are so excited to engage in what God is doing around the world and to see how they can join in God’s big story,” Rouggy said. “It’s been incredible to see their passion for evangelizing and doing work to advance God’s Kingdom across the world.”

In Ensenada, APU students built a house for a family in need. In Selma, the students spoke at an elementary school and made connections with a local church there, including facilitating a midweek service. In McDowell County, students renovated a Young Life club room. In New York City, students learned about the significance of street evangelism and shared the Gospel with others.

“It’s our privilege and responsibility to continue APU’s legacy from its founding in 1899 as the Training School for Christian Workers—APU was the first school on the West Coast dedicated to training men and women for Christian service,” Rouggy said. “Throughout the past 123 years of our history, we have not lost sight of that vision.”

Grants Advance Significant Research and Scholarship



\$681,336

From the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and UCLA Academy of Workforce Excellence Stipend Program to Mary Rawlings, PhD, LCSW, professor and former chair in the Department of Social Work, this funding will

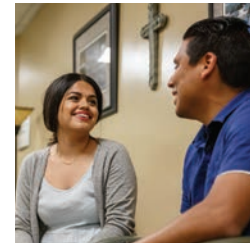
support APU in recruiting and preparing Master of Social Work student interns for employment in DCFS upon graduation. The fund pays for six stipends at \$18,500 per year, as well as 25 percent of a faculty position that specializes in child welfare and provides administrative support. Virginia Olivas, MSW, assistant professor in the Department of Social Work, will collaborate with a team from UCLA and the other six MSW programs in L.A. County. This award will enable APU to prepare well-trained social workers for the critical role of supporting families and keeping children safe.



\$252,800

From the California Institute of Behavioral Health Services to Rachel Gonzales-Castañeda, PhD, MPH, professor in the Department of Psychology, the funding will provide training and technical assistance (workforce development) to clinical

providers of behavioral health agencies that serve at-risk youth with co-occurring mental and substance use needs. Training is completed with evidence-based practices that have been shown to lead to effective outcomes for youth and families. This is a collaborative effort with the L.A. County Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Control, community-based partners, and other academic institutions.



\$85,859

From Richter Memorial Funds to Azusa Pacific University, the Richter Scholars Research Fellowship (RSRF) program enables APU undergraduate and graduate students to pursue independent research projects in conjunction with a faculty sponsor. APU is 1 of only 12 institutions to be awarded funding for a Richter Scholars program. The RSRF is funded by the Paul K. Richter Memorial Fund. Students receive grants in the amount of \$5,000 for their research projects. The student is responsible for the design and execution of the project, and faculty sponsors review students' Richter Fellows applications and monitor progress. This grant builds on APU's existing Scholarly Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) program overseen by Verónica Gutiérrez, MFA, PhD, director of the Undergraduate Research program.

By the Numbers

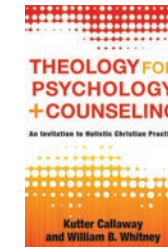
1,200: The number of guests who attended three sold-out shows hosted by the College of the Arts at Warner Bros. Studios. The Industry Spotlight highlighted the work of APU students in theater, animation, studio orchestra, design, and cinema for an unforgettable evening in front of industry professionals, donors, and guests.

100: The number of people served by APU's School of Nursing at the annual Socks, Shoes, and Salvation outreach event in downtown Victorville that took place the week of Easter at St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church. Led by nursing instructor Lydia Garcia-Ustry, DNP, PHN, RN, and her network of 40 nursing students and local community organizations, the event returned from a two-year COVID-19-related hiatus and offered foot washing, mobile showers, haircuts, and a warm meal to those experiencing homelessness.

40: The anniversary number that APU's Bachelor of Social Work program is celebrating this year, commemorating four decades of providing in-depth learning experiences to students through internships in hospitals, women's shelters, child welfare agencies, mental health agencies, senior centers, and more, ensuring that graduates are equipped with relevant experience to make a difference in their field.

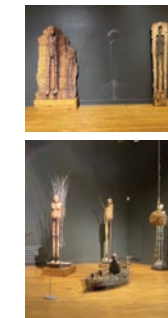
12: APU's ranking among R2 institutions in the western U.S. producing the most high-earning female alumni under age 40. The ranking comes courtesy of Steppingblocks, an organization that provides graduate outcomes, alumni data analytics, and data-driven career tools.

Scholarship at Work



Theology for Psychology and Counseling (Baker Academic, 2022) by William B. Whitney, PhD, associate professor, Department of Psychology, and Kutter Callaway

This book winsomely explores the significance of theology and the Christian faith for the practice of psychology. Callaway and Whitney demonstrate how psychology and the Christian faith can be brought together in a mutually enriching lived practice, helping students engage in psychology in a theologically informed way. Part one includes theological reflections that demonstrate how key Christian doctrines deepen psychologists' understanding of their work, whether in clinical practice or research psychology. Part two proposes a Christian ethical framework for psychologists and demonstrates how Christian conceptions of justice, love, hope, grace, and hospitality can inform psychological practice. Students will also find takeaways that are directly applicable to their studies in psychology or counseling, questions for reflection and discussion, and resources for further study and reading.



The Weight of Memory: A Retrospective (Solo Art Exhibition, Riverside Art Museum, 2022) by William Catling, MFA, chair and professor, Department of Art

Drawn from a body of work decades in the making, William Catling's midcareer retrospective is fueled by faith and a deep understanding of our universal need to find meaning within our lives. At first glance, Catling's work appears dark and heavy, but with patience the viewer will find that soon gives way to a powerful statement on the human condition, full of light and possibility. Built with layers of clay, and sometimes mixing bronze or branches, Catling's work is a visual manifestation of human form and spirit.



How We Love Matters: A Call to Practice Racial Reconciliation (FaithWords, 2022) by Albert Tate, vice chair, APU Board of Trustees; lead pastor, Fellowship Church

It is not an accident that racism is alive and well in the American Church. Pastor Tate guides all of us in acknowledging the racism that keeps people from loving each other the way God intends and encourages siblings in Christ to sit together in racial discomfort, examining the role we may play in someone's else's struggle. *How We Love Matters* is a series of nine moving letters that educate, enlighten, and reimagine discipleship in a way that flips the Church on its head. In these letters that include Dear Whiteness, Dear America, and Dear Church, Tate calls out racism in the world, the church, himself, and us. These letters present an antiracist mission and vision for believers so it will not persist in future generations.



