

Azusa Connects



Connect with **Azusa Pacific**

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For more information,
 please contact:

Ginny Dadaian
 Director of Community Relations
 (626) 387-5764
 gdadaian@apu.edu

Calendar of Events

MARCH

14 TH 8:30 a.m. –2:30 p.m. **Eighth Grade Majors Fair** Memorial Park North Recreation Center
 APU, in collaboration with California Polytechnic University Pomona and Citrus College, hosts its second annual Eighth Grade Majors Fair for all three Azusa middle schools.

18–20 MO–WE **Brain Awareness Week**
 APU hosts the second annual Brain Awareness Fair at all three Azusa middle schools, using hands-on experiments and other education modules to teach more than 250 seventh graders about the brain and how it works.
Slauson, March 18 | Center, March 19 | Foothill, March 20

19 TU **Girls/Kids on the Move Five-week Session Begins**
 These exercise programs, designed by Azusa Pacific University in collaboration with Azusa's Parks and Recreation department, encourage children to exercise regularly and adopt healthy eating habits.

21 TH **APU Cougar Pals Visit Campus**
 Students involved in Cougar Pals, a mentoring program that pairs kids from Center, Slauson, and Foothill middle schools with APU students, visit the APU campus to learn more about student life.

APRIL

4–20 **APU Presents Hello, Dolly!**
 Enjoy the performance of the classic play *Hello, Dolly!* Ticket prices vary.

18 TH 4–5 p.m. **Azusa Reads/Writes/Counts Celebration**
 The Azusa Reads, Writes, and Counts tutoring programs hold their year-end celebration at the Azusa City Library, where participants, parents, tutors, and supporters gather in appreciation of the program's impact on the community.

College C.H.A.M.P.s by Kimberly Rios

This March, a group of 406 excited and anxious fourth graders from six elementary schools find themselves preparing for graduation. They will proudly walk across the platform in front of a large audience of families and friends to celebrate their C.H.A.M.P. (College Headed and Mighty Proud) program commencement. In its 21st year, the C.H.A.M.P. program encourages fourth-grade students from across the Azusa Unified School District (AUSD) to dream of one day attending college and building a bright future.

“The C.H.A.M.P. program is an asset to the Azusa community because it gives its children exposure to college.” Luis Marin

AUSD and Azusa Pacific University partner to run the C.H.A.M.P. program in local Azusa elementary schools. C.H.A.M.P.

brings volunteers from APU to fourth-grade classrooms across the city.

The program has impacted more than 10,000 students since its inception, educating them on the importance of college. C.H.A.M.P. reaches children with the message that college is attainable. Once in fall and once in spring, the 10-week program introduces young students to positive role models who act as mentors and provide motivation. The students also take a field trip to APU's campus to experience campus life firsthand.

“When the fourth-grade students come to APU, they see the opportunities available to them,” said Christa Simpson '13, a volunteer and Azusa resident. “Their eyes grow wide, they wiggle with excitement, and they ask so many great questions. Their response demonstrates how important it is to inform students, starting at a young age, about their chances to get a college education. Being an Azusa resident, I know the idea of college

can look bleak for many families, but the C.H.A.M.P. program shows that with hard work, Azusa students can get into college.”

Many C.H.A.M.P. graduates go on to pursue college once they finish their high school career; several attend Azusa Pacific University.

“The C.H.A.M.P. program is an asset to the Azusa community because it gives its children exposure to college,” said Luis Marin '13, a C.H.A.M.P. alumnus. “For many, college is a mysterious, seven-letter word. This program unravels that mystery a bit and makes the pathway clearer and doable.”

AUSD's School Board and administration even plan to add a C.H.A.M.P. designation to student records in order to assess the program's long-term benefits.

“C.H.A.M.P. creates new dreams and inspires young people to pursue a future that includes higher education. We are honored to share in the lives of our Azusa youth through the C.H.A.M.P. program,”

said Judy Hutchinson, Ph.D., executive director of APU's Center for Academic Service-Learning and Research. “Our commitment through this program belongs to the schools of our city. I'm so thrilled that many Azusa residents cite this program as a major factor in their decision to go to college.”

Join the C.H.A.M.P.s students on Wednesday, March 20, for the spring 2013 “graduation” at Felix Event Center from 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Kimberly Rios '13 is a Celebrate Azusa Nancy Moore Scholarship recipient, a C.H.A.M.P. alumna, and a communication studies major at Azusa Pacific University. She begins the Master of Arts in Management program at APU this summer.



