

# *Voice*

**University of La Verne Magazine**

Fall 2019



## NAVIGATING NEURODIVERSITY

The LaFetra College of Education is paving a new path in the education field with groundbreaking work to support all learners.



## THE ROAD TO WELLNESS

The quest for peak performance – physical, emotional, and mental – is the breath that animates the Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research. With the grand opening of this trailblazing facility, everyone in the University of La Verne community is poised to strive for their personal best.

Picture students meeting in collaborative spaces to exchange ideas, share clinical findings, and reinforce their individual wellness goals. Next, picture them hitting the gym or yoga mat to achieve those goals.

This new campus hub brings together fitness practice, health-related teaching, mindfulness training, hands-on research opportunities, and a never-ending calendar of relevant programming.

Namaste. Salud. Be well.

*Photo by William Vasta*



# Features



**14**

## Breaking the Mold

LaFetra College of Education's Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness brings together teacher training, dyslexia tutoring, and wellness services for people of all ages and learning styles.



**22**

## Code of Law

Taking pre-law electives to new frontiers, Professor Ashley Lipson grounds future attorneys in the legal applications of physics, finance, math, and video games.



**26**

## Trip to Neher Land

Students try their hands at field research, ranch work, and off-grid ingenuity at the university's 187-acre Bob and Mary Neher Field Station in Montana.



**30**

## ROC 'n' Roll

Meet three alumni whose careers were turbo-charged by the University of La Verne's Regional and Online Campuses, now celebrating their 50th anniversary.




**36**

## Radiohead


Forty years on, LeoFM continues to train, support, and inspire the next generation of media professionals.

## FOLLOW US

 [laverne.edu/facebook](https://laverne.edu/facebook)

 [laverne.edu/youtube](https://laverne.edu/youtube)

 [laverne.edu/twitter](https://laverne.edu/twitter)

 [laverne.edu/instagram](https://laverne.edu/instagram)



## WHAT'S NEW

- 7** Message from the President
- 8** Fast Facts
- 8** Leo on the Street
- 10** News & Notes
- 12** Readers Corner
- 24** Campaign Update
- 42** Alumni Notes

## ON THE MOVE

- 13** The Science of Well-Being  
Give every student the knowledge, tools, and support to unlock their own well-being — that's the vision behind the new Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research.
- 40** Arts & Sciences: Building Community  
Brimming with art treasures and cultural history, the African American Museum of Beginnings is Vikki '74 and Khalif '73 Rasshan's gift to the Pomona Valley.
- 44** Athletics: Gridiron Ambassadors  
An evolving relationship with a Mexican university has the Leopards playing offense, defense, and cultural diplomats.

## HEART OF LA VERNE

- 9** My Perspective: Kathy Duncan
- 46** Throwback

## Read the *Voice* Online

Did you know that *Voice* Online contains exclusive web-only stories, videos, slideshows and other interactive media? Stay connected! Visit [voice.laverne.edu](http://voice.laverne.edu)

## What's new with you?

Do you have a story to share with us? Tell us at [voice.laverne.edu/submit-story](http://voice.laverne.edu/submit-story)

## Behind the Cover

The creative team behind *Voice* magazine partnered with the University of La Verne's Wilson Library Makerspace to bring the cover to life. The Makerspace resources are free to all students, faculty, staff, and alumni. For more behind-the-scenes photos and videos, visit [voice.laverne.edu/breaking-the-mold](http://voice.laverne.edu/breaking-the-mold).



**3D PRINTING** is just one resource the Wilson Library Makerspace has to offer. To find out more about Makerspace, please visit: [univ.lv/makerspace](http://univ.lv/makerspace).

HAVE YOU BEEN RECEIVING MULTIPLE COPIES OF VOICE? HELP US SAVE RESOURCES BY LETTING US KNOW.



PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
VOICE  
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS  
UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE  
1950 THIRD STREET, LA VERNE, CALIFORNIA 91750  
EMAIL: [VOICE@LAVERNE.EDU](mailto:VOICE@LAVERNE.EDU)

# Voice

University of La Verne Magazine

PUBLISHED BY THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS  
VOL. 99 NO. 2 FALL 2019

PRESIDENT  
**DEVORAH LIEBERMAN**

VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT  
MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS  
**MARY AGUAYO**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS  
**ROD LEVEQUE**

MANAGING EDITOR  
**GENESIS GONZALEZ**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS  
**KATE KEALEY**  
**GILLEN SILSBY**

WRITERS  
**ANTHONY AVILA**  
**CAROL CHEH**  
**GENESIS GONZALEZ**  
**MATT HUTAFF**  
**KATE KEALEY**

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
**KATHY DUNCAN**  
**DIANE KRIEGER**  
**CHRISTINA SCHWEIGHOFER**  
**GILLEN SILSBY**

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**MAUREEN PANOS, MS '19**

DESIGNERS  
**KATIE BLAINE**  
**K SELNICK, MS '19**

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO  
**DAVID CLUMPNER**  
**MIKE FINK**  
**JEANINE HILL**  
**FELIPE DE JESÚS SALAZAR MUÑOZ**  
**WILLIAM VASTA**

WEB DESIGNERS  
**ELAINE HUYNH '15**  
**ZACHARY ROUNDS**

ADVISORY BOARD  
**ANTHONY AVILA**, DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS COMMUNICATIONS  
**STACI BAIRD**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS  
**SHANNON CAPALDI, EdD '17**, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
**CAROL CHEH**, SENIOR WRITER, ADVANCEMENT  
AND CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS  
**ISSAM GHAZZAWI**, PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT  
**KIMBERLY GRANT**, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT  
**WENDY LAU '98**, TRUSTEE/SENIOR COUNSEL  
**MARY ANN MELLEBY, MS '91**, TRUSTEE/RETIRED PR PROFESSIONAL  
**NANCY NEWMAN, MS '19**, PHOTOGRAPHER

---

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**A**t University of La Verne we are privileged to live, learn, and thrive in a global community filled with opportunities and diverse individuals.

Every day I look around our campuses and admire the positive connections among our students, faculty, and staff. Each are working together to build change and inspire dreams.

In this issue of *Voice*, we highlight the individuals and programs that enrich the lives of our students and alumni. It has been a dream to watch our Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness blossom into a dynamic resource of educational services, professional training, and research.

Professorss Niki Elliott, Amber Bechard, and Patricia Taylor are taking great strides to connect with educators across the community and foster learning and inclusivity beyond the classroom.

Looking outside the classroom, the Bob and Mary Neher Field Station in Montana challenges students to broaden their horizons and engage with the great outdoors. It is a unique experience that brings together seasoned leaders with first-time pioneers.

We cannot forget the voices behind our community of music fans at LeoFM. Can you hear that? Our students and faculty have built a following of loyal listeners who have tuned in to the comedic punch lines, lively conversations, and pop culture references. Their work behind the microphone is uplifting.

Others are utilizing their passion for teaching by developing a one-of-a-kind computer game geared for legal studies, and building a home for African American history serving the community.

And this fall we opened the Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research, which brings together health research and community-based learning opportunities.

It is amazing what we can accomplish from the strong relationships of our community. Together we can do so much more than we ever thought possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Devorah Lieberman'.

Devorah Lieberman, PhD  
President

## WHAT'S NEW

# Fast Facts

with Ruben Ibarra, Director of University Safety Operations



### Q What is the mission of University Safety Operations?

We want to ensure a safe and secure environment that supports the educational mission of the university by providing quick, responsive services with highly-trained personnel. We strive to be a vanguard safety organization among all institutions of higher education. Maintaining peak levels of professionalism allows the department to be in a state of readiness for unforeseen emergencies.

### Q Do you find your experience in law enforcement an asset to the mission?

Before coming to the university, I spent more than 27 years in the Santa Ana Police Department in Santa Ana, California. My years in law enforcement have certainly built

a strong foundation to help me further the goals of Campus Safety and fulfill the goals of the university. I use my experience with crime prevention, conducting investigations, community policing, community engagement, leadership, and management to guide me every day.

### Q What do you enjoy most about serving the University of La Verne community?

I welcome the responsibility of always working to provide a safe environment. Since transitioning to director, I have truly enjoyed interacting with every member of our university community. The opportunity to contribute in the development and growth of our students has been especially satisfying. At the recent commencement ceremony, a graduating student asked me to help him with his tie. As I finished tying his double Windsor, I realized that my service to this community goes beyond public safety. The smallest of things can be important.

## Leo on the Street

### Julio Garcia

President and founder of the Association of Latino Professionals for America University of La Verne student chapter



### What does it mean to be a lifelong learner?

It means never being satisfied with what you already know. It means always striving to expand your knowledge, not only in the realm of academics but also with regard to experiences.

Making efforts to try new things. Traveling to new countries. Befriending people you wouldn't normally talk to. Or simply choosing different places to eat.

I believe there is a misconception that lifelong learning only applies to academics. I would like to encourage everyone to continue growing their knowledge and to become a true lifelong learner.

University of La Verne

SAVE THE DATE  
SAVE THE DATE  
SAVE THE DATE  
**GALA2020.**

*We welcome you  
to be a part of  
this upcoming  
exclusive event!*

**03.28.20**

**FOR RESERVATIONS**

please contact Ashley Vanga at  
909-448-4670 or [avanga@laverne.edu](mailto:avanga@laverne.edu)

## My Perspective It's All About Connections

### **THE UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE WOULD HAVE BEEN A GREAT FIT FOR ME, A FIRST- GENERATION STUDENT.**

Instead, I attended a large university — and failed.

I had graduated among the top 10 students of my small high school class. I won a full scholarship to a top university. When I arrived on campus, though, I found it overwhelming. I sat in some classes with 200 other students. I never once spoke to the instructor. I didn't realize there was tutoring available.

I was lost. As a result, I was academically disqualified by the end of my first academic year. It was not the welcoming atmosphere we have at University of La Verne, with small class sizes and faculty who care.

