

APU LIFE

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

NEW ERA OF APU EDUCATION ■ RACING TOWARD HER DREAMS ■ FASHIONING A DIFFERENCE



CELEBRATING

APU 125 YRS

GOD FIRST





God has been faithful to APU for 125 years. Thank you, Lord! In a season when Christian higher education is under immense pressure to succumb to the things of this world, we celebrate the ways in which the mission of APU has withstood the test of time. Today, APU remains unwavering in its Christ-centered commitment—having made “faithfulness to God” our top institutional priority.

Our institutional mission began with our founder, Mary Hill, whose calling led to the Training School for Christian Workers in 1899. One year later, the Articles of Incorporation were approved and included the following statement of purpose:

“The Training School exists to provide thorough instruction in the Bible, and to give practical training in all that pertains to home and foreign mission work . . . to the promotion of the Kingdom of Christ on the face of the world.”

Clearly, our founders felt called by God to open a school that was Gospel-centered and Kingdom-focused. What started in 1899 with an inaugural class of just 12 students has grown to more than 78,000 alumni worldwide, men and women faithfully serving their families and communities for the cause of Jesus Christ.

And while our history is replete with stories of those who have gone before us to do great things for Christ and His Kingdom, the APU of today is just as vibrant. As you will read in the pages of this 125th Anniversary edition of *APU Life*, God is still very much on the move. Students are making first-time decisions to follow Christ, hundreds are serving in local and global missions, more than 500 have joined discipleship groups, and our weekly chapels are filled with students lifting their voices in praise. The Spirit of God is very much alive on this campus, and His presence is palpable.

Now two years into my role as president, having prioritized our *God First* mission, we’re charting a course for APU’s future. I believe APU’s best days are still ahead as we listen to His voice intently, and follow courageously. As you’ll read beginning on page 12, our vision for the future is bold, and we can’t wait to see what God will accomplish. Yes, the landscape of Christian higher education is changing, but I can only imagine how God might harness the resources of APU to further His work on Earth, so long as we remain faithful to His calling.

Thank you for praying with us to this end. And be encouraged.

In Christ,

Adam J. Morris, PhD
President

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MAGAZINE STAFF

- Rachel (Nordby '97) White, MA '17
Executive Director of Strategic Communication
- Walter Cabal
Communications Editor
- Calli Cox '23
Graphic Designer
- Jason Cunningham
Communications Manager
- Jason Flicker
Art Director
- Nathan Foster '20
Public Relations Manager
- Tim Myers
Associate Director of Operations

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apulife@apu.edu



APULIFE

SPRING/SUMMER 2024



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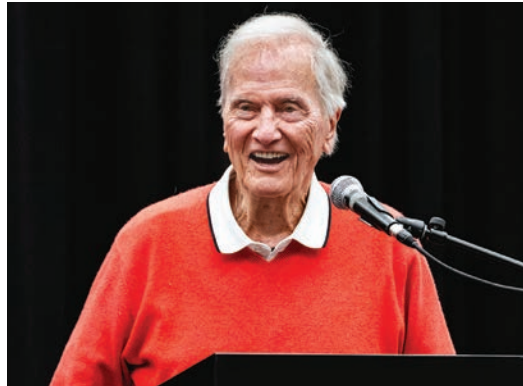
APU 125 YRS

GOD FIRST SINCE 1899



The university kicked off Homecoming 2024 with a festive 125th birthday celebration on East Campus after Friday morning's chapel service. The event—featuring live music from APU's pop-rock group, remarks from President Morris, and, of course, birthday cake—drew a large crowd of enthusiastic students, faculty, staff, and alumni. All smiles, the APU community proudly wear their APU 125th T-shirts while posing for a group photograph to commemorate this historic anniversary.

Boone Designates Historic Gift to Build Scoring Stage and Recording Studio



PHOTOS BY GABI JOHNSON

Legendary recording artist, author, and actor Pat Boone will donate a historic gift to APU’s School of Music to build a state-of-the-art scoring stage and recording studio, where aspiring performers, composers, and filmmakers will come alongside Christ-centered faculty mentors to learn their craft. Boone visited campus on February 23 to sign and commemorate the gift agreement and met with current music students and faculty.

“We are grateful to Pat Boone for this extraordinary gift that will extend his inspiring legacy by equipping a new generation of artists to transform their industry for the cause of Christ,” said Adam J. Morris, PhD, president. “APU’s Pat Boone Scoring Stage and Recording Studio will be a premier production facility located just east of Los Angeles, the entertainment capital of the world and a profoundly influential place for music.”

The new complex, located on APU’s East Campus, will enhance the Warren Music Building and feature a scoring stage with tracking for a full film orchestra, 100-voice choir, and production suites.

“Music and movies have the power to persuade, make deep impressions that drive behavior, and are a moral influence on society,” said Boone. “I am partnering with APU to prepare students for a career that spurs positive and righteous activity in the entertainment industry. I believe God will breathe His Spirit into our efforts to further His use of young talents doing inspirational things if we pray and give toward His purpose.”

“Music and movies have the power to persuade, make deep impressions that drive behavior, and are a moral influence on society.”

PAT BOONE

Boone has been recognized by *Billboard* magazine as a top-10 all-time recording artist, having sold more than 45 million records, with 38 Top-40 and six No. 1 hits, 13 gold singles, 2 gold albums, and 1 platinum album. He holds the record with 220 consecutive weeks with one or more singles on the *Billboard* pop charts. Boone has recorded more than 2,600 songs, is a Gospel Music Hall of Fame inductee, and a six-time Grammy nominee. Also a No. 1 bestselling author and actor, Boone has published 28 autobiographical and motivational books, several of which focus on faith, starred in 29 Hollywood films, and has three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one each for recording, motion picture, and television.

A devout Christian, Boone has supported nonprofits across the world. APU honored Boone with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his service to Christ and the arts at the university’s 2023 Industry Spotlight at Warner Bros. Studios, and premiered Boone’s song “Jehoshua” with the APU Symphony Orchestra, student soloists, and student choir.

Keith Hall Named CCCU Presidential Fellow



The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) announced that Keith Hall, EdD, vice president for student belonging and chief diversity officer at APU, was selected as one of the first annual Presidential Fellows, alongside Ted Song, PhD (John Brown University), and Sarah Visser, MEd ’04, PhD (Calvin University).

The Presidential Fellowship Program is a new, yearlong fellowship to prepare leaders to answer the call to Christian college presidency. Each year, the CCCU will select 1-3 individuals for the fellowship who serve or have previously served as CCCU commissioners and who demonstrate exceptional strength of character, competence, and leadership potential.

“I am thrilled with the selection of Dr. Hall for the inaugural Presidential Fellows program with the CCCU,” said APU President Adam J. Morris, PhD. “He is a seasoned professional with a deep love for students and an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. He will thrive in this program and will continue to be used by God to advance the work of Christian higher education long into the future.”

Hall is a member of the President’s Cabinet and provides strategic leadership and oversight to the Student Belonging division, comprising the Athletics Department; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Student Affairs. He leads ongoing efforts to cultivate a university culture and climate that enables the diverse demography of faculty, staff, and students at APU to thrive and experience belonging. To accomplish this goal, Hall works collaboratively with administrative, curricular, cocurricular, and student leaders to employ strategic initiatives that enrich the holistic experience of all students across the university system.

“I am humbled and honored to be invited to participate in the CCCU’s Presidential Fellowship Program with two individuals that I regard as colleagues and friends,” Hall said. “In a world that is ever-changing and filled with brokenness, hopelessness, and a need for God-sized solutions, I am convinced that Christian higher education continues to be relevant in producing faith-informed scholars, scholarship, practitioners, and practices that address complex challenges with purpose and resolve.”

These leaders are experienced facilitators of the CCCU Leadership Development Institute and will continue to serve in that role. They are also able to shadow a college president as part of the yearlong appointment. These opportunities provide the Presidential Fellows with unique access to executive-level decision-making, presidential networking, and engagement with key issues affecting faith-based education at the national level.

“I am thrilled with the selection of Dr. Keith Hall for the inaugural Presidential Fellows program with the CCCU.”

