The Gift of Christian Community

APU’S FALL RETURN TO CAMPUS
Dear Friends,

Recently, I began my service to the Azusa Pacific community as Interim President. I am grateful for the many expressions of encouragement and prayerful support, and look forward to building upon my 15 years of commitment to advancing APU’s Christ-centered mission to develop disciples and scholars.

As I approach this season and steward the role, I am mindful of the women and men who have similarly sought to provide leadership, from the Training School of Christian Workers in 1899 to Azusa Pacific University. I will seek to honor APU’s God First legacy of more than 120 years by leading with integrity, compassion, and courage.

In this light, I want to express deep thanks to President Ferguson for his leadership of APU, especially through the unique challenges of a global pandemic.

While my title involves “Interim,” my charge from the Board of Trustees is to build upon recent momentum and the aspirations outlined in Renewal, the university’s strategic plan. In collaboration with the Board, my President’s Cabinet colleagues, Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government Association, I will advance our stated goals, making the necessary decisions and undertaking the tasks that will hand the mission and impact of APU to the 18th President of Azusa Pacific University in an even stronger position. The challenges we face are clear, but so, too, are the extraordinary opportunities and God’s promises of presence and provision found throughout Scripture. I believe the future of APU lies not in reclaiming the past, but in building upon it and leaning into God’s unique calling for this institution to serve our current and future students.

As we approach the New Year, let us draw near to God and one another with thankful and hopeful hearts.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

Sincerely,

Andrew Barton, EdD
Interim President
With signs waving and smiles beaming, APU student leaders enthusiastically greet new students and their families as they arrive on campus in late August ready to begin their college journey. Always a favorite event to kick off the fall semester, this year’s Welcome Weekend held even deeper significance for the APU community, marking a joyous return to campus after a year and a half apart. Coming together with a spirit of gratitude and a hope for the future, APU welcomed and celebrated two classes to campus for the first time—freshmen and sophomores—with special programs geared toward both. Serving as an important moment in the history of this university, Welcome Weekend 2021 will not soon be forgotten.
Azusa Pacific University Hosts 9/11 Tribute

The Azusa Pacific University community gathered with local and civic leaders for a tribute ceremony commemorating the 20th anniversary of 9/11 hosted by the Office of Military and Veterans Services. The program, held at the Wynn Amphitheater on East Campus, included the presentation of colors by APU’s Army ROTC Cadets, the National Anthem performed by the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department Brass Quartet, and honored guest speakers, including:

Dr. Mario A. Guerra, the civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, who carries a ranking of Three-Star General for protocol. Originally from Cuba, Guerra arrived in the U.S. on one of the first “Viaje De Libertad” Freedom Flights and was raised locally. He was mayor of Downey from 2006-14, and president of the Independent Cities Association. He is chaplain of the Downey Police Department and is a published author.

Carl Flores, acting assistant fire chief with a combined 40-year career as a battalion chief, fire captain, and firefighter for the Los Angeles County Fire Department. He was a battalion chief for 17 years, and for 6 years served as fire captain, operations bureau chief, and emergency manager at a high-incident fire station. Flores also spent 4 years as fire captain for the L.A. County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and 6 years as a firefighter specialist.

Azusa Pacific University, a designated Military Friendly School and Yellow Ribbon Program participant, provides comprehensive services for its diverse population of approximately 400 military-connected students—including active-duty personnel, veterans, reservists, military spouses, and military dependents—through the Office of Military and Veteran Services.

Accreditation Update
This 2021-22 academic year marked the culmination of Azusa Pacific University’s accreditation cycle. Accreditation is a certification procedure in which a university is accredited as having met important, agreed-upon standards by a postsecondary education accreditation agency. This process is extremely beneficial to students, as it allows for increased financial aid opportunities, as well as ensuring that degree programs are recognized by other institutions. It also assures stakeholders that the institution has met high standards of quality and effectiveness.

The 2021-22 school year is the final year for APU’s WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) accreditation process. In the fall, APU submitted a comprehensive accreditation report, highlighting its effectiveness and places of growth in key areas of the university. The report highlighted topics such as financial sustainability, quality faculty and staff, student learning outcomes, student success, program success, leadership, integrity and accountability, commitment to continuous improvement, compliance with accreditation standards, and more. The report was written by the Steering Committee, led by Stephanie Juillerat, PhD, APU’s accreditation liaison officer, with important content coming from faculty and staff who served on the accreditation working groups and committees. The initial write-up, the report was reviewed by APU’s President, President’s Cabinet, Provost, Academic Deans, Faculty Senate, and Board of Trustees Executive Committee.

CAPT. ROBERT LANDEROS
Commanding Officer Operations Division of the Azusa Police Department who is responsible for overseeing all police/traffic operations and Detective Bureau activities. His prior assignments and ranks at the Azusa Police Department included corporal, detective, sergeant, and lieutenant. He served in the United States Army and is a combat veteran of the Iraq War.

CARL FLORES
Acting Assistant Fire Chief with a combined 40-year career as a battalion chief, fire captain, and firefighter for the Los Angeles County Fire Department. He was a battalion chief for 17 years, and for 6 years served as fire captain, operations bureau chief, and emergency manager at a high-incident fire station. Flores also spent 4 years as fire captain for the L.A. County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and 6 years as a firefighter specialist.

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY HOSTS 9/11 TRIBUTE

APU’s Community Counseling Center Receives $1.94 Million Grant to Help Local School Districts and Community Partners

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will award Azusa Pacific University a $1.94 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This grant will enhance APU’s Community Counseling Center (CCC) by improving training and resources for child trauma services and investing in partnerships with numerous community organizations.