8 Old Testament Passages That Changed the World (The Foundry Publishing, 2021) by Joseph Bentz, PhD, professor, Department of English

If you hear the word "Goliath," what name do you immediately want to pair it with? If someone says "Jonah," what animal pops into your head? If you hear the word "Commandments," what number comes to mind? The Old Testament has shaped and continues to shape our lives in profound ways. *8 Old Testament Passages That Changed the World* looks at the many ways culture has treated, mistreated, distorted, and brought to life the most well-known portions of the Old Testament. Bentz examines these inescapable passages and asks why they continue to have such a grip in every arena of life. If these words hold such power, what difference could they make in our own lives if we delved into them even deeper? Explore the familiar Scriptures about David, Adam and Eve, Noah, Ruth, Abraham, the Shepherd's Psalm, Moses, and Jonah, and discover in them new meaning.



The APU community warmly welcomed its 18th president, Adam J. Morris, PhD, to campus during a special celebration on March 2. The event, held on Cougar Walk, provided students, faculty, and staff with an opportunity to meet the newly announced president and his wife, Faith. Morris began his role on July 1.

WELCOME TO THE APU FAMILY

Scan the QR code to meet the president and hear his strategic vision for advancing a new era at Azusa Pacific University.



PHOTO BY DANA ATTEBERG/AMU '17

APU Welcomes Adam J. Morris, PhD

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY'S 18TH PRESIDENT

An accomplished senior administrator with more than 30 years of experience in Christian higher education, Adam J. Morris, PhD, became the 18th president of Azusa Pacific University on July 1. Entrepreneurial, innovative, collaborative, and discerning, Morris excels at mobilizing people around a compelling vision, with specific gifting in the area of strategic planning and transformation, and a rich history of securing significant external financial support to advance the mission of an organization. He exhibits a deep love for the Lord, a genuine heart for students, and a high regard for the vital role of an engaged faculty. Most recently, he served on Biola University's senior leadership team as the executive vice president, chief transformation officer, and chief institutional advancement officer. The new president sat down with *APU Life* to share his thoughts, insights, and vision for the future of Azusa Pacific University.

Q & A

WHEN DID YOU DISCOVER YOUR PASSION FOR CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION?

During my senior year of college, I had my mind set on heading into the corporate world. I took a nonprofit management class that changed the trajectory of my life. We were given the opportunity to come alongside a Cambodian refugee organization that was helping refugees coming into Southern California by providing housing, food, and employment. For me, it was the first time I realized that my love for business, my entrepreneurial drive, and my love for people could come together to make a profound impact in the world for the cause of Christ. Christian higher education provided that intersection. I have a love for learning and a passion for the life of the mind. Through my undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, faculty have made a huge impact on my life. I have a deep desire to make attending a private Christian university possible for all those who would seek an education that will equip them to make a difference in our world.

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

WHAT DREW YOU TO AZUSA PACIFIC?

First and foremost, the university's 123 years of faithfulness to mission, the motto of *God First*, and the cornerstones of Christ, Scholarship, Community, and Service, resonated with me personally and professionally. Of course, I was also drawn to the diversity of the APU community, reflecting the beautiful tapestry of God's creation. Throughout the search process, my wife and I held this opportunity with open hands. We prayed fervently. Faith and I had multiple opportunities to be on the APU campus, including several early-Sunday-morning visits where we walked the campus and paused in different locations to pray. We believe deeply in our hearts, with complete conviction, that God has called us to serve in this capacity. I'm excited to join this community and can't wait to see what God will do in us and through us in the months and years to come.

WHAT UNIQUE LEADERSHIP SKILLS DO YOU BRING TO THIS ROLE?

My journey to Azusa Pacific University is a continuation of God's story in my life. I believe that the Lord has equipped me for just such a time as this to be joining Azusa Pacific University as your president. I've served in Christian higher education for more than 30 years and have been a member of the President's Cabinet of another faith-based Southern California institution for the last 15. I've served during times of plenty and times of want. I understand the challenges facing Christian higher education and the shifts in the sector as a whole.

I am a student of the business model of higher education. I know the factors that lead to organizational health, stability, and transformation as well as the best practices that enhance enrollment and advancement. Often these comprise the primary revenue drivers of an institution and the Lord has given me experience in these areas. More importantly, I'm beginning my position at APU having been in leadership positions that reflect a deep dependence on God. I've had a front-row seat



PHOTOS BY DANA ATTERBERY, MA '17

to the work that He has been doing in Christian higher education. I come to APU with firsthand knowledge of the power of prayer. I come to you keenly aware of the role of discernment in executive leadership. I'm incredibly hopeful of what we will be able to accomplish together.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO AS YOU BEGIN THIS POSITION?

I already appreciate how the APU community is intentional in its pursuit of holistic development of all students—how we support all students and value their lived experiences. This support begins with faculty creating a rigorous academic community where scholarship is esteemed and research is encouraged. I'm equally excited to help cultivate and advance discipleship at APU. This means that discipleship should be happening everywhere—in the residence halls, in the lecture halls, in laboratories, during faculty office hours, in an online community, on athletic teams, over lunch with fellow students, through research activities. I look forward to bringing leadership to an institution that is serious about pouring into the lives of its students.

WHAT MAKES APU ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO A NEW GENERATION OF STUDENTS?

Pew and Barna data affirm APU's importance to society and the higher education landscape. Barna researcher David Kinnamen contends that one of the most impactful ways churches (and I would add Christian higher education) can equip Generation Z for resilient discipleship is by helping them cultivate cultural discernment—wisdom for what's happening in the world and how Christ followers should respond. Though studies show that Gen Z is losing trust in major institutions, their spiritual curiosity is alive and well. These prospective students are looking for a haven for wrestling with doubts and difficult questions, a place where they can seek truth and learn together, in the context

of meaningful intergenerational relationships. If not for Christian universities, especially APU as an open-enrollment institution, many college students would not have the opportunity to explore their faith, some for the very first time, and others to grow deeper, making their faith their own.

HOW IS APU POSITIONED TO MEET THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF TODAY'S UNDERGRADUATE, PROFESSIONAL, AND GRADUATE STUDENTS?

At APU, we are a community of believers who are being transformed into the image of Christ through scholarship, community, and service. This is not a passive place, but rather a vibrant Christian community of disciples and scholars across disciplines and degree levels who are making a difference in the world.

APU provides a robust faith and learning community where students find a place of belonging, a place that supports transformation as students encounter exemplary scholars and connect with God's call on their lives. This fuels all of our students as they graduate and go on to apply their training and make a difference in their communities and workplaces.

Alongside our ideal Southern California location, APU's rich diversity is acknowledged by our Hispanic-serving status. This distinctive brings with it a responsibility to implement the systems and practices to support the richness of our diverse student body.

