

APULIFE

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2024

STRENGTHENING OUR CORE ■ GOODNESS OUT OF GRIEF ■ APU'S ANNUAL REPORT

Appreciating Our Differences: The Unlikely Friendship of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis





As I enter my third year as president, I continue to marvel at God’s goodness, His faithfulness to Azusa Pacific University, and the strong sense of calling I continue to feel. Being asked to bring leadership to APU during this time in our 125-year history is a sacred *trust*, and something I hold with genuine humility and tremendous joy.

On a long flight home recently, I found myself reflecting on all that I’ve seen God do at APU since I arrived here in summer 2022. Countless examples flooded my mind. I couldn’t journal fast enough! I thought about our recommitment to mission, the new leadership team God assembled, increased financial stability, new internal systems and structures, an anonymous donation of \$13 million, 500 students in discipleship groups, 900 students doing local and global missions, and dozens of students baptized on campus. I quickly found myself experiencing Psalm 143:5 in real time—*remembering the days of old, meditating on all that God had done, and pondering the work of His hands*. Indeed, God has been faithful.

As I look back on the last two years, one specific moment stands out to me as particularly significant. Early in my tenure as president, I received a letter from our accreditor, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, noting the need for APU to shore up its business model. It was a sobering letter for a new president and a clear call to action amidst a time of significant change across the higher education sector. Following 18 months of exceptional work by our faculty, staff, and administration, our accreditation came down to an on-campus visit back in March and a 30-minute meeting with the accreditation commission in June. Both meetings provided an opportunity to showcase the mission and vision of APU, and in the end, we were granted full accreditation through 2030. To God be the glory!

As we continue to live into our Christ-centered mission this new academic year, we do so anticipating all that God will *continue to do* in our midst. We have launched a new strategic plan, are redesigning our undergraduate core curriculum including the required 18 units of Bible and theology, have launched a master-planning initiative for our Azusa campuses, are preparing to launch new academic programs, and are strengthening our work in faith integration.

These are exciting days to be part of God’s unfolding plans for APU. And yes, we marvel at all He’s accomplished and can’t wait to see what the coming year will hold!

Blessings in Christ,

Adam J. Morris, PhD
President

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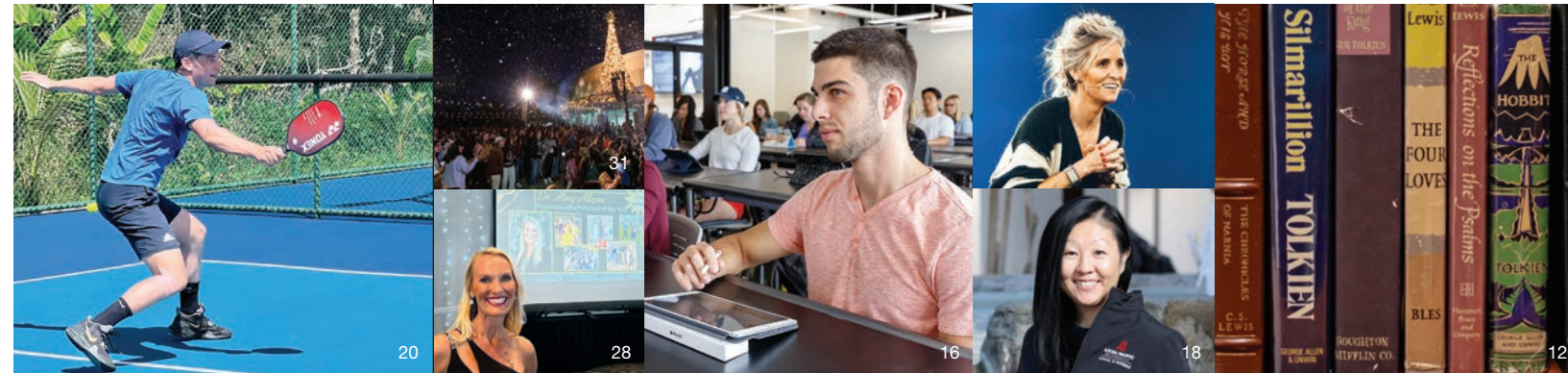
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Roommates and neighbors who become lifelong friends, resident advisors who pray for their students, a space to decorate and call one's own—APU's on-campus housing offers a home-away-from-home for many of our undergraduate students, with great options such as Trinity Hall, Engstrom Hall, and University Village (bottom right). APU recently completed renovations of two other living areas: the female freshmen residence, Adams Hall (photo above), which received upgraded interiors, exterior paint, and an enhanced building entrance; and the Shire Mods, which got new kitchens, paint, flooring, and exterior repairs (photo right). These inviting spaces enhance students' college experience, inspiring connections, study time, rest, and relaxation.



SEE MORE ABOUT APU HOUSING

Scan the QR code to watch a video featuring two roommates' life together in APU's University Village.

PHOTOS BY CHASINGHORIZONSPHOTO.COM



Wall Street Journal Ranks APU Among Best Colleges

Azusa Pacific University achieved a historic placement in the *Wall Street Journal's* 2025 Best Colleges in the U.S. as the top-ranked evangelical Christian university in California and the highest-ranked institution in the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU). APU holds the No. 101 spot in the nation, which marks the highest national ranking achieved by the university.

"This significant recognition by the *Wall Street Journal* affirms APU is a top Christian university in the nation with a clear track record of proven results," said Adam J. Morris, PhD, president. "We provide our students with a transformative Christ-centered education that equips them to succeed as ethical and competent leaders in their chosen fields upon graduation. With strong marks in alumni earnings, social mobility, and character development, APU is a preferred choice for those seeking excellent academics, solid career preparation, a diverse and welcoming community, and opportunities to deepen their faith."

In addition to the Best Colleges in the U.S. placement, APU also ranked high on the WSJ/College Pulse lists for Social Mobility (No. 29 nationally and No. 5 among private universities), Student Experience (No. 73), and Best Salaries (No. 161). *Wall Street Journal/College Pulse* Best Colleges in the U.S. is the preeminent college ranking report, which rates the top 500 colleges and universities in the country. Unlike other national rankings, which prioritize admission rates and subjective criteria such as reputational rankings from opinions of leaders at other universities, WSJ's methodology is more reflective of outcomes such as salary impact for graduates, years to pay off net price of tuition, graduation rate impact, social mobility, and student satisfaction. Other distinct factors include learning opportunities, preparation for career, character score, and diversity.

Stacy Kula Named Founding Dean, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences



Azusa Pacific University Provost Anita Fitzgerald Henck, PhD, named Stacy Kula, PhD, founding dean of the newly formed College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

Kula brings more than 25 years of education experience to the role, with expertise in qualitative research methods, achievement gaps, and education of underserved and immigrant populations.

"With the responsibility to finalize the realignment of academic areas, APU selected an accomplished, wise, and caring leader to shepherd merging schools into cohesive, vibrant academic communities," Henck said. "Through thoughtful review of comprehensive feedback, prayer, and consultation with President Adam J. Morris, Dr. Kula emerged as the finalist for the role, with tremendous support from across the university."

As dean, Kula is responsible for the leadership, planning, direction, and management of the full range of undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the college. She will collaboratively and creatively advance scholarship, research, and integration of faith and learning. Kula's top priorities include recruiting, developing, and retaining a diverse faculty and staff, continuing to build financially viable programs, and representing the college with internal and external stakeholders.

"I am humbled and honored to accept this role," Kula said. "I see tremendous possibilities for synergy across our constituent departments, whose work revolves in different ways around ensuring that God's purposes for every precious individual come to fruition, whether through research or by equipping students to live out their calling. There is so much great work already happening, and I look forward to celebrating and building on that."

"There is so much great work already happening, and I look forward to celebrating and building on that."

STACY
KULA, PHD

Kula joined APU's faculty in 2016 as a qualitative methodologist in the Educational Leadership, EdD, program. She was then appointed as the director of that program, and has served as department chair and a member of the School of Education leadership team since 2021. Kula also served in other roles on campus, including chair of the Doctoral Studies Council, chair of the Faculty Research Council, and General Education faculty mentor for the Title V Hispanic-Serving Institution Grant. Simultaneously, she maintained an active research agenda and was awarded APU's Rose Leigler Graduate Faculty Scholarship Achievement Award in 2022.

