

Voice

University of La Verne Magazine

Winter 2023



PRESIDENT PARDIS MAHDAVI'S MISSION

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A portrait of Pardis Mahdavi, PhD, President of University of La Verne. She is a woman with long dark hair, smiling, wearing a black blazer over a white top with a decorative pattern. The background is a blurred image of a building with a white dome under a blue sky.

***“This is an exciting time
to be a Leopard as we swell
with pride and leap into
the future.”***

DEAR UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE COMMUNITY,

It is an exciting time to be a Leopard! Our rankings soar in national venues such as the *Wall Street Journal*, and partners around the globe are reaching out to learn about our important work. In this issue, read about outstanding faculty like Management Professor Louise Kelly, an expert on women’s leadership in business, and Digital Film Production Professor Morgan Sandler, an award-winning film and television cinematographer, director, and scholar. Learn about incredible students such as Diego Gonzalez ’24, who researched how mathematics and computational science can inform the road to recovery from drug addiction. And get a glimpse of how dedicated staff such as Multicultural Affairs Director Daniel Loera, EdD ’12, supports campus with diverse programming.

These are all examples of Leopards doing what we do best—transforming the communities and world around us.

Now, more than ever, we need institutions of higher education like ours to bridge the divide between educational opportunities and the needs of the communities in which we serve, work, and live. The work we do here—innovative research that solves the world’s most difficult problems; teaching students interdisciplinary approaches to transform their communities; and offering breadth, depth, theory, and practice, while elevating diverse voices—is living into the mission of higher education today.

This is an exciting time to be a Leopard as we swell with pride and leap into the future. I am honored and humbled to embark on this journey alongside you and be a part of this exciting community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pardis Mahdavi".

Pardis Mahdavi, PhD
President

Voice

University of La Verne Magazine

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BY THE NUMBERS: OUR VALUES

Ethical Reasoning



89K+

alumni worldwide actively supporting our values

Diversity & Inclusivity



1992

Year Designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)



70%+

Percentage of students from underrepresented minority groups

Lifelong Learning



14.5K+

Number of Campus Accelerated Program for Adults (CAPA) students since 2013



#1

in California for alumni satisfaction

Civic & Community Engagement



125+

Number of university courses incorporating a community engagement component



12



14



18

12 Reel It In: The Virtual Future of Filmmaking

University of La Verne film students participated in a weeklong pilot education abroad program featuring access to a state-of-the-art digital studio while working collaboratively with students and filmmakers from Taipei.

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Dr. Pardis Mahdavi became the 19th president of the University of La Verne on August 15. The community has embraced and welcomed the internationally recognized and highly accomplished academic, author, and higher education leader.

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President Pardis Mahdavi shares how her experiences with exclusion shaped her identity and personal mission, empowered her to bridge transformative opportunities for others, fueling her commitment to education and providing focus for university work ahead.

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Explore how LaFetra College of Education is shaping the future of education by equipping students with innovative programming, partnerships, and resources to combat the changing U.S. educational landscape.

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GO DIGITAL

To read this Voice issue online head over to **voice.laverne.edu**.

University of La Verne
Ranks Among Top
Universities Nationwide

The University of La Verne was recognized as a 2024 Best U.S. College in the latest *Wall Street Journal* & College Pulse rankings.

Out of 400 institutions, the university is the fifth-highest ranking private and California university on the list. Nationally, the university ranked #33. The university was also recognized as one of only 16 private California universities in the entire report, and is among the top 15 schools for student experience and social mobility, according to results. This year's ranking survey, created by *Wall Street Journal* in collaboration with College Pulse and Statista, focused overall scores on learning opportunities, preparations for careers, and learning facilities.

Meanwhile, the University of La Verne remains the top private university in California for social mobility performance and for the second consecutive year, sixth among all universities in the state, according to the prestigious *U.S. News & World Report's* 2024 National University rankings. The university was also listed in *Washington Monthly's* 2023 rankings, which featured the school in its Best Bang for the Buck Colleges in the West and National University categories, and *The Princeton Review* in their 2024 Best Regional Colleges feature under Best West.



Professor Wins Athletic Training Educator Award

Assistant Professor Russell Muir was awarded the Athletic Training Educator Award during the 13th Annual California Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA) Annual Meeting and Clinical Symposium in Sacramento, California. The award is given to those who make significant contributions to athletic training education and demonstrate exceptional dedication to students.

NetVUE Regional Gathering
Expands Support for
Marginalized Students

The University of La Verne hosted the Council of Independent Colleges' Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) Regional Gathering this year. The event brought together approximately 60 scholars and educators from across the country, as well as University of La Verne alumni, to discuss the role teachers play in supporting students from marginalized communities through vocational exploration and the practice of well-being.



Renamed Colleges

The University of La Verne College of Law and Public Service and the College of Business were officially renamed earlier this year to better articulate how they meet the needs of students and communities. The new synergies aim to significantly impact public service, law, and business in the region and beyond, especially when it comes to social mobility, diverse leadership, and filling workforce deficits.

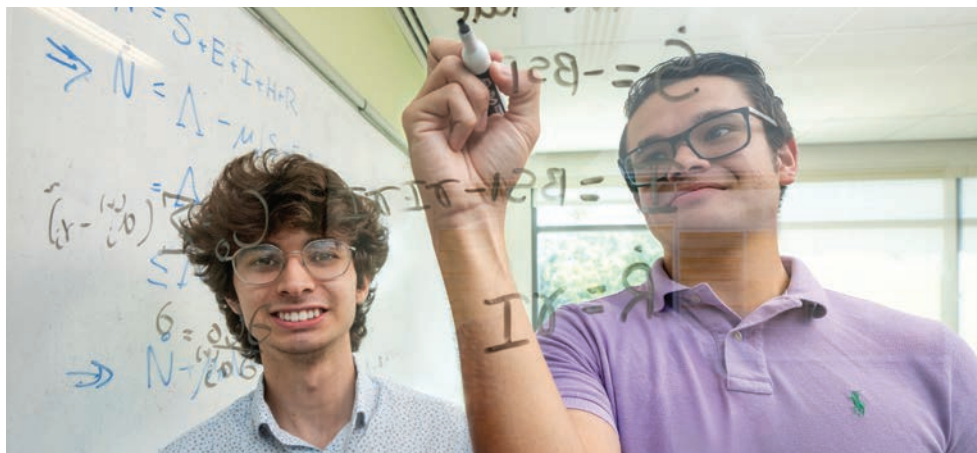


Visit univ.lv/renaming to learn more about the programs offered at these colleges.