According to Sally Mansour, MS, LMFT, director of the CCC and administrator for the Department of Clinical Psychology, “This grant enables our students to receive official training in evidence-based practices. Through these practices, student therapists will be able to more effectively serve patients in the local community. Through this grant, the CCC will offer improved training for APU student therapists, based upon trauma-informed, evidence-based models. This enhanced curriculum will allow student therapists to effectively assess, prevent, and treat children, adolescents, and families who have experienced trauma. With this new model, a comprehensive data tracking system will also be developed to augment the training. The increased funding allows for renewed contracts with Azusa, Glendora, and Duarte unified school districts, providing continued school, family, and clinic-based mental health services to students and families in the area. In addition, the CCC will host two annual community presentations on topics such as trauma recognition, coping, resilience, self care, and local mental health resources, as well as two outreach events with local providers, youth, and families. To further implement the grant’s goals, the CCC will utilize and interact with a wide array of community organizations in order to promote an active network of resources for mental health providers in the area. Through this grant, the CCC will be highlighted as an avenue for eliminating barriers and creating opportunities for our students and the neighboring communities we serve,” said Mansour.

APU Students Accepted as Fellows in Caltech Summer Research Program

Azusa Pacific students Nathan Suiter ‘22 and Nayree Panossian ‘22 were accepted as fellows in the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program to conduct research under the guidance of Sándor Volkán-Kacsó, PhD, associate professor of physics in APU’s Department of Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics. Last summer, Suiter and Panossian received funding to continue their research on F-ATP synthase, an essential enzyme in all known forms of life. Both students received a $4,620 award for the 10-week period, attended weekly seminars led by Caltech faculty and Jet Propulsion Laboratory scientists and engineers, and engaged in an academic and professional development series. “This experience grew these students, deepening their understanding of research and analytical skills, as well as preparing them for their future career paths,” said Volkán-Kacsó. “In addition, it strengthened the partnership between APU and Caltech as we look ahead to more research opportunities.”

Azusa Pacific University earned an R2 designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, the most influential rating organization among colleges and universities, for its high research activity. This recognition heralds good news for current and prospective APU students seeking academic programs at the forefront of their fields. Students’ ability to tap into high level of research with faculty members who are leaders in their industries translates to richer learning opportunities and better marketability upon graduation.

Volkán-Kacsó said that Suiter and Panossian are among the many students at APU involved with cutting-edge research in the STEM fields. “It is very inspiring to see our students demonstrate high levels of interest, care, and drive in our research together,” said Volkán-Kacsó. “Their energy and commitment to the process forward, and I am excited to see what their futures hold.”

APU Honors College Book Reaches No. 1 on Multiple Amazon Best-Seller Lists

A team of APU Honors College students wrote a book, A Cure for the Calories: a抵押品的利率, published by Square Halo Books, list No. 1 in the “Religious Literature Fiction” and “Science Fiction & Fantasy Literary Criticism” categories. A Cure for the Calories has received enthusiastic feedback from readers over the world, including endorsements from more than a dozen major Lewis scholars and incorporation into the curriculum of numerous academic programs.

The book was originally produced as part of the Honors College’s Oxbridge Tutorial program. Its editor, Diana Pavlic Gyor, PhD, professor in the Honors College, has served as a mentor and editor for multiple Oxbridge Tutorial groups, in which seniors spend a year working deep into exploring a single text, resulting in scholarly collaboration and a published book.

“"This experience grew these students, deepening their understanding of research and analytical skills, as well as preparing them for their future career paths."

SÁNDOR VOLKÁN-KACSÓ, PHD
APU Celebrates Shalom Café Grand Opening

On October 7, Azusa Pacific University held a special ribbon-cutting ceremony on APU’s East Campus. The APU community gathered on Cougar Walk to dedicate its new coffee shop, Shalom Café, in honor of late President Jon R. Wallace, DBA. His family, including his wife, Gail, were present for the event, and shared heartfelt tributes in his memory. The café, named after Wallace’s favorite benediction—“Shalom, go with God”—features decor based on his passion for hiking and nature, and a plaque celebrating his legacy and impact on the APU community.

APU Theater Arts Returns for Live Performances

According to Jill Brennan-Lincoln, MA, chair and associate professor, Department of Theater Arts, “For our 2021-22 season, we wanted to celebrate the opportunity to come together and the indelible way God uses stories to lift us up and unite us in our humanity.”

In October, the theater arts program performed Edmond Rostand’s Cyrano De Bergerac, a classic story exploring love, literature, and bravery. For the November show, the department performed Waiting in the Wings, a wise drama set in a retirement home for former actresses. With around 110 student actors, stage managers, and technical crew members involved, as well as faculty and staff, the productions were immensely collaborative efforts, demonstrating the resilience of APU’s students and faculty.

Brennan-Lincoln reflected on the APU theater community’s ability to bounce back in the face of adversity. “Creating stories happens in many ways. The more innovative we can become, the more students learn to adapt. In overcoming these obstacles, I believe we fostered an entrepreneurial spirit that is essential to the arts.”

By the Numbers

28: The national ranking U.S. News & World Report awarded APU for student first-year experience. College presidents, chief academic officers, deans of students, and deans of admissions from more than 1,500 schools were invited to nominate institutions with stellar examples of first-year experiences.

6.5: APU’s Division of University Advancement met its $6.5 million goal to fully fund the new West Campus Student Commons through donor funding. Once complete, the area will provide needed space for students to study, eat, and socialize.

17: In 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP), which included additional COVID-19 relief for institutions of higher education. This stimulus bill included $40 billion for higher education institutions and students. Of this funding, Azusa Pacific University was allotted $17 million, $8.58 million of which is to be used for direct student assistance grants.

1: Azusa Pacific’s 2021 women’s track and field team, under the leadership of head coach Jack Hoyt, became the first Cougar Athletics program to win an NCAA national championship.
Grants Advance Significant Research and Scholarship

$1.9 million
The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, notified the School of Nursing of a new grant, which includes $47,173 for year one of the project titled Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWFET) Program for Professionals, with Sabrina Friedman, EdD, UNP, PMHCCNS, FNP, serving as principal investigator. A total of $1,912,252 over four years will be awarded pending availability of funds and satisfactory progress. The goal is to develop and expand experiential training opportunities of the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) provider workforce serving vulnerable populations in medically underserved and rural areas of San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties, with special emphasis on behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and transitional-age youth. Most of the awarded funds are for stipends to assist graduate students completing their final year of the PMHNP program.