The evidence of APU's impact and God's hand of blessing comes as our graduates are making an incredible impact in countless careers, but especially in the helping professions—nurses, teachers, counselors, social workers—all serving society with compassion and expertise. We believe that the values-based education that we offer has wide appeal, the excellence of our faculty and our relevant academic programs are sought after by our vast network of employers, and the combination of competence and compassion reflected in our graduates sets this university apart.

TEN YEARS FROM NOW, WHAT ARE THE WORDS THAT PEOPLE WILL USE TO DESCRIBE AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY?

First, and most important, APU will be known as a place that is spiritually alive and vitally Christian, rooted in Christ and anchored by our time-honored mission. In 10 years, the university's student-centered approach will be fueled by our robust academic offerings, including leaning fully into our prestigious R2 research designation that denotes high research activity by the Carnegie Commission. APU will have clarity of vision and purpose marked by innovation and adaptability, recognizing that higher education will continue to go through periods of great change. Our institution will be a global leader in Christian higher education and embrace the diversity of our community, reflecting the image of God and the beauty of His creation. Finally, we will be financially strong with a vast network of supporters. We will continue to work very hard to serve the Church and the marketplace by graduating difference makers who impact the world for the cause of Christ. These successes will be ours to share, marked by collaboration, blue-sky thinking, and a willingness to take risks and try new things.

We believe deeply in our hearts, with complete conviction, that God has called us to serve in this capacity.





Over the years, hundreds of students have been baptized in the pond. Scan the QR code to see more.



Sacred Encounters throughout APU's History

BY ABIGAIL REED

The still waters of the baptismal pond, the worship-filled walls of Upper Turner Campus Center, a buzzing classroom moments before a lecture—APU holds a special place of encounter for all. Wherever you find yourself on campus, the Holy Spirit has been, and is still, at work. Several of APU's leaders, past and present, reflect upon significant moments throughout our history when God has moved in miraculous and powerful ways.

UPPER TURNER CAMPUS CENTER

In the midst of the busy school week, classes pause and APU students ascend the steps to Upper Turner Campus Center (UTCC) to gather in worship. For decades, this building overlooking Cougar Walk—in the heart of APU's East Campus—has served as a place of changed hearts and steady spiritual growth.

Terry Franson, PhD, who has worked at APU for 43 years and served in numerous roles, including as former senior vice president/dean of students, has witnessed countless Holy Spirit moments while attending chapel. "I quickly realized that chapel was home to radical transformation and encounters with the Holy Spirit, whether people sharing testimonies, students pouring out their hearts in worship, or others committing their lives to Christ for the first time," said Franson. "This place is sacred ground."

Travel back to February 6, 1970, when a Spirit-led revival broke out in UTCC. The morning chapel lasted far into the afternoon, as students talked with God, dropped to their knees in prayer, testified,

confessed, asked forgiveness, and embraced one another. The service lasted seven hours. In the following weeks, Azusa Pacific students carried the revival to their churches and neighboring colleges. The spark lit in UTCC ultimately touched the lives of thousands, extending to the outward parts of the state.

Powerful moments with God continue in this space today. After nearly two years of online chapels due to COVID restrictions, the doors of UTCC once again welcome students. Just last February, chairs were filled and excitement stirred during the Gospel Celebration Chapel—a time of lamentation, reflection, and worship.

"A consistent and powerful thread of hope wove its way throughout the service as we reflected on the challenges of the past years," said Coba Canales, EdD, dean of spiritual life. "It felt like a turning point for our campus as we rediscovered the beauty of the Gospel message in community together."

Continued on page 18

February 6, 1970

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Continued from page 17

BAPTISMAL POND

Once a semester, members of the APU community gather around the baptismal pond, filling the bridge and encircling the tranquil waters. Excitement fills the air. Friends, roommates, and professors cheer and shout praises as students take turns wading into the pond, declaring their commitment to Christ and sharing their testimony before they are baptized.

“The baptismal experience is in many ways a microcosm of the beauty of APU,” said Canales. “It’s a snapshot of a community excited to experience the work of God in their lives and spur on the faith of those around them.”

Over the years, hundreds of students have been baptized in the pond. While campus pastors promote baptism through the local church, many students express the profound impact APU has made on their faith. Nestled among palms and other greenery, and bordering the peaceful courtyard of the Hartwig Prayer Chapel, the pond offers a place for students to make public their devotion to Christ within the very community that spurred them on toward Him.

“When I listen to baptismal testimonies, I think of the many more encounters happening among our thousands of other students on campus,” said Canales. “The pond is a reminder that God is working in His own time, calling each student in a unique way.”

ATHLETIC TRAINING GROUNDS

From the hills overlooking APU’s campus to the cross standing tall beside the track, the grounds where athletes train are sites of deep character development, close-knit fellowship, and conversations about God.

Franson, track and field head coach for 15 years, experienced these life-changing moments on what used to be APU’s Hillside Campus. Often under the glaring sun, Franson’s students—some of whom later became Olympic athletes—ran on these roads overlooking the valley below. Breathless after their training, the athletes would return to the simple white cross on the side of the hill. Together, they would spend time in fellowship and prayer, united by the symbol of Christ.

“The cross up on the hill reminds us that we don’t need the perfect facilities to excel at what God has set out for us, but a heart and soul to work with what we are given,” said Franson.

Although the asphalt roads on the hillside

campus have been upgraded to the track and field on East Campus that now bears Franson’s name, the same holy work of discipleship occurs.

“The coaches at APU are dedicated to seeing lives changed for Christ,” said Cliff Hamlow ’56, PhD, vice president emeritus, who served for 58 years in intercollegiate athletics and in numerous senior leadership roles. These bonds formed between coach and athlete often last a lifetime. “One of my former players wanted to drop out, and I reminded him of the Lord’s plan over his life. He stayed and launched into his career as a teacher. We are friends to this day.”

Today, in a shaded grove of trees next to the track, a cross memorial represents the faithful work of one of these coaches, Jim Milhon, head football coach and mentor to student-athletes for 17 years. The cross reminds all who pass by of the deeper, holy work in athletics.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMMUNITY

Bright swatches of red, blue, green, yellow, and white flutter in the breeze on the eaves of a building tucked amongst the trees on East Campus. These flags—of countries all around the world—represent the hundreds of international students who have attended APU, all of whom found a place of belonging here.

“There are many who arrive on campus and have never seen a Bible before,” said Mary Grams, director of international students and scholars. “The places where these students engage in conversations about Jesus, the places where seeds are planted and watered, are sacred ground.”

For many years, the International Office served as such a space. Breaking from the bustle of campus life, international students would congregate in the

office to share food from their cultures, laugh while attempting to speak each other’s languages, or study with their peers.