Researching the Road to Recovery

Over the summer, Diego Gonzalez '24 participated in an undergraduate research program in applied mathematics and computational science through the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) Research Program housed this year at George Mason University. Alongside fellow student colleague Adan Baca from the University of Arizona, they delved into research aimed at exploring the role of computational science in addressing drug addiction recovery.

During the six-week program, Gonzalez collaborated with Baca and their mathematics mentors to learn the essentials of conducting scientific studies and effectively communicating principles of mathematics and computational science. Their collective aim was to explore how their ongoing academic pursuits could translate into a career in applied mathematics and computational science.



DIEGO GONZALEZ and **ADAN BACA** working side by side on their research.

Photo by **EVAN CANTWELL/CREATIVE SERVICES/GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

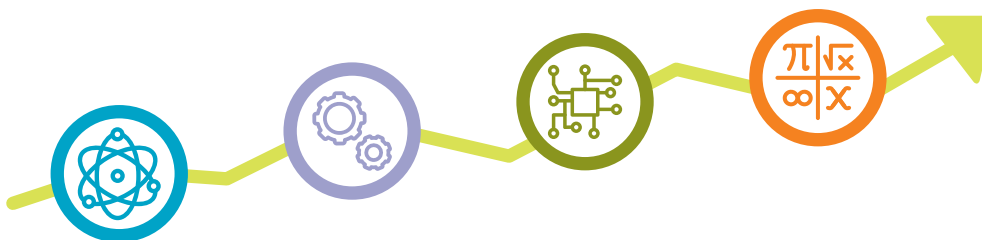
The program culminated in a research presentation delivered to an audience comprising George Mason University faculty, students, SIAM representatives, and parents. Gonzalez, despite lacking prior research experience, felt fully supported and motivated to excel, attributing

his success to the mentors he had the privilege of working with. Reflecting on the experience, he emphasized the significance of a welcoming and supportive mentorship in fostering academic achievement and solidified his belief in the value of pursuing graduate school.

Turning to Title III

The University of La Verne continues to boost science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) resources for students through the Title III HSI STEM grant. Holistic and Inclusive Practices for Student Success programs provide direct support for these undergraduates as they transition into college. Programs, activities, and workshops are designed to help build skills and a supportive network committed to their success.

In 2021, the university received the annual one million dollar Title III grant to develop and carry out activities to improve and expand capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students. This includes access



to technology, select books at no-cost, and events that spark ideation and community. So far, more than 125 students have been served and nine professors are part of creating culturally relevant curriculum so that more students of color have access to STEM education.

The commitment to holistic growth extends beyond the classroom. The university organizes a series of enriching events designed to ignite students' imaginations

and foster a sense of community. Some of these events include a summer overnight experience, peer mentoring, First-Gen Fridays, STEM nights, monthly luncheons, and "skill shops."

Our students have greatly benefited from these initiatives, marking significant progress in the university's mission to empower a more inclusive and diverse generation of STEM professionals.

Seasons of Success

The 2023 athletics season for our women's basketball and men's baseball teams will go down in the record books. It was a season marked by wins, unwavering support, and team dedication.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ENDED THE SEASON 24-3

OVERALL, WITH A 15-1 IN-CONFERENCE RECORD. The team had an 18-game win streak, the longest ever in university history. Six players snagged Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) Athlete of the Week awards, while three earned spots on the SCIAC all-conference team. The team's journey culminated in a record-breaking season, securing the most wins in university history and tying for the most single season wins in the conference's history.

Behind the stats and victories are the unseen stories of strength, encouragement, and perseverance that unfolded behind the scenes. For Dejanee Gill '21, MHA '23, the season was an opportunity to make a comeback after the COVID-19 pandemic cut her athletics career short. Gill transferred to the University of La Verne in 2019 and played with the women's basketball team for one season. In 2021, she returned for a master's degree program and played her last year of eligibility in the 2022-2023 season.

Gill said the team put in the hard work from the very beginning, and with frequent, grueling, morning weight training sessions, they started physically strong. But it was the moments of prayer during huddles, group text pep talks after tough practices, and karaoke on the bus ride to their first matches in Tennessee that helped them build a close bond.

"We were always motivating and empowering each other because we all wanted the same thing," Gill said.



Women's basketball had an 18-game win streak, the longest ever in university history.

Marissa Howell, a kinesiology major, echoed Gill's sentiments, and said the team called each other family and put in the hard work necessary to be successful for one another.

"I was surrounded by a bunch of great women who work hard on and off the court every day. Seeing them work hard and give 100% to everything they do is inspiring to watch," Howell said.



Across the diamond, the men's baseball team was writing its own story of success. Despite starting the season 11-10, the team came together to turn around their record and earn the best team season finish since 1995, with 32-18 overall, and 20-4 in conference records.

Player Noah Garcia said the team worked hard to build each other up, and finished the season with a strong identity.

"I don't think I have been on a closer-knit team with a common goal in mind that we were all striving towards. I was empowered by commitment, extreme hard work, and love for each other," said the economics major.

Coach Scott Winterburn said that much of the team's season was battling teams who were right behind them in standings, gunning for first.

"We had a ton of work to do in our own conference, and we did it," Winterburn said.

The team is the 2023 SCIAC champions, NCAA Regional Champions, and among the top 16 teams in the division in the nation. Four athletes received SCIAC Athlete of the Week recognition and three were named to ABCA/Rawlings NCAA DIII All-Region team.