I eventually found my way to a community college, where I earned an associate degree in nursing. I began my 20-plus-year career as a registered nurse and eventually went back to school to complete a bachelor's degree at a Cal State. I worked as a clinical nurse, nurse manager, and educator in a variety of clinical settings. It was not until I began looking for a master's degree that I discovered La Verne.

In the nurturing and stimulating environment of the Master of Science in Leadership and Management program, I was encouraged to consider a career change by one of my favorite faculty members, who became my mentor. I finished the master's degree, started a doctoral program, and began teaching as an adjunct instructor.

I had always done some teaching in my healthcare career, but now I found my true passion — a place where all my



experience, education, and gifts could come together for a new and exciting purpose.

I completed a doctorate in organizational leadership at La Verne. Not bad for someone who flunked out of their freshman year of college. Eventually, I was fortunate enough to become a full-time management professor at the institution I had grown to love.

Now it is my job to help students find success. Sometimes, they don't know what they don't know. Or, they are uncertain what resources are available to assist them in their educational journey. Faculty can direct them toward help and encourage them along the way.

I tell adult students returning to graduate school, after a break of many years, "I earned an associate degree in my 20s, a bachelor's in my 30s, a master's in my 40s, and a doctorate in my 50s. You can do this!"

I consider it my mission now to facilitate learning to meet our students' personal and professional goals. It is such a privilege to see them grow and develop into the best version of themselves.

I love watching as they gain confidence and skills that they then apply in their real-world organizations. It is all about connections. Students connect with faculty to learn what they need for their goals. Students connect with one another for support in classes and for networking after graduation.

Connections mean more prepared graduates who have a positive impact on their organizations and their communities.

---

## NEWS & NOTES



### Integrated Business Students' Charitable Donations Rise to \$260,000

Over the past seven years, the University of La Verne's Integrated Business Program has raised more than \$260,000 for charities such as Little Heart Warriors and the Surfrider Foundation. The program teaches students to launch their own businesses and develop products that can be marketed and sold, with profits donated to charity. Products in the spring semester included a water bottle, ear pods, and a Wi-Fi power adapter. The students donated more than \$20,000 in profits to charity, and built real-world business skills that will carry forward into their careers.

---

### Former Homecoming Queen Reunited with Treasured Keepsake

Marjorie Bothwell '69 was re-crowned homecoming queen by Felecia Beardsley, cultural and natural history collections director, during the University of La Verne's 2019 Homecoming and Family Weekend. It was the first time Bothwell had seen the crown since she earned the title in 1968. She was one of 10 students to wear the prized keepsake from 1964-1973. Thanks to a generous donation by Janelle Krug, daughter of former queen Mary Jane Doramus (Krug), the crown was returned to the university in 2016 and restored by curator, Anne Collier.



### *New York Times* Names La Verne Top-Performer

For exceeding expected graduation rates, especially among low-income and middle-income students, the University of La Verne was cited by the *New York Times* earlier this year as a top-performing institution. The recognition stems from the university's longstanding commitment to providing an intimate and caring educational environment and for its signature La Verne Experience program. The newspaper's assessment was done in partnership with the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute.



## More Partners Sign on to PACE

The university welcomed nine new educational organizations to the Partnership for Access to College Education (PACE), bringing the total number of participating school districts, private schools, and community organizations to more than 40. Launched in 2017, PACE guarantees admission to the University of La Verne and an annual scholarship of at least \$10,000 to qualified undergraduate students from partner programs.

---

## New LaFetra Center Promotes ‘Brainier’ Pedagogy

LaFetra College of Education launched its Center for Learning Innovation (CLI) in August. Directed by Anne Mangahas, CLI exposes LaFetra faculty to high-impact, brain-based pedagogical theories, skills, and technologies with the goal of strengthening teaching culture and supporting students preparing to become educators.



## University Welcomes Two New Trustees

John Raffoul, president of Adventist Health White Memorial hospital, and Martha Daniel, president and CEO of cyber-security provider Cytellix, and its parent company, Information Management Resources, Inc., are the newest members of the University of La Verne’s governing body. The two University of La Verne alumni were unanimously voted onto the Board of Trustees at its annual meeting in May. Raffoul earned his doctorate in public administration in 2002 and Daniel earned her MBA in 1984.

## READERS CORNER

### New Voices

Students from Ayerwaddy International School in Yangon, Myanmar, enjoyed the opportunity to Skype with Adam Wu, director of international admission at the University of La Verne, this summer. Many are interested in learning more about the university and the programs offered for international students.



### Twitter Wall [laverne.edu/twitter](https://twitter.com/laverne.edu/twitter)

Like a story or have a comment to share?

Tweet to us @ULaVerne using hashtag #ULaVerne



Enjoyed a wonderful visit with @LAAreaChamber board member @PresLieberman on campus @ULaVerne. Thank you for the tour!  
**@LACHAMBERMARIA**

It's a great day in Compton! More great opportunities for our students...  
#BoardHighlights: CUSD approves MOU w/@ULaVerne to expand access to private universities. La Verne will waive all application fees & promises a \$10,000/yr scholarship to every CUSD student accepted into the school! #teamzurita #teamcompton #teamcUSD #elevate #elevator

**@SATRAZURITA**



Partnering w San Bernardino City USD for The Mindful Leaders Project. 240 principals, vps, & site directors will be trained over a year in practices that intentionally disrupt inequity. Impacting the lives of 55,000 children. So proud!  
#LFCE @ULaVerne

**@DRK\_WHITESMITH**

# Create a *Leo Legacy*



*"My favorite professor, Dr. Ahmed Ispahani, inspired me to become an entrepreneur and a risk-taker. Perhaps my contribution will support another student to do the same."*

- Jeff Nasmyth '87

Owner, Fourth Street Mill  
Veritas Society Member



*"I loved the small class sizes at the University of La Verne; the personal relationships that resulted made all the difference. I want the next generation to enjoy the same benefits."*

- Peter R. Nasmyth, Jr. '86, JD '98

Owner, The Law Offices of Peter R. Nasmyth  
Veritas Society Member



Veritas Society  
University of La Verne

Considering an estate plan that includes the university, or already done so?

We welcome you to join the Veritas Society, where your gift will ensure our academic excellence for generations to come.

The Veritas Society recognizes all estate and life income gifts. To notify us of a plan that already includes the University of La Verne, or for more information on how to become a member of this exclusive society, visit:

**[www.planwithlaverne.org/veritassociety](http://www.planwithlaverne.org/veritassociety)**

# The Science of **Well-Being**

With the grand opening of the **Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research**, the university charts a new course.

By Carol Cheh

**ON OCTOBER 18, AMIDST THE FANFARE OF HOMECOMING AND FAMILY WEEKEND**, the University of La Verne officially launched a bold new initiative: the Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research.

The shared vision of President Deborah Lieberman, lead donor and well-being enthusiast Randall Lewis, and several faculty members, the Lewis Center will provide every student with the knowledge, tools, and support to learn about and improve their own well-being — both during their time at the University of La Verne and throughout the rest of their lives. It will also act as a hub for faculty and student research, and engage in community partnerships to develop public programming and resources, ultimately aiming to improve the well-being of the entire region.

Taking the helm at the Lewis Center is Sarah Rodman-Alvarez, who joined the university in July following a nationwide search. Rodman-Alvarez, a nationally-recognized public health expert specializing in health equity and environmental sustainability, is the first Bauccio Endowed Executive Director of the center. She earned a PhD from the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, where she worked for seven years at the school's Center for a Livable Future, which focuses on eliminating social disparities in health by improving food and agriculture.

The University of La Verne's commitment to educating the whole student — mind, body, and spirit — aligns with Rodman-Alvarez's background and professional philosophy.



"Equipping students to thrive can no longer be limited to the classes they are taking to fulfill their degree requirements," she said. "We must do right by them, by building their resilience in our rapidly shifting world in a multifaceted way. This means addressing mental health, social connectedness, finances, navigating the work world, navigating families, and much more."

Rodman-Alvarez is beginning her tenure by listening to students to gauge their needs. She distributed a brief survey at the center's soft opening in early October, and has been visiting classrooms and holding open office hours and listening sessions. She has also been offering tours of the center.

"Listening to student priorities around their well-being — what they are concerned about, what they want to learn about — is critically important to me in deciding the direction of programming for the center," she said.

As Rodman-Alvarez takes the time to get to know the students and the region, the greater future of the Lewis Center has yet to unfold. For now, students and other campus constituents are enjoying the benefits of a new and expanded fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment that can stream Netflix or Hulu during workouts, or track workout progress over time. The fitness center, along with several studios where well-being programming is already being offered, form the core of the new facility.

Follow the Lewis Center on Instagram **@ULVLewisCenter**.

For more information, please visit: **[laverne.edu/well-being](https://laverne.edu/well-being)**.



*Is the headline "Breaking The Mold" difficult to read? This is what it might look like to someone who has dyslexia.*



# BREAKING THE VOC

**The LaFetra College of Education's  
Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness  
is supporting student success one heart  
and one mind at a time.**

.....

*By Genesis Gonzalez, Diane Krieger, and Christina Schweighofer  
Photography by William Vasta*



## Patricia Taylor

CO-DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF THE CENTER FOR  
NEURODIVERSITY, LEARNING, AND WELLNESS

Smart, funny, creative, normal, or different. These are some of the labels society places on people.

**BUT SHOULD SOCIETY** put people in boxes like these, and should we allow labels to shape who we are?

Albert Einstein didn't think so. He believed "in standardizing automobiles. I do not believe in standardizing human beings."

The Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness (CNLW), an arm of the University of La Verne's LaFetra College of Education, is following Einstein's lead. It is helping to reshape how people identify as learners and to expand the perception of differences that are often used to categorize or limit student potential.