$400,000
APU’s School of Education was awarded $400,000 over 3 years to participate in the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED) National Teacher Preparation Transformation Center. Awarded to Catherine Hals Brinkley, EdD, and Rebekah Harris, MS, the funding will be utilized to foster high-quality educator preparation within minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and their school district partners across the United States, drawing from BranchED research. APU faculty in the Division of Teacher Education, as well as Azusa Pacific University’s School of Education, will work together to enhance resources and professional development and networking opportunities, and will share data with other institutions in the cohort to move forward with sustainability and innovation.

$297,686
Awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention project, Azusa Pacific University received $297,686 to be distributed over the course of 3 years. The renewed grant, allotted to Sally Mansour, MS, LMFT, director of the Community Counseling Center (CCC), is a continuation of the work of the past 3 years to improve suicide prevention infrastructure and training efforts across the university. The grant will fund projects to capture data on at-risk student behavior and develop an improved network of resources for students, staff, and faculty—the CCC will offer improved training, events, handouts, and other programs pertaining to suicide prevention, substance abuse, depression, and more.

Scholarship at Work

A Counselor’s Guide to Christian Mindfulness (Zondervan, 2021) by Rogena Trammel, PhD, LCSW, associate professor, MSW Program, Department of Social Work
In A Counselor’s Guide to Christian Mindfulness, Trammel and John Trent, PhD, provide counselors training in mindfulness skills used in evidence-based practices, including dialectical behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. These therapies have been shown to be profoundly effective in the treatment of many mental health issues. Blending elements of neuroscience, social science, and religious training, Trammel and Trent offer a Christian perspective that will be extremely helpful in assisting Christian counselors and therapists to confidently use mindfulness interventions with those they treat and help.

Using Narratives and Storytelling to Promote Cultural Diversity on College Campuses (IGI Global, 2020) by T. Scott Bledsoe, PsyD, director of PsyD clinical training (internship) and professor, Department of Clinical Psychology; and Kimberly Setterlund, MSW, LCSW, assistant professor and graduate program director, Department of Social Work
This research-based publication offers a framework model to identify culture-based narratives. The work follows the lives of five college students through a vast array of experiences and provides a comprehensive dialogue about diversity through the personal narratives of college faculty, students, staff, and administrators. Highlighting a range of topics including microaggressions, ethnicity, and psychosocial development, this book is designed for academicians, practitioners, psychologists, sociologists, education professionals, counselors, social work educators, researchers, and students.

A Token of Faith (Independents, 2020) by Richard Felix, PhD, President Emeritus
Felix shares the inspiring story of how he followed a path from poverty to faith to scholar to teacher and finally fulfilled his life purpose to become the President of Azusa Pacific University. He was born and raised in the small town of Lafayette, Indiana, under the care of his grandparents. Despite living in poverty, they had a firm belief in God and were surrounded by a supportive Christian community. His pastor encouraged him to attend college, and the congregation gave him a token of faith that inspired him to do God’s work in the world. The key choices he made during life’s obstacles and struggles led him to become a compassionate, effective, inspirational, and successful leader.

Power Women: Stories of Motherhood, Faith, and the Academy (Xp Academic, 2021) by Doreenma Collier-Gouhl, PhD, ternum clean, School of Behavioral and Applied Sciences
A common narrative that women hear is that motherhood and academia are incompatible. Both are challenging vocations filled with complexities and daily ups and downs, yet more and more women are answering the call to both. A growing body of literature highlights parent-professors, but what about the particular needs of Christian women seeking to navigate both callings while living out their faith? With Poorer Womem, Nancy Wang Yuen and Collier-Gouhl have curated a unique resource by and for Christian academic mothers. This collection of essays highlights the voices of women of diverse academic disciplines, institutions, and stages of parenting and career.
Duffle bags and dorm rooms, sporting events and bonfires, crisp new books and old favorite study nooks—college life conjures up different expectations for everyone. But no one expected the COVID-19 college experience. Like countless campuses across the country, Azusa Pacific University went from a bustling hub of activity to nearly empty overnight. Now, a year and a half later, the APU community is back on campus. Familiar faces and places restore a sense of comfort, but something has definitely changed, fueled by meaningful lessons learned from being apart.

In true Cougar fashion, APU students, faculty, staff, and administrators approached last year’s challenge of pivoting to online education with faith and fortitude. They tackled the technology needed to stay connected and take care of business, but they didn’t merely “get through” the pandemic; they chose to use it as part of their education experience. Nursing students tapped into their God-given gifts of compassion and healing to comfort...
UNIFIED ACTION

Unity, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Christian community, flourished at the first sign of the pandemic. “The day we found out social distancing mandates were being put into effect, our team brainstormed what that meant for students, chapel, and life on campus,” said Coba Canales, EdD, dean of spiritual life. “A few hours later, we stood in front of the chapel doors and broke the news that it was canceled. That was the beginning of it all. We went back to our offices and talked about what was next and prayed together as a team. One of the first ideas to spring up was to create a new chapel platform called Weekly Rhythms, and it allowed us to continue the chapel experience remotely. We offered engaging spiritual content so students could stay connected. More than 1,000 students leaned into this offering that spring.”