Winterburn has been a fixture at the university for 23 years, and said the players took ownership of the team and their season. The dedication wasn't limited to the players. Coaches juggled full-time jobs and family responsibilities alongside their coaching duties, while players invested countless hours in practice and weightlifting on top of their academic commitments.

Although the spotlight was shown on women's basketball and men's baseball last season, La Verne's athletes from all 18 teams put in the time and commitment needed year-round.

"It's a special effort, and I am so proud of all of the teams," Winterburn said. "There are quite a few teams on our campus that give that kind of effort, and when I see that, it makes me smile for sure."



Support leopard athletes by visiting **leopardathletics.com** for the game schedule.



The men's baseball team is the 2023 SCIAC champions and among the top 16 teams in the division in the nation.

The Impact of Scholarships & Student Support



Every spring the University of La Verne hosts a Scholarship Gala to raise funds for student scholarships.

Every donation or act of service can have far-reaching impacts that go beyond the individuals who benefit from them.

They can change the course of one's life, open new opportunities, and inspire a domino effect of paying it forward.

Last spring, the University of La Verne raised nearly \$2 million, a record-breaking amount, during its Annual Scholarship Gala. Here are some of the recipient stories shared.

Continuing the Legacy

Esmeralda Olivar grew up in a household filled with family, children, and a matriarch with a heart of service. This vibrant and selfless childhood led to a desire to continue her mother's legacy of giving back to her community by becoming a teacher.

Thanks to the LaFetra Family Overcomers Scholarship, funding for first-generation college students, Olivar finished her bachelor's degree this year and says she is empowered to continue her education.

About half of University of La Verne students are the first in their families to attend college, and more than 90 percent need and receive financial aid. Last year, the university allocated \$58.3 million in institutional grants and aid to support student scholarships.

Much of the funding comes from donors and supporters including the late Anthony LaFetra, and Art and Sarah Ludwick who established the Overcomers Scholarship.

Military Connected

Ivan Jimenez is in his third career and pursuing a bachelor's degree in information technology. After serving six years in the U.S. Air Force, he leveraged his love of music to work in the music industry as a recording and mixing engineer. As an adult learner and veteran, Jimenez says he has found increased connections, services, resources, and programs through the Sara and Michael Abraham Center for Veteran Student Success. And this is just the kind of support the Abrahams and other supporters of the center had intended. Jimenez is now a student worker at the center excited to see where his degree and experiences will take him next.

Success Without Financial Stress

In high school, Cynthea Roque was president of the physics club, captain of the junior varsity and varsity tennis teams, and maintained a 4.3 GPA, all while working part-time at a restaurant. Her goal is to become an optometrist and provide underserved populations with optical care, but the financial concerns of attending college seemed daunting. She inquired at the University of La Verne and found out her academic success qualified her for the Searing Scholarship, an academic scholarship that funds full financial support for expenses such as tuition, fees, and room and board. The biology major says the funding allows her to focus on her studies and become involved on campus. She is part of the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority and Phi Epsilon Kappa health fraternity.

When you give to University of La Verne, you are a part of something bigger.

You join thousands of other donors who are investing in the next generation of great young minds.



Scan the QR code or visit **univ.lv/scholarships** to support student scholarships and make a difference today!





REEL IT IN:

THE VIRTUAL FUTURE OF FILMMAKING

WRITTEN BY ALEXANDRA CLAYTON

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MORGAN SANDLER



In the heart of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of La Verne, digital film production students Kaitlyn Moran '24, Andrew Morris '24, Andrew Patterson '23, and Amanda Torres '24 geared up for the journey of a lifetime. Packed with excitement and fueled by artistic passion, they were mere moments away from beginning a two-week pilot program that would transport them from sunny Southern California to the beautiful bustling streets of Taipei. Their mission? To explore the cutting-edge world of virtual filmmaking at Shih Hsin University in a state-of-the-art LED studio, otherwise known as: The Volume.

What is "The Volume"? Let's immerse you into the scene:

A massive air-controlled set is lit by four IMAX-rivaling, LED test screens that envelop the ceiling and sides of the staged area, shaped around in a blazing bright rainbow hue test screen of colors. The 360-degree panels are built so seamlessly together it looks like a pocket into a new dimension. The screen goes black. People in headsets tap computer screens for a virtual scene change. Sophisticated cameras are adjusted. An actor walks up the stairs to a fluorescent floor-taped marker. The scene is set. Everyone awaits the director: "Quiet on the set. And...marker." A far-off land appears for take one.

Alumnus Nathan Chow, MS '01, DPA '11, a man whose connection to the institution runs deep, made this opportunity possible. Chow holds a special place in his heart for both the University of La Verne and Shih Hsin University. Shih Hsin is Chow's family's institution and he serves as chairman of the board. His unwavering support for the arts, superior filmmaking, and generosity were the driving forces behind this unique educational endeavor.

Standing at the forefront of this adventure was Professor of Digital Film Production Morgan Sandler, a creatively dedicated documentary award-winning cinematographer and digital film production extraordinaire. His passion for storytelling translates effortlessly into his life as a professor. Experience as a cinematographer and producer ignites his professional prowess and helps guide his students into movie industry success.

Above left: The Volume is comprised of four LED screens that blend seamlessly to create virtual film environments.

Bottom left: Students stand on The Volume stage displaying a winter forest landscape.

Sandler says utilizing this "rad" virtual LED studio in collaboration with Chow and the Taipei university makes a significant impact. The technology is so sophisticated and cutting-edge, that access to this multi-million dollar equipment is nearly out of reach to most in the U.S. Visual effects such as commercial driving scenes are filmed this way, as the screens effortlessly transport actors and viewers into a completely new landscape. For instance, the Star Wars franchise utilizes this technology in *The Mandalorian*, where most galactic scenes are filmed.

University of La Verne students got an industry advantage, learning about the intricacies of the LED set technology, while Sandler shared more about the American film industry with Shih Hsin University students during a rigorous schedule of six all-day classes. Technical lighting, camera work for non-virtual sets, and the creation of a practical set for future projects with the LED screens was also part of the curriculum.