One of these APU students was a generational Muslim who immediately declared he was not interested in knowing Jesus. Years passed by filled with Bible classes, chapel, and the witness of his roommate. One day, he returned to the International Office with tears streaming down his face, professing his deep love for Christ. Numerous international students share stories like this. “APU is deeply set in my heart as a place that has been faithful in sharing Jesus for generations before me and will continue to do so after me,” said Grams. “Heaven is going to be richer because of this university.”

CLASSROOMS

In spring 1991, a small group of faculty and staff gathered in a parking lot outside of a corporate center marked for sale. In this unlikely place of meeting, they prayed for doors to open that would allow APU to purchase this more-than-15-acre property. Richard Felix, PhD, then the new president of APU, led them in a prayer of petition and guidance.

“We asked God to pave the way if this property could be used for His glory at APU,” said Felix. “It was incredible the way in which God moved. Little by little, God provided avenues for APU to eventually purchase the grounds.”

Now known as West Campus, the once-empty parking lot greets the comings and goings of students. In the Mary Hill Center, Honors College scholars gather around a table to discuss the works of Aristotle. Nearby, in the Darling Library, roommates type research papers under the colorful shadows of

the stained-glass rotunda above. Across the parking lot in Segerstrom Science Center, biology students engage in a lab that explores the complexity of the human body. In all these varied moments of learning, God is moving. “God stepped in and began a sacred work in our university after our prayers many years ago,” said Felix. “Since then, we have nearly doubled in size—allowing for more spaces to welcome a vast array of students as they study and grow in faith.”

As a Christian university, APU has the unique opportunity to intertwine academics with faith. Professors open classes with prayer or a devotional. Students share their hopes and wrestle with their doubts. Classes ponder the role of believers in their future career fields. “Throughout the years, the classroom has provided the space for sacred encounters with students,” said Roxanne Helm-Stevens, DBA, interim dean and professor in the School of Business and Management. “As faith is integrated into the curriculum and classroom discussions, students learn how their studies and profession can be directly connected to their beliefs. One of the joys in my life has been the deep connections with students that stem from these moments of transformation.”

From the reverent stillness of the Munson Chapel to the everyday bustle of the dining hall, APU is home to sacred spaces of powerful memories and present experiences. Looking toward the future, as the university approaches its 125th year, these places also hold a promise of God’s work yet to come.

“I sense that APU can be a center for revival—faculty, staff, and students are gathering together to pray for God to move here,” said Franson. “Something really special is on the way.”

Abigail Reed ’20 is a freelance writer residing in Manzanita, Oregon. abbiejreed@gmail.com

“God stepped in and began a sacred work in our university after our prayers many years ago. Since then, we have nearly doubled in size—allowing for more spaces to welcome a vast array of students as they study and grow in faith.”

—Richard Felix, PhD, pictured to the right of Cliff Hamlow ’56, PhD



In a shaded grove of trees next to the track, a cross memorial represents the faithful work of Jim Milhon, head football coach and mentor to student-athletes for 17 years.



These flags—of countries all around the world—represent the hundreds of international students who have attended APU, all of whom found a place of belonging here.



PHOTOS BY DANNA ATTEBERY, MA '17

Pathways to Leadership: Equipping California's Superintendents for Success

BY ANITA FITZGERALD HENCK, PHD



PHOTOS BY NATHAN INGALLS, MA '18, AND LON HARDING

When Katie Russell became superintendent of the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District in the greater Bakersfield area in 2020, she was the first woman and first African American to be senior leader of the district. Though skilled and seasoned, she recognized she would need more to succeed and serve her district well. She immediately began looking at doctoral programs and soon selected Azusa Pacific University, committing time and miles to make the commute to Azusa for Saturday classes, while completing other work online.

Like Russell, most superintendents begin their careers as classroom teachers, eventually earning their administrative credential and working as school principals or district office administrators. In recent years, however, the superintendent role has increased in complexity due to many factors—statewide curricular revisions, school-funding formula changes, greater community engagement, increased school safety concerns, elevated media and social media attention, ever-changing risk management demands, personnel shortages, navigating bond initiatives, and increased board

involvement in a union-based environment—signaling a need for advanced preparation.

“In an educational system, ongoing learning is critical to success, and as a superintendent and leader of my organization, I must model this for the staff, students, and families I serve,” said Russell. “Participating in the EdD in Educational Leadership program at Azusa Pacific has stretched me as a learner, personally and professionally. My cohort includes a diverse group of leaders who have expanded my network of trusted colleagues, and along with my university professors have made me a better leader and educator.”

For more than six decades, Azusa Pacific University’s School of Education has educated and prepared California’s teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, and administrators in Azusa and at five regional campuses, partnering along the way with 200 school districts. In 2021-22, the school recommended candidates for 498 credentials, placing APU in the top 10 producers of educator credentials across the state. Building on our strong history, within the last decade we have focused on executive leadership development, providing support and pathways for superintendents, assistant superintendents, and district leaders.

We also noted two concerning patterns and have worked to provide solutions. First, the superintendent turnover rate, especially of urban school districts, has spiked. Second, across the board, there is an increased expectation for superintendents to have a doctoral degree to complement their career experience.

With a commitment to educate and cultivate school leaders, the School of Education launched three initiatives over the last decade to support pathways to district executive leadership for emerging and established professionals. We began with hiring the 2012 California Superintendent of the Year, Kent Bechler ’79, PhD, as associate dean for external partnerships to strengthen relationships with district partners and emphasize executive leadership development, drawing upon his rich experience as a three-time superintendent. At APU, he leads the Superintendents’ Collaborative, which provides ongoing opportunities for area superintendents to gather on campus for conversation, collaboration, and education. Sessions range from engagement with the authors of state legislation to cultivating practices for emotional, financial, and spiritual health. Perhaps most significant are the collegial relationships between peers that emerge in this setting.

Next, we relaunched the EdD in Educational Leadership program with the involvement of a superintendent advisory group and faculty asking, “What should every doctorally prepared superintendent know?” The program redesign culminated in courses focused on understanding data through traditional research methodologies and skills juxtaposed with personal interactions with superintendents who have transformational perspectives on leading change and navigating the competing district demands. Knowing that less than 50 percent of students entering doctoral programs complete them, we also looked at efforts to boost student retention and persistence. The redesigned program now embeds the writing of the dissertation into the coursework, allowing

students to immediately practice their new skill and advance toward candidacy, and features a blend of traditional faculty and part-time professors who are superintendents-in-residence teaching leadership courses and serving on dissertation committees. To date, 96 percent of students have completed the program, with significant research and leadership impact on their home districts and beyond.



“The EdD in Educational Leadership program at Azusa Pacific has stretched me as a learner, personally and professionally.”