The center is advancing this work through initiatives to train educators on best practices in serving neurodivergent learners, provide tutoring and support for students at all levels, and create a pipeline for the next generation of highly-skilled teachers.

Clinical Professor Niki Elliott, co-director of the CNLW, says the stories we are told about how our brains function play an integral role in how we approach the process of teaching and learning.

"Regardless of the labels that are assigned to certain students, such as those with ADHD, autism, or dyslexia, they are all diverse individuals with the capability to strengthen their unique talents," Elliott said. "Understanding this diversity begins by pulling back the layers and diving deeper into how the mind functions."

If teachers understand more about the brain, the nervous system, neurodiversity, and the role of trauma and stress in students' brain development, they will see themselves differently, and treat students differently, Elliott said.

"It is this understanding that will be reflected in the classroom with more inclusive and affirming teaching practices," she said.



## Genius Within

Within the tiny acorn is a giant oak tree. The acorn's essence is to be surrounded by an environment that will feed it, nurture it, and most importantly, allow it to grow. There is something similar in everyone, an essence known as the genius of the person.

Each of us, no matter diagnosis or label, has the potential within. Similar to an arborist, the teacher uses their knowledge and ability to nurture the student to be the best they are meant to be. No two oak trees are the same, and no two brains are identical. Therefore, no two people are the same. Each of us are a part of a neurodiverse community with the ability to thrive in our uniqueness, just like the mighty oak tree.

— Patricia Taylor



**Top Right:** During the summer workshop, students participated in a session centered on myth and storytelling led by Kwame Scruggs, whose work for the past two decades has focused on youth and their development. **Bottom left photos:** Student Mackay MorganArmstrong carves a clay-model brain during the Genius Project intensive. Students were also introduced to an old fairytale, *The Water of Life*, and encouraged to find their own story in the characters.

## Neurological Diversity

**THE CNLW WAS FOUNDED** by Professor Patricia Taylor in 2017 as part of a broader reenvisioning of the LaFetra College of Education. The center serves as a multi-faceted program of educational services, professional training, research, and community engagement.

From the beginning, its mission has been to promote a greater understanding of neurological diversity. Today, that goal is furthered by the drive to equip neurodivergent learners with the essential skills to thrive in a learning environment.

One avenue for advancing this mission is the Genius Project, which prepares incoming college students who have documented learning differences to thrive in an academically rigorous setting.

The Genius Project kicked off this past summer with a three-day residential intensive for seven incoming students. They practiced mindfulness, honed their organizational skills, and engaged with assistive technology including textbooks on tape and Irlen sheets (color filters for reading). Participants discovered how their neurodivergence is a strength rather than a deficit. This shift in perspective was a game changer for them.

“Our goal has always been to help individuals find their talents, actualize them, and learn to advocate for themselves,” Taylor said.

One of those students, Mackay MorganArmstrong, is diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety, and depression. She said her mind often wanders and she is easily distracted, but the Genius Project experience helped her with techniques to refocus.

“We learned about the brain and the role of the vagus nerve,” she said, “and how we can use breathing techniques and visualization to help calm ourselves in stressful situations.”

Having identified her genius as optimism and perseverance, she wants to use mindfulness to spin negativity into positive thinking and to remember that overcoming obstacles has always made her stronger.

To ensure the efficacy of the Genius Project, Taylor designed it with a team of students and staff who have first-hand experience with learning differences.

“Critical to everything we do in the center is that we’re not telling people with neurodivergence about themselves,” she said. “We are doing things so that they can tell us about themselves.”

Taylor hopes the Genius Project will spawn a club or a self-help group at the university when this year’s participants become mentors for neurodivergent students arriving in 2020.

Throughout the academic year, students in the Genius Project will meet with Taylor for continued mindfulness training and support.



**Top:** Niki Elliott leads a mindfulness session for students and educators.

**Middle:** Educators from San Bernardino City Unified School District discuss how to create a safe, learning environment for their students.

**Bottom:** During the conference educators took a moment to meditate.



Secular mindfulness practices are being used at all levels of education to help students enhance:

**1**

Calmness and resilience

**2**

Attention and concentration

**3**

Complex thinking and decision-making

**4**

Self-awareness

**5**

Prosocial skills



## Niki Elliott

CO-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR  
NEURODIVERSITY, LEARNING, AND WELLNESS

# Disrupt the Narrative

THE CNLW'S INFLUENCE is expanding beyond the University of La Verne campus.

Earlier this year, in partnership with the San Bernardino City Unified School district (SBCUSD), it launched a district-funded, year-long training program that offers educators from the district a certificate in neurodiversity and inclusion.

Structured as a mix of residential immersions, on-campus one-day classes, and online sessions, it blends practical strategies with a theoretical understanding of current research. Teachers learn how the brain and neurosystem work in order to understand how trauma, PTSD, and extreme stress can impact the brain's ability to process new information. Ultimately, they are learning to create a safe, non-distracting, and inclusive learning environment.

At one class session, more than 30 educators from across the district took part in a brain science and mindfulness training led by Elliott. Each participant drew an outline of a human brain onto a piece of cardboard. They then used colored modeling clay to fill in each section of the brain. In the end, no two brains were alike.

"Our goal is to disrupt the narrative that has been told too often, that some students have brains that are incapable of learning as well as others," Elliott said. "Instead, we aim to help teachers create inclusive and accessible learning spaces in which educators and students practice strategies that keep their brains and nervous systems engaged and ready to learn."



Special education instructor Yessell Reyna said the mindfulness training taught her how to manage her own trauma and appropriately respond to challenging classroom situations.

"I know now that no learning can take place if the amygdala is being hijacked," said Reyna, referring to the part of the brain that processes emotions.

During the fall semester, the district's administrative leaders, including principals, vice principals, and superintendents, participated in a three-day residential Mindful Leaders Conference. They learned how to apply concepts in interpersonal neurobiology and mindfulness in order to support healthy brain management for themselves.

They were also guided in applying the lessons to how they manage their schools and support teachers in understanding the development of all students, especially those who have learning differences or have been impacted by trauma.



## Why Neurodiversity in Higher Education?

Of undergraduate students self-reporting a disability, **11%** reported having a learning disability.

More than **200,000** students entering college have some type of learning disability.

Only **17%** of college students with learning disabilities take advantage of learning assistance resources at their school.



## Amber Bechard

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF LITERACY  
AND OUTREACH AT THE CENTER FOR NEURODIVERSITY,  
LEARNING, AND WELLNESS

# Support for All

UNDER NEW STATE GUIDELINES, California schools are expected to address dyslexia systematically. However, few teachers possess the skills to do so, and the immediate needs of many students are going unmet, according to Amber Bechard, associate director of literacy and outreach at the CNLW.

To help close those gaps, the CNLW has opened a Dyslexia Reading Clinic that will be a regional hub for teacher training, community tutoring, and professional development workshops. The clinic builds on the center's established Literacy Center, which provides no-cost tutoring to struggling readers as part of required field-work for all LaFetra College of Education special education teacher-candidates.

The center is developing educators through a train-the-trainer program that provides a pipeline of local teachers skilled in best practices in dyslexia tutoring.

"We're trying to fill a gap to provide structured support for teachers who can then support children in their classrooms," Bechard said.

The system is built around Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) support. The highly-customized technique is designed to get children to hear, see, talk, and move in carefully crafted activities that link the sight, sound, and feel of spoken language to the printed language on the page.

The effectiveness of the system is evident in the clinic's work tutoring local children.

Drew Haslett, an 8-year-old second grader from La Verne Heights Elementary School, meets with Bechard twice a week for a variety of reading lessons. Drew is one of four children in the dyslexia tutoring pilot program that was introduced last spring.

During a recent session, he recited a formula, tracing vowel patterns of words three times with his fingertip on a flash card, and again, three times on his desk.



*"Eyes, ears, voices, and hands must work together for conscious organization and retention of language patterns."*

"A-W is 'awe,'" he said.

"A-U is 'awe.'"

Bechard segues to a listening activity. As she reads a list of words ("saw, law, ounce, dawn, raw, soy, yawn, hawk"), Drew signals thumbs-up when he hears the "awe" sound.

"Eyes, ears, voices, and hands must work together for conscious organization and retention of language patterns," Bechard said.

After a semester of tutoring, Drew's word attack skills shot up from grade K.9 to grade 2.8 — that is 19 months' worth of reading progress in four months.

Bechard couldn't be happier.

"At CNLW, we're impacting people's lives in incredible ways," she said. "This is only the beginning." ●



**Top:** Student Trevor Jones practices his reading with graduate student Natalie Mastrosimone.

**Middle left:** Drew Haslett sounds out words during a study session with Amber Bechard.

**Middle right:** Leah Taylor greets her mom Lanie after a tutoring session.

**Bottom right:** Graduate student Claresa Asuncion and student Braxton Atchley focus their attention on a lesson plan in one of the sound proof study rooms.

## Dr. Jean Todd

**(left to right)** Amber Bechard, Dean Kimberly White-Smith, Jean Todd, and Niki Elliott honor Todd for her generous support for the Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness at the University of La Verne.

Todd, MA '69, spent 40 years as an educator, specializing in dyslexia research. She believes in the power of "teaching the whole child."

**CODE  
OF**



Written by  
Matt  
Hutaff

Photo by  
Jeanine  
Hill

# Professor Ashley Lipson argues for the defense of a quality **law education** through common-sense coursework and groundbreaking **video game** technology.

**A**shley Lipson was in court to argue some parking citations when presiding judge Anita Stuppler recognized his name. She asked if he was the person responsible for creating *Objection!*, a computer game used by schools, government agencies, and judges around the world to brush up on the law. When he answered in the affirmative, the two proceeded to have a lively sidebar discussion about the software and its role in continuing legal education.