This spirit of collaboration characterizes APU’s efforts from the moment the pandemic hit to the arrival back on campus this fall. Every department banded together to provide comprehensive support and uphold the shared responsibility of safety. One of the clearest examples of this can be seen in the way the Student Health Center rallied to ensure that return to campus would be safe for all. “The Division of Advancement worked hard to fund our own testing facilities on campus in addition to offering ongoing vaccine clinics to students, faculty, and staff,” said Bill Flaia, PhD, dean of wellness. “Students submit proof of vaccination through the MyCougar Health electronic record-keeping system, and those who have not been vaccinated submit weekly self-test results, in addition to daily symptom tracking. All students, vaccinated or not, monitor their health daily and contact the health center if they notice any flu-like symptoms.” The university also employed additional temporary personnel to assist with testing, contact tracing, meal deliveries for students in quarantine/isolation, and the assembly of testing kits. Further, APU’s chief medical officer, Todd Emerson, DO, ABFP, serves as the point person for all communications with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and ensures that APU maintains compliance with county guidance and directives during the pandemic.

SHARPENING ONE ANOTHER

The Christian life requires continuous conversion and constant growth, and Christians need one another to achieve that. As iron sharpens iron, so the teacher sharpens the student. For all the amazing accomplishments that occurred remotely, face-to-face learning facilitates much deeper understanding, inspires collaboration, and produces more immediate results. Students and faculty alike share stories about the huge benefits of being back on campus. The time away was particularly challenging for students whose courses included lab work and other types of hands-on learning.

Chemistry major Nayree Panossian ’22 earned a coveted fellowship at CalTech to study a rotary motor enzyme ATP synthase of a certain bacterial species called Thermophilic bacillus. “My particular research primarily focused on conducting data analysis at different temperatures for the rotational rates of a Thermophilic bacillus F1-ATPase and coming up with a kinetic model for the rotations,” said Panossian. But remote research proved a bit bumpy. “Research is not always straightforward; it’s a process that requires one to acquire new skills. COVID-19 restrictions placed a barrier in our research that made it difficult to communicate with one another rapidly.”

Panossian’s faculty mentor, Sándor Volkán-Kacsó, PhD, agreed: “Remote learning is okay for theorists, but the rate of communication and turnover of results is much slower.” Being back on campus has significantly accelerated their work together and has set the stage for a smoother, more productive process, he said. “Because we’re face to face now, we can work together. It would have taken three to four Zoom meetings to accomplish what we do in one visit now. We aren’t just teaching about research—the students are participating in cutting-edge original research, and it takes more than a Zoom meeting to accomplish that.”

A COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY

The face-to-face learning that drives this type of research also makes it possible for other aspects of Christian community to thrive, such as accountability and compassion. The entire team of faculty and staff at Azusa Pacific has participated in trauma-informed workshops to learn how to engage with students dealing with stress and trauma.

Coba Canales, EdD, dean of spiritual life, engages with students during Welcome Weekend. Fellowship is key to APU’s Christ-centered community.

Continued from page 13

and care for those struggling with the virus. Social workers devised a way to engage the elderly and stave off isolation. Theater students invented a new way to deliver their craft—drive-in style—and music students created a whole new genre of digital performance, where they leaned into the crisis and faced it with honesty and passion.

This fall, throughout the residence halls, classrooms, faculty offices, and social hangouts, there’s an underlying sense of gratitude—a honed and tangible appreciation for the privilege of being together that was not there before. During the 18 months away, APU students, faculty, and staff have come to understand that Christian fellowship is much more essential than they once realized. The fall 2021 return to campus illustrates how APU has integrated this profound insight in every way possible.

Continued on page 16
“Our faculty and staff are not only concerned with students’ future careers, but also the whole person,” said Provost Rukshan Fernando, PhD. “Now that we’re back on campus, we can have conversations that lead to character growth and maturity.”

—Rukshan Fernando, PhD, Provost

Faculty and staff also felt the void of Christian community during the time away. “Now that we’re back together,” said Simons, “we keep experiencing these sweet moments with students and with one another, and we can share life spontaneously. We can have unscheduled conversations. As a team, there’s something beautiful about bumping into each other on campus.”

BEYOND TRADITIONS

There’s a sense of strength that comes from facing difficulty, leaning deeply into one’s faith, and coming back to the gift of Christian community. It’s certainly not business as usual, but traditions still stand and provide the foundation for memories and a lifelong connection to APU. Students who missed out on some of those or had to participate virtually last year got the full treatment this fall. Transfer students and now-sophomores celebrated the beloved Gate Walk just days before Welcome Weekend. “Walking through the gate is a marker, a significant part of their journey,” said Simons. “They are starting a transformational, emotional, spiritual, intellectual journey together. It is right to pause and recognize that significant moment in time. It is important that students feel seen and valued. It is one of the most important parts of the APU community, and these events help us communicate that.”

Breathing new life into those time-honored traditions, there’s an enlightened mindset about what they mean. “There’s a phrase that characterizes this whole pandemic: ‘When this is over, I’m going to…’” said Canales. “This mindset created a new kind of anticipation. It’s less about things we want to do, and more about human connection.”

Karla Consuelo Alejandro Meza ’22, Student Government Association president and a resident advisor, echoed Canales’ thoughts. “Students are talking about all the things they once took for granted,” she said. “I heard some students marvel at the fact that they took a quiz on paper—and passed! Coming back to campus is an adjustment.” But she also noted the poignancy of the opportunity to congregate once again. “Community is unity. We are all parts of the body of Christ, and we all have different functions. When any part of the whole is missing, we all feel it, and we can’t function collaboratively as God intended.” And those functions have changed since the pandemic hit. “For example, the best way to show your love and compassion toward someone may be with a big bear hug, or it may be the act of wearing a mask and not hugging them,” she said. “Regardless of our individual gifts and talents, we all have the responsibility to uphold and serve one another.”

Serving one another may look a bit different today, but APU is adapting to its current reality, working together in unity to establish fresh ways of living out God’s call to be light and salt to a hurting world.

Shino Simons, PhD, Vice President for Student Affairs

Cynthia Hoff is a freelance writer and editor living in Wenatchee, Washington. cenhoff@gmail.com

Shino Simons, PhD, vice president for student affairs, leads a special Candlea ceremony for sophomores and their families who had missed out on the experience freshman year due to the pandemic.