—Katie Russell, Superintendent, Panama-Buena Vista Union School District

More recently, Bob Taylor, EdD ’06, superintendent of Walnut Valley Unified School District and APU superintendent-in-residence, launched the Next Generation Superintendent Program. The focus is to provide insight and access for emerging leaders from traditionally underrepresented groups. This yearlong initiative provides formal programming and informal coaching on the soft skills of executive leadership, the political realities of public service, and the practical aspects of multifaceted superintendency. Under the leadership of Taylor and Bechler, emerging leaders from across Southern California are selected for this program, with support provided from their home districts and generous donors to make this program possible. To date, more than 50 leaders have benefited from this unique program.

While a doctoral student, Ryan Maine, EdD ’20, was named principal of Walnut High School, a nationally and locally renowned school in the Walnut Unified School District. “Having superintendents-in-residence teach our classes was transformational,” said Maine. “I would not be in the position I am right now if it weren’t for those Saturday classes—seeking advice, bouncing ideas off of them, and seeing what has succeeded for them. I continue to communicate with those superintendents for advice and guidance, and this provides lifelong professional value.”

Anita Fitzgerald Henck, PhD, is dean and professor in the School of Education at Azusa Pacific University. ahenck@apu.edu

Baseball Coach Kirk Nieuwenhuis Comes Full Circle

BY NATHAN FOSTER

Kirk Nieuwenhuis '12 returned to his old stomping grounds in 2020 with a plethora of professional baseball experience, eager to help the Cougars program excel to new heights. At first, he served as an assistant coach, but after 18-year head coach Paul Svagdis left APU to return to his *alma mater*, Tufts University, in 2021, Nieuwenhuis was chosen to be his successor, serving at the helm of Cougar baseball.



NIEUWENHUIS IS ONE OF TWO ALUMNI TO HAVE THEIR NUMBER RETIRED FOR THE COUGARS.

24
NIEUWENHUIS

13
VOGT

Nieuwenhuis was a star outfielder for the Cougars from 2006-08, batting .373 over three seasons alongside eventual MLB All-Star Stephen Vogt '07. Together, they helped APU reach the NAIA World Series in back-to-back years. Reflecting on his time as a player at APU, Nieuwenhuis said he wouldn't trade it for anything. "I have so many good memories [of] hanging out with teammates on and off the field," he said. "Those bonds and relationships were so strong. Many of my teammates came to my wedding, and I've gone to theirs. Those lifelong friendships are what made it special."

In 2008, the New York Mets made Nieuwenhuis the highest MLB draft pick in APU history, selecting him in the third round with the 100th overall pick. "I always had a desire to play in the big leagues, but I was certainly surprised when I got drafted in the third round," he said. Nieuwenhuis said that the first year in the minor leagues was the hardest transition as he adapted to the demanding pro schedule. "I realized quickly that I needed to rely on and draw near to God," he said. "I remember missing a family reunion that my parents and relatives attended and feeling lonely and homesick."

In that moment, and many more that followed throughout his professional career, Nieuwenhuis

turned to a favorite Scripture, Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Nieuwenhuis knew that God had a plan for his life and he could only take things day by day. "In all the uncertainty, that verse provided comfort for me, knowing that God's in control and I could trust Him."

This trust in God proved pivotal to Nieuwenhuis' career. It took a few years before he matriculated from the minor leagues to MLB, but when he debuted in 2012, Nieuwenhuis made a splash, batting .252 with 7 home runs, 12 doubles, and 28 RBIs over 91 games. He appeared in 226 games for the Mets over the next three years, but was traded to the Los Angeles Angels in 2015, before being cut and re-signing with the Mets in a matter of weeks. "I relied on God a lot during that time," he said. Later that year, Nieuwenhuis became the first player to hit three home runs in a single game at Citi Field and the first Cougar to play in a World Series. "That was the highlight of my professional career. It just emphasized how special baseball is and the excitement you have in playing with your teammates at the highest level. I was just so grateful for the opportunity to play in a World Series. It's something that every ballplayer dreams of but there's not many people that get to do it."

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to be back on the campus where I learned so much and made many lifelong memories and friends."

-Kirk Nieuwenhuis '12



PHOTOS BY DIANA ATTERBERY, MA '17

Nieuwenhuis went on to play a few more seasons in the majors with the Milwaukee Brewers before deciding to end his professional playing career. Soon after, he received a call from his former head coach at APU. "I didn't know if coaching was ultimately the career for me, but coming back to APU felt right. I wouldn't have done it anywhere else," he said.

Nieuwenhuis said Coach Svagdis was a great mentor during his time playing for APU and an even better teacher in the two years Nieuwenhuis was able to coach under him. "I was a pretty fiery player and he helped me keep my emotions in check on the field and channel them into higher levels of performance, especially in high-stakes games," Nieuwenhuis said. "In terms of coaching, the biggest thing I learned from him is that players respond to different styles of coaching. What works for one of my guys may not work for another, so I have to get to know my players and how to coach each of them best."

Nieuwenhuis teaches his players to focus on each pitch. "Being present during a game and in life takes

an incredible amount of mental energy; that's why it helps to focus on just one day or one pitch at a time," he said. "My players are learning, just like I did, to trust the process, not the results. You don't always get the results you want, but you can control the process and learn from it."

Coaching at APU provides Nieuwenhuis with an avenue for sharing his faith with his players. "That's not something you get to do everywhere," he said. "It's important for me to help them learn the perspective that baseball is important, but whether you win or lose, at the end of the day, it's just a game. The bonds these guys form with each other, how they treat people, and ultimately their relationship with the Lord is far more important than anything they do on the field."

After working with the team each day, Nieuwenhuis returns home to his wife, Bethany, and their two children. His professional career taught him a lot about how to prioritize his time. "When I leave the field, I leave work behind. My time at home is for my family and I'm grateful that coaching at APU allows

me to be present and focused with them," he said.

For Nieuwenhuis, it truly feels like he has come full circle—after an amazing collegiate baseball career at APU, he spent years cutting his teeth in the minor leagues, then made a lasting impact at the MLB level, and now is back at his alma mater coaching the next generation of Cougars. "It's definitely been an honor and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be back on the campus where I learned so much and made many lifelong memories and friends."

Nathan Foster '20 is public relations manager in the Division of Strategic Communication and Engagement. nfoster@apu.edu

Cougars Sports Roundup



Women's Track and Field Shines at Indoor Nationals

The APU women's track and field team placed third at indoor nationals this winter with a total of 40 points scored across seven events—the best indoor finish in the program's NCAA era. Seven of the team's members were distinguished as indoor All-Americans, which is also an NCAA-era program record. On the men's side, Jermel Jones II was the national champion in the high jump and the team's lone All-American.