ADAM J. MORRIS, PHD



PHOTOS BY DANA ATTEBERY, MA '17

Henck Installed as Provost at Special Chapel Service Celebration

On April 10, APU celebrated the installation of the university’s sixth provost, Anita Fitzgerald Henck, PhD, during a special chapel service held in the Felix Event Center. The event included a faculty processional, a welcome and prayer by President Adam J. Morris, PhD, worship music performed by the APU chapel band, the formal installation, and a keynote address delivered by Henck titled, “The Power of Education as Transformation.” A distinguished lecture luncheon followed, which featured Diana Pavlac Glycer, PhD, professor in the Honors College. Henck is a renowned educator and leader who assumed this role after serving as dean of APU’s School of Education since 2011, where she provided turnaround leadership during major transition, improved enrollment, enhanced fiscal health, led a team that reshaped the curricular portfolio, redesigned the EdD in Educational Leadership program with a 96 percent completion rate, and launched the Next Generation Superintendent Program professional development group. Today, APU is a leader in preparing candidates for educator credentials in California.

Provosts were not initially a common component of American higher education, but began gaining popularity in the mid-20th century. Azusa Pacific University appointed its first provost in 1991, acting on a recommendation from the Carnegie Foundation.

AZUSA PACIFIC PROVOSTS

AJ ANGLIN, PHD 1991-96

PATRICIA “PAT” ANDERSON, PHD 1997-2002

MICHAEL WHYTE, PHD 2002-10

MARK STANTON, PHD, ABPP 2011-19

RUKSHAN FERNANDO, PHD 2020-22

ANITA FITZGERALD HENCK, PHD 2023-PRESENT

The Chosen's Jonathan Roumie Honored with Inspirational Artist Award During Campus Visit



PHOTOS BY DANA ATTEBERY, MA '17

On February 16, APU honored acclaimed actor Jonathan Roumie, best known for his portrayal of Jesus in the TV drama *The Chosen*, with the 2024 Inspirational Artist Award. APU welcomed Roumie to campus for a special daylong visit where he spoke in chapel to more than 1,200 students, faculty, staff, and special guests; attended a luncheon in his honor where he received the award; and conducted a workshop with theater students where he shared his story, provided them with helpful advice, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams.

“I reached out to Jonathan and shared APU theater arts’ mission to train students to be excellent at their craft so they can go out into the world as ambassadors for Christ,” said Jill Brennan Lincoln, MA, chair and associate professor of the Department of Theater Arts. “I also shared our deep appreciation for the impact he is having for Christ globally and invited him to APU to meet with our aspiring Christian artists and we are thrilled he said yes.”

“If I had experienced success much earlier in my career, I wouldn’t have appreciated it in this way, and I most certainly wouldn’t have developed the faith that I have now.”

JONATHAN ROUMIE

Roumie has garnered critical success and inspired viewers across the globe with his performance in *The Chosen*. The faith-based drama grew from a crowdsourced television series about the life and ministry of Jesus and His followers to amass more than 110 million viewers in 175 countries. A devout Catholic, Roumie told *The Christian Post*, “If I had experienced success much earlier in my career, I wouldn’t have appreciated it in this way, and I most certainly wouldn’t have developed the faith that I have now.” Roumie said that the longer he plays Jesus, the greater his thirst grows to learn more about the Son of God. His other credits include playing hippie street preacher Lonnie Frisbee in the 2023 motion picture *Jesus Revolution*, which was Lionsgate Studios’ largest-grossing domestic film in three years. A new docuseries about Roumie, titled *Jonathan and Jesus*, is available on Amazon Prime.

“I couldn’t do this without Him,” said Roumie as he accepted the award. “Psalm 115 comes to mind: ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.’ I’m completely honored and so grateful. Thank you, and God bless you.”

Inklings Scholar Honored at Mary Hill Luncheon



On March 27, Diana Pavlac Glycer, PhD, professor in the Honors College, was presented with the Mary Hill Award, named after the university’s first president and given to honor outstanding women in leadership at APU. An award-winning writer whose research focuses on C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and their literary group, known as the Inklings, Glycer is also known for her podcasts and speaking engagements. She is the author

of *The Company They Keep*, *Bandersnatch*, *The Major and Missionary*, *Journey Back Again: Reasons to Revisit Middle-earth*, and a series of Christian devotionals titled *Clay in the Potter’s Hands*. Among her many accolades, Glycer has received the Paul F. Ford Award for Lewis Studies, APU’s Undergraduate Faculty Outstanding Scholarship Award, APU’s Chase A. Sawtell Inspirational Teaching Award, the Mythopoeic Society Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies, the Imperishable Flame Award for Tolkien Studies, APU’s Teaching Excellence Award, and a Hugo nomination.

President Adam J. Morris, PhD, also honored three other finalists for the award: Karen Rouggy, DMin, director of the Office of Service and Discipleship; Candice R. Williams, PhD, associate professor and chair of the Department of Criminal Justice; and Carrie Webber, head coach of APU’s softball team.

The Mary Hill luncheon featured an inspirational interview between campus pastor Ta’Tyana Leonard, MDiv, and Joni Eareckson Tada, a bestselling author and renowned speaker. Tada suffered a life-altering spinal cord injury when she was 17 years old in a diving accident that resulted in quadriplegia. While rehabilitating from her injury, Tada grew vastly in her faith and decided to dedicate her life’s

work to God. She started Joni and Friends, a nonprofit committed to reaching and serving people with disabilities with practical help and the saving love of Jesus. Through the organization, Tada has helped thousands of people with disabilities across the globe.

Anonymous Donor Gives \$13 Million Gift to APU

APU President Adam J. Morris, PhD, announced that the university has received a more than \$13 million commitment from an anonymous donor, representing the largest gift in the institution’s 125-year history.

“I am deeply grateful for the incredible generosity of this donor who believes strongly in our university’s Christ-centered mission,” said Morris. “God is on the move at APU in so many ways, and momentum is building for a promising future.”

When the gift is realized, the Board of Trustees and president may direct it to fund APU’s strategic priorities, ensuring that the university advances its position as a top university in Christian higher education, providing a transformative education to new generations of ethical and compassionate leaders who will make a significant impact on society.

“This extraordinary gift commitment to APU is of tremendous encouragement and inspiration for this community of disciples and scholars as we seek to advance the work of God in the world,” said Andrew Barton, EdD, vice president for university advancement. “What a blessing this donor has bestowed on current and future students.”

“God is on the move at APU in so many ways, and momentum is building for a promising future.”

ADAM J. MORRIS, PHD

APU School of Nursing Partners with AUSD to Foster a Healthy Community

APU’s School of Nursing partnered with Azusa Unified School District (AUSD) to host eight Ask-a-Nurse pop-up events throughout the 2023-24 school year, with the goal of bringing health education

Continued on page 10

By the Numbers

500: More than 500 APU students participated in discipleship groups (D-Groups) during the 2023-24 school year, growing in their faith while being poured into from spiritual mentors, including all members of the President’s Cabinet.

400: More than 400 APU students served on global engagement trips during Thanksgiving, Christmas break, spring break, and the summer through the Office of Service and Discipleship. Students served in a variety of capacities including building homes and schools, providing health screenings, and supporting children in orphanages.

16: The men’s basketball team turned a slow start to the season into its first PacWest Championship. This earned them a trip to the NCAA DII Sweet 16 for the first time since the 2014-15 season.

2: The School of Nursing’s online RN to BSN program was ranked second in California by RegisteredNursing.org in recognition of the university’s accelerated program and innovative curriculum.

Continued from page 9

and resources to the families of Azusa while giving nursing students a chance to learn about careers in community health. APU nursing faculty and students attended community events including open houses and fairs held at several elementary schools throughout AUSD.

“We brought the wellness center to where people are, creating easier access than if they came to us,” said Diane Viera, grants administrator and director of the Neighborhood Wellness Center, which was established so nursing students could serve during their community rotations. Members of the community receive health education, group exercise, weight management lessons, and blood pressure checks.

Partnership events such as these pop-ups have allowed the School of Nursing to assist the community. The school has also partnered with a vaccine clinic, which allows them to administer vaccines at these events. In the fall semester they offered flu shots, and in the spring semester they offered COVID-19 shots and vaccines necessary for school-age children. Families can also receive physical and mental health clinic referrals, as well as social service information.

“We focus on prevention before treatment,” said Valerie Ver ’25. “We communicate and explain to people how they can prevent getting to the point where acute care is needed. Through these pop-ups, I’ve learned how to engage in an effective way with community members.”

The pop-ups focused on accessibility for the community.