But it wasn't all work and no play. Outside the classroom, students were immersed in the vibrant tapestry of Taiwanese culture and history. They visited tea house villages on top of scenic mountains, viewed Buddhist shrines, and tasted new cuisines.

This fusion of classroom learning and real-world cultural experiences was a transformative journey. Morris '24 called the trip a "phenomenal experience," saying it furthered his skillset and cultural perspectives.

"I now have more of a technical grasp of gaffers and grips and what they do," explained Morris, who transferred to the university for film composition. "This trip was a valuable experience and I know way more than what I did of the industry before."

Torres '24 is already working in the film industry. She currently works on big-budget sets mostly in their lighting department, and recently started working as a camera assistant. She plans to be a leader in cinematography and directing.

The technology is so sophisticated and cutting-edge, that access to this multi-million dollar equipment is nearly out of reach to most in the U.S.

"I feel extremely grateful to have made these connections in Taiwan," Torres said. "I went home feeling very motivated and excited to go into my senior thesis and apply my knowledge to make it one of the best films La Verne has seen thus far."

Program organizers anticipate further collaborations and opportunities for current and future students, so the Leopard community continues to make its mark in the global cinematic landscape. ■

The President's First 100 Days in Visuals

WRITTEN BY NICOLE PEREZ

Convocation 2023

AUGUST 23, 2023

Students, faculty, and staff gathered together outside the Sports Science and Athletics Pavilion on August 23 to celebrate the beginning of the fall semester at Convocation. This was the first time University of La Verne President Pardis Mahdavi addressed the community at-large.

“Know that you are firmly planted as a Leo. And you will be forever connected to a framework of go-getters, world-changers, transformative thinkers, and paradigm-shifters.”

“And if you remember nothing else of anything I say, remember these three words: own your narrative. Make it a priority to continue to develop your story and your character.”



“You matter. Your story is valuable and most importantly, the University of La Verne is a better place because of all of you.”



President Mahdavi joined on August 15, just as the university welcomed its largest-ever incoming fall class.



Leap Into Action

In the weeks leading up to President Mahdavi's inauguration, the Leap Into Action community service pledge campaign was launched as an exciting way to celebrate the beginning of a new era in the university's history, while also giving back to communities near and far. From donating food and clothing to mentoring youth, hundreds of students, staff, faculty, alumni, and local community partners pledged their time and talents to make a positive impact and build lasting bridges in our communities.



TAKE THE LEAP

This initiative continues. We want to see YOU leap into action in your community! Make the pledge and share your stories on social media.

Scan the QR code above or visit univ.lv/leap to pledge today!

Follow Us!

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#ULVLeap 🐾

#UniversityofLaVerne

#LeosEngaged

“It is incredibly important to be an engaged Leo.”



We took the pledge by...
participating in environmental cleanups.

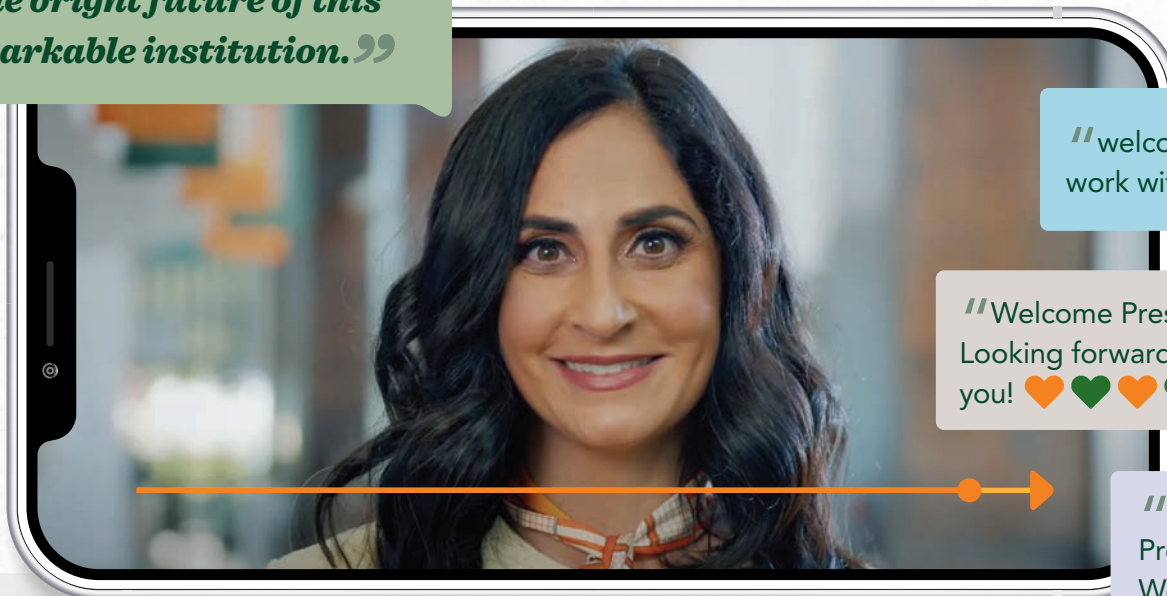


Community Engagement Day
September 9, 2023



We took the pledge by...
volunteering.

"I am humbled to be a part of the bright future of this remarkable institution."



"welcome! excited to work with you! 🐾❤️"

"Welcome President Mahdavi!!! Looking forward to working with you! ❤️💚❤️💚"

"Congratulations, President Mahdavi! Welcome home!"

First Video Message

"The time is now—and the University of La Verne is the kind of institution that we need to lean into and live into the mission of higher education to engage social transformation and uphold democracy that our world needs today."



Inland Empire Magazine

University of La Verne was featured as a top employer in the City of La Verne and as a leader in higher education and career preparation.



President Mahdavi learns about the campus with Tiny Mic interviews.

19th Presidential Inauguration

OCTOBER 13, 2023



President Mahdavi snaps a photo with student athletes.