It still didn't help his case (he lost). But a few months after Lipson paid his fine, Stuppler got in touch and asked him for a favor. Lipson agreed, and the two struck up a friendship as a result. She asked if he'd be interested in teaching alongside her at the University of La Verne's College of Law. An appeal had been made; his talents were needed.

That was 1998. More than 20 years have since passed, and Lipson continues to challenge generations of lawyers by teaching a record number of standard and bar-tested law courses for the university. He doesn't see that changing anytime soon.

Lipson is a fascinating guy, a brilliant litigator with degrees in telecommunications, mathematics, computer science, and physics. He's worked for both Barry Gordy of Motown Records and infamous disc jockey Wolfman Jack, passed the bar in multiple states, ran a successful law practice, and programmed best-selling video games.

However, Lipson's primary focus is teaching law students the fundamentals. No, not tort reform – the real fundamentals: physics, accounting, and more. He's concerned the LSAT and current law school curriculum ignore basic science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education despite their unmistakable value for practitioners. The result is a generation of lawyers who fail to understand statistics or balance sheets, Lipson said. When it comes time to negotiate settlements, this knowledge deficit can lead to real losses for clients.

Enter Math, Physics, and Finance for Lawyers. This one-of-a-kind course, taught by Lipson through the College of Law, (re)introduces common sense mathematics and science to students and helps them navigate numbers in a legal setting. While he teaches a variety of traditional subjects as well, connecting future lawyers with Newtonian physics, Einstein, and

thermodynamics brings Lipson a special kind of joy.

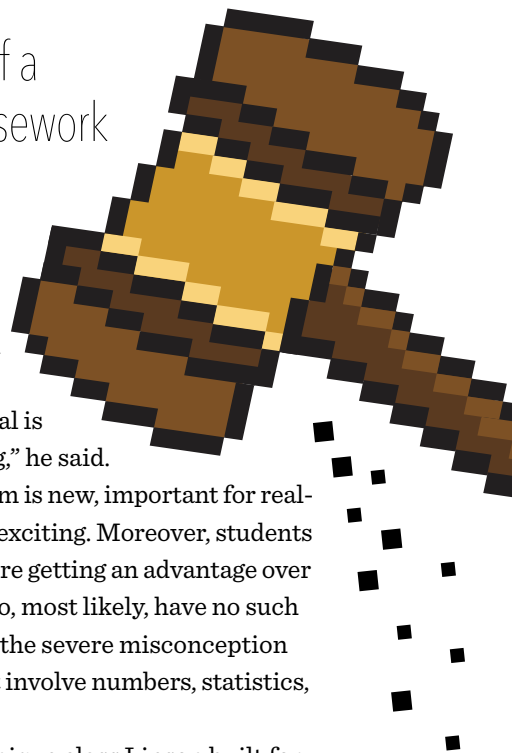
"Teaching the material is unique and challenging," he said. "Everything you tell them is new, important for real-life practice, and often exciting. Moreover, students correctly feel as if they're getting an advantage over other practitioners who, most likely, have no such training and are under the severe misconception practicing law does not involve numbers, statistics, and math."

This isn't the only unique class Lipson built for the College of Law; he also founded Videogame Law in 2002, when online multiplayer gaming was in its infancy. Given the widespread adoption of gaming since then, the coursework provides specialized skills University of La Verne law students can use to differentiate themselves.

"Our students tend to be serious workers from working families," he said. "Experience as a legal practitioner has taught me that University of La Verne grads are tougher, more formidable opponents in the courtroom."

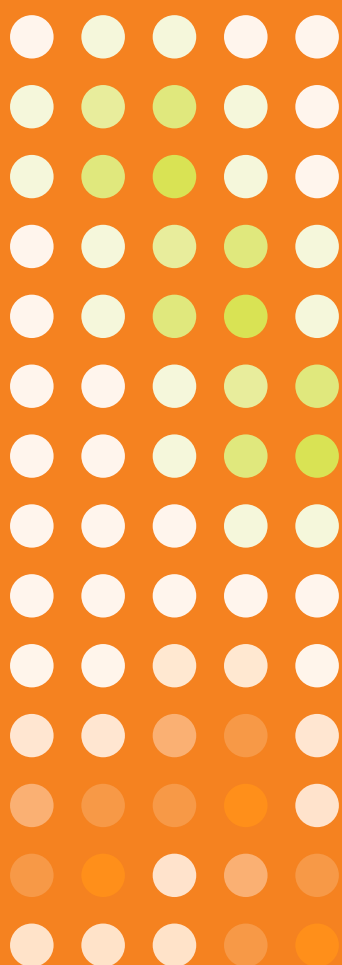
If Lipson had his way, courses like Videogame Law and Math, Physics, and Finance for Lawyers would be standard electives across the country – "its spread to other schools is long overdue." Until there are more hurdle-removing innovators, he refines and updates *Objection!* as he prepares a new game designed to teach law students basic and advanced legal terminology for release. What began as a passion project on an Atari 400 in the late 1970s has transformed over the years into one of the legal world's preeminent teaching tools. Through multiple-choice "interrogations," the current standard edition has more than 32 million variations of play to keep courtroom skills sharp.

"There's usually less than one second between the end of an opposing lawyer's question and the witness' answer," Lipson said. "Within that split second, a lawyer has to recognize a bad question, decide if it's going to hurt the client, object, and then articulate a valid basis for it. Objecting is a skill requiring quick reflexes and practice. What better way to teach skill and speed than with a video game?" ■



# \$100 Million+

That's how much we've *already*  
raised for the University of La Verne!



Thanks to the generosity of 9,600 donors, **Create the Future: The Campaign for the University of La Verne** is on track to raise a total of **\$125 million** for the university by 2021.

This unprecedented comprehensive campaign builds on the university's core values by supporting scholarships and resources for students, academic programs, faculty development, and new and expanded campus facilities, among other strategic priorities.

***Be a part of making our goal a reality! You can make a difference. Give today and join with us to CREATE THE FUTURE. The students of La Verne thank you!***

**[createthefuture.laverne.edu](https://createthefuture.laverne.edu)**

**Office of University Advancement**  
1950 Third Street, La Verne, CA 91750  
909-448-4680

**● ● create** | The Campaign for the  
**● ● the future** | University of La Verne



***Thank you,  
Donors!***

TRIP TO

# *Neher* Land

By Gilien Silsby \* Photography by David Clumpner





*Two weeks  
on a remote  
Montana ranch  
teaches science  
students new  
ways to learn.*

**When 14 University of La Verne biology and chemistry students** descended on the tiny town of Drummond, Montana, they knew they'd be cut off from the outside world.

No television, Wi-Fi, Snapchat, or texting. No communication with their families.

What they did not anticipate is how it would focus their minds and sharpen their senses.

Upon returning from the two-week summer research project at University of La Verne's Bob and Mary Neher Field Station, many said digitally disconnecting taught them skills they never would get at home. They also forged new and unexpected relationships with the land and with one other.

"It was an experience I wasn't prepared for," said Donald Monzon, a 21-year-old senior from Inglewood. "We were completely unplugged from technology and really experienced nature and our work."

After the initial shock, Monzon quickly adjusted to not texting friends or playing video games. "It was really good," said the chemistry major, who wants to become a doctor. "I learned a lot about myself and what I can do."



**Above:** Students arrive at the Bob and Mary Neher Field Station.



**Previous & current page:** Students collect aquatic insect and water samples from Silverbow Creek for joint biology and chemistry senior projects.

## Environmental Learning

That's the mission of the 187-acre ranch founded 25 years ago by Bob and Mary Neher. The Nehers believe in the importance of connecting students with the outdoors in a learning environment.

"The idea is to immerse them in a new culture, a new ecosystem, and, for many, a completely new way of life," said Bob Neher, an emeritus professor who taught biology at University of La Verne for more than five decades. He calls the ranch, which was recently renamed for the couple, "a labor of love."

"I hope it continues to inspire students and reach beyond our campus toward future research partnerships," Neher said.

During the day, the students worked on their senior research projects. Chemistry students analyzed potential metal contamination in the soil and river sediments in the areas near the historic Anaconda smelting operation. Biology students studied the defensive behaviors of nesting tree swallows. In a biology and chemistry collaboration, students investigated metal contamination in the aquatic food web in streams near the smelting operation.

Located 1,000 miles from campus, the site offers students unique experiences, according to field station director and biology professor Pablo Weaver.

"Chemistry students are looking at copper, cadmium, zinc, and lead levels in the soil around the old mining operations," Weaver said. "They are seeing up close how it is impacting wildlife and land. Biology students are trained in field techniques applicable to wildlife ecology and conservation management careers."

Victoria Villar, a 21-year-old chemistry major, was amazed to find heavy metal contaminants from the



*"I stood there, just observing with my naked eyes, taking in the moment and engraving the visual in my memory."*

## Alliyah Garcia '19

nearby mine affected nearly every living organism in the vicinity.

"We saw dead grass and so much debris," said the senior, who hopes to be a researcher specializing in toxicology. "We spent a week collecting soil samples and found the contamination from the mine continues."

## Home on the Range

Before they started collecting and organizing field specimens for their senior projects, the students experienced camping and life on a working ranch. As they made their week-long journey from Los Angeles to Montana, they camped in national parks without showers. They cooked dinner over an open fire. They studied diverse wildlife, from large mammals and birds to insects and snails.



As they made their week-long journey from **Los Angeles to Montana**, they **camped in national parks** without showers. They cooked dinner over an open fire. They **studied diverse wild-life**, from large mammals and birds to insects and snails.

Upon arriving at the field station, the students got a taste of ranch life: mowing and irrigating, building and repairing fences, sanding and painting wooden structures.

"I love to see the teamwork and camaraderie develop as the students settle into the new pace of activities, whether it is working together to pitch a tent, making meals for the group, or packing the overstuffed vehicles with gear," Weaver said. "It sounds sort of cliché, but the students learn to appreciate unplugging from social media, emails, and texting as they embrace the experience of being in the wilderness and the beauty of the natural world."