“Easy access for families is essential,” said Paul Hernandez, director of student support services for AUSD. “Once people have this information, they can appropriately advocate for themselves.”

When planning the events, Viera took into account that “people may lack transportation or experience a language barrier,” she said, and the pop-ups helped remove those barriers while providing health services.

Opportunities to form personal connections within the community have been impactful for nursing students. “A big part of faith is serving others, and through these events I get to see from the perspective of community members,” Ver said. “The comfortable environment allows me to make valuable connections with the people I serve.”

Feedback from families attending the pop-up events has been overwhelmingly positive, and APU and AUSD hope to grow their partnership.

“I would really like to see the continued growth of clinics that can provide help to our communities,” Hernandez said. “The information and accessibility the School of Nursing provides could be used for other information sessions as well.”

Viera also expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to work with AUSD: “I’m really grateful for our partnership with AUSD and for them allowing us to put these events together. Our faculty look forward to continuing our community outreach and helping Azusa residents.”

Grants Advance Significant Research and Scholarship

\$1,249,916

From Lilly Endowment Inc., to Matthew Elofson, PhD, interim dean of the School of Theology, to support a “thriving congregations” initiative. The School of Theology, Azusa Pacific Seminary, and the Center for Vocational Ministry are focusing on three key outcomes in this ministerial education: pastoral identity formation, increased connection between preachers, and developing a robust theology of compelling preaching. The education will also address equipping small-church pastors, women in ministry, pastors in APU’s surrounding area (the San Gabriel Valley), and first-call preachers.

\$399,953

From the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, to Candice Williams, PhD, chair and associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice, to reduce domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking on college campuses. The grant will be used to develop, strengthen, and implement campus policies, protocols, and services that more effectively identify and respond to the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

\$255,000

From the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH)/California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS) subaward, to Rachel Gonzales-Castañeda, PhD, MPH, professor in the Department of Psychology, for training and technical assistance services (substance use disorder services). The overall goal of this contract is to provide training and technical assistance to the LACDPH Substance Abuse Prevention Provider Network and to provide workforce development for the Youth Services Provider Network to ensure quality and effective service delivery to youth and families who seek and receive services for substance-related needs within Los Angeles.

\$221,863

From the University of California, Los Angeles, subaward to Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (LADCFS), to Kimberly Setterlund, MSW, LCSW, chair and assistant professor in the Department of Social Work, and MSW director. The Department of Social Work’s MSW program was awarded a five-year grant to train graduate students pursuing public child welfare as a career path. Students admitted into this highly competitive program receive \$26,000 annually for two years, and complete a specialization practicum at a DCFS placement site. The grant funding will be applied to student stipends, child welfare training curriculum, and enhanced practicum instructor development. The MSW program has nurtured the training partnership with LADCFS since 2014.

Scholarship at Work



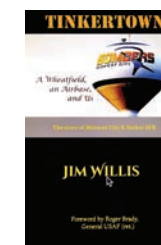
Jesus’ Best Friend: A Novel

(Resource Publications, 2023)

by Don Thorsen, PhD, professor,

Department of Biblical and Theological Studies

Imagine Jesus having a best friend named Shamir, whom Jesus knew since boyhood in their hometown of Nazareth. What kinds of conversations might the two of them have had? How important was friendship to Jesus? This novel envisions how friendship aided Jesus in His adult life as well as in His boyhood. Conversations with Shamir suggest the kinds of questions and concerns that the human Jesus experienced. What sense of divine calling did Jesus have? Why did He pray so much? How did Jesus assemble His disciples? How did He view the signs, wonders, healings, and exorcisms that occurred? How did Jesus endure eventual betrayal, crucifixion, and death? How did Jesus understand resurrection? We gain a needed understanding of Jesus’ humanness by reading this novel. Jesus emphasized faith and hope as well as love and justice. We learn about how Jesus developed these virtues and how He communicated them to others. In listening to Jesus’ conversations with Shamir, we learn about how Jesus persevered and flourished in living a God-centered life, empowered by grace.



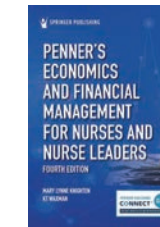
Tinkertown: A Wheatfield, an Airbase, and Us

(ArtStrings Press, 2024)

by Jim Willis, PhD, professor emeritus,

Department of Communication Studies

Tinkertown: A Wheatfield, an Airbase, and Us tells the unique story of the founding and first three decades of Tinker Air Force Base and Midwest City, Oklahoma, and the role its founder, W.P. “Bill” Atkinson, played in harvesting a city out of cropland in 1942. It is also a human drama, told through the eyes of the author and his friends who grew up there in the early years from the 1940s to the 1970s. It is an anecdote-driven story that addresses a key question in life: How much of who I am is where I’m from? The story of the base and the city are brought up to the present day in the final two chapters, and the book is amply illustrated with photos from the former and present eras.



Penner’s Economics and Financial Management for Nurses and Nurse Leaders (4th ed.)

(Springer Publishing Company, 2023)

edited by Mary Lynne Knighten, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, associate professor, School of Nursing, and KT Waxman, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CENP, CHSE, FSSH, FAAN, FAONL

This acclaimed text helps build the fundamental economic and financial management skills nurses and nurse leaders need in order to be successful in daily practice and career advancement. The updated fourth edition includes new and revised case studies reflecting current trends and increased coverage of budget strategies, forecasting, and the financial impact of COVID-19. It is rewritten to provide greater clarity for readers unfamiliar with budgets, and features a new two-color design to enhance readability. Additionally, the text reflects the AACN’s current The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education and includes updated sample business plans, grant proposals, and other essential reports, along with augmented instructor resources.



Financial and Business Management for the Doctor of Nursing Practice (3rd ed.)

(Springer Publishing Company, 2022)

edited by Mary Lynne Knighten, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, associate professor, School of Nursing, and KT Waxman, DNP, MBA, RN, CNL, CENP, CHSE, FSSH, FAAN, FAONL

This award-winning resource is the only text to focus on the financial and business skills needed by students in DNP programs. The third edition, updated to reflect key changes in our healthcare system and in nursing competencies, includes three new chapters addressing big data, population health, and financial management in times of uncertainty. It examines the impact of COVID-19 on our healthcare system as it relates to nursing competencies, provides expansive coverage of clinical environments beyond acute care, and presents five comprehensive new case studies emphasizing the financial aspects of DNP roles and the DNP project.

Advancing a New Era of APU Education

From its humble beginnings as the Training School for Christian Workers to one of the top Christ-centered universities in the nation, Azusa Pacific University has been an instrument of God throughout its 125-year history to advance His work in the world. APU students graduate transformed to answer a higher calling and make a difference in the lives of others. As we celebrate this special anniversary, APU looks forward to extending its legacy of transformation to new generations of disciples and scholars. As part of this issue, three university leaders share APU's vision and strategies for boldly advancing the university toward a promising future while living out the Four Cornerstones of Christ, Scholarship, Community, and Service.

CHRIST

How does APU remain deeply rooted in our *God First* mission as we move the university forward?

Adam J. Morris, PhD, President: This question is at the very heart of who we are as a Christ-centered university. I believe one of the greatest risks institutions face is “going soft” on mission. It’s seldom a single, glaring decision. Instead, it’s often a series of small, seemingly insignificant decisions made over time. Examples include recruiting the wrong board members, hiring misaligned faculty or staff, changing university policy, lacking institutional accountability, and giving in to external pressures. We need to be attentive and diligent as we steward APU’s mission, and this is what will keep us faithful as we move the university forward. It’s why I’ve told our community that faithfulness to God is our top institutional priority!

Early in my time at APU, our leadership team identified six key ingredients of a faithful Christian university:

Mission: Faithfulness begins with clarity of mission and answers the questions: Who are we? Why do we exist? At our Faculty/Staff Kickoff event in August 2023, we revisited our Christian identity, as outlined in our What We Believe document.

Leadership: The Board of Trustees, administration, full- and part-time faculty, and staff must be aligned in order to effectively carry out our mission.

Curriculum: We know that the Word of God is the source of all Truth, and therefore must be what anchors all our academic offerings.

Faith Integration: APU must take seriously the practice of faith integration. Regardless of the academic discipline, it’s vitally important that we equip our students with a biblical worldview in order for them to be the salt and light our world desperately needs.