Up Close:

Linda Gonzalez Kaminski

As superintendent of the Azusa Unified School District (AUSD), Kaminski comes equipped with an M.S. from Pepperdine University, an M.Ed. and an Ed.D. from Harvard University, and a common bond with English-language learners that infuses understanding, compassion, and inspiration into her leadership role.

APU: What attracted you to this position?

KAMINSKI: I have a poster in my office that showcases 12 doors on the Harvard campus. So when I graduated, I bought a print, and it has hung in my office ever since. But every time I looked at it, something felt wrong. Then one day it hit me—all the doors are closed.

As the AUSD superintendent, I want every student to have the keys to open those doors or any doors they choose. The keys are knowledge, critical thinking, literacy, reasoning, computational skills—the foundational components of a quality education. I have been blessed with a world-class education, but my mother was not. She struggled with her schoolwork while trying to learn English in a community with few resources to help her. I know that pain. I spent much of my career as a bilingual teacher because I know firsthand the frustration my mother, grandmother, aunts, and uncles experienced. I want every Azusa student who walks across the stage at graduation to be fully prepared to unlock any door at any college, confident that anything is possible.

APU: How do you define student success?

KAMINSKI: Student success is more than grade-point averages and test scores. I see it as the ability to participate fully in society. I want students to leave the Azusa school district with the tools necessary to analyze their world, weigh evidence, take a stand and support it, and solve complex problems. I hope that while these students are here in Azusa, they learn the foundation for a lifetime of learning that will serve them through every phase of their education and ready them to contribute to their communities.

APU: Describe your leadership style.

KAMINSKI: No good work happens alone. I believe that as a leader, it is my job to help identify issues of concern and then help people engage in the solution process. It takes people working together, collaborating on a problem facing our district, and drawing on all the expertise in the room to get the job done. Case in point, the new Common Core Standards will drastically change the way our teachers teach and our students learn. No mandate from the top down will help educators and their students navigate this new culture and context. It will take everyone rolling up their sleeves and getting creative together to ensure that our schools and programs remain vital and relevant. I see myself as a servant leader, a facilitator of the process.

APU: What mark do you hope to leave on AUSD?

KAMINSKI: It has been said that you should always leave the campground a little better than you found it. I plan to serve this district for many years, and when I've completed my time here, I hope I will have built upon the great successes of my predecessors and leave a solid platform. Azusa is an amazing community of talented teachers and exceptional learners with many bright spots. I hope one day I will look back on this time in my life and know that I helped nurture those positives and worked with groups of amazing people to help build a lasting legacy together.

Why Does College Matter? *by Pamela M. Christian*

Students and families must exercise more fiscal caution than ever in selecting an institution of higher education. The realities of life in a resource-challenged economy prompt students to pursue the highest quality education at the lowest possible cost. While families everywhere grapple with affordability, few question the commonly understood benefits of postsecondary education. The most compelling motivators for pursuing a college degree include increased earning potential, career and/or vocational preparation, and quality of life. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, greater levels of education correspond to greater income. A college graduate earns an average of \$412 more per week or \$21,424 per year. Master's and professional degree holders increase the annual financial advantages to \$33,592 and \$40,768, respectively. The Social Security Administration defines the normal retirement age as 67 years old. If a college graduate works from age 25 through age 67, a bachelor's degree provides an \$899,808 benefit, representing more than a 6 percent annual return on an investment of \$140,000, the average cost of a four-year private college.