Now that we’re back together, we keep experiencing these sweet moments with students and with one another, and we can share life spontaneously. We can have unscheduled conversations.
Advancing Renewal

In October 2021, Azusa Pacific University published its inaugural Renewal Annual Report, which details the progress of the university’s new seven-year strategic plan. As designed and implemented, Renewal: Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders will advance APU as a university of impactful Christian scholars and leaders characterized by best practices of the highest quality. The strategic plan, which launched in September 2020, provides a blueprint for a university-wide commitment to effectively promote and sustain Christ-centered academic excellence for highly diverse constituencies at all degree levels. The annual report features first-year successes in meeting the comprehensive nature of Renewal, and the complexity and interconnectedness of issues APU faces as it seeks to be the premier Christian university of choice for our culture and times. The annual report highlights and gives more detail to this first year of engagement around topics of institutional identity, spiritual formation and faith integration, student enrollment, financial sustainability, strategic communication, church and government relations, APU’s status as a Minority Serving and Hispanic Serving institution, talent management, campus master planning, principle-driven reorganization and right-sizing strategies, a renewed institutional technology and data collection strategy, and more.

Working Groups

As APU returned to campus for the Fall 2021 semester—and for the first time since the pandemic began—it was clear that Renewal had stimulated a new focus and energy across the institution, alongside a heightened collaboration with the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government Association leadership. The APU community has embraced the vision and language of Renewal, engaged in learning around the five Grand Initiatives, evaluated their own contributions, and served on 19 Renewal working groups.

The breadth of topics addressed in these working groups indicates the comprehensive nature of Renewal, and the complexity and interconnectedness of issues APU faces as it seeks to be the premier Christian university of choice for our culture and times. The annual report highlights and gives more detail to this first year of engagement around topics of institutional identity, spiritual formation and faith integration, student enrollment, financial sustainability, strategic communication, church and government relations, APU’s status as a Minority Serving and Hispanic Serving institution, talent management, campus master planning, principle-driven reorganization and right-sizing strategies, a renewed institutional technology and data collection strategy, and more.

The Year Ahead

The full Renewal Annual Report (2020-21) can be found on the Renewal website (apu.edu/renewal). The fact that this high level of work was performed largely in a virtual environment is remarkable. Despite these restrictions, meaningful engagement by the APU community around Renewal evolved, with tangible evidence that the community has embraced the purpose and strategies of the plan. The language of Renewal has permeated the activities and dialog of the APU community—evidence of a consensus-based approach to strategic planning and reflective of the ultimate goal of the process.

The 2021–22 academic year represents one of transition in a number of areas, most notably in the Office of the President and the impact of the return to in-person learning across campuses. What remains consistent is the commitment of APU faculty, staff, administrators, and Board of Trustees to deliver on our promise of a Christ-centered mission to develop disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world.

Notable Milestones and Achievements

The annual report noted a number of significant milestones and achievements for Azusa Pacific University in the first year of Renewal:

2020

September

Renewal, APU’s new strategic plan for 2020-27, launches.

October

$1 million secured for an Endowed Chair in Citizenship and Civic Virtue for the Honors College from the Fletcher Jones Foundation.

November

APU ranks among top 25 universities nationwide by alumni as reported in Forbes.

December

Rally with Us (virtual Dinner Rally) raises $1.3 million for student scholarships, an all-time funding record for this event.

2021

January

APU celebrates the life, service, and impact of Dr. Jon R. Wallace, Azusa Pacific University’s 16th President, with an endowed student scholarship.

February

President Paul W. Ferguson announces the new President’s Annual Faculty Scholarship Enhancement Grants Program with $120,000 in funding.

March

Faculty secure a $650,000 National Science Foundation STEM Grant to fund a first-generation scholar initiative at APU.

April

APU recognizes the teaching, scholarship, and service of 34 faculty by awarding extended contracts.

May

1,782 students graduate from APU with undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Women’s Track and Field captures the first NCAA national title for APU.

June

$6.5 million West Campus Student Commons project receives full donor funding.

July

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, APU ends the fiscal year fully compliant with debt covenants.

A Model Christian University

Become the model Christian university for our culture and times: defining engagement with virtue as leading Christian scholars and citizens.

A Thriving University of Choice

Become a university destination of choice for a diverse body of students, faculty, and staff, reflecting inclusive academic excellence.

A Transformational and Collaborative Organization

Build APU’s leadership structure to promote and sustain a newly unified and collaborative approach to transformational university development and impact.

A Recognized Leader in Technology and Data Management

Advance APU as an academic leader on innovative technology and data management promoting insightful decision making.

A Sustainable Financial Enterprise

Create entrepreneurial funding strategies and practices to resource new initiatives and secure financial sustainability.
Trenten Merrill ’15 went to the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games on a mission. He was determined to succeed in the long jump and represent the U.S. on the podium after falling just short in his Paralympic debut at the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro. Although his jump in Rio was a personal best and it broke the American record, it placed him fourth and just off the podium.

“Rio was an amazing experience. Tokyo was incredible, but more laid back without all the fans there,” he said. Although he felt much more prepared going into his second Paralympic games, Merrill didn’t have an auspicious start in Tokyo. “I tripped up on my second jump and just ate it in front of everyone.”

Although the jump was painful and hurt his chances at attaining a medal, Merrill was not daunted by a little adversity. He had overcome much greater obstacles in his life. When he was 14 years old, Merrill and his best friend were riding dirt bikes to his house in San Juan Capistrano, California. They came to the final turn before the house, looked both ways, and began to cross the street. “We didn’t see the car when we checked, and they didn’t see us, because there was a divided median with trees and shrubs that obstructed the view,” he said. “I woke up in the other lane and it felt like the whole thing was a dream at first. Then I looked over and saw my friend Scott on the ground, screaming. I realized it wasn’t a dream. It was real.”