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Hiring Practices: We need to be diligent in who we hire, and who we retain. Since my arrival in summer 2022, I've asked to have the final interview with all new faculty hires and all new full-time coaches. I've also asked to interview all full-time faculty who are up for their five-year contract renewal.

Spiritual Formation: Staying rooted in our *God First* mission calls us to be intentional in the spiritual formation of our students. Curricular and cocurricular programs must work together to encourage spiritual transformation. We saw this happen this last academic year, resulting in nearly 40 APU students baptized, more than 500 in Discipleship Groups, and more than 900 students involved in local and global engagement.

What new opportunities lie ahead to infuse our Christian commitment into every aspect of an APU education?

President Morris: Provost Anita Henck has initiated a complete redesign of APU's General Education core, including the 18 units of biblical and theological formation required of all undergraduate students. The redesigned core weaves the very best of the liberal arts and the Truth of God's Word together in a way that captures the hearts of our students and fosters life transformation. Aiding this effort will be the opening of an Office of Faith Integration on our Azusa campus, which will come alongside our faculty to provide the tools and training necessary to fully integrate God's Word across all of our academic disciplines. I'm super excited about this initiative! We're also expanding our discipleship efforts, growing our commitment to local and global missions, investing more in our weekly chapel programming, sponsoring on-campus worship nights, and so much more.



How is open enrollment a benefit to APU amidst the competitive landscape?

President Morris: As you may know, open enrollment means we accept students who may or may not share our faith commitment. This means that APU is expressly "evangelistic" and accepts non-Christian students and families. In contrast, "covenant" schools only knowingly accept students who have made a clear profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

As a university with open enrollment, a qualified applicant interested in furthering their education is a prospective APU student, increasing our prospective student pool. The overwhelming benefit of APU's model of open enrollment is the opportunity our faculty and staff have to point students to Jesus Christ. The spiritual curiosity we see among this generation of students is what contributes to the spiritual vitality of our campuses. My first two years here have been filled with story after story of first-time decisions to follow Christ, measurable spiritual growth among our students, and a deepening love for one another. This makes my heart sing!

SCHOLARSHIP

How does a Christian liberal arts education equip the leaders of tomorrow?

Anita Henck, PhD, Provost/Chief Academic Officer: A commitment to the liberal arts is rooted in balancing an education focused on a particular major or discipline with a General Education curriculum that educates broadly in the humanities, arts, sciences, social sciences, theology, and more. To learn broadly and think deeply, while focusing on enduring questions of the ages—the nature of good and evil, where we can see God at work in the world, what it means to live an honorable and integrated life—shapes our undergraduate students for a lifetime.

How does APU's status as an R2 institution set us apart from other CCCU schools, and how does this distinctive aid our academic success and the future of our programs?

Provost Henck: APU's status as an R2 (ranking by Carnegie as a high research activity, doctoral-granting university) is unique within the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities and exemplifies our institution's commitment to financial investment in supporting faculty research; faculty investment in student research at all levels, from undergraduate to graduate student; and students earning doctorates in research-based programs. APU has long had a commitment to excellence in teaching and the student experience. The investment over time in expanding teaching and learning to include significant emphasis on research adds to the body of knowledge that makes a difference and improves the world around us.



A hallmark of an APU education is its world-class faculty. How do we continue to attract and retain such scholars?

Provost Henck: APU is blessed with remarkable faculty, many of whom have invested decades in teaching and mentoring their students and continuing their own professional development. The launch of new programs has slowed in recent years, so recent hiring has been to replace faculty who have retired or moved on to other professional pursuits. In our work to redesign some programs and launch new ones, our commitment is to recruit broadly and hire with intentionality—first, faculty who are fully committed to APU's faith and identity statements and able to integrate their faith across the curriculum that is rooted in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ; and second, faculty who are exemplary in their discipline, evidenced by their advanced degrees, research, and professional development.

What are new areas for growth in APU's academic offerings?

Provost Henck: In developing our strategy for launching new programs, we are focusing on developing new offerings adjacent to our current expertise, particularly in health care and education. For example, with the reality of an aging population, there will likely be multidisciplinary programs developed in gerontology. The recent realignment of schools and colleges established the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, bringing child life, kinesiology, and physical therapy under the same college as our multifaceted nursing programs. We anticipate incredible synergy around shared teaching, research, and professional collaborations for students and faculty alike.

With California's renewed focus on early childhood education, APU's School of Education secured a grant to develop an early childhood education program, again drawing on faculty and alumni expertise and partnerships with school districts and community colleges across Southern California. With the relaunch of an Advisory Board for the School of Business and Management, a review of existing

programs and plans for introducing new ones are under way, as we see potential for growth and impact. Meanwhile, other programs continue their partnerships with the communities they serve, ensuring up-to-date programming to match an ever-changing landscape for employers and industries.

How does APU envision the delivery of education changing in the next several years to meet the diverse needs of our students (different ages, backgrounds, goals)?

David Shynn, Vice President, Chief Strategy Officer: The composition of APU's student body has changed significantly over the past decade, and we expect it to evolve as demographics, educational expectations, and career opportunities continue to shift. Over the last decade, APU has moved from being a primarily traditional undergraduate campus to a point where roughly two-thirds of our student population is enrolled in graduate or degree-completion programs. While there have been other changes, this shift alone requires us to take a step back to ensure that how we offer an APU education in 2024 and beyond is best designed for our current and anticipated mix of students.

For example, we need to be more intentional when considering how and where we deliver our education (i.e., in person, fully online, hybrid, or at an employer/partner location). We also need to consider operational details that affect our students, such as our service hours that are more friendly to working professionals, allocation of space, student services offerings, and spiritual formation programming.

What does it mean to be a lifelong learner and how can APU facilitate this?

Vice President Shynn: One of the special aspects about higher education is that we have the privilege of serving students in a very broad age range: from students in their teens taking dual-enrollment courses to learners who are well into retirement. As a university committed to Christ-centered education across a variety of disciplines and life stages, we believe there's an opportunity to offer an APU education through innovative and accessible options, whether a learner wants a full degree program or seeks to upskill or reskill for the rapidly evolving job market.

To do this well, not only is it important to consider education modalities and student service models, we'll need to be more intentional about engaging with the community around APU, and partnering with businesses, schools, churches, and other organizations. Those partnerships help ensure that APU students across all degree levels and programs are nurtured spiritually and equipped with the relevant skills and experiences for their respective callings. We can imagine this leading to the development of options such as corporate training partnerships, boot camps, certificates, YouTube content, and other educational partnerships.

Continued on page 16



Continued from page 15

What measures is APU taking to ensure we are both financially sustainable and able to provide students with an accessible education?

President Morris: Financial sustainability is a growing concern for the majority of private Christian universities in America, and APU is addressing the concern head on. Following COVID, an increasing number of prospective students and families are debt-averse and questioning the value of a college degree. Given the nationwide birth-rate decline since the mid-2000s, there will likely be as much as a 15 percent decline in the number of high school graduates beginning in fall 2025 and lasting for seven years. This means that Christian colleges and universities, APU included, will compete for a shrinking pool of prospective undergraduate students. The need to steward our dollars has never been more critical.

We've just completed an enormous project to evaluate the financial viability of all academic programs at APU. Optimizing our academic portfolio is a significant step towards financial sustainability. Beginning this summer, we will conduct a similar exercise for all of our nonacademic programs, benchmarking the rest of APU against national norms in pursuit of greater efficiency.

We've also concluded a study of our entire digital infrastructure, looking for ways to leverage technology in order to streamline our processes and better serve our students. We're assessing campus usage across all of our facilities in order to maximize revenue.

The Christian university of the future will require a new business model and I believe God has assembled the right team of leaders at APU to help architect the future. And of course, we're doing all of this to make an APU education affordable and accessible for all students.

COMMUNITY

What is APU doing to ensure that our programs meet marketplace demand and the needs of our students?

Provost Henck: Determining the optimal academic portfolio employs a number of strategies. In partnership with external consultants, we observe market demand for individual programs through analysis of APU and peer institutions' enrollment trends; track inquiries from prospective students and prospective employers about programs that we don't currently offer; and anticipate workforce needs of communities we serve across industries, such as hospitals, school districts, churches, and businesses.

How does APU's status as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) represent a strategic advantage?