Identifying birds by their songs, waking at 3 a.m. to search for wolves in Yellowstone, endlessly scanning back roads for an elusive moose: activities like these sparked the students "enthusiasm and openness to learning new things," he said.

Alliyah Garcia '19 recalled an encounter with a grizzly bear en route to Grand Prismatic Spring.

"We were so excited. None of us had ever seen a bear in the wild," said the biology major, who graduated in the spring. As the bear cooled off in a pool of water, Garcia said, "I stood there, just observing with my naked eyes,

taking in the moment and engraving the visual in my memory."

### **Blow-Out Exam**

Their evening entertainment came in the form of games and cooking projects.

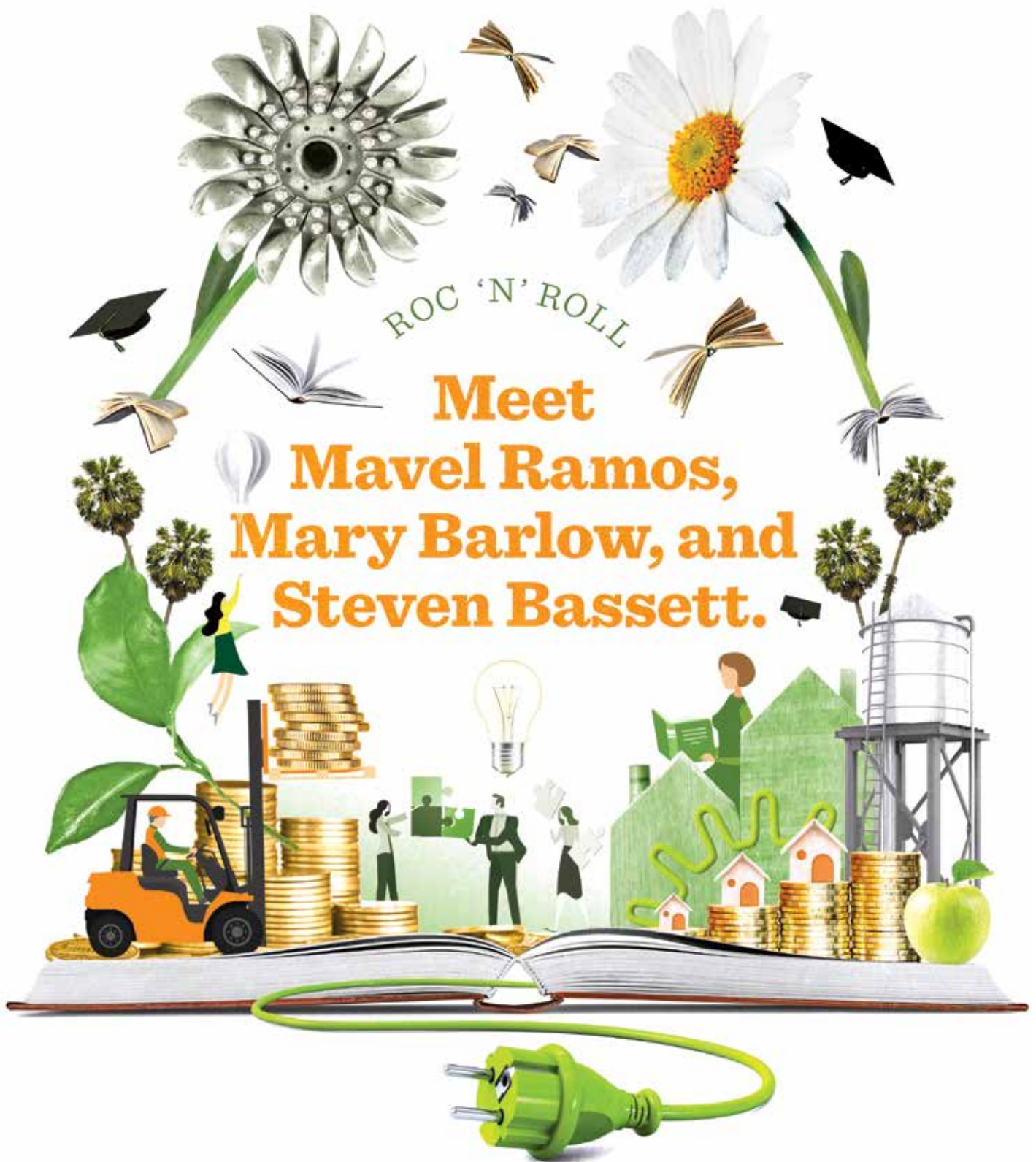
Late in the program, the students received an unplanned lesson in creative problem solving. Headed back to camp from a day of ranch work, two tires blew out, sending their SUV to the side of a dirt road. When the jack broke, calling AAA wasn't an option. Miles from a gas station, they were forced to improvise.

"We had to figure out how to fix this ourselves, and before it got dark," Villar said.

A quick huddle with Weaver, and they knew what to do. Using their shovels and pick axes, they dug ditches under the tires, made wood piles to prop up the axle and safely removed and replaced the flats with spares.

It was a pop-quiz in teamwork, problem solving, and mechanics, mirroring many of the lessons they had recently learned on the ranch.

"It is pretty empowering knowing you can solve problems without outside help," Monzon said, "and pretty cool to see everyone pitch in." X



What do an Irvine banker,  
Kern County school superintendent,  
and Los Angeles supply chain chief have in common?  
All three have careers that were turbo-charged by University  
of La Verne's pioneering regional and online campuses,  
which celebrate their 50th anniversary this year.

---

## Banking from the Heart



Orange Country-based Wells Fargo manager Mavel Ramos brings compassion, personal history, and a University of La Verne leadership education to her community relations role.

By Diane Krieger

**A**t age 12, Mavel Ramos, MS '18, was wiping down tables in the family-run hamburger stand in South Gate, California. Later, she rang up customers in the family's flower shop. All through her teens, she watched her father's frustration as he struggled with one business after the next.

"On top of a full-time job with a roofing company, Dad was always trying to run a business," Ramos said. "He wanted to provide a better life for us. He just didn't have the resources he needed."

No one ever gave her father, a Mexican immigrant with a third-grade education, advice on how to access capital, develop a marketing strategy, or build a brand.

Ramos tried to help. "I was ordering supplies, trying to figure out how to increase the cashflow. But when I left for college, he just couldn't keep it going. He ended up selling the flower shop. I felt really bad about that," she said.

The lessons of her youth have stayed with Ramos, 37, who earned a master's degree in leadership and management from the University of La Verne's Irvine campus and is now a rising leader with Wells Fargo Bank and a board member of several Orange County, California-based service organizations.

"One of my passions is being able to serve my community in a meaningful way," she said. "I see my family in the people that are struggling with businesses."

Ramos works in the community relations division of Wells Fargo, part of the national team that last year managed \$444 million in grants supporting neighborhood projects through the Wells Fargo Foundation. As a regional associate consultant, she oversees the bank's award process across the Bay Area, Oregon, and Washington state.



*"One of my passions is being able to serve my community in a meaningful way."*

*"I see my family in the people that are struggling with businesses."*

### Mavel Ramos

#### Banker's Luck

Ramos fell into banking by serendipity.

Originally intending to be a doctor, she had earned her bachelor's degree in biology from University of California, Irvine. An academic star in high school, Ramos attended on a full-ride scholarship from the prestigious Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholars Program.

Then a hospital internship in the intensive care unit scuttled her plans.

"I didn't think I could handle the emotional piece," she said. "I always wanted to help others; medical school just wasn't the way I wanted to do it, I realized."

After graduating in 2005, Ramos took what she thought would be a temporary job as a Wells Fargo teller. Fourteen years later, she's still with the bank. Promotions came quickly, and Ramos soon found a niche she loved in community relations, overseeing the bank's financial education efforts in Orange County.

### Flexible Leadership Training

Then a few years ago, a mentor suggested Ramos go back to school for a graduate degree, and something clicked.

Her career with Wells Fargo had provided plenty of hands-on experience, but Ramos wanted to fill some conceptual gaps. As a pre-med student in college, she'd had no formal education in management theory or organizational behavior.

The idea of returning to school after 14 years in the workforce was daunting. Once Ramos found out about University of La Verne's Regional and Online Campuses, the decision became easy.

"I went to an orientation at the Irvine campus and asked a million questions," she said. "I loved the flexibility of classroom study with the option to switch over to online classes if I ever needed to. That really sealed my decision to attend La Verne."

In 2016, Ramos enrolled in the Master of Science in Leadership and Management program. She took all her courses in Irvine, one of 10 University of La Verne campuses across Southern California.

"I liked the feel of the campus. It was easy for me to access it right off the freeway, and really close to my home and my work," said Ramos, who lives in Orange with her husband, Johnny. He, too, works for Wells Fargo, as a business consultant in the merchant services division.

As a full-time student, she took two courses each semester and completed her master's degree in 2018, with a concentration in organizational development. Ramos took advantage of University of La Verne's flexible format: once-a-week courses right after work, and weekend classes compressed into five Friday evenings and Saturdays.

"The faculty is amazing," she said. "I really appreciate the fact that they have careers as working professionals."

### Degrees of Success

The degree has already made a difference in Ramos' career at Wells Fargo. She credits it, in significant part, with her promotion last December.

In fact, she's already eyeing her next La Verne degree — an MBA, Master of Public Administration, or possibly a doctorate. Her long-term goal: "I would love to be a foundation manager."

"Overall I had such a great experience," she says, of her time at the Irvine campus. "My only regret, honestly, is not doing it sooner." ●

## Top of Class

Alumna Mary Barlow's rise from first-grade teacher to Kern County Superintendent of Schools was aided by multiple degrees from the University of La Verne's Bakersfield Campus.