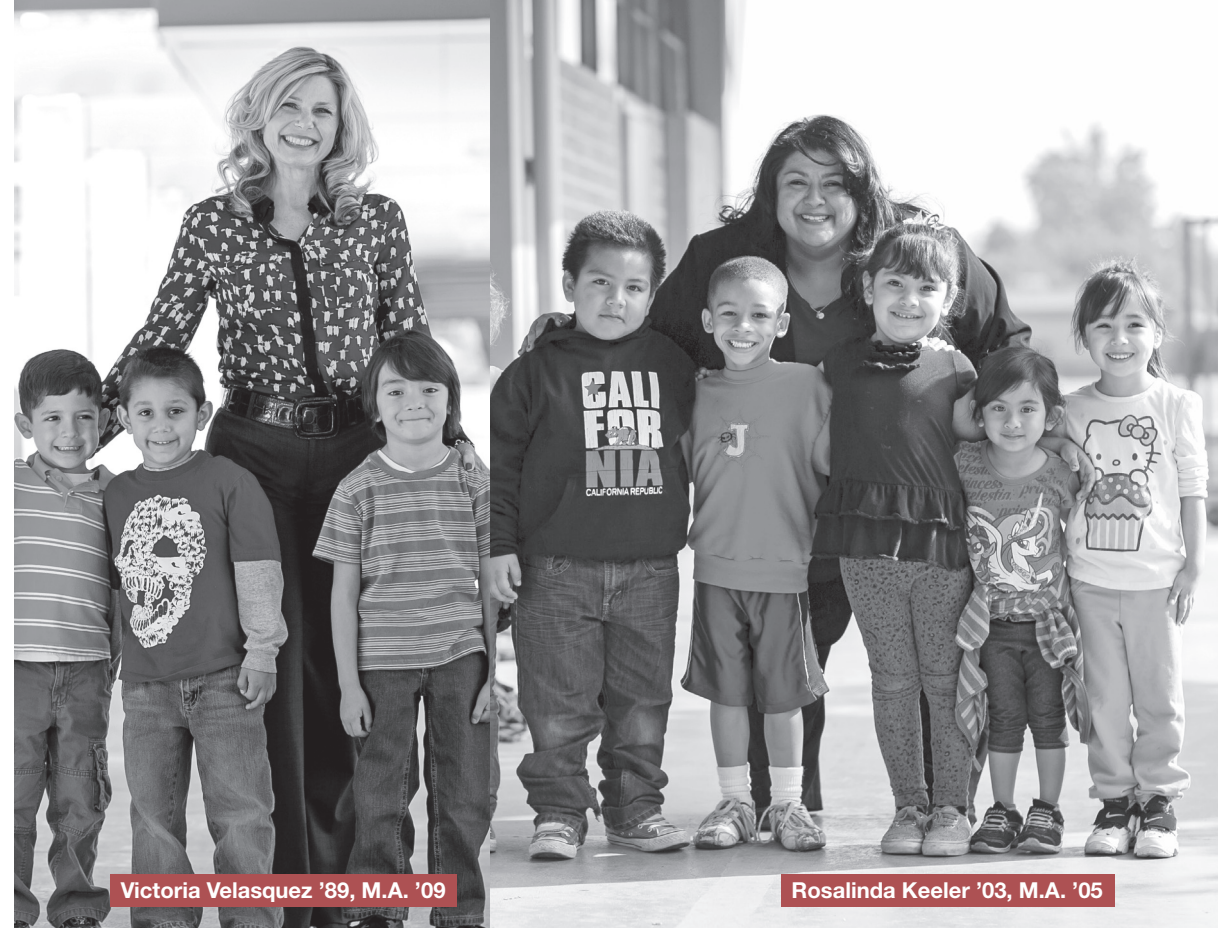
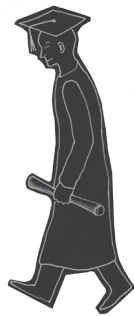
In addition to increasing earning potential, a college education has become a requirement for many entry-level employment opportunities. Many jobs previously secured by hardworking and smart high school graduates now require a bachelor's degree. In fact, the Public Policy Institute of California predicts "that 41 percent of jobs in 2025 will require a college degree." In today's competitive marketplace, establishing a career calls for at least an undergraduate degree, often a master's degree, and substantial experience. Americans will have an average of 11 jobs in their working career. A college education serves as

a prerequisite for both marketability and flexibility.

The discipline, persistence, and intellectual acumen required to successfully complete degree requirements are transferable skills. These skills prove relevant across diverse workplace environments. One of my first jobs after earning a Bachelor of Arts in History called for a computer science degree in the position description. Similarly, a thriving librarian I know earned an undergraduate degree in veterinary science. The extensibility of a college degree is noteworthy. Preparing students to critically evaluate, integrate, and apply knowledge, while demonstrating competence in the content and methods of their chosen discipline or professional program, effectively trains graduates for the world of work. This accounts for the lower unemployment rate among college graduates compared to those without a college education. The unemployment rate of those with a bachelor's degree is roughly half the rate of those without college experience. The rate drops to less than 2.5 percent unemployment with a master's degree, and less than 2 percent with a doctorate. In what might be called a survival-of-the-fittest economy, higher education produces the most viable contenders.