Provost Henck: This exemplifies our commitment to provide a Christ-centered education to a student body that reflects the cultural richness of our Southern California location. Our classrooms evidence the racial and ethnic diversity of our communities, which, in turn, prepares our graduates to appreciate and value cultures and communities beyond their own. Even more, access to higher education is a transformational opportunity for all students, but uniquely significant for students who are the first in their family or community to attend college. To be a part of the transformation of individuals, families, and communities is reflective of Kingdom values.

SERVICE

How does APU continue to lead in health care and the helping professions as society's needs increase for these services?

Provost Henck: APU's health care programs have earned stellar reputations for the quality of our graduates and the professional

reputations of our faculty. This requires deep engagement with external partners and investment in professional circles, which can range from involvement with large healthcare systems (such as Kaiser Permanente) and membership on the boards of hospitals and community health centers to advocacy at the legislative level to help shape the future of these fields. Other APU programs such as mental health/counseling, social work, and educator preparation programs have faculty and staff who invest in their professional accreditor groups and serve as experts in shaping professional standards.

How does APU remain important to California's workforce development efforts?

Provost Henck: APU contributes in ways large and small. We track professional preparation programs that are directly related to specific jobs—nursing, counseling, educators, pastors, etc. Yet, in educating the whole person, we graduate students at all levels who may be employed in a variety of roles that are less specifically tied to a particular degree. With our deep commitment to the liberal arts, our undergraduate students leave APU with a holistic education through their General Education requirements, values formation both inside and outside the classroom, and significant service-learning, volunteer, or internship experiences that lead to opportunities for a variety of roles across industries. Similarly, our graduate programs also include faith integration, which provides graduates the experience of having learned deeply in their specific discipline but also broadly in terms of the impact of their faith development in whatever setting they serve.

How does APU's close proximity to Los Angeles benefit our students now and in the future? What types of key industries/partnerships does our location enable?

Vice President Shynn: Los Angeles is a preeminent global city, renowned for its cultural diversity, culture-shaping sectors, and world-class opportunities. APU's proximity to L.A. provides our alumni, students, faculty, and the university ample opportunities to learn, engage, and lead with a Christian perspective. Our students desire to serve through competent, compassionate, ethical leadership, and the



L.A. area, and the world more broadly, can benefit greatly from APU graduates with that kind of mindset. For example, this can be manifested through savvy yet ethical business practices; compassionate and highly knowledgeable healthcare workers, social workers, and educators; or Christ-centered artists and storytellers who shape culture.

I love the fact that APU is not only close to L.A., but also situated with easy access to industries and spheres of influence within the High Desert, San Bernardino County, Riverside County, and San Diego. California itself tends to have an outsized influence in shaping culture throughout the U.S. and the rest of the world, so when we talk about a desire for APU graduates to change the world, our location is a tremendous asset for setting up our graduates to do exactly that.

CHRIST, SCHOLARSHIP, COMMUNITY, SERVICE

Please provide an update on the strategic plan. Where are we in the process and what are the overarching goals?

Vice President Shynn: For APU to flourish in the long term, a new model will be required—one where our passion for equipping disciples and scholars through excellence in Christ-centered education is paired with an operating model that fosters greater agility, creativity, efficiency, and intentionality.

APU's strategic plan is in development for presentation to the Board of Trustees this summer. It outlines APU's preferred future along with objectives, measures, and projects with clear lines of accountability. While I stepped into my role only last fall, the process of engaging stakeholders across campus started long before that.

Since the beginning of President Morris' tenure, he has focused on hearing from groups across campus and involving diverse perspectives in strategic planning efforts. He held 17 listening tour sessions; engaged frequently with the student government team as well as the Faculty Senate moderator and Staff Council chair (past, present, and future); deployed nine working groups to develop and implement solutions; and commissioned several experts to evaluate key functions such as IT and enrollment management. In recent months, we've deployed student surveys and focus groups, as well as additional ideation sessions for faculty and staff.

All that input, paired with sound data about external realities, is assisting us in building up APU to be a place of strength, so that through the grace of God, we are prepared to not only manage national enrollment challenges, but to surpass expectations. As we think about the strategic plan for APU, President Morris and the Cabinet are inspired by the story in Nehemiah where the community is led with a focus on spiritual renewal and collaboration across areas of expertise to jointly rebuild the city's walls. After years of challenges, and with more headwinds anticipated, this feels like a critical moment in the life of APU for the community to unite, with full reliance on our Lord, to set up APU, its mission, and its students, faculty, and staff for long-term Kingdom impact.

Azusa Pacific University Timeline

APU 125 YRS

As we celebrate our 125th anniversary, we reflect on key moments in the history of Azusa Pacific University that demonstrate God's faithfulness. These significant events help pave the way for the next era of achievement when we will boldly lean into our mission to advance His work in the world.

1899

MARCH 3, 1899
Committee meeting at Philena Hadley's home to begin Training School for Christian Workers (TSCW)

MARCH 1900
First day of classes for TSCW, with Mary Hill presiding as first president

1906
William V. Marshburn becomes first chair of the Board of Trustees

1939
TSCW changes name to Pacific Bible College (PBC)

JUNE 1, 1939
Cornelius P. Haggard, at the age of 27, becomes TSCW's 13th president

1950
First Dinner Rally held, raising \$2,944

1955
Men's basketball wins the Southern California Christian Colleges Conference Championship

1944
First four-year degrees granted

JUNE 1946
PBC moves to Azusa

1957
PBC changes name to Azusa College

1961
Cougar Dome completed

1962
Mexico Outreach established

SEPTEMBER 1963
Marshburn Library completed

1964
Los Angeles Pacific College merges with Azusa College to form Azusa Pacific College (APC)

1965
APC joins the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA)

MAY 1968
Turner Campus Center completed. Graduate department created with enrollment reaching 80 students.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1975
Wynn Science Building completed

AUGUST 2, 1976
Paul Sago becomes 14th president

MAY 1, 1981
Azusa Pacific College becomes Azusa Pacific University (APU)

1983
Track coach Terry Franson wins his first of 10 consecutive NAIA Coach of the Year awards

1986
Cougar Stadium completed. Christian Okoye '87, first-team All-American, leads the entire nation in rushing (186.7 ypg) and appears in *Sports Illustrated*

1988
U.S. News & World Report names APU 1 of 25 best small colleges and universities in U.S.

MAY 8, 1990
Richard Felix becomes 15th president

MARCH 12, 1992
West Campus purchased

SUMMER 1992
Dave Johnson '85, competing with a broken foot, wins the bronze medal in the decathlon at the Barcelona Olympics

JULY 1993
Wilden Hall completed

JANUARY 1994
Engstrom Hall completed

1997
Marianne Pemberton-Gilbreth receives APU's first doctoral degree; enrollment reaches a record 5,069

1998
Football and women's soccer win national championships

FEBRUARY 5, 1998
\$8 million Hugh and Hazel Darling Library dedicated

JANUARY 6, 1964
Azusa College receives accreditation from Western Association of Schools and Colleges

AUGUST 1967
Adams Hall completed

SEPTEMBER 1973
Shire Mods completed

OCTOBER 2, 2003
Trinity Hall opens

SUMMER 2004
Bryan Clay '05 wins the silver medal in the decathlon at the Athens Olympics

SEPTEMBER 3, 2009
\$54 million Segerstrom Science Center dedicated

JANUARY 1990
Ronald Center, Warren Music Center, and Munson Chapel completed

MARCH 22, 2011
Women's basketball caps off 30-win season with national title

2014
APU athletics joins the NCAA Division II

2019
APU achieves the prestigious R2 research designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

JUNE 1, 2019
Paul Ferguson becomes the 17th president of Azusa Pacific University

FALL 2022
The 27,000-square-foot Duke Student Commons opens on West Campus

SEPTEMBER 17, 1998
School of Nursing opens the Neighborhood Wellness Center in Azusa

NOVEMBER 2000
Jon Wallace becomes APU's 16th president

MAY 25, 2002
Men's track and field sweeps indoor and outdoor national titles

SUMMER 2008
Bryan Clay '05 wins the gold medal in the decathlon at the Beijing Olympics

2011
Founding of the Leung School of Accounting

AUGUST 29, 2014
The inaugural class of Honors College students arrives on campus

JULY 1, 2022
Adam Morris becomes the 18th president of Azusa Pacific University

SPRING 2023
Women's track and field wins NCAA Division II national championship

MARCH 3, 2024
The 125th anniversary date of the founding of Azusa Pacific University

2024

Racing Toward Her Dreams

BY SAUNDRI LUIPPOLD



At the beginning of every race, Esther Conde-Turpin '26 focuses on the sound of her heart beating. Even as spectators cheer and the crowd goes wild, all she can hear is the thumping in her chest. When her legs kick off as the race commences, sweat drips down her neck, her sneakers pound the track, and she's fearless, majestic, determined. Her breaths are steady. Breathe in, pace, breathe out.