Kula holds a PhD in Education with an emphasis in teaching, learning, and culture from Claremont Graduate University (CGU); an MA in Education with specializations in teaching Spanish language and literature, teaching in multilingual/multicultural settings, and language arts methods from CGU; and a BA in Linguistics and Spanish Literature from Pomona College. Kula's areas of research include immigration experiences and factors of achievement for students from Latin American immigrant and Indochinese refugee families—groups particularly underserved by education institutions. Kula's coedited book, *High-Achieving Latino Students: Successful Pathways Toward College and Beyond* (Information Age Publishing, 2020), won the 2021 American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education's Book of the Year award.

New Strategic Plan Unveiled

Azusa Pacific University President Adam J. Morris, PhD, announced the launch of the university's new strategic plan, the Nehemiah Initiative. The strategic plan will guide APU from 2024-30 with the vision of building a new model of Christ-centered education. A living document, the Nehemiah Initiative is designed to be nimble and responsive to changes and opportunities in the marketplace and the higher education industry.

"My favorite scene in Nehemiah is found in chapter 3, and this is at the very heart of why we've named our new strategic plan the Nehemiah Initiative," Morris said. "The emphasis is not on bricks and mortar, but instead it's about trusting God to use us to accomplish something only He can do and to engage in this work together. As the

Continued on page 8

APU and Citrus College Form Nursing Partnership

Azusa Pacific University and Citrus College announced a new partnership that will extend access to nursing education for residents of the San Gabriel Valley and the greater Los Angeles area while offering a quicker and more affordable pathway for students to earn their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

"We are thrilled to see these two excellent nursing programs join with this new integrated curriculum," said Renee Pozza, PhD, RN, CNS, FNP-BC, dean of APU's College of Nursing and Health Sciences. "Students will benefit from a collaborative program of study taught by expert faculty from both institutions through a cost-effective and efficient pathway."

This collaboration enables nursing students to concurrently enroll at APU and Citrus College, earning credits and clinical experience through both institutions. In just six semesters of total program study, Citrus' Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) students will graduate from APU with their BSN. This dual preparation makes such students highly employable, given that California healthcare organizations prefer to hire BSN-prepared graduates.

"We couldn't be more excited to partner with APU and give our nursing students a great opportunity to accelerate their professional career," said Salima Allahbachayo, DNP, FNP-BC, RN, director of health sciences at Citrus College. "As a community college, we place a great deal of importance on access and affordability. Not only will our students be able to save time and money through this partnership, but they will also enter the nursing workforce as BSN-prepared nurses with a deeper level of knowledge and experience. Put simply, this is a game changer."

The accelerated program elevates the proficiency of nurses entering Southern California hospitals and clinics, moving such graduates beyond the two-year associate's degree while increasing their skills as caregivers. In combining the low-cost, open-access program at Citrus College with APU's nationally ranked School of Nursing, students from all educational backgrounds will enter a pathway to a high-paying, impactful career. Students will benefit from APU's RN to BSN program, which was recently ranked #2 in California by RegisteredNursing.org. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the Board of Registered Nursing's annual surveys, APU graduates approximately 4 percent of the newly registered nurses in California, with an employment rate for all prelicensure programs at 100 percent within a year of graduation, with 90 percent of those employed within California.





MSW Program Earns Recognitions

Azusa Pacific University's Master of Social Work (MSW) program earned a place in *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Graduate Schools 2024 rankings, positioned among the top programs in the nation at No. 120 nationally and No. 10 in California. APU is one of only two Council for Christian Colleges & Universities schools to make the top 150 MSW programs on the list.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this recognition of our social work program as one of the top programs nationally and locally," said Stacy Kula, PhD, dean of APU's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. "The APU MSW program has worked hard to accomplish its mission to serve the community through the preparation and training of professional social workers. I am proud of our faculty for their commitment to our students, the profession, and the larger community. We are truly training difference makers."

The MSW program was also recognized by CaliforniaSocialWorkEDU.org as one of the "Editor's Picks for the Best CSWE-accredited MSW Programs in California," ranked alongside top universities such as UCLA and USC. APU's MSW program was recognized for many reasons, including flexible options with one-year, two-year, and three-year degrees, and electives in various social work fields.

"We are honored to be recognized as one of the best CSWE-accredited MSW programs in California," said Kimberly Setterlund, MSW, LCSW, assistant professor and chair of the Department of Social Work. "As a primarily in-person program, we are firmly committed to advancing our mission inside and outside of the classroom, which is to prepare ethical, holistically trained social work practitioners. The faculty are dedicated to engaging students in deep learning, mentoring individuals for their career, and calling to advocate, serve, and be a voice for marginalized individuals and communities."

APU's MSW program, which is offered at the Azusa and San Bernardino campuses, prepares students for a wide range of social work opportunities, giving them the advanced specialization necessary for effective clinical and macro social work practice upon graduation. The program includes two-year full-time, three-year part-time, and advanced standing options, and for those interested in an accelerated graduate program experience there is an Advanced Standing 4+1 Program (4 years undergraduate, 1 year MSW). APU receives accreditation from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), and the BSW and MSW programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

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chapter unfolds, we see a beautiful tapestry of God's people from all walks of life, accomplishing the impossible together—all working side by side with a shared vision and the resolve to be part of something so big that only God could do it."

The Nehemiah Initiative is composed of four pillars:

1. Proclaim God First in All Things

Building on our legacy of more than 125 years, our Christ-centered mission will guide every action of our vibrant university.

2. Advance Academic Distinction and Student Transformation

With a renewed academic program portfolio and flourishing faculty scholars, our students will be equipped to live out their higher calling in Southern California and throughout the world.

3. Unite in Purpose

Aligned with trust and collaboration, our diverse community will unite in purpose to reach new heights.

4. Optimize Operations for Success

Based on a data-informed and agile approach, the university will optimize operations for lasting success.

Azusa Pacific Earns Six-Year Reaffirmation of WSCUC Accreditation

This past summer, Azusa Pacific University received reaffirmation of accreditation for a period of six years from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

In a letter to the APU community, President Adam J. Morris, PhD, praised the efforts of the President's Cabinet and the WSCUC working groups composed of faculty, staff, and students: "This is a monumental achievement and the result of much prayer and hard work from so many in this community. With God's help, we are a healthier and more stable university, and we have laid the foundation for an even stronger future. In this I am confident that 'He who began a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus' (Philippians 1:6, NIV). Praise God for His unwavering faithfulness to

APU for more than 125 years, and may His favor continue to be poured out as we serve Him together."

The commission commended APU for:

1. Making great strides in reestablishing a culture of trust to facilitate the community's work in fulfilling its mission.
2. Building a strong, competent, and collaborative leadership team committed to leading the community toward a financially sustainable and mission-driven future.
3. Addressing board development to enhance effectiveness in strategic planning and fiduciary oversight.
4. Improving data quality and enhancing use of data in strategic planning and decision making.
5. Implementing effective channels for regular internal communication.

The commission also issued a Notice of Concern, emphasizing the importance of APU remaining vigilant in its efforts to provide long-term financial sustainability. With this notice comes a Special Visit in spring 2026 to make certain that APU continues to implement the systems and structures necessary for long-term financial health.

WSCUC accredits public and private higher education institutions in the United States and the Pacific region. WSCUC's accreditation process evaluates academic quality and educational effectiveness, and helps institutions develop and maintain effective education programs.

By the Numbers

3: APU was ranked third in California and 50th in the nation for First-Year Experience by *U.S. News & World Report*. APU's Offices of Campus Life and Residence Life and dedicated faculty and staff strive to help students have a memorable and impactful experience as they begin their college studies.

7: APU's Leung School of Accounting students networked with seven top local and national accounting firms at the annual Meet the Firms event. Experiences such as this are a big reason why 93% of APU's domestic accounting students land jobs in their field before graduation.