Women's Swimming and Diving Finishes Historic Season

The Azusa Pacific women's swimming and diving program had its best-ever finish at the NCAA Championships this past winter, placing 22nd, which was also the highest finish among Division II programs from the Pacific Collegiate Swim and Dive Conference. Amy Crayne reached All-American status and took home fifth place in the 1-meter dive, which was the highest-ever finish at nationals in program history. Melia Stout and Montana White also earned All-American status in what was the most successful season in Azusa Pacific swimming and diving history.



Men's and Women's Basketball Advance to Second Round of NCAA West Regional

Azusa Pacific men's and women's basketball advanced to the second round of the NCAA West Regional with buzzer-beating shots on a night to remember in Cougar Athletics. In the men's opening round, Ken West's three-pointer with a second to go helped the Cougars beat Point Loma 66-64 in San Bernardino, California. Then, just moments later in East Bay, California, Paige Uyehara's three-pointer beat the buzzer to send the women to overtime with Cal State San Marcos, and they went on to win 89-86.

Spring Sports Update

Azusa Pacific had eight spring sports teams in action, including acrobatics and tumbling, baseball, softball, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field, and women's water polo. Azusa Pacific's acro team is ranked No. 2 in National Collegiate Acrobatics & Tumbling Association, women's track is ranked No. 3 in the country, and men's tennis is ranked No. 16 and women's tennis No. 22 in the latest Intercollegiate Tennis Association poll. The baseball and softball teams are in second place in the PacWest with winning records. To stay up to date, visit APUCougars.com.

For more news and updates on APU athletics, including team schedules, visit athletics.apu.edu.



- 1 Interim President Andrew Barton and Incoming President Adam Morris gather with students at the Breakfast with the President.
- 2 Members of the Pacific Islanders Organization put on an unforgettable performance at the 33rd Luau at the Felix Event Center.
- 3 Interim President Andrew Barton meets with a student and his grandparents at the Grandparents' Luncheon.
- 4 Grammy Award-winning artist Brooke Ligertwood performs at the Felix Event Center.
- 5 Incoming President Adam Morris, center, throws the ceremonial first pitch at an APU baseball game against Biola.

Homecoming Weekend Returns

There was something for everyone at Homecoming: Alumni and Family Weekend 2022. It was invigorating for the entire APU community to be invited back in person to fellowship together on the Azusa campus after such a long period of separation.

Some major highlights of the weekend included academic discussions presented by esteemed faculty members, a Grandparents'

Luncheon, baseball and softball doubleheaders along with festive tailgate parties, a concert with platinum recording artist Brooke Liegertwood, the President's Breakfast, Cougar Tea Time, alumni reunions, Pacific Islander Organization's Luau, and the Electric Zu Dance for students.

A Platform for Faith

BY JORDYN FOUTS



Alana Morgan Perkins '25 traces the origins of her faith back to the inspiring, deep, and dedicated devotion of her grandmother. “Growing up, my grandmother shared her love of Jesus with me and my family. She is so strong and committed.” Her grandmother’s influence spurred Perkins’ personal faith. Putting *God First* in everything she does has opened doors for Perkins that she couldn’t have dreamed possible. Serving as the current Miss Teen Universe USA, and previous Miss Teen California, and competing as a track athlete at Azusa Pacific University provide unique opportunities for Perkins to live out her faith. In March, Perkins traveled across the world to Dubai to vie for the title of Miss Teen Universe, affording her a global platform to represent Christ.

As a student at APU, Perkins said she sees herself as part of an immersive educational community who seeks the Lord in every area of life. “Going to a Christian university and being in classes where you pray even before you start your work has definitely been amazing. It has helped me realize that I am part of a community of believers who are as devoted to their faith as I am.” This integration has been transformational for Perkins. “I never realized before how connected my faith could be to my education.”

That connection extends to her role as a student-athlete as well. “When I first joined APU’s track team, I didn’t know what to expect. But there’s such a sense of belonging on the team. I’m with people who are on the same path as me beyond athletics.” Perkins has found her faith to be crucial to her athletic experience. “Everything is really mental with track. It’s just you out there at times. I have to keep my faith strong and rely on God in order to keep going—my faith has given me endurance and provided meaning for everything I do as an athlete.”

Being at APU has helped Perkins see practically how she can place *God First* in everything—whether through her studies, competing as a track athlete, or serving as Miss Teen Universe USA, a title that brings influence she doesn’t take lightly. Perkins uses her prominent position to serve others, whether that be through fundraising to aid



disaster relief, speaking out about the importance of mental health, or volunteering to raise money to fight Alzheimer’s.

“I hope to use my platform to promote good and always use any sash or crown as a microphone to gain access to help others.” Perkins, a journalism major, plans to someday advance her broadcast journalism skills on a national network. “I want to focus more on giving back, since I have been so blessed, and use my voice to speak for those who may feel voiceless.

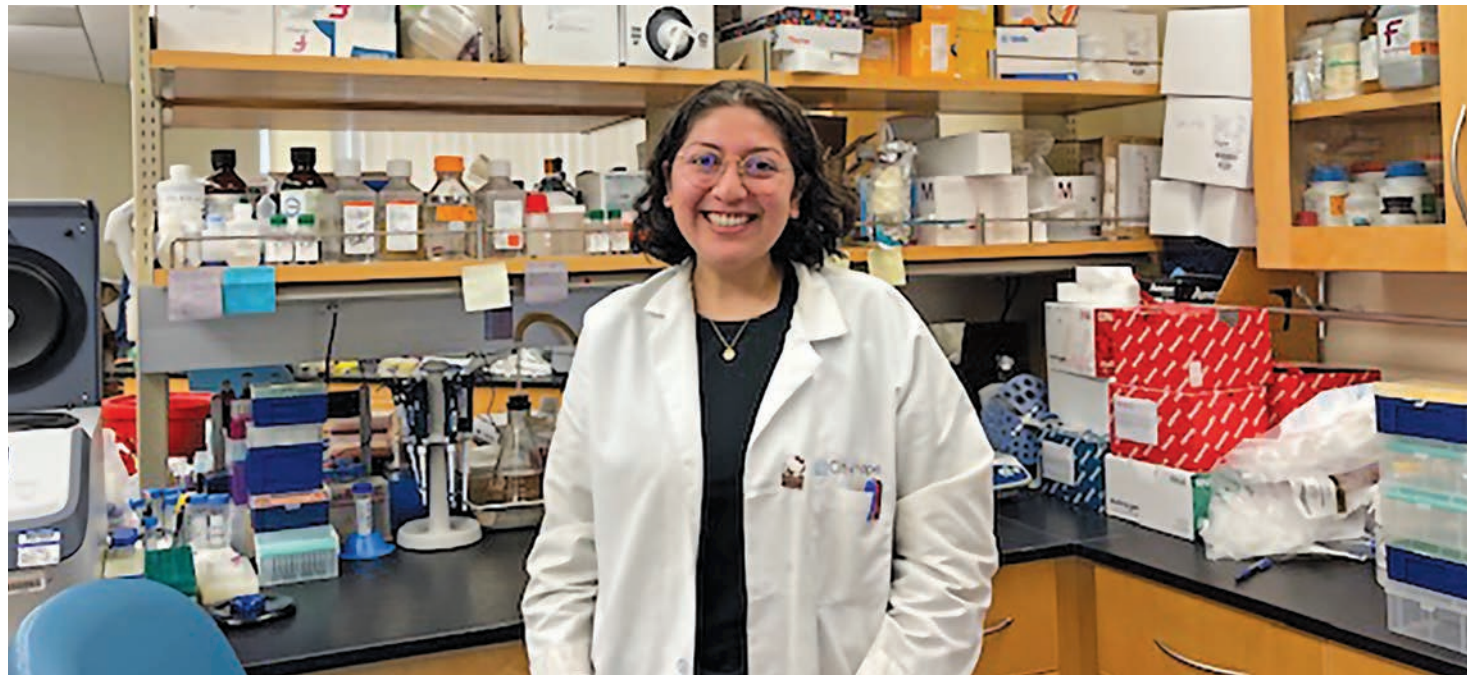
Jordyn Fouts '21, MA '22, is a recent graduate of APU’s Master of Arts in English program.