The applause reaches her ears, and when she crosses the finish line, she experiences an indescribable feeling: a tug on her heart, a relentless realization that her body was made to run as she keeps chasing her athletic dreams every time the opportunities present themselves. The vivid feeling of being alive, anticipation for the action ahead, and the hope for what her body can achieve drives her to be present. Conde-Turpin is in her element—free, centered, energized.

Conde-Turpin's specialty is the heptathlon, an event comprising 100-meter hurdles, a 200-meter sprint, an 800-meter race, a high jump, a long jump, a shot put throw, and a javelin throw. It is a beast of the track and field world and requires exceptional stamina and physical ability. Last year, Conde-Turpin broke school records in the heptathlon with a performance that ranked third in NCAA Division II history. Her athletic accomplishments speak for themselves (see sidebar).

Conde-Turpin often surprises herself on the track, in the same way that unforeseen moments, both good and bad, have happened in her life.

"You never know what will occur, or who will swoop in and change your life for the better," she said. "Sometimes I think I'm supposed to go in one

direction, and one slight change moves me in a completely different one."

From moving to a new continent twice to following her dreams as an athlete to playing a pivotal role in her husband's restaurant, Conde-Turpin dives into life's surprises and navigates new opportunities with a mindset of curiosity, hope, and optimism.

From Réunion Island, a territory of France off the coast of Madagascar, Conde-Turpin grew up with a spirit of adventure and vibrancy in her backyard. From beaches to mountains to forests, the multicultural community she lived in offered a taste of different cultures and all the joys that come from living life to the fullest. She always loved running. What started out as a hobby turned into a professional endeavor. She won the French Championship for the first time at 16 years old, and she moved to France at 19 to continue her sport professionally, a choice that led to her breaking records and winning multiple national championships.

The track is her place to simply be, to reach her goals, and to find community with those who share a passion for racing. Conde-Turpin met her husband, Guillaume, in France through track and field. He immigrated to the U.S. in June 2022, opening his restaurant, The French Way, which serves French

tacos, a dish famously sold throughout Paris but new to Los Angeles. Conde-Turpin joined him in January 2023, hesitant about whether she should continue running track, considering she would need to find a new coach and training facility. Her husband encouraged her to keep chasing what she loves, which led her to Azusa Pacific University.

Conde-Turpin was connected to Jack Hoyt, APU's track and field head coach, and has experienced growth through his mentorship. Hoyt praised her enthusiasm for showing up for practice every day, ready to go.

"She gives her best, encourages her teammates, and does whatever is asked of her from our staff," Hoyt said. "The first week I coached her, knowing that she had already been competing at an elite level, I wanted to give her some say in the training. She told me, 'It's up to you. You are my coach.' She's had full confidence in our process since the beginning, which makes coaching her a joy for me."

Conde-Turpin expressed gratitude for Hoyt's trust, support, and encouragement to push her further. Their coach-athlete relationship has cultivated a community of runners whose finish line is more than just the ranking or victory, but the satisfaction of reaching their highest potential.

"My goal is to build up the team, hype them up, and be a mentor for the younger athletes," she said.

Through her communication management major, Conde-Turpin has encountered various opportunities for sharing her positive demeanor and warm spirit with her peers. And as a student-athlete, she appreciates the flexibility in her studies.

"My experience at APU has been amazing," she said. "The community is incredibly loving, and I find so much joy being here. It feels like home."

Conde-Turpin often trains three or more hours a day. "I love competitions because I embrace challenges. In the end, it's not about winning or losing, though; it's about improving each time and being surrounded by people who help me grow," she said. "My dream is to realize the best I can be on the track, to use my fullest God-given athletic skills."

One of her fondest memories so far is representing France and APU at the World Championships in Budapest last summer. The track was bigger than any she'd witnessed before. The crowd's vibrant



energy pulsed through the stadium. Conde-Turpin's heart raced, a reminder of her body's strength, her soul's motivation, and the drive that transcends wherever she goes. She placed 18th, a strong finish, but one that motivates her to continue improving. Conde-Turpin valued the chance to learn about skills she can augment for future competitions.

Track has taught Conde-Turpin a multitude of skills that overlap with other areas of her life. She has learned to approach time management with organization and clear planning, while juggling helping with her husband's restaurant, practice, and her studies. It hasn't always been easy, but she and her husband have worked together in every stage of their relationship to support one another. She helps her husband out in any way possible, including social media advertising, bagging food, and working the cash register at The French Way.

Conde-Turpin has gone through life's hurdles the same way she faces them on the track: with bravery, thoughtfulness, and maximum effort. She's faced new countries, teams, and responsibilities. It all comes down to chasing the passion in her heart. Every new environment has been worth it, and she's grateful for the path that led her to where she is now.

"I love track so much, and in many ways track is its own life school," she said. "When you scratch, you have to get yourself back up again, and you have to support those around you."

Through every challenge and setback, Conde-Turpin evaluates what she can improve on, asks for help, and puts in the work to grow. When her heart begins to beat faster, she knows she's in for a good race.

Saundri Luippold '25 is a public relations intern in the Division of Strategic Communication and Engagement. Saundri is double majoring in Honors humanities and English with a minor in Spanish.

AZUSA PACIFIC COUGARS

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Men's Tennis Wins Third Straight PacWest Title



The PacWest men's tennis champion is Azusa Pacific for the third consecutive time, as the Cougars knocked off Hawai'i Pacific by a 4-2 score in the title match. Elias Emilio Walter

was named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, as he went undefeated in singles and doubles over the three matches at the tournament. Not only did the Cougars win the PacWest once again, but they did so after making 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

top three in their respective events to earn All-PacWest distinction, including 7 athletes who placed first for individual conference titles. For the women's squad, 18 Cougars were All-PacWest performers, with four individuals capturing conference titles in their events. Felix Perrier (steeplechase), Hannah Richardson (shot put), Juan Diego Castro (1500m), and Nico Melendres (800m) were not only individual conference champions in their events, but they also set meet records at the PacWest Championships. In addition to the Cougars' showing at the PacWest Championships, Azusa Pacific also showed out at the annual Bryan Clay Invitational a few weeks prior. Two Cougar standouts at the invitational 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 in 2017-18 and it has not left the campus of Azusa Pacific since, as the Cougars have claimed the trophy for the seventh consecutive time in 2023-24, beating the Eagles by a 100-50 tally. Over the seven-year history, the Cougars hold an all-time lead of 545-225, with an average winning margin of 50+ points.

Vogt's MLB Managerial Career Off to Strong Start



Stephen Vogt '07, who was announced as the manager of the Cleveland Guardians last November, is off to a strong start in his managerial career. As of June 10, spanning the first four months of the 2024 season, Vogt's Guardians boasted a 42-22 record that not only put them in first place in the American League Central, but Cleveland's .656 winning percentage was tied for second-best in the American League and tied for third-best in all of Major League Baseball. "Stephen's leadership, the partnership we're continuing to build with him, the contribution of the coaches, the dynamic he is building with them, the culture he is continuing to build in our clubhouse. In my view, he has done an extraordinary job as he has transitioned into the organization and into his role," said Guardians President of Baseball Operations Chris Antonetti.

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



PHOTOS BY LOUIS FELIX AND DANA ATEBERY, MA '17

APU Celebrates a Special 125th Anniversary Homecoming

APU's Homecoming 2024 was a monumental celebration, marking the university's 125th anniversary in style! On February 23-24, alumni, students, faculty, staff, and families came together for an unforgettable experience. The festivities kicked off with a family-style dinner and heartwarming fellowship at The Table, hosted by the Student Government Association. The night was electric with student performances shining bright in the Black Student Association's Expressions Showcase and the APU Department of Theater Arts' mesmerizing production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. APU students danced the night away at the prom-themed dance: A Night to Remember.