University Launches Athletic Marks

Azusa Pacific University officially launched new athletic marks this fall. For the first time in APU history, its celebrated programs have a cohesive set of unified athletic marks, including a Cougar and a new "AP" logo with a modern design twist to build even greater affinity among students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the broader community.

"We are excited to see these athletic marks across campus," said Gary Pine '84, MBA '05, athletic director. "In the same way that we strive in athletics to honor our storied past while pursuing even greater levels of excellence, this cohesive, fresh, and modern look is a powerful affirmation of our APU branding. We are eager to see our student-athletes, fans, and the entire community decked out in the new marks as they root on our Cougars!"

The APU Cougar symbolizes the dedication and strength of Azusa Pacific athletes and the entire campus community. The new mark has the Cougar looking forward into the future with a deep sense of purpose, inspiring confidence and leadership.

"We are eager to see our student-athletes, fans, and the entire community decked out in the new marks as they root on our Cougars!"

GARY PINE '84, MBA '05

6: A group of students in APU's School of Business and Management traveled to six countries (Germany, Austria, Wales, England, Spain, and France) as part of the school's annual L'APEU trip this summer, during which students took classes, met with top international companies, and saw historic sites across Europe.

10: APU's Master of Social Work (MSW) program was ranked 10th in California by *U.S. News & World Report*. As one of only two institutions from the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities to place in the top 150 MSW programs nationally, APU is a leader in training the next generation of Christian social workers.

Grants Advance Significant Research and Scholarship



\$4,985,376

From the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to David Picella, PhD, FNP, CNS, GS-C, CPG, director of the adult-gerontology nurse practitioner program in the School of Nursing, to support interprofessional geriatric education and training of healthcare

providers to care for older adults in underserved communities across San Bernardino County. Through this grant, APU partners with CareConnectMD and other community organizations to create an interprofessional geriatric workforce to provide age- and dementia-friendly integrated primary care to older adults in clinics, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities in medically underserved areas. APU will develop a cohort of more than 50 interprofessional trainees in a newly designed 12-week longitudinal geriatric clinical rotation.



\$3,141,402

From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), to Rachel Castaneda, PhD, professor in the Department of Psychology and Todd Emerson, DO, for a Youth Wellness grant

focused on providing prevention and treatment support services to young people challenged with co-occurring substance use and sexual health needs. Project Youth Wellness is a government-funded program focusing on three priority areas: promoting emotional health and well-being management through mental health education; reducing the onset of, and progression of substance use risk behaviors to, substance use disorder (SUD); and decreasing sexual health risk outcomes (infectious and communicable diseases such as HIV and STIs) through prevention education and advocacy of screening/testing and health care linkages.



\$1,249,818

From Lilly Endowment Inc. to Jennifer Graffius, DMin, executive director of the Center for Vocational Ministry, and Freddy Rivas, MDiv, director of mentoring and formation in the Center for Vocational Ministry, to help establish Sowing the Seeds for God's Harvest: Cultivating Worship,

Faith, and Calling in Children. The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, a national initiative designed to help Christian congregations more fully and intentionally engage children in intergenerational corporate worship and prayer practices. The team will focus on three main objectives: developing digital formational resources, establishing congregational cohorts, and fostering collaborative learning communities for ongoing practice. The project will create a culture of mutual support and knowledge exchange among participants, and foster greater connections between the academy and the Church.



\$448,961

From UCLA's subaward to Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, to Kimberly Setterlund, MSW, LCSW, chair of the Department of Social Work, for the L.A. County DCFS + UCLA Academy of Workforce Excellence Stipend Program 2024.

The subaward is part of the new five-year grant to train graduate students pursuing public child welfare as a career path. Funding will provide \$26,000 stipends for students accepted into the program for the 2024-25 academic year. It will also support child welfare specialization curriculum development and practicum placements. This university/county-government partnership highlights the need for coordinated workforce development to equip social work students to advocate for the most vulnerable individuals and communities in Los Angeles County.



\$386,654

From the Institute for Education Statistics under the U.S. Department of Education to Bradley McCoy, PhD, chair and professor in the Department of Computer Science, Engineering, Math, Physics, and Statistics. This grant will fund an interdisciplinary project, in

collaboration with experts in education research and human/computer interaction at Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, in which project members will develop and scientifically test visualizations and tools for communicating research evidence to education decision makers. This will include funding for three APU undergraduate researchers per year, for three years. The team will expand the kinds of visualizations that will help researchers display data, while discovering other information they need when making decisions. The researchers aim to find how to most effectively display information in a way that helps decision makers weigh the statistical and contextual information about their schools. In the final year of the grant, researchers will conduct a national survey of U.S. principals and district superintendents to gain a broad, representative perspective of what their decision-making needs are when making evidence-based decisions about curriculum and programs in their districts and schools.

Year-end Grant Update

APU Received grants totaling

\$15,889,252 in 2024.

Federal, state, and local government funding:

\$9,275,834
awarded

Foundations and other nonprofit organizations:

\$6,613,418
awarded

Scholarship at Work



Global Business and Marketing Strategy: Integrative Workbook of Exercises and Case Studies (First Edition)

(Cognella Academic Publishing, 2025) by Mark Wm. Cawman, DBA, associate professor, Department of Business and Entrepreneurship, and Patricia Fine-Skalnik, DBA, professor emerita

This book facilitates uniquely experiential learning for students of international business, strategic management, and global marketing, using an integrative approach that combines theory with practical exercises and case studies, exposing students to real-world business scenarios. The workbook is organized into three units, covering global considerations in business, global management, and global marketing. Each unit dives into specific topics such as corporate social responsibility, ethics, supply chain management, brand identity, and the intricate balance between risk and reward in international markets. *Global Business and Marketing Strategy* is a textbook and workbook, making it an exemplary resource for courses and programs in international business, and particularly valuable for courses that emphasize applied learning, strategic thinking, and hands-on experience with complex, contemporary business challenges.



The Integration Journey: A Student's Guide to Faith, Culture, and Psychology

(IVP Academic, 2024) by William B. Whitney, PhD, associate professor, Department of Psychology, and Carissa Dwiwardani, PhD

William B. Whitney and Carissa Dwiwardani present a compelling exploration of Christian theology, psychology, and cultural identity, framing integration as a transformative, embodied practice essential for spiritual growth and the pursuit of love and justice within personal and professional life. Drawing from years of teaching and research, they introduce a framework that helps readers reflect on their Christian faith, cultural identity, and interests in psychology.

Through engaging narratives, practical exercises, and theological insights, readers are invited into a lifelong journey of meaning-making that cultivates humility, cultural awareness, and a commitment to Christian love and justice. At the heart of their vision is a call to embody God's love and justice through psychological research and clinical work, fostering healing and transformation in diverse communities and the wider world.

Traveling Through the Dark

Lewis-Tolkien Friendship Shows Us How to Seek Understanding

BY DIANA PAVLAC GLYER

You may know that C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were longtime friends. At the very end of Lewis's life, when he became quite ill, Tolkien continued to visit him regularly. They spent hours together, reminiscing about their lives as college professors, their years of family vacations together, and the unexpected and far-ranging impact of their writing, including *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

When Lewis died in 1963, Tolkien wrote, "So far I have felt the normal feelings of a man my age — like an old tree that is losing all its leaves one by one: this feels like an axe-blow near the roots."¹

But earlier, in 1926 when they first met, it was a different story. From Tolkien's point of view, there was nothing memorable about meeting Lewis. But Lewis definitely remembered meeting Tolkien. He described it in some detail, calling Tolkien "a pale, fluent fellow" who "needs a smack."²

It was a rough beginning! And after that? Well, after that, it got worse. They discovered that they stood on opposite sides of a bitter debate about curriculum. They started somewhat suspicious of one another and then became downright hostile.

And yet they ended their lives as friends.