By Kate Kealey

**M**ary Barlow's family moved a lot during her childhood. By high school graduation, she had lived in eight cities in five different states. But through that transition, there was one place where she felt comfortable and included: school.

"Our family moved often, and, as a result, I attended many different schools," said Barlow, MEd '00, EdD '14. "But because of the care, concern, and compassion of people I encountered, I had someone who believed in me. School was a safe haven. It was a place where I could focus and be myself."

Soon after she and her husband Steve set roots in Kernville, California, in 1989, Barlow enrolled at the University of La Verne's Bakersfield Campus to begin working on a teaching credential.

Now 30 years later, Barlow is making a major impact as the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. The position, to which she was elected in 2018, oversees the county's educational programs and supports 47 school districts serving 190,000 students.

### Eager to Learn

From first-grade teacher to county superintendent, University of La Verne helped prepare her for every step in her career. Barlow is a multiple alumna, having earned a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership, a Preliminary Administrative Services Credential, and a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership all while working and raising three sons with her husband.

"The University of La Verne worked for me," said Barlow. "The professors, practitioners in the field, could give us real examples of how a scenario might play out. We discussed things to consider when leading an organization, or making decisions on behalf of children. It wasn't just theory. The practical application was so valuable, as was the connection with other people in the program."



*“I saw kids coming to school with shoes kept together with duct-tape and wearing T-shirts instead of winter coats. As an educator, I knew that families struggled, and yet I also **saw the potential in each and every student.**”*

**Mary Barlow**

Barlow completed her teaching credential in 1996 and was hired to the South Fork Union School District. There, she taught for a couple of years before moving into the role of director of children and family services for Kernville Union School District, writing grants to help fund programs at local schools.

### **Compassionate Educator**

In 1997, she led the formation of the Kern River Valley Collaborative (KRVC), a network of county, private, and nonprofit agencies that provide support services to at-risk families.

“I saw kids coming to school with shoes kept together with duct-tape and wearing T-shirts instead of winter coats,” she said. “As an educator, I knew that families struggled, and yet I also saw the potential in each and every student. We did research about the needs of the Kern River Valley, and issues around poverty, domestic violence, incarceration, and childhood stress and trauma that we wanted to be able to address as a community.”

In four years, the KRVC grew to employ more than 40 staff members who worked directly with families through home visits, parenting classes, and after-school programs. In 2002, Barlow was hired as superintendent at Kernville Union School District, where she oversaw the modernization of two elementary schools, the construction of a middle school, and an increase in student achievement.

In 2009, Barlow was tapped by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools to serve as deputy administrative officer for the Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). The state agency provides fiscal intervention for California schools and districts.

### **A Leader in the Making**

The appointment was a formative experience in Barlow’s career, and coincided with her enrollment in University of La Verne’s doctoral program in organizational leadership.

“It was important to advance the work I felt most motivated me: helping students and families succeed through the power of education,” she said. “The research for the doctoral program helped with the studies we were conducting at FCMAT and the issues I was concerned about as a leader in my community.”

In 2012, Barlow was appointed to assistant superintendent of administration, finance, and accountability for Kern County Superintendent of Schools. Five years later, she was selected to lead the county office of education.

### **In It Together**

As county superintendent, Barlow continues to advocate for families and work to close the achievement gap in the region. To that end, Barlow spearheaded a partnership between the county’s public schools, charter schools, community colleges, and universities to help students succeed from the moment they enter preschool to the time they graduate.



*“It is important not to think everybody is going to be like me. I have to understand employees’ differences to be able to manage them.”*

*Steven Bassett*

The Kern Education Pledge launched in December 2018 with the goal of improving collaboration across educational institutions, formalizing data sharing, and generating systemic change.

The pledge has driven excitement and innovation among the school districts in an era of increased accountability, according to John Mendiburu, EdD ’10, superintendent for the Rosedale Union School District.

“The Kern Pledge was Dr. Barlow’s vision that we truly are all in this together. She took down the barriers between districts and organizations and asked ‘What is our commitment from pre-K all the way through college? What do we have in our control to make our students successful?’,” said Mendiburu, who also earned a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership from University of La Verne’s Bakersfield Campus. “That pledge, the collaboration, and the data-sharing project validates who she is as a leader: A person who has never forgotten where she started from as a classroom teacher and a parent — and that we’re all here for the students.”

While she harnesses the collective support of the community, Barlow remains focused on ensuring that the schools in Kern County are places where all students can find the kind of care that she experienced as a child.

“Education is the great equalizer and I strongly believe that every student can succeed in school and life,” she said. “It is our mission to harness the power of data and continuous improvement to make sure that the education of our students remains our top priority and that we invest in results.” ●

## Utility Player

From forklift operator to the front office at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, alumnus Steven Bassett rose up the ranks through hard work and a flexible path to education.

By Diane Krieger

In 1986, when Steven Bassett started his career with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), he was a 23-year-old warehouse worker with a high school diploma.

Today, Bassett ’15 runs half of LADWP’s Supply Chain Services division. He’s responsible for 54 warehouses across Los Angeles County and the Owens Valley. He oversees \$200 million in inventory, administers more than 300 major materials contracts, and leads a workforce of about 300 people. He serves on leadership committees across LADWP — the nation’s largest municipal utility — and collaborates with senior management on infrastructure projects and safety issues.

Getting there took personal initiative and decades of hard work. It also required a college education.

Bassett earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration through University of La Verne’s Regional and Online Campuses. He did it in two

stages, with a 15-year gap between matriculation and graduation. He attended courses all across the region, from the South Bay to Burbank and Orange County. He took classes at night, on weekends, and online.

For Bassett, flexibility was essential to reaching his educational goals.

### Moving Around

Raised in La Mirada, he still calls the Gateway City home.

“I’ve lived here forever,” said the 57-year-old husband, father of two, and grandfather of three.

His workplace, however, was a moving target.

He started his career with the City of Los Angeles in a warehouse at the Convention Center. Months later, he transferred to LADWP’s warehouse in El Segundo. As Bassett gradually rose to storekeeper, senior storekeeper, principal storekeeper, and store supervisor, “I moved around a lot,” he said.

To advance professionally, he decided to enroll in college in his 30s, and University of La Verne, with its network of regional campuses, made sense.

“It is kind of all over the place,” he said. “They bring the school to you — that’s how I felt.”

By the late 1990s, Bassett had fulfilled all his major and general education requirements through the regional campus program. He only needed 20 elective units for the bachelor’s degree.

“Unfortunately, I never completed them,” he said.

### Back to School

Even without the degree, the business skills and connections he’d gained through University of La Verne propelled Bassett forward in his career. He even found a substantial La Verne alumni network inside LADWP.

Then in 2013, when he was promoted to supply services manager, his boss nudged him to go back and finish his bachelor’s degree.

Bassett reconnected with Nelly Kazman, then-director of University of La Verne’s Burbank Campus. Together, they worked out a plan to wrap up his interrupted education.

“I jumped right back in at that point,” he said.

He earned his bachelor’s degree in 2015. Two years later, he was promoted to the No. 2 job in his division.

Bassett currently runs the materials side of LADWP’s Supply Chain Services. His 54 warehouses carry 110,000 inventory line-items — poles, cables, transformers, switch gear, power system parts, connectors, electrical tools, water pipes, valves, digging equipment, cleaning products, and safety gear.

### From the Forklift to the Front Office

His first job straight out of high school had been in the tool room of the shop where his dad worked as a machinist. Later, he staffed the order desk of a concrete block manufacturer. One day, Bassett’s father-in-law handed him an employment application with the City of Los Angeles, and in 1986 he embarked on his 34-year career with the city.

Education didn’t matter at first.

“I was a warehouse guy driving a forklift,” he said.

But as he rose through the ranks, being able to communicate at work became increasingly important.

“Standing in front of a group and writing business plans used to be a real challenge for me,” he recalled.

“That’s why I’m so appreciative of University of La Verne. For every class, you had to prepare a written report and give an oral presentation. And practice makes perfect. It just helped me greatly.”

Business courses also introduced Bassett to various leadership styles, personality types, and issues of culture and gender — knowledge he found invaluable as a rising manager.

“It is important not to think everybody is going to be like me,” he said. “I have to understand employees’ differences to be able to manage them.”

### Passing the Baton

Perhaps what Bassett valued most about his La Verne education was the pairing of abstract ideas with real-world experience. His instructors were all working business professionals, and his classmates were adult learners at different rungs on the management ladder.

In the 1990s, he remembers his more-seasoned peers sharing eye-opening insights and anecdotes during classroom discussions. By the time Bassett returned to the Burbank Campus to complete his degree in 2013, his status had changed.

“The second time around, I was the old guy in the room,” he said, with a chuckle, and his classmates were the ones hanging on every word.

Asked if he recommends University of La Verne to the next generation of managers rising through LADWP, Bassett responds brightly: “Absolutely! I always do.” ●



# RADIO

A photograph of a radio broadcast booth. In the foreground, a professional microphone is mounted on a boom arm. Below it, a control panel with various buttons and sliders is visible. In the background, a large monitor displays the call letters 'LEOFM'. The scene is dimly lit with blue and purple ambient lighting.

**Adrianna's  
Top Song**  
"Truth Hurts"  
Lizzo

# OWHEAD

*Calling all music lovers.*

Tune in to University of La Verne's  
**LeoFM** to hear from today's top  
voices playing the hottest Top 40.

By Genesis Gonzalez

Photography by William Vasta

Cue the music.  
Switch mic on.  
Go live.

**H**appy Valentine's Day, Mom!" Those heartfelt words from DJ Gouda echoed to more than 3,000 students, faculty, and staff across the University of La Verne campus in 2004.

"Too bad my mom wasn't among those listening," said Kevin Schatz, aka DJ Gouda, a 2007 graduate of the University of La Verne's Communications Department.