Saturday was packed with excitement, starting with a breakfast with President Adam J. Morris, PhD, that drew a full house. The

125th Anniversary Homecoming Broadcast, featuring Terry Franson and Christian Okoye '86, took the audience on a captivating journey through APU's rich history, from the 1950s to the present. The Honors College Scholars Celebration and Support Local Market added to the merriment. Throughout the day, visitors embarked on a Homecoming Scavenger Hunt, snapping photos at beloved campus landmarks. The weekend's grand finale was the APU women's and men's basketball games, both ending in triumphant victories against Concordia University while APU alumni from all eras gathered to watch from the Raising Cane's-sponsored VIP Lounge. All this was followed by a celebratory postgame dance party on the court! With another incredible APU homecoming in the books, we can't wait to see you next year!



SAUNDRI LUIPPOLD

From Nigeria with Love

BY SAUNDRI LUIPPOLD

Madey Sule '27 has always been fascinated by the way mechanisms work. From cell phones to ceiling fans, she wondered how the circuits caused such devices to function. Her curiosity, interest in improving day-to-day life, and yearning to answer God's calling gave her the drive to leave her home in Nigeria for the first time in order to pursue an engineering degree at Azusa Pacific University.

Sule grew up in Jos, Plateau, and her parents were determined to provide her with the best education. She attended an international school, and knew from a young age that she wanted to go to college in America. When she began applying to universities, Sule was discouraged because many were too expensive to afford. When she discovered APU, Sule was unsure she would be able to come, since she was unable to obtain a visa in order to attend an in-person interview for her scholarship. She recalled grabbing a journal and writing, "God, I don't understand why this has to be so difficult, but I'm going to trust you. You're still in control and I know you have my best interest at heart." Fortunately, Sule completed her interview online, and remembers waking up in the middle of the night receiving a congratulatory email with her acceptance.

"I knew God was with me," she said. "He saw me personally. He loves me and wants me to succeed."

Stepping on an airplane to leave her country was bittersweet, as Sule was eager to discover new opportunities but sad to say goodbye to her home.

"Nigeria has some of the most hardworking people I've ever met; amidst struggles, sacrifice is a norm," she said. Sule reflected on how common it is for Nigerian parents to pour everything into their children's education with a happy heart: "I hope to be a representative of the love and dedication Nigerians share."

Sule's passion for studying engineering stems from her desire to give back to her country and develop ways to improve life, such as creating better means of food transportation: "While I was privileged enough to not have to worry often about the power going out, not having running water, or having to wash my clothes by hand, these are common occurrences in Nigeria, and I want to give back to the people and country I love."

Sule reflected on how common it is for Nigerian parents to pour everything into their children's education with a happy heart: "I hope to be a representative of the love and dedication Nigerians share."

Madey Sule '27

Biology was always Sule's favorite subject in school, and she aspires to pursue biomedical engineering. In high school, when Sule learned about how prosthetic limbs work, she knew she wanted to be a part of giving people hope, whether it be through prosthetics or other ways of making life easier for those in need.

"I never thought I wanted to be an engineer, because I honestly thought I was not smart enough, but I realized there's no reason to think that," she said. "I chose engineering as my major to prove to myself that I can do it." Her eyes lit up and she couldn't help smiling as she said, "And now I love it!"

Sule's joy shines through when she expresses her gratitude to God for leading her to APU: "God has become more real to me here. My faith expanded astronomically when I saw His goodness play out in my own life."

Like many international students, Sule has discovered community in the Third Culture Kids club, where she made friends from the start, proudly sharing her love for God and Nigeria with others, and learning their stories as well.

When she's not deciphering her next engineering project, Sule enjoys going to the gym, playing sports—especially basketball—and getting to spend time with her friends. She values each day that she gets to

increase her knowledge, cultivate friendships, and discover more about her faith.

Sule's willingness to serve others through her passion for science reflects the love and light that shines so brightly for her back at home—her parents and two younger sisters continually cheer her on from afar. Sule is dedicated to pursuing what she loves and doing everything for the glory of God, and hopes to give as much love and more back to those who have loved her so deeply.

Saundri Luippold '25 is a public relations intern in the Division of Strategic Communication and Engagement. Saundri is double majoring in Honors humanities and English with a minor in Spanish.

A Most Peculiar Kind of Ministry

BY NATHAN FOSTER



PHOTOS BY NATHAN FOSTER '20

Tucked into the corner of University Promenade across the street from Azusa Pacific University's East Campus sits one of the best hidden gems in all of Southern California: **The Ministry of Peculiarities**. Created by brothers Jonathan "Jon" '05 and Benjamin '11 Berk, The Ministry is home to Hope End, a one-of-a-kind escape room that has captured the imagination of thousands. Since opening, The Ministry has received massive critical acclaim in the industry: It was voted the No. 5 escape room in the nation by a *USA TODAY* readers poll, was named the No. 51 escape room in the world in 2023 by the Top Escape Rooms Project, received a 2022 Golden Lock Award from Room Escape Artist, and was named to the Best of 2023 Escape Rooms by Morty. The Ministry was also featured in the *Los Angeles Times* as a magical mystery where participants feel like they are "creating the story" themselves.

"Receiving the industry awards affirmed what we hoped to create," Jon said, "but what I really love is seeing how much fun people have as they accept our invitation to play. It's great hearing them say they've been thinking about the experience for weeks afterward."

Drawing participants into a quirky world of wonder, The Ministry separates itself from other escape rooms through immersive theater.

"People get to be a part of our performance from the moment they walk in the door," Jon said. "We love seeing them interact with our actors as the story unfolds."

Jon came up with the idea for The Ministry after completing numerous escape rooms in the area with a friend. "We felt like we could create a better, more compelling experience," he said.

Jon recruited Benjamin to help create the story for the room, which focuses on an extremely dysfunctional family with deep-set problems. Together with some help from their other two brothers—James '02 and Jeremy '06—they converted a former billiards hall into the escape room, building props by hand.

"It took a while because we had to teach ourselves how to make the puzzles work," Benjamin said. "We made mistakes and learned a lot on the way, but we're happy with how it turned out."

After three years of building and a yearlong delay from the COVID-19 pandemic, The

Ministry officially opened in September 2021. It operates one escape room experience, Hope End, with two more in the works.

Starting an escape room wasn't always in the Berk brothers' plans. Jon studied philosophy and Benjamin studied English at APU, and after graduation, both brothers embarked on careers in teaching.

"Education is great, it's just that so many members of my family were teachers, including my mom, who taught at APU," Jon said.

While he had planned on avoiding the family profession, Jon couldn't pass up the opportunity to teach in another country. After graduating, he moved to Chengdu, China, and taught English at an international school for a year. Soon after, he applied for the Fulbright program and received an invitation to teach English at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

"That was an amazing experience, one of the best of my life," said Jon.

After Slovakia, Jon got a master's degree in linguistics from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, then returned to the U.S. to teach at FLS International in Los Angeles. He now works at University of the West in Rosemead as the lead TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) instructor.

"In my role, I instruct students from a lot of countries in Asia who want to study at colleges in the U.S., but their English speaking ability



After three years of building and a yearlong delay from the COVID-19 pandemic, **The Ministry of Peculiarities** officially opened in September 2021. It operates one escape room experience, Hope End, with two more in the works.

isn't quite there yet," he said. "Helping them through that process has been really rewarding for me. I love hearing their stories and making lasting connections."

Following in his brother's footsteps, Benjamin applied to the Fulbright program and taught in Vidin, Bulgaria. While Benjamin had studied abroad at Oxford during his time at APU, living in Bulgaria was completely different, as he taught in one of the most impoverished cities in all of Europe.

"It was a really challenging area, but my students were great," he said. "Fulbright centers around creating dialogue and promoting mutual understanding. Although I taught them about American culture, I learned more from them about Bulgarian culture, history, and their relations with other countries."

After Bulgaria, Benjamin returned to the U.S. for several years to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) in Washington, DC, and Virginia, then moved abroad again to teach ESL in Brisbane and Melbourne, Australia, then in Wellington, New Zealand. Benjamin primarily instructed immigrants, helping them learn English so they could get jobs and support their families.

"It's fun to travel to other countries," he said, "but actually living there and getting to know their culture and see how it shapes people was life-changing for me."

One of the Berk brothers' favorite parts of running The Ministry is seeing the wide variety of people who come through, including a number of people from other countries. Although they didn't specifically incorporate puzzles from their experiences abroad into the escape room, they enjoy seeing how people from other cultures interact with them. But puzzles are just part of the experience.

What truly makes The Ministry special is the immersive performance of actors. "We want our actors to be the experience," Jon said. "From the moment groups enter, the characters begin interacting with them and the experience begins."