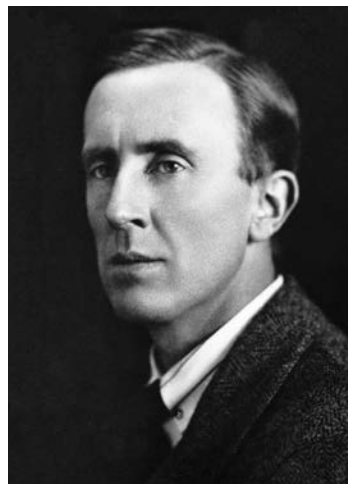
How did they manage it? Things began to change when Tolkien started a book club and invited Lewis to join. As this small group of faculty colleagues from different disciplines spent time together, they built trust. As Lewis says in *The Four Loves*, friendship develops as people spend time side by side, listening and learning. I don't mean to suggest that they "found common ground" or achieved some kind of consensus. What changed? They discovered that deep affection can emerge when we seek first to understand. Over time, Lewis and Tolkien discovered that their world was a bigger world because they had each other in their lives.

It's a lofty goal: to harness the wisdom that comes from a multitude of perspectives. It's a lofty goal,

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So what about us? How do we remain open, curious, humble, and patient even as we acknowledge our differences? What guiding lights can help us find our way through challenging times?





Over time, Lewis (top) and Tolkien discovered that their world was a bigger world because they had each other in their lives.

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and it is not easy. Remember: As a newly minted college teacher, Lewis thought the way forward was an insult and then a good smack.

So what about us? How do we remain open, curious, humble, and patient even as we acknowledge our differences? What guiding lights can help us find our way through challenging times?

It's complicated, so I want to mention just four key ideas that helped Lewis and Tolkien. In order to negotiate their differences, Lewis and Tolkien looked to the past to find guiding principles for their future. They looked to philosophy and history, literature and theology, to find guiding principles to light their way.

The first principle is **courage**. You know the saying: Courage is not the absence of fear; it's taking action despite our fear. The truth is we wouldn't need courage if we were not afraid. I would take it a bit further: Being truly brave requires that we acknowledge our fears, daring to be honest about what is at stake.

It also seems clear that for the Christian, fear becomes the very thing that drives us to God. In other words, we find the courage to do what we are called to do as we look to the Source of all strength.

So our first guiding light is courage. And a second is moderation, or what is usually called **temperance**. As I struggle to understand temperance, the word "balance" is helpful: not too much and not too little. Aristotle would have us all seek the "golden mean"—that is, the appropriate balance point between excess and deficiency. Can I confess? This one is hard for me. Balance. The balance between home and school, work and rest, structure and spontaneity: Every decision I face seems to be a battle between competing priorities. I spend a lot of time wrestling to find that balance point, to be guided by temperance. For me, it's not easy.

But it does get easier for me as I grow in **prudence**, our third guiding light. I think the word prudence is an unfortunate word: these days, we think it means "timid" or "shy," or perhaps being overly concerned with proper behavior.

The heart of prudence, though, is simply the



PHOTOS OF APU LIBRARY'S SPECIAL COLLECTIONS BY DANA ATTEBERY, MA '17

practical application of wisdom to life's great challenges. Let me explain it this way: I think of knowledge as knowing what is right, and wisdom is knowing how to do what is right. In other words, knowledge and wisdom have to do with how we think. But prudence is combining wisdom with courage and then actually making better choices. Josef Pieper explains that prudence is more than contemplation. It is action that is built upon knowledge, experience, and insight.³

But here's the hard part: Prudence is right action, and the only way to learn it is by practice. As Pieper says, we grow in prudence by making choices repeatedly with goodness itself in mind. Perhaps you watched the recent Olympics in Paris. Stunning performances. Supernatural strength and grace! Those competitors start with amazing talent. But natural ability has been perfected by hour after hour after hour of practice.

Prudence is like that. It is perfected through practice. And here's the thing: That kind of goodness, practiced year after year, becomes the training ground for our souls. Ultimately, a commitment to prudence redefines the kind of people we become.

As Lewis and Tolkien learned to appreciate their differences, they grew in courage and in temperance and in prudence. And the fourth and final light that guided them is **justice**. We tend to think of justice as the big things: laws, policies, and systems. And rightly so. It is. It absolutely is. But it is also interesting to me that in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes a story in which very ordinary people, Hobbit-sized heroes, overcome great evil by simply doing all they

can despite the odds. Lewis explains: "Justice means much more than the sort of thing that goes on in law courts. [Justice] is the old name for everything we should now call 'fairness'; it includes honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises, and all that side of life."⁴

Justice. Along with courage, temperance, and prudence. Four simple ideas. Simple, but not easy. Lewis writes about all four ideas, all four of these cardinal virtues, in *Mere Christianity*. He calls them "directions for running the human machine"; he calls them guidelines that "prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction."⁵ Through his experiences in the trenches of the First World War, and through the hard work of forging a friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis came to believe that courage, temperance, prudence, and justice provide the necessary instructions for how to appreciate our differences, resolve our conflicts, make hard decisions, and grow in God-honoring character.

In this season, my prayer is that our courage will never fail; that temperance will guard and guide us; that wisdom and prudence will serve as trustworthy companions; and that justice will light our path every step of the way.

May we be guided in all this by love. May hope attend us every step of the way. And one more: May we be grounded in faith: believing that in all these things, in courage, temperance, prudence, and justice, in faith, in hope, and in love, God is our constant companion, and He will guide our way.

I want to conclude with a quotation from E.L. Doctorow. He said that writing a novel is

like "driving a car at night, you only see what the headlights light up, but you can make the whole trip that way."⁶ Driving at night. Making our way through the dark. It's true of the experience of writing a novel. And maybe it's true for all of us. Most of the time, we feel like we are traveling through the dark, just trying to find our way.

As we face challenges and competing priorities, I suggest that all four of the classical virtues taken together—courage, temperance, prudence, and justice—along with the theological virtues of faith and hope and love, provide trustworthy guidance for all of us. Taken together, they serve as guiding lights for the work God is calling us to do. So let's hold fast to courage, temperance, prudence, and justice. And to faith, and hope, and love. We can make the whole trip that way.

¹Letter to his daughter, Priscilla Tolkien. 26 November 1963.

²C.S. Lewis, *All My Road Before Me*, 393.

³Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*.

⁴Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapter 2.

⁵Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book II, Chapter 1.

⁶<https://www.trolleyjournal.com/doctorow-kennedy>

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Professor Diana Pavlac Glyer, PhD, discusses the literary works of Lewis and Tolkien with her students.





Strengthening Our Core

New GE Curriculum to Debut in 2025

BY BRYANT MATHEWS

Whether wrestling with life's biggest questions, conducting research shoulder to shoulder with faculty mentors, or learning to lead and innovate ethically, APU students benefit from the transformative power of a Christian liberal arts education. General Education (GE) has long played a key role in APU's undergraduate curriculum, complementing and enriching students' majors by exposing them to the methods and insights of a variety of disciplines, from biblical studies and theology, to the humanities and arts, to the sciences and social sciences.

At its best, GE offers students a coherent and compelling journey of formation that clearly reflects an institution's distinctive mission. At APU, that means a life-changing journey that equips students to discover their higher calling and impact the world for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom. To that end, in January 2024, President Adam Morris, PhD, and Provost Anita Henck, PhD, called upon APU faculty to design a dynamic GE program to meet the needs of new generations of scholars and to bolster our position as a national leader among Christian universities.

We are excited that the new program, titled The APU Core: Pathways to Flourishing, will launch in fall 2025. The courses are framed around three concepts: Pursuing Wisdom, Preparing to Serve, and Living Out God's Love.

GE redesign is a complex endeavor; the last such effort at APU stretched over an eight-year period from 2006-14 and produced modest changes. This past spring, with support from the administration and a lot of prayer, faculty leaders committed to developing a new framework in just four months. We gathered a GE Design Team of faculty, administrators, and a student representative for more than 30 hours of collegial and spirited discussion. President Morris also brought the Design Team together with School of Theology faculty for six hours of interviews with influential pastors and scholars around how best to nurture the spiritual formation of today's students. And Provost Henck supported our work by bringing on a consultant who had overseen the development of a new GE program at another Christian college. The Design Team studied APU's inspiring history and mission, as well as many innovative GE curricula at institutions across the country. After 20 hours of listening sessions with various groups of faculty and students and many rounds of drafting, the Design Team presented a new GE framework that was approved in June by a resounding 89 percent of the faculty.