Still, it is a fond memory for the Los Angeles-based broadcaster, who launched his career at the University's radio station, LeoFM, which was then known as KULV. He credits that experience as the building block to his successful career on air at K-Earth 101 in Los Angeles and as a writer/producer for 93.1 Jack FM.

More than a decade later, he's still passionate about his job.

"I love the idea of being a human on one side and connecting with a larger audience on the other," Schatz said. "As on-air talent, we have the ability to make a genuine connection with our audience. Though tricky at times, it is an incredible experience."

### On Air

For more than 40 years, the university's broadcasting program has been preparing students to work in media with a hands-on curriculum they can use in a competitive market.

"Since day one, our goal has always been to train, support, and inspire the next generation of media professionals," said Mike Laponis, professor of communications. "We want our students to be prepared for whatever the industry throws their way, including the knowledge to handle production, editing, video, and being on-air talent."

The Communications Department was founded in 1975 with a focus on journalism. A year later, the program added radio and television. Soon after, it introduced KLVC, La Verne College Radio. The call

letters changed to KULV when the college became a university. In 2007, KULV was rebranded as LeoFM.

Today, the program prepares students for careers in broadcast, radio, podcasting, entertainment, filmmaking, television, and video production. Several well-known radio personalities have graduated from the highly respected program, including Sabrina Ruiz, on-air talent for Hot 103.9; Nudia Hernandez, on-air talent for Mix 94.1; Mary Flowers Boyce, head writer for the Tom Joyner Morning Show; DJ Santana, board operator for 93.9 Jack FM and AMP Radio; John Ramos, producer and podcaster for Fox Sports Radio; and Daisy Moreira, Midwest regional manager for Def Jam Recordings.

"Our students are well prepared for fast-paced careers," Laponis said. "They are building their résumés while working in co-curricular opportunities. This includes working on air, making films, and creating digital content for both web and television."

Found at 107.9 on the FM dial, the station can be heard throughout campus, including the residence halls, the Sara and Michael Abraham Campus Center, the Sports Science and Athletics Pavilion, the Spot, Barb's Place, and the Arts and Communications Building. Listeners worldwide can tune in at [leoFM.streamon.FM](http://leoFM.streamon.FM) or on the radio app RadioFX.

### 'Mind-Blowing' Resources

"When I first walked into the Arts and Communications Building at La Verne, my mind was blown," said Christopher Norman '19. "The idea that there was a building dedicated to this field with the resources to practice on-air daily was incredible."



Mike's  
Top Song  
"Roadhouse  
Blues"  
The Doors



Since 1976, one loudspeaker has been playing the sounds to generations of music lovers.

Top 40 Contemporary Hits  
Alternative Rock Punk Rock  
"In-Tents Music" Jazz

While at La Verne, Norman served as LeoFM program director, music director, and imaging director.

"I never took these positions for granted. They gave me a first-hand look at how to produce a successful show," said the recent graduate, who now works as a board operator for Anaheim-based Angels Radio AM 830.

Over the years, students have interned at radio stations, music labels, and entertainment venues, including KIIS-FM, KROQ-FM, AMP Radio, Power 106, KNX, KOST, Fox Sports Radio, and ESPN Radio.

Every student is required to complete at least one internship. However, Laponis noted that it is common for broadcast students to complete two or more internships in their junior and senior years.

### Extraordinary Support

Alumni of the program credit the support and mentorship of faculty for their success.

"It can be intimidating at first when you go on-air," said Noor Wahba '10, who is currently working as a producer at Los Angeles hip hop station Power 106. "But every shift brought a new opportunity to better yourself, feel more confident, and stand out."

She still recalls the constructive feedback Laponis would provide after her two-hour shifts.

"In radio, the key is to be short and sweet, but never forget the personality," Wahba said. "He would always remind me to slow down, be mindful of my tone, and to always turn on the energy. Even if I had zero hours of sleep."

### Bright Future

LeoFM's talk-radio topics can range from campus events, pop culture, politics, and music trends. In three required courses on radio production and studio operation, students learn how to pre-produce a show using audio software such as Avid Pro Tools to create teasers and voice-overs.

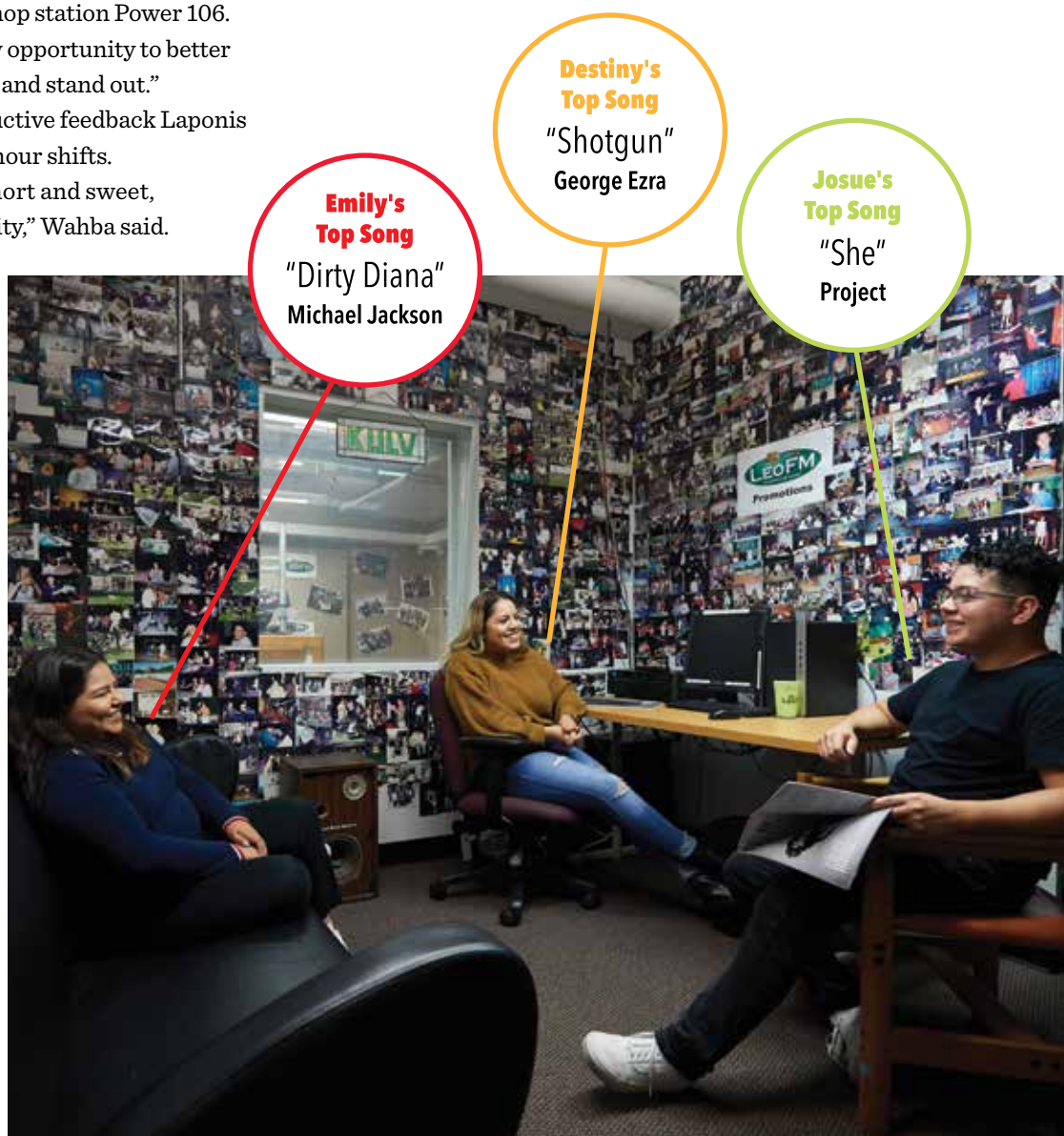
"Every day we are building our portfolio for real-world experience," said Zachary Niccoli, a junior broadcast major with a radio concentration. "As students, we have access to three professional studios for recording, sound mixing, editing, and for on-air time. This is our playground."

Niccoli has worn several hats at LeoFM. He is currently the sports director and, over the summer break, he met with local businesses to generate on-air advertisements. This fall, he will focus his attention on football commentary.

"In this business, you get what you put in," Niccoli said.

Niccoli is already reaping the rewards for his efforts. When he interviewed for an internship at Angels Radio AM 830, he was told that his experiences at LeoFM went beyond what the station would require of him. In other words, he was overqualified.

In the fast-changing, competitive world of radio broadcasting, that's a very good thing. ♦♦♦





# Building Community

## The Rasshans' African American Museum of Beginnings Illuminates History and Stirs Conversation

### VIKKI '74 AND KHALIF '73 RASSHAN LOVE TO TEACH. SO MUCH SO, THAT EVEN WHEN THEY RETIRED, THEY JUST COULDN'T STOP.

The college sweethearts met when both were undergraduates studying sociology at University of La Verne. Following graduation, they got married and immediately began teaching in local schools. Vikki taught at North San Antonio (now Barfield) and Roosevelt Elementary Schools, while Khalif taught at Lexington Elementary School and Garey High School, among others. After long and satisfying careers, the Rasshans both retired in 2010.

With their own children grown, they thought they would keep busy by substitute teaching, but life took a turn. In February 2011, the Rasshans put together an exhibit of artifacts to teach young people in their community about Black History Month. It began as a modest endeavor, but soon snowballed as more people — many from the couple's Church of God congregation — donated artifacts and offered support. A space was made available to them at no cost for the first six months, and local civic leaders even got involved, from Pomona Unified School District Superintendent Richard Martinez to Pomona Chamber of Commerce Director Frank Garcia.

The next thing they knew, the Rasshans were running the African American Museum of Beginnings, which they bill as "a community cultural history and arts museum... where humanity is welcomed home." The core of the museum is its impressively large and diversified collection of artifacts, including African masks, books on African American history, a collection of Barack Obama souvenirs, sports memorabilia, movie posters, and vintage records.