Inauguration speakers
Mariko Silver and Jad Abumrad



President Mahdavi with her family.



“It is only by bridging that we can find a way forward. And then this bridge [the University of La Verne] called.”

President Mahdavi takes her oath of office with San Bernardino Superior Court Judge Lisa M. Rogan, JD '01.



See the recap, photos and more at univ.lv/inauguration.



University of
La Verne



MAHDAVI'S MISSION

WRITTEN BY
Jamie K. Ayala

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
William Vasta

WHERE IT STARTED

In the late 1970s, amidst the Iranian revolution, a young doctor and father-to-be made the difficult decision with his pregnant wife to leave their home country and find refuge in America. They settled in Minnesota. Six years and three kids later, the couple once again found themselves forced to pack up their home when their daughter found a disturbing sign on the front door that read, "burn this house; terrorists live here."

During the move from Minnesota to Southern California, the father imparted to his daughter:

"People are going to try to take everything from you—they can take your home, they can take your belongings, they can even take your country—but the one thing no one can ever take from you is your education. They can never take your mind."

This powerful message became the foundation that propelled Pardis Mahdavi toward a career and mission in higher education to help others get that which can never be taken away.

"I want to be at a place where we measure ourselves by who we include, not who we exclude," said Mahdavi, who became the 19th president of the University of La Verne in August. "This is what drives me as an educator and why upholding a commitment to access and excellence are so important to me."

FINDING INCLUSION AMONG THE EXCLUDED

Always the curious anthropologist, Dr. Mahdavi spent years studying social injustices and revolutions, women's rights and movements, access in education, and more. Her research has allowed her to bring societal and cultural issues to light through the stories and voices of the excluded. In every case, Mahdavi amassed strong and personal empathy as she struggled to find her own self-identity and cultural heritage while feeling caught between trying to fit prescribed identities.

"I have tried most of my career to fit in boxes and I have learned that I just do not. I have not fit because I was interdisciplinary... because of my identity as a hyphenated individual...because I identify as a woman of color...because of my Iranian name...for one reason or another, I just haven't fit. So how can I belong? That's why co-creation to me is the framework that helps us create space."

Her experiences and observations have made her a distinguished author, national and international public speaker, and notable thought leader and scholar. She has published six single-authored books, two edited volumes, and numerous journal and news articles in popular media.

JOURNEY INTO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

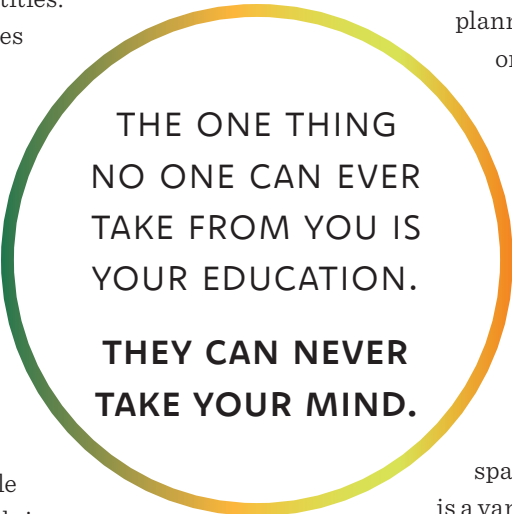
As a young professor at a private liberal arts college, Mahdavi was excited to widely share her passion for education, but it quickly simmered as she noticed fewer numbers of students coming from low socioeconomic and diverse backgrounds. The lack of access, equity, and diversity among students, and even her colleagues, weighed heavy on Mahdavi.

She decided she needed to be at the table where critical decisions were made and where she was empowered to develop innovative educational opportunities. She needed to lead.

Mahdavi spent more than twenty years in higher education, most recently serving as provost and executive vice president at the University of Montana, a public flagship research university in Missoula. She previously held deanships at Arizona State University and the University of Denver, as well as several leadership positions at Pomona College.

Her career has focused on strengthening education, institutions, and opportunities for students through the lens of democracy, diversity, and service. In 2020, she founded the J.E.D.I. Academy, a justice-oriented, mission-driven academy to assist corporations and organizations in equity, diversity, and inclusion work.

Colleagues and industry leaders have characterized Mahdavi as an inclusive, visionary leader. She has a significant record of success in developing relationships, strategic planning, identifying resources, and advancing organizational efficiency.



THE ONE THING
NO ONE CAN EVER
TAKE FROM YOU IS
YOUR EDUCATION.

THEY CAN NEVER
TAKE YOUR MIND.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Now at the helm of the University of La Verne, Mahdavi is an ever-present president, listening intently, taking copious notes, engaging with stakeholders, and of course weaving in her professional training roots with ethnographic work and social mapping. Sometimes, she still enters a quiet space, an "in-between" space, but today, it is a vantage point, allowing her to spot outliers, establish champions in education, and create bridges to educational excellence.

"I try to honor the strength and values of the past—to weave it into a bold and innovative future," says Mahdavi.

While she is still meeting with stakeholders to build a joint vision, some needs are starting to emerge:

- Enhancing and improving online offerings with wrap-around support
- Creating transparent processes and policies that factor in diverse labor and facilitate the creation of an infrastructure that supports our goals and our mission
- Supporting and enhancing a culture of research and internships
- Living into the university's core values

Plans continue to evolve. Dialogue assuming good intent is encouraged by Mahdavi, who thrives in co-creation and collectiveness.

"It's not about me," she says with deep sincerity. "It has to be about what is right for the entire university and using strength in that collectiveness as we create further partnerships, build bridges and move forward." 🌈

PARDIS MAHDAVI | AT A GLANCE



PERSONAL

- Born in Minneapolis, MN
- Grew up in Southern California
- Three children
- Has a horse named Caspian

UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE

- Took office as the 19th president on August 15, 2023
- Was officially inaugurated on October 13, 2023

EDUCATION

- **PhD, Sociomedical Sciences and Anthropology**
Columbia University, 2006
- **MPhil, Sociomedical Sciences and Anthropology**
Columbia University, 2005
- **MIA, Human Rights**
Columbia University, 2002
- **BA, Diplomacy and World Affairs**
Occidental College, 2000

NOTABLE MEMBERSHIPS

- Lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations
- Member of the Young President's Organization
- One of Arizona's Most Intriguing Women of the Decade
- Former Commissioner for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education
- Former fellow of the Social Sciences Research Council, the American Council on Learned Societies, Google Ideas, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
- Consultant for U.S. government agencies, Google, and the United Nations

QUOTES TO LIVE BY

"Doing as others told me, I was blind. Coming when others called me, I was lost. Then I left everyone, myself as well. Then I found everyone, myself as well."