We are excited that the new program, titled The APU Core: Pathways to Flourishing, will launch in fall 2025. The courses are framed around three concepts: Pursuing Wisdom, Preparing to Serve, and Living Out God's Love. Built around eight new courses that all students will take, the APU Core will enable students to achieve 24 new learning goals under the categories of worldview and wisdom, character and virtue, calling and mission, critical and creative thinking, scientific and quantitative inquiry, and communication and collaboration.

As part of the APU Core, students will complete courses that enable them to declare an 18-unit minor in biblical and theological formation. The minor will begin with a new Cornerstones first-year seminar anchored in the biblical narrative and focused on APU's Four Cornerstones of Christ, Scholarship, Community, and Service. New biblical studies courses, organized around the themes of creation, covenant, exile, Christ, community, and redemption, will combine broader exposure to the biblical text with continued deep dives into key passages. Then, following updated theology and upper-division Bible courses, a concluding Calling and Character Seminar will help students to integrate their vocational journey with their biblical, theological, and character formation as they prepare to launch into life after college.

In a new Visions of the Good Life humanities seminar, students will explore life's big questions regarding what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful as they engage with works from a variety of times, places, cultures, and genres. A new Personal Wellness course will help students develop the skills and habits they need in order to incorporate spiritual, emotional, social, physical, academic, and financial wellness practices into their lives throughout their time in college and beyond. Finally, students will develop their research skills in an interdisciplinary Seeking Shalom Seminar, where they will grapple with how to bring



PHOTOS BY DANA ATTEBERY, MA '17, AND GABI JOHNSON

healing and restoration in relation to some of the most pressing challenges of our time.

In addition to these new courses, the APU Core will continue to feature valuable exploration of the humanities and arts along with preparation in written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, science and social science, intercultural competence, and language study. Throughout all of these experiences, students will be able to integrate Christian faith with their learning and engage with people and ideas from their own and other cultures with curiosity, humility, respect, and compassion.

Overall, the APU Core will encourage students to come as they are and to encounter the grand story of God's love and His mission to redeem His world as they are equipped to be salt and light in their careers, communities, churches, and families. We look forward to seeing what God will do in the lives of our students as they embark on a lifetime of learning and service supported by a strong foundation in the liberal arts.

Bryant Mathews, PhD, is Associate Dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences and Director of General Education. bmathews@apu.edu

Drafting a New Blueprint

Kim Trades Architecture for Nursing in Response to God's Call

BY JACQUELINE GUERRERO

Sometimes God calls us to a completely different path than the one we're on, and it can be daunting to take the leap of faith. Professional nursing student Mika Yagi Kim '25 switched to a career in nursing when she felt God calling her to help others in ways she couldn't at her previous job.



PHOTOS BY NATHAN FOSTER '26 AND COURTESY OF MIKA YAGI KIM '25

Kim graduated from the University of California, Irvine, with a bachelor's degree in social sciences, specializing in cognitive science, then earned a master's degree in architecture with a focus on environmental science from the University of Southern California. Kim combined the two to get what she believed to be her dream job—an architectural consultant for sustainability—but found herself searching for something more. As she began to question what her true calling was, she leaned into the spiritual aspect of her life: “That’s

when I realized that to feel fulfilled in my career, there had to be an element of selfless service more than I was already doing.”

She knew that she was helping people in her consultant job, but she wanted to work with people firsthand and see the impact for herself. Becoming a nurse became Kim's aspiration, so she applied to multiple nursing programs and was accepted by all of her top candidates, but Azusa Pacific's faith-based mission and values align with hers, something she couldn't find anywhere else.

She also liked that APU's professional nursing program is a two-year accelerated program perfect for those who already have a degree in another subject. “So much of the coursework has to do with commingling God's principles and work into our curriculum, and that would not be the case at other universities,” she said.

APU encourages professional nursing students to participate in global service trips where they can use their gifts to help people in need, but her target destination, Tanzania, was not one of the locations APU offered. Kim was inspired to serve in Africa due to the nursing trips frequently organized by her current employer, Adventist Health, a nonprofit faith-based hospital. Through Adventist Health, she came across a nonprofit organization called International Volunteer HQ, which planned to send a team to Tanzania for three and a half weeks over the summer. Kim knew that she could make an impact in others' lives in Tanzania while also growing in her faith, so she committed to going.

Kim, who had never been to Africa, was assigned to work in Levulosi Hospital, a 45-bed public healthcare facility in Arusha, where she volunteered in the acute inpatient ward treating those with HIV/AIDS, malaria, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental health disorders. Working alongside the chief medical physician, her responsibilities included daily rounds with the medical team, performing assessments, developing care plans, completing treatments, and providing education to patients in a country where access to health care is limited. She also helped in a medical outreach clinic located in a more remote area where community members without direct access to health care could be treated.

She found, however, that the most emotionally impactful part of her trip was teaching English to fifth graders at the Burka Primary School.

“I came across a student named Grace, whom I knew was special,” she said. “Many of the girls in the school have barriers that prevent them from completing their education, but this one girl had such a strong desire to learn.”

As Kim continued to interact with the little girl, she learned that Grace's dream was to become a pilot, but her family was struggling financially since her father passed away the year before. Kim set up a meeting with the school's principal and learned that she could help support Grace's education and career dreams.

“There's a scholarship program between the government and public schools where you can sponsor a child,” she said. “It is a blessing that I can be of support to her and her family so that Grace will be able to continue her education. For her not to pursue her dream because of circumstances out of her control would be heartbreaking.”

Kim's time in Tanzania also allowed her to reflect on her faith. Kim spent a day with one of the local tribes, and when she arrived, they were all wearing traditional attire and singing songs in their



“I came back from the trip (to Tanzania) having experienced God's universal love.”

—Mika Yagi Kim '25

native language. Despite the language barrier, the Maasai tribe welcomed Kim with open arms into their celebration.

“I came back from the trip having experienced God's universal love,” she said. “Interacting with the community showed me that there was an underlying concept of love that I could only attribute to being God's love.”

While Kim's main goal is to become a nurse, she believes that there is something bigger than herself or her job that she is called to do.

“I will be focusing my PhD dissertation on spiritual care, and that's something that could only be supported at APU,” she said. “Over the last year, I've been contemplating the subject of God consciousness as a healing modality in health care. I hope to be able to make it a priority in nursing in the future.”

Kim's time at APU prepared her for the work she did in Tanzania, and also has helped transform her faith.

“I have found a home in APU, and it's because of the curriculum involving spiritual care that I see just how integrated it is to nursing,” she said. “I've come from institutions where speaking of God was not encouraged, so I never got to fully express my true self as a child of God. But here at APU, we're encouraged to further our spiritual growth and share that with others. I'm so humbled and blessed by the opportunities I've had to strengthen my spiritual foundations alongside receiving my degree.”

Jacqueline Guerrero '27 is a double major in Honors humanities and English with a minor in political science, and is a public relations intern in the Division of Strategic Communication and Engagement.

A Passion for Pickleball

Moore Brings Popular Sport to Japan and Kenya

BY NATHAN FOSTER



“I love the variety my jobs provide, every day is different. Tour guiding and teaching pickleball keeps things interesting, and I love both equally.”

-Daniel Moore '11

When Daniel Moore '11 was introduced to pickleball by his father in 2014, he had no idea the sport would become a major part of his life. After being a tennis star at Azusa Pacific University, Moore quickly fell in love with pickleball, even deciding to train with his father for a national competition. Both Moores won national championships in the senior and open divisions. “That was just the beginning of our pickleball journey,” Daniel said. Over the next decade, Moore went on to win eight more national championships before ending his professional playing career and introducing pickleball to Japan and Kenya.

Moore was born in Atlanta, but his family moved to Japan when he was just seven months old so his father could pursue a master's degree at a Japanese university. Although the family planned to spend only two years in the country, business opportunities arose and they ended up staying for 16 years.