Merrill felt a numb sensation in one of his feet and could tell from looking at it that it was broken. He grabbed his cell phone and called his dad, who arrived followed by two ambulances. They first took Scott, who was in critical condition with a broken pelvis, punctured lung, and a bruised face from hitting the car’s windshield. With much medical intervention and prayer, Merrill’s friend eventually made a full recovery.

Merrill remained in the hospital for the next month and a half. After several weeks of effort to avoid the unthinkable, the doctors at Mission Hospital delivered the news that he would need his right leg amputated, just below the knee. Merrill began to cry, panicking at the thought of a life without one of his legs. He reflected on his identity, which was largely rooted in athletics.

Growing up, Merrill played numerous sports—soccer, basketball, baseball, hockey, swimming, and motocross racing. “I remember watching those old Gatorade commercials with Michael Jordan and one of my aunts would pull out an ‘APU Track & Field’ shirt. I had gotten a whole wardrobe of shirts and sneakers from 2013-14. He went professional in 2015 and finished yet, so I’m going to keep going.”

He hasn’t told me that I’m not good enough, and teacher living in Nashville, Tennessee. nathan.foster@gmail.com
**Donors Made This Possible**

**Total Giving by Project**

- **Unrestricted**: $18,774,671
- **Endowment**: $5,792,856
- **University Fund**: $2,033,239
- **Restricted**: $1,779,218
- **Capital**: $1,285,200
- **Total**: $18,798,184

**FY21 Planned Gifts**

$12,334,160

**FY21 Matching Gifts**

$58,441.47

**Total Giving**

$18.8M

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**Student Profile**

**KATHRYN TICKLE '24**

Mathematics | Paradise, CA

Dear APU,

Thank you so much for your generosity and kindness. Without this scholarship, I could not have attended Azusa Pacific University. APU has greatly impacted my life, providing a positive, welcoming community when I did not have a physical home.

In November 2018, I lost my house to the Camp Fire in Northern California. Shortly after, I applied for a scholarship at APU and interviewed on campus. During that weekend at APU, I found my new home. My family and I prayed that God would grant us the ability for me to attend APU, and through your generosity God answered our prayers. Your kindness changed my life, giving me hope when I had very little.

Along with a remarkable community, I have also been very impressed with APU’s academics. Since my freshman year of high school, I wanted to major in math to someday become a math professor. I love computing calculations and theorizing with mathematical concepts, and APU is a great place for both. When I attended a preview weekend, Bradley McCoy, PhD, chair and professor, Department of Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics, shared about APU’s commitment to helping students obtain internships and research opportunities. Later that year, I attended a Number Theory class taught by Sharon McCahter, PhD, associate professor, and was so excited by the material that I could not wait to be her student.

I am involved in a few different groups on campus. I am also a Math and Physics Fellow, a Math and Physics Center tutor, and an Honors College mentor. My discipleship group has helped me grow in my faith. I have started journaling my prayers and being more attentive to how God is speaking to me. My discipleship group leader helps us focus on relevant topics like trusting God and finding our identity in Christ. Being part of the Honors College has greatly aided me in my faith journey. Through studying great literary works such as Dante’s Divine Comedy and Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle, I have learned how to pray more effectively and focus more closely on Jesus. Through my friendships in the Honors College, I have also made discoveries about myself.

Thank you for making all of this possible through your generosity!

Kathryn Tickle '24

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**Total Students**

9,006

- Undergraduate Students: 50%
- Graduate Students: 50%

**Graduates in 2020-21**

4,350

**Market Value of the Endowment**

$100,257,631

**Gifts Given in 2020-21**

10,023

**Undergraduate Students Receiving Scholarships or Financial Aid**

94.7%
New Commons Area Coming to West Campus

APU’s West Campus offers a strategic location to create a vibrant communal space—a home away from home—because of its proximity to the university’s largest student parking area as well as the growing number of graduate programs on this campus. Part of this space is being transformed into a new student commons, an engaging and inclusive area that highlights one of APU’s cornerstones: Community.

With construction beginning in September 2021, and an expected completion in March 2022, the commons addresses two of the university’s strategic priorities: Cultivating a Christ-centered, inclusive institutional culture that intentionally values people, diversity, and mutual understanding in community; and advancing the physical and virtual infrastructure to execute our mission and support our growth goals.

APU Athletics Administration Updates

Courtney Davis, PhD, and Paul Flores II have joined the administration for Azusa Pacific Athletics, and Bethany Blomquist will serve in a new role, director of athletics Gary Pine announced in early October. Davis was named the faculty athletic representative, Flores II is the assistant athletics director of compliance, and Blomquist is transitioning from director of compliance/senior woman administrator to assistant athletics director for internal operations/senior woman administrator.

“I am excited to announce these changes to our administration,” said Pine. “This trio already has enhanced, and will continue to enhance, Cougar Athletics through their work and dedication. We are blessed to have them join us.”

APU Alums Wins World Series with Braves

Former Azusa Pacific baseball player Stephen Vogt ’07 won the 2021 Major League Baseball World Series with the Atlanta Braves. Vogt, a nine-year MLB veteran and two-time All-Star, ended his season earlier than expected, he remained with the team throughout their playoff run and eventual world championship.
A Crescendo of Opportunity

BY PETER COOLEY

The satisfying feeling of unwrapping the perfect Christmas present or opening a much-anticipated school acceptance letter—APU alum Erick Quintanilla ’11, MM ’13, had that same magical feeling the first time he opened a saxophone case in his 7th-grade band class. From the moment Quintanilla laid eyes on the shiny instrument, his world opened to new possibilities. For the first time, he experienced the power of music to inspire young minds. Little did he know that he would use his gifts and talents years later to lead his own school band program, enabling the students to experience the same magical feeling the first time he opened a saxophone case in his 7th-grade band class.