– Rumi

"I am a woman with a foot in both worlds; and I refuse the split. I feel the necessity for dialogue. Sometimes I feel it urgently."

– Cherríe L. Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*

"Mission first, people always."

– U.S. Army



EQUIPPING

EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

for the

FUTURE

By Alexandra Clayton
and Nicole Perez

The LaFetra College of Education is leading the charge in addressing the evolving teaching and learning challenges that face the region and beyond.

Southern California, with its diverse communities and changing educational landscape, has long been a case study of the broader challenges facing the U.S. education system.

Over the past decade, TK-12 educational leaders have witnessed significant transformations in their roles, driven by shifts in state rules and policies like assembly bill 130, workforce shortages, changing societal expectations, COVID-19,

and the ongoing need to prioritize student equity, readiness gaps, neurodiverse learning, special education, bilingual education, and STEM education.

To help address such issues, educational institutions in the region must be increasingly agile, innovative, and deeply connected to the communities they serve. The University of La Verne's LaFetra College of Education continues to rise to the occasion.

LaFetra College of Education offers a wide range of programs, partnerships, and resources that address specific needs of the region, from educational leadership resources to cutting-edge neurodiversity programming. These multifaceted degree programs, non-degree programs, certificate programs, centers, and trainings ensure that graduates and participants are not only well equipped academically but are also culturally competent to navigate the intricacies of Southern California's education system.

Moreover, LaFetra College's emphasis on research and innovation has led to the development of evidence-based practices that can be readily applied to meet the unique needs of students in Southern California. These practices include interventions for students with neurodiverse learning needs, strategies for improving English language proficiency, and the use of technology to bridge educational gaps.

The college is also creating several new opportunities such as a Principal Pipeline, including a 24-unit online, one-year Preliminary Administrative Services Credential program. Cohorts in San Diego, Kern, and Los Angeles counties will be starting in the spring. Courses are designed in a "learn by doing" fashion to encourage leadership development by providing learning activities commonly experienced by school site leaders.

"We face a perilous time in education, and our communities in general, as the void of qualified and effective leadership is highlighted by scary imitations. Never can we recall such a time where critical thinking and courage are scarce, and endangered by political and legal maneuverings as they are now. We support our leaders to stand steadfast in courage and ethical reasoning," says triple alumnus Eric Bishop, EdD '08, who recently became the chair of the organizational leadership doctoral program (EdD). "I want to maintain the program's rich tradition of preparing and developing successful and innovative educational leaders for the region and beyond."

Bishop is also ushering in new efforts to create a pipeline of leaders and support through program alumni. He sees this partnership as an opportunity for alumni to join their alma

mater to provide mentorship, resources, ongoing workforce development, and leadership pathways for future educators. The university alumni network, which spans across different sectors of education from TK-12 to higher education, also serves as a dynamic force for change, influencing policies, fostering innovation, and addressing the most pressing issues in Southern California education.

In the summer, prominent education leader, expert, national speaker, and alumna Candace Singh, EdD '15, joined LaFetra College as the new clinical professor of leadership and inaugural superintendent-in-residence. The roles were created to enhance programs through increased development training, pathways to leadership, and partnerships, while

contributing to the college's ongoing commitment to developing effective leaders and advocates for equity and access in education. Singh brings more than 33 years of experience in all levels of education and an impressive track record in educational leadership. She is also helping to bring new educational leadership resources and training to the region.

Additionally, the university is seeking ways to increase diversity

among school leaders. Research shows that students have better academic and behavioral outcomes when they attend schools led by those who reflect the communities they serve. Yet in California, diverse TK-12 administrators are underrepresented. While 60 percent of students in public schools identified as Black or Latinx, only 20 percent of public schools were led by Black or Latinx principals in 2018, according to the Diversity in Leadership Institute. The non-profit is leading efforts to establish funding to train, place and retain 300 new, diverse, and culturally responsive administrators to improve student outcomes and meet the needs of California's education workforce.

With a range of programs, a vibrant alumni network, and the visionary leadership of Bishop and Singh, among others, the college is not only meeting the demands of the region but also setting the standard for educational excellence.

Learn more about the LaFetra College of Education at education.laverne.edu. 



Experiences That Matter

The University of La Verne leads the way in extending learning beyond the classroom and offering experiences that allow our students to demonstrate their skills, receive training that leads to a competitive edge in the workplace, and live out our core values—ethical reasoning, diversity and inclusivity, lifelong learning, and civic and community engagement.

These are the experiences that matter!



As part of their clinical service, nursing students provide health education and more to vulnerable populations.

HOMELESS HEALTH CHAMPIONS

In a bustling cafeteria at the Los Angeles Union Rescue Mission, University of La Verne nursing students waited patiently to share health information with residents. This particular Friday, as dishes clanked and conversations carried across the lunchroom, a baby started coughing.

Students realized this was no normal cough, and within seconds leapt into action, properly treating the baby, and ensuring food was cleared. The young mother clung her baby to her chest, thanking the students repeatedly in Spanish. The team demonstrated the technique a few times afterwards so she would be confident to take action if it ever happened again.

Students say there is never a dull moment at the Union Rescue Mission, which provides homeless services in the heart of Skid Row. Jorge Balladares, a member of the first cohort to perform clinical service at this partnership site, says the time spent serving the less fortunate rounds out the RN to BSN degree program.