“Growing up in Japan felt normal at times, since it was what I knew from infancy,” Moore said. “At other times, I recognized how much I stood out as one of the few Westerners in my city.”

Moore developed an affinity for tennis, training with his dad and siblings after school every day. He grew his skills and competed in numerous local and national tournaments. During his junior year of high school, Moore's family moved back to the U.S., settling in Colorado Springs. Although he had visited America every summer as a kid, transitioning to public high school in the U.S. was a culture

shock for him. Fortunately, he found a way to fit in after leading his school to a state championship in tennis. And Moore's success on the court led APU to recruit him.

At APU, Moore thrived on the tennis team. During his freshman year, he went 15-5 in singles and 18-8 in doubles, as the team posted a 20-8 record and went all the way to the semifinal round of the NAIA championships. “Being on the tennis team felt like home for me because every other player was an international student,” he said. “The success we had as a team my freshman year was really fun to be a part of.” Moore played for one more season, but made the difficult decision to quit the team in his junior year so he could study in Egypt through the Middle East Studies Program.

Through the program, Moore learned about history, politics, and current events in the Middle



East and got to speak to diplomats from several countries when his cohort traveled to Israel, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. “That was a really formative experience for me that broadened my horizons and helped me to look at what's going on in the world through different perspectives,” Moore said. The semester away also cultivated a desire in him to travel more.

Moore returned to APU for his last three semesters of college, which were highlighted by times with friends in the Third Culture Kids Club and an influential senior seminar class. As an international business major, Moore was one of a select group of students who was invited to participate in former APU president Jon Wallace's senior seminar. In Wallace's class, Moore enjoyed hearing from several local CEOs, nonprofit leaders, and APU board members about their entrepreneurial journeys. Moore was inspired to write his thesis for Wallace's class about economic challenges in Africa.

After graduating, Moore briefly moved to Kenya to work for a social enterprise selling fuel-efficient stoves. He enjoyed learning about the country's culture and gained an appreciation for things

Americans take for granted, such as electricity and Wi-Fi, both of which frequently went out in Kenya. After a year and a half, he moved back to the U.S. and discovered pickleball.

After winning his first pickleball national championship, Moore began playing in tournaments more frequently, loving the intimate community that the sport cultivated.

“Back then, pickleball was so much smaller than it is today. Everybody knew each other. It was very welcoming and inclusive,” he said. “I could show up in pretty much every state in the country and there would always be a place for me to stay, a couple who wanted me to put on a pickleball clinic for their friends.”

Moore watched the sport grow rapidly over the next few years in the U.S. When he moved back to Japan in 2015, he was thrilled to introduce the country to pickleball. Although the sport is still much smaller in the Land of the Rising Sun, Moore has watched it grow steadily—he estimates there are about 10,000 Japanese pickleball players now.

“It feels like we're still gathering more momentum as we grow the sport professionally,” he said. “I'm privileged to know that anyone who plays or will

play pickleball in Japan will have some connection to me. It's so cool to see people having fun and making friends on the court.”

Moore enjoys watching people play pickleball for the first time, since it takes just a few minutes to learn. But it takes a lifetime to master, and he coaches the best players in Japan to get better at their craft.

“My goal is to put Japanese pickleball on the map,” he said. “In a few years, Japanese players could be among the best in the world.”

Inspired by his love for pickleball and his experience in tour guiding, Moore founded two companies: Pickleball Trips and Active Travel Japan. The former takes people on trips across Japan and around the world to play at top pickleball venues, while the latter offers a way for tourists to see beautiful and historic parts of Japan on walking, hiking, biking, and snowshoeing tours.

“I love the variety my jobs provide,” Moore said. “Every day is different. Tour guiding and teaching pickleball keeps things interesting, and I love both equally.”

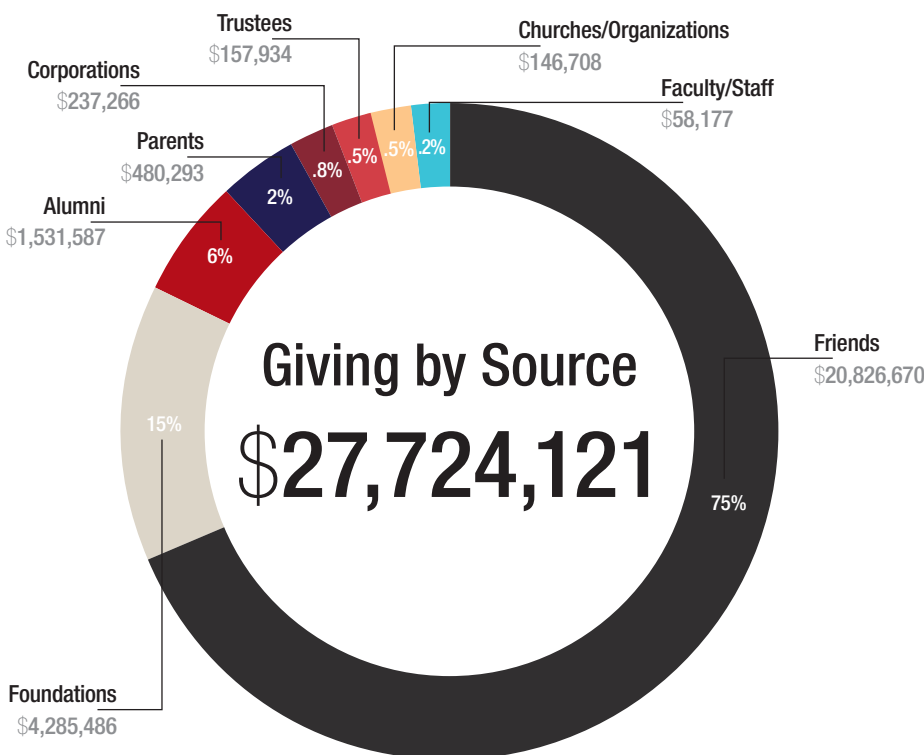
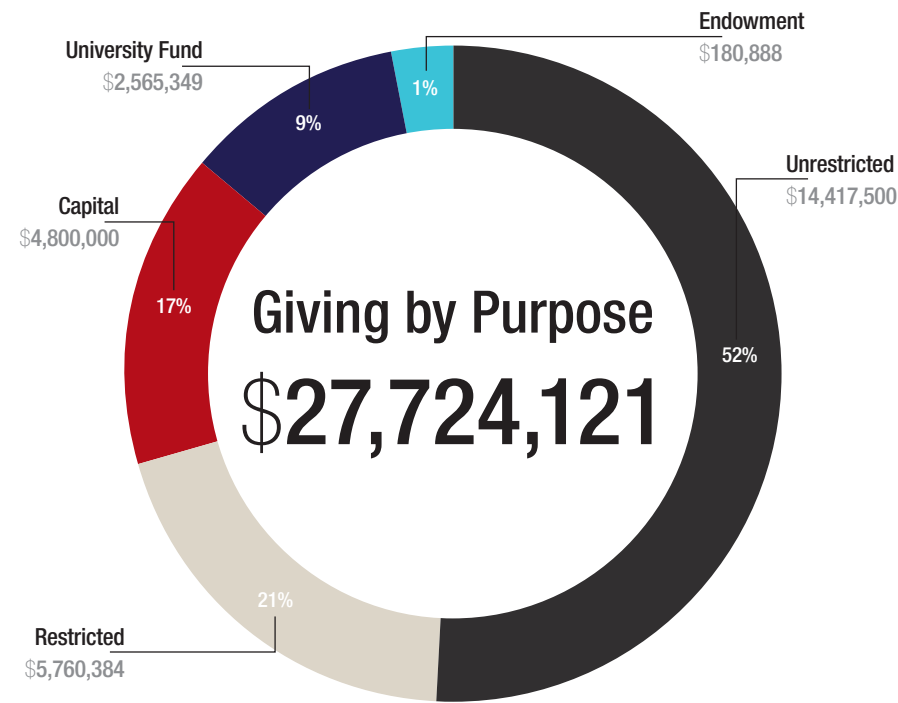
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2020s	247
2010s	230
2000s	186
1990s	140
1980s	80
1970s	63
1960s	34
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2023-24 Commitments: Supporting Every Corner of the University



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\$3,207,271

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For more information, contact the Division of University Advancement at (626) 815-5333 or advancement@apu.edu.