Clearly, earning a college degree warrants the investment. A degree from an accredited institution should correlate with financial returns and employability. A college degree will help students to secure a better lifestyle after their education is complete. The initial cost and effort that a degree requires is later overshadowed by a lifetime of higher salaries and job satisfaction. In the long run, the investment of higher education is perhaps one of the wisest ones a young adult can make.

Pamela M. Christian, Ph.D., is a professor in the School of Education and chair of the Department of Doctoral Studies in Education. Her career in education includes leadership experience within both public and private universities, community college, and in partnership programs with K-12 education.



Victoria Velasquez '89, M.A. '09

Rosalinda Keeler '03, M.A. '05

Principled Leadership *by Evelyn Barge*

On any given school day, students quickly spot Rosalinda Keeler '03, M.A. '05, along the walkways between buildings at Valleydale Elementary. They dash toward her to offer greetings and hugs, spouting details of classroom activities and home life.

A little more than two miles north, at Victor Hodge Elementary, a similar scene plays out as Victoria Velasquez '89, M.A. '09, strides across the breezeway with a classroom of kindergarteners in tow.

In August 2012, both women officially assumed principalships at their respective Azusa schools. Between the two, Keeler and Velasquez serve more than 1,000 kindergarten through fifth-grade students in the Azusa Unified School District (AUSD).

"The teaching community in Azusa is so dedicated, and there's a real desire to give back," said Velasquez, a 23-year AUSD veteran. "Many of the teachers on staff are themselves products of local Azusa schools and Azusa Pacific University."

As the highest administrators within each of their schools, Keeler and Velasquez say the proverbial view from the top hasn't much altered the memory of the paths that lay behind them.

Attending a private Christian university had once seemed an impossible feat for Keeler, the daughter of migrant farm workers who settled into a Santa Cruz home near the library to encourage their kids to learn and love reading. Velasquez also never imagined that anything but a state college would fall within her reach. The news of acceptance to Azusa Pacific—and corresponding financial support—was a turning point for both future educators, who would go on to earn their master's degrees through APU's School of Education.

During her years as an APU student, Keeler became, if not always a familiar face, a very familiar voice around the APU campus as a switchboard operator. She recalled many late nights spent studying in her office, the only quiet place she could claim while simultaneously

working toward a degree and raising a family.

For Velasquez, the early ministry opportunities she experienced as an undergraduate student—through Mexico Outreach and the Peach Factory—laid the foundation for her current role. "The best part is looking back and seeing that every step along the way—even those that seemed overwhelming or unrelated at the time—has prepared me to do my best in this position," said Velasquez.

Now, at the end of each day full of new challenges and distractions, Keeler and Velasquez agree that strong school leadership requires unwavering commitment to a singular goal: helping all students receive the best education possible. In other words, making sure Azusa students at every level are afforded the same opportunities they were.

"Every child deserves that," said Keeler. "It's about the kids, always, because we change our communities from the inside out."

Evelyn Barge is a writer/editor at Azusa Pacific University.

Community News

APU teams again with the Azusa Unified School District and the Southern California Edison Federal Credit Union Foundation to host two additional Mad City Money events for highschoolers, teaching them essential financial skills on March 12 at Azusa High School and March 20 at Gladstone High School.

Azusa Pacific volunteers continue to provide free math, reading, and writing tutoring to elementary school students at the Azusa City Library through the Azusa Reads, Writes, and Counts programs. The year-end celebration for participants and their parents is slated for Thursday, April 18, from 4–5 p.m. at the library.

APU's Azusa Literacy program continues to educate adults in the community on the topic of health literacy, while improving their English language skills. The program, which began last fall, takes place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at Azusa High School and Thursday evenings at Foothill Community Church. The 8–10 week sessions are open to all Azusa residents.

On February 9, APU's Keeping History Alive program held an awards reception for 390 L.A. County school teachers who received educational grants. The program secures funding from local foundations and awards all of the financial support to K–12 teachers in the form of small grants for classroom resources, field trips, on-campus presentations, and professional development opportunities. This year 34 Azusa Unified School District teachers received grants totaling \$24,515.

This spring, Azusa Pacific University expanded its Building Our Kids' Success (BOKS) effort, a before-school program in elementary schools that combines play, physical activity, team games, and discussions on nutrition to create healthier habits for children to achieve lifelong fitness. The program now takes place at Powell Elementary School, in addition to Gladstone Street Elementary.