"In this field, higher education allows us to broaden the spectrum of how we help people," said Balladares, a case management nurse at AltaMed Health Services. "This population literally has nothing and is so often forgotten. Many times, we are the first to listen to their health and personal stories and help them."

Students provide health education and may assist with wellness checks but are often stopped in the hallways for impromptu requests for advice on skin irritations, odd bumps, or even minor injuries.

"People are devastated in every way by homelessness, and they suffer from many ailments, chronic ailments, untreated chronic conditions, foot problems. You name it. Heart problems, heart conditions go untreated. And to have nurses on-board walking around the mission caring for our guests has just been tremendous," said Andy Bales, president and CEO of the Union Rescue Mission.

ENGAGED LEOPARDS

Community engagement at the University of La Verne has been one of the legacies since our Church of the Brethren beginnings. While the university has not been directly affiliated with the Church of the Brethren for many years, the strength and relevance of those values remain.

Annually, the university holds a Community Engagement Day, where students explore local community organizations and join them on a day of service. This year, the university linked up with about half a dozen organizations from Ontario to Irwindale. From organizing a food pantry and creating food packets for remote countries that don't have access to food, to planting community gardens and carrying out activities at a senior center, students spent the day offering support to our local communities.

The university's Office of Civic and Community Engagement organizes and creates such opportunities for students through 28 community partnerships throughout Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. Meanwhile, community engagement is incorporated in more than 125 university courses. Nearly 9,000 hours of service were captured last year, but the collective impact goes beyond recorded hours. Students have been inspired to find work that incorporates such services or to make it a habit to give back wherever they live.



Before they graduate, all University of La Verne students participate in direct or indirect civic or community engagement.

BRIDGING THEORY, PRACTICE & LEADERSHIP

The Integrated Business Program connects finance, management, and marketing into a 16-unit course block. Students demonstrate their skills by forming a company, determining the target market and product, developing a business plan, seeking a loan from a bank, and selling their product throughout the semester. All proceeds are donated to charity.



Integrated business students get the opportunity to apply skills to a real business venture that benefits nonprofits.

In addition to entrepreneurship, students learn social responsibility by donating proceeds to a nonprofit charity of their choice. Recent recipients have included the American Cancer Society, Make-A-Wish, and the Leroy Haynes Center, a local provider of mental health and addiction recovery services.

Students who have completed the program say it was the "highlight of their academic career," "reinforced what we learned in class in the real world," and "helped me understand business as a whole, where all the disciplines are needed and work together."

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

Leaving it All on the Court

IN THE WORLD OF BOTH LEGAL AND BASKETBALL COURTS, THE PURSUIT OF VICTORY TAKES THE CENTER.

Individuals seeking asylum in the United States can turn to the University of La Verne's Justice and Immigration Clinic for a win in the immigration courts.

Law students participating in the clinic gain real-world legal experience through pro bono services offered to the public under the coaching of Krystal Rodriguez-Campos, professor of law and associate dean of the College of Law and Public Service.

An Afghanistan woman recently scored victory in her asylum case with the clinic on her team. Two years ago, she was targeted by the Taliban regime in her home country for her involvement with basketball and advocacy for women's rights. It became too dangerous for her to stay at home with her family and children. She was evacuated and sought refuge in the U.S.

The University of La Verne's clinic readied to jump in. Recent graduate Andrea Orozco, JD '23, and 4L senior Yue Zhang '23 represented the client before the Los Angeles Asylum Office. Always the cohesive team, they worked tirelessly to prepare the case. They sprang into action, gathering evidence and documents as the shot clock ticked down, signaling a limited amount of time to prepare the case and meet the asylum application deadline.

"I was nervous," Zhang said. "But this experience was important for me. I saw all that was needed to process this case. Professor Rodriguez-Campos set a high standard for us and taught us how to create documents for this immigration case."

Zhang himself emigrated from China. Previously a reporter for Chinese media, his new position in life is to help others going through the U.S. immigration system.

"I want to be a good lawyer and help those people in my community to get high-standard legal service," Zhang said.

Their teamwork and dedication paid off when, after a year of legal hearings, their client was recently granted asylum. Her journey is not just a personal championship moment; it is a team triumph for the human values of justice, equality, and resilience.

As a mother of three, Orozco empathized with their client and stayed with her every step of the way throughout the challenging process, so she never felt alone.

"She did what she had to do for her own well-being. Her choice to leave her family was difficult, but very admirable. She is a great example to have. I consider her a friend now," Orozco said.

Orozco will be joining Zhang in taking the California bar exam in February. If it was not for La Verne's part-time program, she believes she might not have been able to balance her additional responsibilities as a mother and realize her dreams of becoming an immigration lawyer.

With the dedication of Rodriguez-Campos, Zhang, Orozco, and their undergraduate interns, this team can successfully say that they truly left it all on the court for their client.

Krystal Rodriguez-Campos (right), alumna **Andrea Orozco, JD '23** (center), and senior law student **Yue Zhang** (left) debriefing the asylum case they helped secure for women's rights activist and basketball player from Afghanistan.





In Conversation with **Daniel Loera**

Daniel Loera, EdD '12, is the director of multicultural affairs for the Center for Multicultural Services at the University of La Verne. Loera has served the university for more than two decades and has been a driving force in supporting students, faculty, and staff during their professional and academic journeys. His work in providing diverse and inclusive programming and events on campus has ushered in a space for community empowerment.

Q What does the term “empowerment” mean to you?

Empowerment means standing tall with our feet firmly grounded in who we are, clear about what we believe in, and knowing that one can affect change. It means being connected to each other and recognizing that, unless we embrace each other as our authentic selves, anything short of that, we are deceiving ourselves about creating an inclusive community.

Q How is the Center for Multicultural Services empowering and serving the university community?

We work to create programs focused on asking fundamental questions of “who we are,” “how we impact each other,” and “is your voice represented.” There is always a need to educate and actively work to identify and dismantle oppressive policies, practices, and systems that impede full participation and equity for all. We are creating “space” for everyone to “be” and work to elevate what it means to be an equity-centered community.