During Khalif's tours, he shares that it is called a "museum of beginnings" because anyone can walk in and discover something new: "It is meant to open up dialogues."

Beyond the collection, the museum engages with its community. Located at The Village at Indian Hill, the museum holds film screenings, talks, book signings, a children's reading circle, a monthly quilting circle, health and wellness events, and even chess lessons for kids.

The Rasshans credit their time at the University of La Verne, which they describe as "very inclusive and nurturing," for instilling in them a lifelong love of history, knowledge, and learning. The university community was close-knit, and students were encouraged to explore their cultural heritage.

Rodney Davis '48, who was a psychology professor at the time, was especially encouraging, serving as advisor to the Black Student Union, in which Vikki and Khalif participated. The couple remain close to their college cohort, which includes university Trustee Emmett Terrell.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which directly preceded the Rasshans' college years, was also influential.

"We are the second generation of the Civil Rights Movement," Khalif said. "We benefitted from it, but we are also obligated to contribute."

To that end, the Rasshans would like to keep the museum going for another 50 years. Now a 501(c)(3) organization, the museum has many supporters, but their goal is to expand its income streams and move into a new space sometime next year.

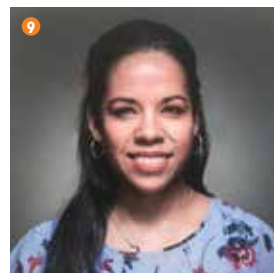
Most importantly, they want to involve more young people in their operation. Plans are in the works for their first-ever gala and a museum membership. As Vikki says: "This museum belongs to the community, not any one person — we all own it!"

*To learn more about the African American Museum of Beginnings, visit [taamb.org](http://taamb.org).*

# WHAT'S NEW ALUMNI NOTES



Photo by Aimlee Photography



1 **Gerlaine Kiamco '05**, welcomed identical twins, Isabella and Maria, on March 28, 2019.

2 **Heidi Hubbs '87** married her partner of 15 years, Cyndy Johnson, on September 29, 2018. They shared their day with fellow alumni. Pictured are: Gloria Rodriguez '87, Charlene Marie King '87, Lianne DeGraw '90, Shelley Redman-Hernandez '87, and Carol Knorr '86.

3 **Diana Westmyer '08, MBA '13, MS '17**, married Samuel Acosta on October 13, 2018, in Riverside, California, surrounded by their family, friends, and her Iota Delta sorority sisters.

**Brandon Shamim, MS '08**, was selected to serve on the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Foundation Board, as well as the executive board of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

4 **Lauryl '10** and Paul Bennett welcomed their first child, daughter Sloane Noelle Bennett, on April 6, 2019.

**Lisa Morris Hibbler, DPA '05**, was promoted to chief community services officer for the city of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Cadence Aerospace named **Anthony E. Lawson, MS '85**, vice president-operations, quality and environmental health and safety.

5 **Danielle Cooper '16** and Tanner Anderson were married on July 18, 2019. Following the ceremony, they jetted to Las Vegas, where they met friends and family at Taco Bell Cantina.

6 **Rosemary Perez '01** received the 2019 Edison award, one of the most prestigious awards given to employees of Edison International. Perez has worked for the organization for 19 years and serves as the advisor of safety, security and business resiliency.

7 **Melvin Alvarado, MBA '17**, opened his first BurgerIM franchise in Ontario, California, on July 8, 2019. This is the first business for the full-time mechanical engineer.

**Rebecca Westover, EdD '18**, is the new chief business officer of the Mountain View Whisman School District office.

**Rod Foster '85, MS '93**, was selected by Rialto City Council to become the new city administrator.

**Stephanie Johnson '14, MS '17**, joined Healthpointe's Psychology Department as a clinical psychologist.

8 **Suely Saro, EdD '17**, has announced that she is running for Long Beach City Council's District 6 seat in the March 2020 election.

9 **Angel Mejico '99** is a 2019 California Teacher of the Year. She currently teaches at El Cerrito Middle School.

10 **Rob Fukuzaki '88** and his wife Sharil welcomed son Maverick Robert on May 21, 2019.

**George Platsia '80** has been hired as the chief financial officer of Pelican Products, Inc—the global leader in design and manufacture of high performance lighting and rugged gear.

**Lauren Stevens, MBA '01**, has been appointed by The Armed Services YMCA to its board of directors.

11 **Stephen Cavanagh, MS '83, MPA '84**, has been named the dean of UC Davis' Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

**R. Erin Farrar, JD '06**, has been appointed to the Yuma County Superior Court by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey.

**Sylvia Ballin '00**, San Fernando, California's vice mayor, will return to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's board.

**Jim Irwin, MS '12**, has been appointed by Washington & Jefferson College as vice president for business and finance.

**Robert Fosmire, MBA '99**, has been named Greenway Health's senior vice president of customer success.

**Chad Collins, MBA '10**, has been named the president of Akro-Mils and Jamco Products, a storage, organization and transport products company.

12 **Tony Kissinger '13** married **Sabrina Ruiz '15** on March 16, 2019. They met during the 2011 fall semester. Tony is a manager at Trader Joe's and Sabrina is an on-air personality at KHTI Hot 103.9.

13 **Ben Montgomery, MBA '12**, was named the city manager of Chino Hills in March 2019.

**Richard E. Nash, MBA '01**, was presented with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who's Who.

14 Trustee **Zoila D. Escobar '03, MBA '13**, has been elected to the California Health Care Foundation's board of directors.

**Jim Hayes, MS '08**, joined the Credit Union Executives Society (CUES) board of directors. Hayes is also president and CEO of Andrews Federal Credit Union.

15 **Jan Caldwell, MS '95**, has been named the chairwoman of Scripps Health board of trustees. Caldwell has served on the board since 2012, after retiring from a 32-year career as an FBI special agent.

**Jennifer Jackman '84** has joined America's Physician Groups as vice president of business development.

## In Memoriam

**Hazel Snell '42** passed away on November 15, 2018, in McPherson, Kansas. She was 100 years old. Snell was a beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She is survived by her daughter Gloria Anthony, MEd '76, five grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and one great-great-granddaughter. She was preceded in death by her husband Arthur Snell '41, in December 2015, and their son, John Snell, in April 2018. Both Arthur and Hazel were educators in Santa Ana, California.

# Gridiron Ambassadors

The Leopards embrace the impact football has beyond the win column.

**WHEN THE UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE FOOTBALL TEAM HEADS INTO A GAME, THE GOAL IS USUALLY SIMPLE: TO WIN.**

But the 2019 season opener was about more than defeating the opponent. It called for international diplomacy.

The Leopards' opener occurred in Mexicali, Mexico. An exhibition against the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior Universidad (CETYS), it was the first time the La Verne squad traveled south of the border since 1953, when the Leopards traveled to Mexico City to face Mexico City College.

"I'm really excited for our team to be ambassadors of La Verne and our country," Head Football Coach Chris Krich said before their departure. "It's an opportunity to experience a new culture."

The game is part of an evolving relationship between the three CETYS campuses (Tijuana, Ensenada, and Mexicali) and the University of La Verne. In athletics, the Leopards are growing accustomed to playing CETYS, having recently hosted the Zorros in baseball, volleyball, and football. It is a mutually beneficial association that gives the Leopards game experience and helps CETYS, which is aiming to be the first Mexican institution to join the NCAA for a chance to compete against American universities.

But the recent Mexicali match-up was also an opportunity for the Leopards to experience Mexican culture and play football in a new context. As one of the nation's most diverse universities, with a Latino population of 46 percent, University of La Verne continues to promote cultural awareness in the classroom and on the field.

"Sports brings everyone together," senior offensive lineman Manuel Dorado said. "You don't get to see the beauty of two countries coming together and playing football often. It is special. Of course, we want to win, but it is not always about beating someone."

The match-up between the Leopards and CETYS was also an example of how the University of La Verne promotes an expansive student experience and a global worldview.

"In a time of political division, football brings us together," Krich said. "It is really a unique situation where we can play a rough-and-tough game and then connect in a way that builds relationships."

For sophomore Derek Guzman, it was a homecoming, of sorts. He comes from El Centro, California, less than 15 miles from Mexicali, and grew up playing CETYS youth teams.

"We're just students trying to have fun and compete, even though we're from different sides," said the linebacker. "Coming together as one, to show we have common goals, I think helps out a lot."

Dorado's extended family members met up at the Mexicali game, traveling from Tijuana and Ensenada for a rare opportunity to watch him in collegiate play. It was a chance to reconnect.

"Growing up, family meant everything. So I was really excited to get to play in front of them," Dorado said.

The exhibition game does not count toward the Leopards' record, nor will the stats be officially added to the season totals. But the advantages of playing south of the border will carry forward well beyond touchdowns, field goals, and yards gained.

Photography by  
**FELIPE DE JESÚS SALAZAR MUÑOZ**

**QUARTERBACK MATTHEW ALBRIGHT** looks for an open receiver downfield against the Zorros.



# Way-Back-When Trivia

Bob Neher, emeritus professor of biology, watches as a tarantula crawls up his arm in the university's Maniero building.

**What year did Bob Neher join the University of La Verne as a faculty member?**



**FIND CLASSMATES  
SEARCH FOR JOBS  
CHOOSE A MENTOR**

# **ON LEO CONNECT**

*University of La Verne's exclusive,  
online networking platform*

**LEOALUMNINETWORK.COM**

University of  
**La Verne**

Alumni Engagement

909-448-4665

alumni@laverne.edu

**GET  
CONNECTED**

# University of La Verne

University of La Verne  
1950 Third Street  
La Verne, CA 91750

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF LA VERNE

**Everyone** has the brainpower to thrive and succeed, no matter how differently or uniquely they think, act, or play.