When Quintanilla began working at Hollenbeck Middle School as a long-term substitute music teacher. At this point, Quintanilla was able to secure multiple grants totaling $170,000 to equip his students with high-quality music experiences. He was simultaneously finishing his teaching credential. “Thanks to APU’s flexible program, I was able to finish my credentialing process during evenings while still working as a teacher,” he said. “This opportunity led me to landing a full-time music teacher position.”

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“In certain communities, music programs often get overlooked,” he said. “I wanted to make sure that students’ passion and ability could be highlighted, and these grants allowed this to happen.”

Recently, Quintanilla made a guest appearance on the Kelly Clarkson Show, where he shared his inspiring story. On the show, Quintanilla’s program received $20,000 in donations from Pandora and the celebrity hosts. One of his former students, Lidia, was in the audience, with a special message for her teacher: “Thank you for making a big impact on my life. I thought that because I was a girl, I wasn’t going to do well on my instrument. I didn’t have the confidence, but you showed me that I have potential and that I can do anything I set my mind to.”

Just as his teachers poured into him, Quintanilla is making a difference in the lives of his music students. “I believe that our mission as humans is to serve each other. I learned to serve others well at APU and in the military, and now I’m blessed with the opportunity to serve others here in the communities that need it most.”

Peter Cooley ’23 is a music education and honors humanities double major, and a public relations intern for the Division of Strategic Communication and Engagement. pcooley18@apu.edu
Providing Healing and Hope

BY ABIGAIL REED

“When victims and survivors of trafficking often carry extreme fear of the system and people in power—including doctors’ offices and doctors themselves,” said Anthony. “In addition, some don’t have the insurance or means to pay for care. We wanted to remove these barriers, and many more, by creating a safe and completely free medical clinic.”

The Walls’ sacred calling to care for these patients can be traced back to their time at APU. As they built a crucial foundation of scientific knowledge in classes and participated in service opportunities, God sowed the seeds that would eventually come to fruition with Healthcare for Justice.

“For both of us, our time at APU not only prepared us academically, but it stretched, grew, and challenged our faith—making our desire to follow Jesus deeper and more real,” said Emily, who was an applied health major. “Today, my faith pours into my work caring for patients. I’m showing them the love of Christ.”

When the couple continued on to graduate school, Anthony pursuing a Doctorate in Medicine at Boston University and Emily completing a Master of Science in Nursing at the McG Institute of Health Professions, they were pushed to consider the difference they were hoping to make in their future careers.

“When my time at APU revealed to me that our mission field is really how we show Christ’s love to the people in our life—to the orphans and widows in our community,” said Anthony. “In the midst of medical school, I realized I wanted to truly make a lasting impact in my patients’ lives, showing them the Gospel through my love and service.”

During this time of searching, they met a lawyer through connections at their church who started a safe home for survivors of human trafficking in Boston and offered ways to get involved. Anthony and Emily were deeply impacted by this outreach, and they began to outline a vision of how they could love and serve this population.

After completion of their graduate programs, they moved to Ventura, California, where Anthony began his residency program to study family medicine and Emily worked as a family nurse practitioner. Although Anthony was busy with his work, God continued to remind him of the vision to serve the trafficked and abused, so he began making connections with government agencies and local nonprofits, joining the Ventura County Coalition Against Human Trafficking as a medical advisor.

Eventually, during Anthony’s fellowship training, his mentor pushed him to adopt a community project—so Anthony began serving residents of local safe homes who were survivors of human trafficking. During the off hours at his workplace, a general practitioner family clinic, nonprofits referred residents to Anthony for free medical care. Unfortunately, more than 60 percent of patients did not show up to their appointments.

“I conducted a survey and discovered there was still a deeply rooted fear and distrust of the system, even when cost barriers were removed,” said Anthony. “I knew something had to change.”

He continued along his career path until a sudden change forced them to prayerfully reconsider their future—Anthony’s mentor and supervisor decided to leave her position at the family clinic. God brought back to their mind their vision: a safe and completely accessible space for those who have experienced trafficking or abuse. Even though they did not have a building, they decided to obey God’s prompting by making house calls, caring for people where they felt most comfortable and at peace. When Anthony called the local district attorney, a fellow member of the Coalition Against Human Trafficking, to ask for a business address, they received a surprising response.

“The district attorney informed me he had broad-spectrum primary care, including anything from a skin infection to managing high blood pressure, as well as preventative screening, treating diseases, and much more. Recently, through the aid of donated funding, Healthcare for Justice initiated a more comprehensive trauma recovery program for patients struggling with psychiatric needs, including free access to a licensed therapist and research-backed tools such as trauma-sensitive yoga.

This trauma recovery program, along with basic medical care, has already turned lives around, as seen in the story of a young woman with a history of sexual trauma and violence. After receiving care from Healthcare for Justice for more than a year, she is back at work, contributing to her community, and continuing on the path of healing.

“This care enabled me to overcome barriers such as my trust issues with authoritative figures and strangers,” said another patient, a victim of labor trafficking and sexual violence. “You made it possible for me to achieve better health physically, emotionally, and mentally.”

Today, this patient is happily married, runs his own business, and sits on Healthcare for Justice’s board of advisors to advocate for others, believing they all deserve the opportunity to heal and receive care.

Since opening the doors of their clinic, the no-show rate has dropped from more than 60 percent to around 20, a massive success in reducing the obstacles and fear that keep trafficking and abuse victims from medical care.

“We hope for the future is that our work inspires others around the world to make a difference in their communities—identifying a need and using their passions and skills to show God’s love,” said Anthony. “Each community and population has different needs, and it is the tender and thoughtful work of Christ followers that can truly make a difference.”

Abigail Reed ’20 is a freelance writer living in La Pine, Oregon. abbiejreed@gmail.com

When Azusa Pacific University alumni Anthony ’06 and Emily (Maarschalk ’06) Walls met on an APU Mexico Outreach trip and were paired together to present to the local community on a public health topic, they had no idea that God would continue to use their partnership to impact in my patients’ lives, showing them the love, “Each community and population has different needs, and it is the tender and thoughtful work of Christ followers that can truly make a difference.”