“Going to a Christian university and being in classes where you pray even before you start your work has definitely been amazing. It has helped me realize that I am part of a community of believers who are as devoted to their faith as I am.”

—Alana Morgan Perkins '25

Undergraduate Research: Training the Next Generation of Scientists

BY MEGAN PROSSER



Just two years after graduating from Azusa Pacific, Hannah Valencia '20 is already applying the knowledge and hands-on training acquired through her biology major and excelling as a research associate in the laboratory of Yuman Fong, MD, at City of Hope.

Her work involves developing novel immunotherapeutic approaches to treat cancer, and she is already a featured author of a journal article published in *Molecular Therapy Methods and Clinical Development* for her contributions to a research study on treating breast cancer. The accomplished young scientist credits her success to the

skills she cultivated as an undergraduate researcher at APU under the mentorship of Sarah Richart, PhD, professor in the Department of Biology and Chemistry.

“When I started my position at City of Hope, the lab practices I had learned at APU allowed me to thrive in a fast-paced environment where it is easy to be overwhelmed with many experiments happening simultaneously,” she said. “Documenting experiments and using online scholarly resources has allowed me to gain a better understanding of an experiment’s significance with the overarching project goal in mind. Ultimately, my APU education encouraged my curiosity, which is the driving force behind my research. It continues to motivate me in the lab today.”

“When I started my position at City of Hope, the lab practices I had learned at APU allowed me to thrive in a fast-paced environment where it is easy to be overwhelmed with many experiments happening simultaneously.”

—Hannah Valencia '20

Valencia’s research journey began early in her undergraduate career—as a sophomore. The Department of Biology and Chemistry emphasizes the importance of experiential learning through the Student to Scholar program, where students have the opportunity to engage in faculty-student research partnerships throughout the academic year and over the summer. This unique experience enables students to direct the development of a research project under the mentorship of a faculty member. Projects include areas such as regenerative medicine, pharmacology, global change, and cancer biology, among many others.

“The sky’s the limit in terms of research projects,” said Richart. “I help students get started, but they have freedom in how the experiment is designed and how they’ll test their hypotheses.” At many universities, this is an opportunity typically afforded only to graduate and doctoral students, but at APU it is built into the fabric of undergraduate scientific training.

Richart’s research focuses on the analysis of a fungus, *Aspergillus sclerotiorum*, that is pathogenic to termites, meaning the discovery of a natural pesticide. Valencia studied the effect of that fungus on cell-cycle arrest in fruit flies, and a compound secreted by the fungus that may inhibit cell division, leading to an understanding of the mechanism of pathogenicity.

A hands-on research mentor, Richart supports student growth and development in conceptual understanding and technical execution. She is often in the laboratory guiding her students to develop skills in designing and executing experiments, data analysis, appropriate record keeping, and scientific communication. Ultimately, Richart mentors students to become independent researchers.

“Throughout my undergraduate research experience, Dr. Richart encouraged me to ask many questions and be resourceful,” Valencia said.

In addition to guiding scientific development, Richart also models work-life balance for her research students, and Valencia noted that this modeling has continued to equip her to combat burnout in her current career.

Another key component of Richart’s mentorship is faith integration. “She encouraged me to attend seminars hosted by APU and taught



me how faith is intrinsically connected to our call to be good stewards of the environment,” Valencia said. “Her advocacy for using science to better understand and care for the environment is a perfect demonstration of how she uses her career and her faith to prompt change. It is a lesson that I hope to achieve in my career.”

In her APU research, Valencia learned a variety of experimental techniques, including cell culture, flow cytometry, western blot, and proliferation assays, and was encouraged to pursue opportunities to present and fund her work. In 2020, she was awarded first place for best poster presentation in the cellular/molecular category at the Beta Beta Beta National Biological Honor Society district convention, and was awarded a competitive undergraduate research fellowship from the American Society for Microbiology to continue her research progress. These types of research experiences are a hallmark of the APU experience in biology and chemistry and prepare APU students to be highly competitive in gaining admittance to graduate programs and careers in research.

In Valencia’s case, this exposure sparked a love of science that will last a lifetime. She plans to complete a PhD in Virology, aspiring to continue in the research profession, and she desires to work alongside and mentor others as they delve into the unknowns of science, creating new knowledge. She recognizes the invaluable influence that Richart’s mentorship played in her development as a researcher and plans to pay it forward as she trains the next generation of scientists.

Megan Prosser, PhD, is interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and professor in the Department of Biology and Chemistry. mprosser@apu.edu

Building Community through Music

BY NATHAN FOSTER

Denney Premkumar '22 has 33 brothers who use their musical talent to bless others at Azusa Pacific University. The members of Men's Chorale, led by Premkumar as president, found ways to bring the APU community together in the midst of the pandemic while classes and performances were held virtually, and upon APU's return to campus. From holding *Star Wars* watch parties to making pancakes for students on Cougar Walk, the group embraces Premkumar's vision of unity through connection and service.

"Being a part of Men's Chorale is such a rewarding experience," Premkumar said. "It's about building relationships with my brothers in the ensemble." Premkumar has learned leadership lessons from current Men's Chorale director John E. Simons, DMA, as well as past directors Harold Clousing, DMA, and Galen Clark, DMA. "I use my position to encourage the guys to follow the example of Christ, of what it means to be a man, how to love like Him, stand up for the right things even in hard situations, inspire good, and spur on compassion and community, not through words but through our actions."