Benjamin and Jon didn't have to go far to find their actors, turning to APU's theater department for help—they employ four alumni of the university's renowned acting program.

"They have excellent training and have been an indispensable part of the experience," Benjamin said. "Their interactions make it so much more personal, and that's had the biggest impact on participants."

While the brothers didn't anticipate creating an escape room a block away from their alma mater and where their father, Randy, still works as the manager of landscape services, their full-circle journey has touched countless lives. Through The Ministry, Benjamin and Jon invite people to a unique and unforgettable experience, welcoming others into their story who may then go out and write their own.

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

Fashioning a Way to Make a Difference

BY NATHAN FOSTER



On a chilly Saturday night in February 2023, Josh Holm '15 stood to the side of a runway in Milan, Italy, watching models show off apparel he had designed for his label, *Castles & Queens*, as cameras flashed and the crowd applauded. It was one of the biggest moments of Holm's life, but just a few years ago, it seemed impossible—a dream that might never come true.

Half Korean and half Caymanian, Holm was born to a single mother in South Korea. His mom, Kim, worked multiple jobs to support them, but their financial situation caused Holm to go in and out of foster care multiple times. Then, when he was 5 years old, their house burned down and his mother was forced to make an extremely difficult decision. Friends told her that Holm's best chance for a prosperous life was being adopted by an American family. She couldn't stand the idea of letting her son go, but she also wanted the best life for him, so she sent him to an orphanage. Within a few months, an American couple adopted him.

"They came across me and after hearing my story, they felt God calling them to bring me into their family," Holm said.

He moved with his new parents, Joel and Marie, to a suburb of Chicago. Holm's parents provided an amazing new life for him, and he had two new sisters, Rachel and Lisa. Holm no longer faced the challenges of wondering where his next meal would come from or getting a high-quality education. While he did well in school, he excelled in athletics. Toward the end of high school, Holm was recruited by Azusa Pacific University's track and field coaches. His family flew to the West Coast and toured the university.

"When I walked onto campus, I felt there was something special about this place and I needed to come here," he said.

Although he planned to run track throughout college, Holm stopped after his freshman year. "I felt God telling me, 'This is it for you,'" he said. "It was a hard decision, but it made sense because track was a personal dream, but it wasn't what I was meant to do." Holm decided to devote his newfound free time to his studies (he majored in practical theology and minored in leadership) and his internship with The Dream Center, a nonprofit dedicated to confronting human trafficking and helping foster children and at-risk youth. One night, the team brought Holm along on an outreach.

"We went into Anaheim, just a couple blocks from Disneyland, and gave out resources to runaway children," he said. "It was devastating seeing the reality of what they face on the streets."

This experience ignited a passion inside Holm. After talking with his APU mentors, Matt Browning and Terry Franson, Holm decided to start a student club called Free the Captives. The club, still in existence today, held events on campus to share information about trafficking and connected students with resources to help fight it. By the time Holm graduated, Free the Captives was the second-largest club on campus.

"We had connections with the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force, the International Justice Mission, and A21, large nonprofits that gave students tangible ways to help," Holm said.

After graduating, Holm made a bold decision to sell his most valuable possession—his car—to buy a



plane ticket to visit his biological mother in Korea. He spent two weeks with her for the first time in 16 years.

"It was always on my heart to reconnect with her," he said. "We spent so long apart, but when we were together, that mom-son connection felt so natural. She means the world to me."

On his trip to Korea, Holm discovered his love for fashion, inspired by clothing from different cultures, and decided to become a designer.

"Fashion appealed to me because it's a powerful platform, a straight line into culture, impacting industries from entertainment to sports," he said. When Holm returned to California, he found an internship in downtown Los Angeles. "A designer took me under his wing and taught me what he knew," Holm said. "He couldn't pay me, but made up for it in the knowledge he imparted. Working with him was a lightbulb moment for me because I knew this is what I was called to do."

He learned the technicalities of garment making, the cut-and-sew process, and how to run a business from a production standpoint, all while working multiple jobs on the side to support himself: "I've always prided myself on my work ethic. I believe hard work brings opportunity."

Despite his industriousness, Holm faced financial challenges, and lived in a friend's converted van to save money on rent. "I slept in that van for six months. It wasn't fun," he said. "But I was so

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"Fashion appealed to me because it's a powerful platform, a straight line into culture, impacting industries from entertainment to sports."

JOSH HOLM '15



Continued from page 29

“From a young age, God has given me visions of my life, but it’s always a glimpse of what it can be, and never how I’m going to get there. As I’ve walked through challenging moments of my life, I trusted God and pushed through. Making it to where I am now shows that God is the realest thing in the world to me.”

JOSH HOLM '15

passionate about where I envisioned myself that even if I was uncomfortable for six months, I was determined to pursue what I was meant to do by any means.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Holm faced a new challenge: losing his jobs in retail. He saw an opportunity after finding out that hospitals across L.A. were in massive need of personal protective equipment (PPE), so he went from one hospital to another, meeting with purchasing departments to see if he could create PPE for them.

“I got lucky one day and met with a vice president of medical supplies for a vast number of Southern California hospitals; he gave me five minutes to make a pitch,” Holm said. “He asked me to come back the next day with a sample.” Holm scrambled and went to The Home Depot to buy materials. The PPE garment he created was met with approval. “I went from a 26-year-old trying to wing it to receiving the biggest purchase order of my life.”

Holm hired a team of sewers and worked for the next six months to create more than 100,000 units of PPE, helping protect the hospital workers and people of L.A. With the money he received, Holm decided to invest in his dream of starting his own fashion company. He launched Castles & Queens in 2021.

“Castles & Queens is a contemporary luxury brand that taps into our West Coast DNA. I want people to feel powerful, confident, and capable when they wear our clothes,” he said. “I’m good at spotting trends. I see in visuals and bring them to life.”

All of the brand’s clothing is made by hand in L.A. In the three years after opening, Holm produced

five collections. His designs caught the eyes of people high up in the industry. In the company’s second year, they were invited to New York Fashion Week. Castles & Queens was covered by *Vogue* and *NYLON* as one of the top 12 emerging brands. After experiencing success in New York and Milan, Holm landed his first luxury retail account, Wolf & Badger, and was featured in *Forbes*’ “30 Under 30: Art & Style.”

“It’s an awesome journey to see this brand I built get recognition and continue to grow,” he said. “I want to have a positive impact on the world through Castles & Queens.”

Although he has experienced massive success in the last three years, Holm is still the only full-time employee of Castles & Queens. He hires part-time sewers who produce the clothing in each collection, but Holm comes up with every design and does all the marketing for the brand. For the future, Holm aspires to build a team, to land in more retailers across the world, to open his own storefronts, and to honor his Korean and Caymanian heritage through his designs. He also hopes to represent L.A. well, since the city hasn’t traditionally been known for luxury apparel, as he competes at the highest level in the fashion capitals of the world.

As Holm grows his company, he stays rooted in his faith. He became a Christian after being adopted and has a close relationship with Christ.

“From a young age, God has given me visions of my life, but it’s always a glimpse of what it can be, and never how I’m going to get there,” he said. “As I’ve walked through challenging moments of my life, I trusted God and pushed through. Making it to where I am now shows that God is the realest thing in the world to me.”

Holm lives out his faith every day as a leader and entrepreneur. Each decision he makes in his business is based on his values. Although entrepreneurial success drives him, Holm has not forgotten his roots and his passions he discovered while a student at APU.

“I hope to start a nonprofit one day that helps my community, whether it focuses on human trafficking, helping foster children, or other societal issues,” he said. “As we grow as a brand and create a bigger platform, it provides an opportunity to pour into issues that really matter and spread a powerful message.”

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



Wells Concert Headlines Night at the Zu

APU hosted an incredible spring concert with Grammy-nominated Christian artist Tauren Wells for hundreds of current and prospective students who gathered on East Campus’ Trinity Lawn for the high-energy show. The performance was part of a Night at the Zu event that took place March 14 and also featured In-N-Out, ice cream, and cupcake trucks. Along with the concert, prospective students had the opportunity to meet with professors, attend college planning sessions, and spend the night in a dorm.



Tauren Wells is a Grammy-nominated, Dove Award-winning singer/songwriter. He and his wife, Lorna, are copastors of Church of Whitestone in Cedar Park, Texas.



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