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Emily (Maarschalk ’06) Walls

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMILY (MAARSCHALK ‘06) WALLS

BY ABIGAIL REED

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When Azusa Pacific University alumni Anthony ’06 and Emily (Maarschalk ’06) Walls met on an APU Mexico Outreach trip and were paired together to present to the local community on a public health topic, they had no idea that God would continue to use their partnership to serve the underserved. Nearly 18 years later, as a married couple, they work together as medical professionals running a life-changing nonprofit organization called Healthcare for Justice, which provides free, accessible health care to victims of human trafficking and domestic violence.
Virtual Networking: 4 Tips for College Students and Recent Grads

In the working world, it’s all about who you know—or so the saying goes. This definitely has some merit, at least according to a recent Jobvite survey that found 57 percent of people discovered a job through their professional network. Here are four ways you can bolster your online network.

1. CONNECT WITH PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS

When you are working to build your network virtually, you may wonder how to get started. Those with lots of contacts in their field or industry didn’t wait for something to come along—they took action, which led to the opportunities they received later.

Here’s a simple virtual networking strategy almost any student or graduate can use: commit to writing three individualized emails (don’t copy and paste) to prospective employers every weekday until you find your first lead or job.

The whole process should take you about 45 minutes each day, including research. And over the course of just one month, you’ll have sent more than 60 emails to different companies. That’s a great way to take proactive steps to build your career contacts.

2. PROMOTE YOURSELF (THE RIGHT WAY) ON SOCIAL MEDIA

It’s easy to think of platforms like Instagram and Facebook as separate from your professional life. The reality, though, is that many employers don’t exactly see it that way! It’s important to maintain an online presence from your professional life. The reality, though, is that many employers don’t exactly see it that way! It’s important to maintain an online presence — and crucial that your posts don’t undermine your personality or abilities.

According to a CareerBuilder study, researchers found that:

• 70 percent of employers said they use social media to screen candidates before hiring
• 69 percent of employers will type a candidate’s name into Google or other search engines before making a hiring decision
• 57 percent of employers said they were less likely to interview a candidate that they couldn’t find online

3. BUILD AND OPTIMIZE A PROFESSIONAL PROFILE ON LINKEDIN

Of all the social media platforms, LinkedIn is the most important for virtual networking. As a recent grad or current college student about to enter the job market, it should also be one of your top priorities to create a professional page on this platform. This includes:

• Filling out your profile completely
• Connecting with teachers, friends, and peers to start growing your network
• Using a professional profile picture
• Having past employers endorse skills on your page

Your page becomes like a virtual business card, which you can use to attract potential employers. It also allows LinkedIn’s algorithms to match you to jobs or companies that fit your work experience and skills, effectively streamlining the job hunt for you.

Career experts say to use 40 or more words in your headline and summary to organically increase search engine optimization. And what makes for a professional photo that pairs well with your LinkedIn headline? Think natural light, high resolution, limited filters, and suitable dress to fit the part.

4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALUMNI RESOURCES

Don’t forget to maximize the institutional resources available to you! Azusa Pacific University’s Office of Alumni Engagement is specifically dedicated to helping students stay in the loop after graduation, and the Career Center helps alumni connect with businesses and organizations that are hiring for jobs and internships. APU alumni stay connected via monthly newsletters, get notified of alumni events, and can sign up for Handshake, an online forum for career networking with fellow graduates and employers. Connecting with other APU alumni comes with an advantage: you share common ground with the contact or potential employer right away.

By positioning yourself as a professional and staying in control of your virtual networking options, you’ll give yourself the best chance of landing a great job.

Stay Connected to the APU Community

Because you are a valued member of the APU community, Alumni Engagement has several ways to keep you connected. First, we invite you to join APU Connect (apuconnect.com). More than 5,000 alumni utilize this network to connect socially and professionally—joining interest groups, seeking or becoming a mentor, exploring job opportunities, promoting their businesses, and keeping up to date on the latest APU news and resources. Also, follow us on Instagram (@apusumalumni) and Facebook (@apusumalumniengagement) and subscribe to our Azusa Pacific Alumni YouTube channel to watch Alumni Academy, where faculty and staff experts share thought-provoking information in their areas of expertise. Finally, take advantage of our alumni discounts on hotels, airport parking, car insurance, APU’s IMT Computer Store and University Bookstore, and our new Alumni Perks (apu.enjoymydeals.com, code: APU1899). Visit apu.edu/alumni to learn more.

A History of Gathering Together

Through the decades, Azusa Pacific University has formed a sense of community by gathering in various venues, including classrooms, chapels, concert halls, and athletic fields, as well as in informal spaces such as the student lounge and snack bar in the Turner Campus Center (shown above). During winter 1980, due to torrential downpours, many gatherings were restricted to only indoor activities, resulting in more students congregating in the Turner Campus Center to play ping-pong, Ping-Pong, or pool. From spring 2020 to fall 2021, campus activities were again restricted, this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After a successful return to campus in fall 2021, APU once more enjoyed that familiar sense of community with face-to-face interpersonal interactions. On October 7, 2021, the university dedicated its new coffee shop, Shalom Café, located where the student lounge and snack bar once stood. Named in honor of late APU President Jon R. Wallace, DBA, and for the phrase that he so often used—“Shalom, Go With God”—this cafe will continue to remind the APU community there is the potential for sacred encounters in every interaction. Shalom.

Ken Otto, MLIS, professor, Head of Special Collections
From Gratitude to Hope

Gratitude has a way of grounding us in the things that matter. It’s a seed of hope that can carry us through uncertain times.

Here at Azusa Pacific University, we are choosing gratitude and finding hope in God’s greatest gift to us, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Watch our community’s journey from gratitude to hope by visiting:

apu.edu/hope

May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Psalm 33:22