Premkumar moved from Singapore to the United States when he was five years old. His father took a ministry job in California and Premkumar said he grew up attending Hispanic churches where he felt God's presence in the worship. He sang publicly for the first time at age four, a Christmas ballad at church. Although he continued singing throughout his youth, his first choral experience wasn't until his freshman year at Pasadena City College. When he was ready to transfer to a four-year university, Premkumar chose APU on the recommendation of

multiple mentors, and he decided to pursue a degree in music education with an emphasis in choral music. His APU education was made possible through the scholarships he received.

"Music is definitely something that keeps me going. There have been really tough moments in my life where I've felt far from God, but something about music always made me feel connected

Help another student follow in Denney's steps at APU and learn to love like Christ, inspire good, and create compassionate community. Scholarship support is often crucial to starting the APU journey.

Scan the QR code to give now and help change a student's life so they can change the world for Christ.



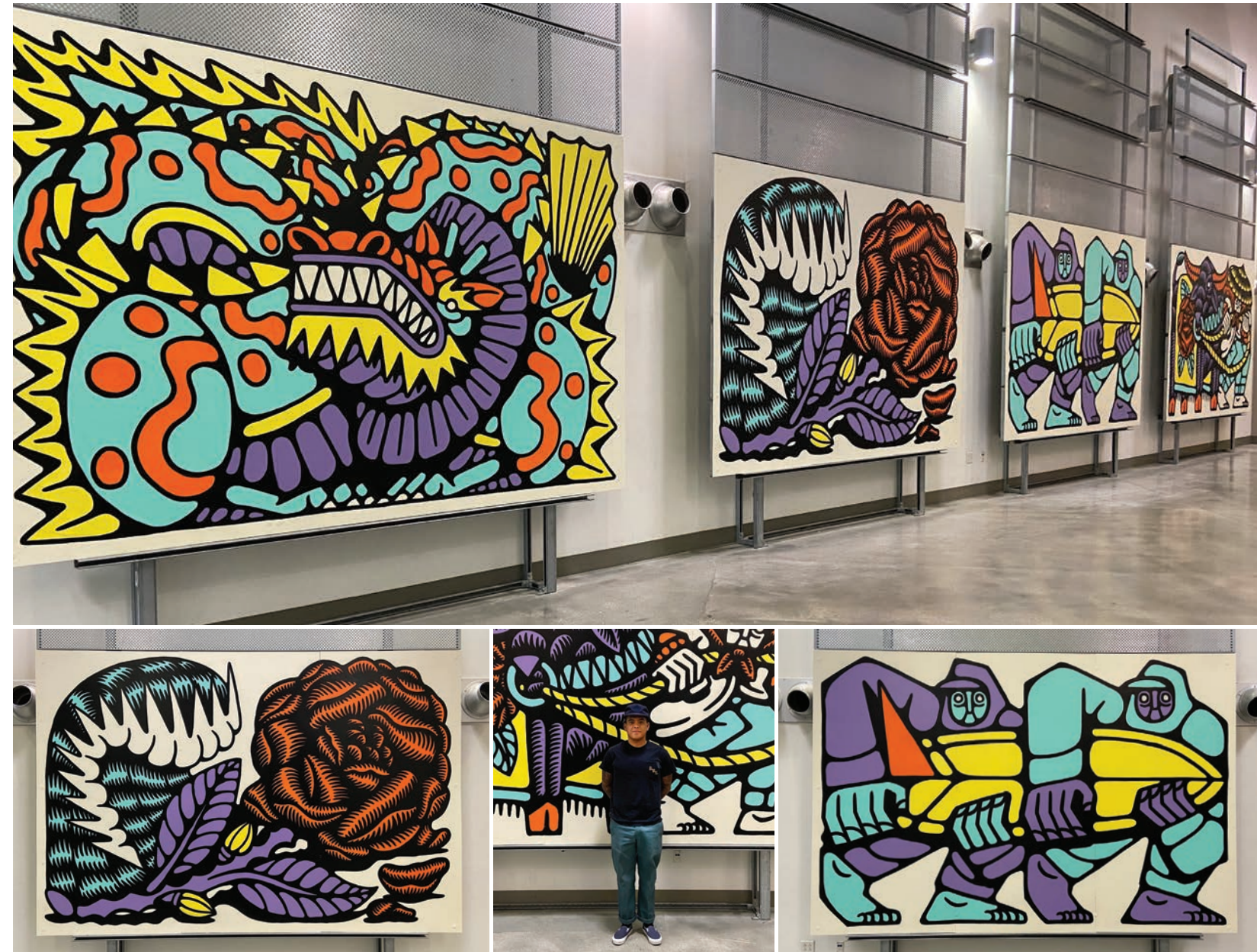
PHOTOS BY DANA ARTEBERG, MA '17

to Him. If I feel stressed or discouraged, I can turn a song on and it will remind me God is still present and everything will be okay," he said.

Premkumar has acquired much knowledge and wisdom from APU's School of Music faculty. "My professors, including Dr. Stephen Martin, Professor Michelle Jensen, Dr. John Sutton, Dr. Alexander Koops, Dr. John Burdett, and Professor Christopher Russell, are well accomplished and have done amazing things, yet they're always so kind, humble, and genuinely concerned about me and all the other students," he said. "They're willing to share about the obstacles they've had to overcome in life, and that encourages, inspires, and gives me hope and motivation."

After graduating in Spring 2023, he aspires to become a music educator. "I want to teach choir, but I'm open to what God has in store," he said. "Whatever I do, I want to show God's love through my actions."

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE APU DEPARTMENT OF ART

Javier named his studio, Bayan Surf Club, in honor of bayanihan, the Philippine practice of communal unity and cooperation, which in earlier times, when their houses were made of lighter materials such as coconut leaves, referred to the practice of helping neighbors literally move their houses.

Good Vibrations

APU's Duke Art Hallway is alive this summer with the vibrant work of DJ Javier '15. The Santa Barbara resident's recognizable designs feature bold strokes and lively color inspired by his love of surfing and his desire to address social inequalities. Showcased by global brands such as Patagonia and Amazon and adorning walls from Los Angeles to New York, his art was recently featured in the *Los Angeles Times*. Javier, who graduated from APU with a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design, runs a fashion line of T-shirts, shorts, and hats called Canto Vision, works as art director at SeaVees shoes, and has opened a new studio in Santa Barbara's Funk Zone.



18th Presidential Inauguration

Adam J. Morris, PhD

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

10:30-11:45 a.m.

West Campus

apu.edu/president/inauguration