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Student Profile



Harry Vannatta '24
Kinesiology

I'm a student at Azusa Pacific today because of the generous scholarship I was awarded upon admission. I completed an associate's degree at Citrus College with high honors

and was accepted to six colleges, including APU. After much deliberation, I decided it would best serve me to transfer to a private university instead of a state college because I valued a personalized education experience. Choosing between APU and another private school nearby, they had virtually the same tuition, but APU was able to offer me \$2,000 more in annual scholarships. I did what any practical student would do in my position, and I accepted APU's offer. I did not realize at the time that God was behind this very "practical" decision. He closed other doors so that I would make the right decision to choose APU. I did not come to APU as a Christian and I did not intend to become a believer, but I was recently baptized on campus. My journey to accepting Christ while attending Azusa Pacific is too wonderful to express.

I have always wanted to help people, but I was unsure of a career direction until I attended APU. As a kinesiology major, I intended to enter the healthcare field, but recently God has called me to become a life enrichment director. Thanks to the world-class education I'm receiving at APU, I'll be set up to succeed in my field.

APU has transformed my life in every possible way. My APU experience has also improved the lives of my wife and daughter, who have been by my side, growing toward God along with me. Since coming to APU, I have served in multiple ways, including helping the elderly and children through volunteering and service-learning. I have also served the student body through the Student Government Association.

This life-changing experience was made possible because you have given so generously to APU, and to students like me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, and may God bless you and yours!

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SPORTS ROUNDUP

Men's Tennis Wins Third Straight PacWest Title



The PacWest men's tennis champion is Azusa Pacific for the third consecutive season after the Cougars knocked off Hawai'i Pacific 4-2 in the title match. Elias Emilio Walter was named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, going undefeated in singles and doubles over three matches. Prior to winning the conference title, the Cougars made program history by becoming the first team to go undefeated in the regular season, posting a 19-0 record and reaching No. 13 in the ITA national rankings. Head coach Mark Bohren was named the conference's Coach of the Year, while Walter was honored as the Player of the Year.

8-Peat and Olympic Trials for Cougar Track and Field



Azusa Pacific swept the men's and women's team titles for the eighth consecutive year at the PacWest Track and Field Championships in late April. On the men's side, 20 Cougars placed in the top three in their respective events to earn All-PacWest distinction, including seven who won individual conference titles. For the women's squad, 18 Cougars were All-PacWest performers, with 4 capturing conference titles in their events. Felix Perrier (steeplechase), Hannah Richardson (shot put), Juan Diego Castro (1500m), and Nico Melendres (800m) were individual conference champions in their events and also set PacWest Championships records. In addition to the Cougars' showing at the conference championships, they showed out at the annual Bryan Clay Invitational a few weeks prior. Two Cougar standouts were Nicole Warwick (heptathlon) and Jermel Jones (long jump), who turned in performances that put them in a good position to compete at the United States Olympic Trials in Eugene, Oregon, on June 21-30.

The Cornerstone Cup Remains in the Zu



In 2017-18, the rivalry between Azusa Pacific and Biola was renewed after the Eagles joined the Cougars in the PacWest Conference at the NCAA Division II level. That same year, the two schools launched a rivalry series called the Cornerstone Cup in which points are earned in head-to-head matchups between the two schools. The Cougars won the first Cup, and it has not left the Azusa Pacific campus since, and the Cougars won the trophy for the seventh consecutive time in 2023-24, beating the Eagles 100-50. Over the Cup's seven-year history, the Cougars hold an all-time points lead of 545-225.

Vogt Named American League Manager of the Year



Stephen Vogt '07, who was named manager of the Cleveland Guardians in November 2023, led the team to its best postseason finish since 2016, with the club making it all the way to the American League Championship Series before losing to the New York Yankees. Vogt's squad experienced massive success in his first year, finishing with a 92-69 regular-season record and winning the American League Central Division. Despite the Guardians losing their ace pitcher, Shane Bieber, in the opening weeks of the season, Vogt's coaching inspired the team to perform better than many analysts and experts expected. For his efforts, Major League Baseball named him the American League Manager of the Year. For 2025, Vogt hopes to keep building on the success the team experienced in his first season at the helm and lead Cleveland to its first World Series victory since 1948.

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

Goodness Out of Grief

Marshman '08 Has Met God's Grace Time and Time Again

BY NATHAN FOSTER AND ABIGAIL REED



“God wants what’s best for you,” Megan Fate Marshman, MA '08, shared with the audience at Sun Valley Community Church as she encouraged the congregation to rejoice and find contentment. For those who know Marshman’s story, this message may seem contradictory to her circumstances: Just two years prior, Marshman lost her husband, Randy, to an unexpected heart attack. She was left to raise her two young sons, Jedidiah and Foster, as a widow. Even so, Marshman—speaker, author, and pastor—continually encourages others to have faith, even in the midst of tragedy.

“God understands. Not only does He know us in those places, but we can also know Him,” said Marshman. “If we’re open to it, we’ll see how His Spirit uses all those things to form us more in the likeness of Him.”

This strong foundation of faith traces back to her parents, who taught her that ministry is not limited to the Church—and words have power to build God’s Kingdom. This stuck with her as she went on to study communication at Westmont University with the goal of telling stories as a videographer. God, however, had different plans.

Those plans involved using a poor decision that Marshman made in college to change her trajectory and her understanding of Him. She had made friends with a group who shoplifted and one day she joined them. “I got caught, thanks be to God, and it changed my life for the better,” Marshman said. After six hours in a holding cell, her parents bailed her out. She walked out with her head down, expecting to be met with anger. When she looked up at her parents, however, her mom was holding her arms out.

“I told her, ‘Mom I don’t deserve that.’ With kindness and compassion, my dad told me, ‘My girl, you never did.’ That was the first time I met grace face to face,” Marshman said.

Marshman still had to face court, though, but dozens of her friends and family wrote letters to the judge attesting to her character. In response, the judge gave her a unique sentence: She was required to make a public presentation at local high schools on the topic of decision making. That’s when she discovered she had a gift for speaking. “In that moment, my greatest weakness revealed my greatest strength,” Marshman said.

When Marshman graduated from Westmont, she eagerly accepted an offer to play professional basketball in Europe. Her sister, however, reminded her to pray. “At 4 a.m. on the floor of my bedroom, I prayed and asked God the direction He wanted me to take. It was then that I realized the whole decision to play basketball internationally was all about me, not God’s purpose in my life,” Marshman said.

So she changed course. The very next day, Marshman received a call from a place near to her heart, the place where she had made life-changing decisions to follow Jesus—Hume Lake Christian Camp. They needed a summer lead counselor, so she packed her bags and drove up a day later.

“That was when one of my college basketball teammates contacted me,” she said. “Her dad was going to coach at Azusa Pacific, and asked if I wanted to coach with him.”

God wanted to use her basketball experience after all—for His glory, not hers. For two years, she coached, taught classes as an adjunct professor, and worked on a master’s degree in organizational leadership at APU.

After her time at APU, she married the love of her life, Randy Marshman. Newlywed, they spent one last summer counseling campers at Hume Lake.

“That final summer orientation changed my life—I saw a woman stand on stage giving a profound message on God’s grand,



full redemptive narrative,” Marshman said. The speaker took her under her wing that summer and offered her a position at a Christian publishing house.

“Suddenly, every little detail of my life came together. I had the exact qualifications needed for the job,” Marshman said. “I realized God was sovereign over the whole thing, and had been orchestrating this from the beginning. He will use absolutely everything if we’re walking in step with His Spirit.”

She and Randy soon welcomed two boys into the world, and life was full. So when Randy died on February 21, 2021, Marshman turned to the Scriptures and honest prayer in grief and confusion. She was sad, angry, and hurting, but because of community and authentic prayer, she was never alone. She leaned on Romans 8:28-29: “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son” (NIV).

“I sat and considered how in the world God could use Randy’s death for good,” she said. “Good, based on Romans 8:29, didn’t mean comfortable or happy. While everything is not good, God is wildly creative in still using it for good. God can use ‘all things’ to bring us into deep intimacy and honesty with Him. And He has.”

Marshman is now a popular chapel speaker at APU. Delivering a recent morning chapel message, she faced the audience of students filling the Felix Event Center and shared a simple yet profound truth: “God wants to meet you right where you’re at. He won’t meet you where you’re not, so you might as well open your heart and be honest. He’ll meet you right there.”

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Putting the “Public” in Public Education

Alzina Harnesses the Power of Communities to Help Schools

BY NATHAN FOSTER



Amy Alzina, MA '02, EdD, believes in the power of public education. She desires to make an impact in the lives of students and communities, and her leadership of Cold Spring School District (CSSD) was recognized with the 2024 Superintendent/Principal of the Year Award from the Association of California School Administrators. While she felt honored, Alzina credits her dedicated team, which has pushed CSSD to new heights.

“What’s magical about Cold Spring and the other schools I’ve led is that I’ve been fortunate enough to build a strong team of parents that don’t only want their child to succeed, they know that their child does better when everyone succeeds,” Alzina said. “It’s truly special to have parents and community members come alongside our staff to help our kids reach their full potential.”

Originally from Scotia, a small town in Northern California, Alzina became the first member of her family to go to college, supported by a track and field and cross country scholarship at Westmont College, where she majored in liberal studies and minored in kinesiology. After graduating, Alzina was recruited to fill a physical education position at a new school, the Santa Barbara Community Academy (SBCA), hired with an emergency teaching credential. “I fell in love with teaching the kids right away,” she said. Wanting to continue teaching during the day, Alzina sought a graduate school that offered night classes, and she heard about the Azusa Pacific University regional campus open at the time in Ventura County.

“I was just planning on getting an education credential,” she said. “I thought I was a poor writer, so I didn’t think I had what it took to complete a full master’s program, but APU’s program director told me he believed in my potential.”

For three years, Alzina taught during the day, then drove to Ventura for her classes at night. She earned multiple subject and administration credentials, along with two master’s degrees—one in education, and one in educational leadership and administration.

In her APU classes, Alzina grew as a writer, and also as a leader who supported the social-emotional needs of her students. She appreciated that her classmates were veteran teachers who had rich teaching experience and knew the right questions to ask their instructors.

“The thing I’m most grateful for in my APU education is that I wasn’t treated like just a number,”

she said. “The faculty and administration truly cared about me and wanted me to succeed.”

Alzina’s professors also instilled confidence about her writing and leadership capabilities, which proved pivotal down the road when she got her doctorate. After teaching in various roles for seven years, Alzina was encouraged to go into administration.

“My mentors, Isabella Hernandez and Roberta Ortega, and the rest of the staff asked me to step up as their principal,” Alzina said. “I didn’t know if I could do it, but they said they would support me, and they did. Not many people have the opportunity to lead a school where all the teachers ask for you. That meant a lot.”

Alzina became SBCA’s principal at just 29 years old and led the school for three years. After that, Alzina became principal of another local school, Adams Elementary. While SBCA had achieved great success, Adams had fallen into disrepair. Many local residents did not want to send their kids to Adams, and Alzina saw it as an opportunity to transform the school: “Together, my team and amazing community members and parents brought that school that nobody wanted to go to into becoming a Distinguished School, top 100 in the nation for Title 1 schools.”

Alzina created a culture of excellence with relationship-driven teachers and administrators who made their students feel seen and valued, and the school began providing opportunities for self discovery and hands-on learning. Among the achievements she is most proud of: creating a bike program to teach kids how to ride a bike and allowing them to ride bikes during recess, taking students to the YMCA so they could learn how to swim, and investing in robust music, drama, and art programs.

“I believe in a whole-child approach to learning,” she said. “Nobody remembers the worksheet they did in school. We remember our experiences. I think the disconnect most school districts have is that they have great experiences, but they’re not

“We had an all-hands-on-deck approach of creating fantastic experiences with community members that allowed our kids to master standards while enjoying coming to school each day.”

Amy Alzina, MA '02, EdD

aligned to the standards.” Alzina set out to align fun art and PE experiences with California’s education standards: “We had an all-hands-on-deck approach of creating fantastic experiences with community members that allowed our kids to master standards while enjoying coming to school each day.”

After eight years at Adams, Alzina became superintendent/principal of CSSD, a single-school district with about 200 students from transitional kindergarten through sixth grade. Alzina attributes much of her success to having a supportive school board that helped her land opportunities to serve on the board of directors for California’s Small School Districts’ Association and the Association of California

School Administrators: “That fills my tank, knowing that I get to have an impact at the state and community levels.”

When Alzina arrived, CSSD’s students had nearly 80 percent proficiency in English language arts (ELA), math, and science, but Alzina wasn’t satisfied with those rates: “I firmly believe that no matter what school district I’m in, regardless of the socioeconomic status or amount of English language learner or special education students we have, that we can achieve 100 percent proficiency.”

Alzina began implementing practices that use student data to drive instruction and motivate student learning: “I’m proud to say that last year, we hit 99% proficiency in ELA, 98% in math, and 97% in science.” And beyond simply meeting state standards, 87% of CSSD students exceeded state standards in ELA and 72% exceeded standards in math, massive increases compared to when she arrived.

“My calling is to show what’s possible in public education,” she said. “I believe in coming together as a community to meet the needs of our kids. Together, we make great things happen.”

Outside of work, Alzina loves spending time with her husband and two children. She balances being a dedicated servant leader at her school with being a loving mom. She also knows she has gotten to where she is in life only because of her faith.

“My faith is everything to me; it hasn’t been an easy road, but when times get tough, I pray to God to give me strength,” Alzina said. “I strive to follow His will for my life. I have immense gratitude, waking up each morning grateful for the life and gifts He has given me.”

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Homecoming Makes Fall Return with Spirit-filled Weekend

Azusa Pacific University’s Homecoming made a return to the fall, centered around the energy of Cougars soccer and packed with memorable events and school spirit.

The weekend kicked off Friday morning with a special chapel gathering that brought the community together for powerful worship music led by Russell Vista ’19. Vista was accompanied by a full alumni band sharing their musical talents and inspiring words, connecting past and present generations of Cougars. Later that night, students transformed into fairy-tale characters for the “Once Upon a Dream” Homecoming dance, filling the dance floor with vibrant costumes and unforgettable memories.

On Saturday morning, APU students, alumni, and friends gathered for the Revive Experience, an incredible time of worship and reflection. With music led by APU students and messages from guest pastors, the morning filled the campus with renewed faith and unity.

Lunch with the Presidents brought a cozy, autumnal atmosphere, with APU President Adam J. Morris and SGA President Travis Gray

sharing insights on student life and spirituality, deepening the bond within the APU family.

The excitement continued with the Support Local Market and Street Fair, featuring inflatables, food, and booths from local businesses, including alumni-owned brands such as Bondi Bowls by Bailey Wilson ’18 and Strides of Faith by Christian Granadosin ’22.

The community’s spirit soared as the crowd donned Cougars pennants and scarves to rally around the men’s and women’s soccer teams for their final home games of the season. Halftime was full of surprises, from raffles to penalty kicks with Freddy Cougar and a youth game featuring Grace Sports Soccer League. The men’s soccer team held its opponent at bay, ending with a 0-0 draw, and as a perfect close to Homecoming 2024, the women’s soccer team claimed a thrilling victory. Fall Homecoming was a true celebration of faith, fun, and Cougar pride.



Let it Snow!

Azusa Pacific University’s Tree Lighting is a beloved holiday tradition that continues to grow in popularity each year. The event celebrates the start of the Advent season and the anticipation of the birth of our Savior. With West Campus transformed into a winter wonderland, complete with falling snow, the APU community gathers to enjoy a festive evening of sledding, carriage rides, holiday treats, and musical entertainment.



Scan the QR code to watch highlights of this year’s APU Tree Lighting.



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