Q Why are multicultural services important?

Creating spaces that encourage discovery and expression of one’s full self supports individuals to have meaning and significance, which then supports community building. The more we can raise awareness of our interconnectedness, the more likely we are to create caring, compassionate, and equitable communities.

Q What are the newest center services and how do they help promote belonging at the university?

Two areas of service that we are incredibly excited about are the Black and Latinx Scholars Living-Learning Communities, and the Access Program. Each affinity group is focused on providing additional support to minority communities and foster youth, and program areas with dedicated groups that focus on cultural wealth building and community building.

Q What is your favorite part about serving in your current role?

The idea that I may be able to make a difference in the life of a young person seeking to get through this structure we call higher education, to then do the work that will transform not only their life, but the lives of their family and community.

Q Who has inspired and empowered you to become a leader?

Initially, it was due to a void of leaders in my life that led me to step forward and assume leadership roles. Thereafter, it was individuals who displayed great courage in the face of pursuing justice that most inspired me like Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Angela Davis. I was also inspired by the day-to-day persistence and commitment of my grandfather and dad who worked hard, had a joy for living life, and a focus on the well-being of our family as opposed to seeking material wealth.



Get involved, become a partner,
or find organizational resources
laverne.edu/multicultural

Empowered Women Empower Women



From Left: Patricia Caldani, Alexandra Burrell, Louise Kelly, Linda Pratt, Jessica Osuna-Peraza, Elaine Rodriguez.

AUTHENTICITY IN LEADERSHIP, NOW MORE THAN EVER, IS A HIGHLY COVETED COMMODITY. From political leaders to social media influencers—wherever the spotlight seems to shine the brightest—we are searching for what is true, real, and trustworthy.

Louise Kelly, professor of management and leadership at the University of La Verne, has devoted her time and talents to researching the art of authentic leadership. With many accomplishments under her belt, including authoring seven books with more on the way, the underlying goal in Kelly's endeavors is to empower diverse leaders who lead according to their values.

"You lead according to who you are—your values, your personality, your disposition—it's about creating engagement, creating relationships with people, and you have to do that from who you really are," she said.

Kelly's teaching philosophy is focused on co-creating knowledge in the classroom. She intentionally creates space for students to discuss leadership from the perspective of their own values and life experiences. This fosters an atmosphere of inclusiveness in the classroom and encourages students to approach leadership with a more holistic worldview.

In her continued efforts to study diversity and authenticity in leadership, Kelly was challenged with the idea that the model she created to develop authentic leaders was not a one-size-fits-all.

"We know how the traditional white male leads. We know everything about them because our world is defined by who they are, their values, etcetera. But now you've got this whole new cadre of leaders coming up—they're people of color, women, LGBTQ+, cognitively diverse...even socioeconomic status, that's something we never talk about in the U.S., but it's huge," she said.

This discovery helped shift her focus to both Hispanic and women leaders. She found that both groups, because of their values and how they are psychologically hardwired, led with a more inclusive, unified style of leadership. This is vastly different from the more traditional hierarchal, individualistic style of leadership that is typically seen in our world.

Regardless of gender identity or cultural background, authentic diverse leadership comes down to collaboration, community, and being willing to challenge our values, says Kelly. While we draw strength from others and our values are shaped through our communities, we also have to be willing to challenge those ideals in an effort to learn and evolve, she says.

"The essence of education is examining. If you're not unlearning, then you can't learn."

Kelly continues research on empowering women leaders in the Fulbright Specialist Program, a widely recognized and prestigious international project-based exchange program where U.S. faculty and professionals serve as short-term experts at academic and other institutions abroad.

A Cut Above the Rest

LEADERSHIP, LIKE DIAMONDS, HAS MANY FACETS—AND, DEPENDING ON WHERE THE LIGHT TOUCHES, SPARKLES DIFFERENTLY ON EACH POINT.

Similar to these gemstones, University of La Verne alumni, having spent years being formed and polished in the classroom and beyond, shine brilliantly and exemplify dynamic leadership in their local communities and around the world.

From business owners and political leaders to professional athletes and renowned journalists, our alumni are the embodiment of our university's four core values: ethical reasoning, diversity and inclusivity, lifelong learning, and civic and community engagement. More than 89,000 worldwide—and counting—alumni have found great success in the workplace as they have incorporated these principles into their leadership practices.

A shining example of the civic and community engagement core value is Liliana Andriani '20. Owner of Angel's Jewelers, Andriani was forced to temporarily close her business during the pandemic. Fortunately for her community, Andriani turned this difficult circumstance into an opportunity to serve as the chairwoman of the Rancho Cucamonga Chamber of Commerce.

"In my own journey, I've encountered obstacles that, at times, appeared overwhelming. Yet, by embracing a resilient mindset, I've managed to not only endure but also advance. I would encourage others to embrace setbacks as opportunities for growth, to learn from failures, and to remain adaptable in the face of change," she said.

Andriani received a proclamation for her community service from Rancho Cucamonga Mayor Dennis Michael, on behalf of the city, after turning her personal high-pressure situation into a jewel of an outcome.



"Remember that success is a journey filled with ups and downs, but by upholding resilience and determination, you can empower yourself to overcome any adversity that comes your way and achieve your goals," she said.

Andriani is in good company with fellow alumni who are also serving in local California government. Wendy Lau '98, currently serves as mayor pro tem for the City of La Verne, Silviano "Sal" Medina '98, '05, is mayor pro tem for the City of Claremont, meanwhile Kimbley Craig '98, serves as the mayor of the City of Salinas, and James Breitling '03, is a council member with the City of Upland.

Another brilliant example of leading from one's core values is Rita Gallardo Good '03, MPA '07. Good is the director of civic affairs for California State University, Sacramento in the Office of Public Affairs and Advocacy and won a *Hispanic Lifestyle* 2021 Latina of Influence honoree

title. Douglas Lusk, JD '18,

was also recognized in *CIO Views Magazine* as one of the top 10 most

inspiring people in legal services for 2022,

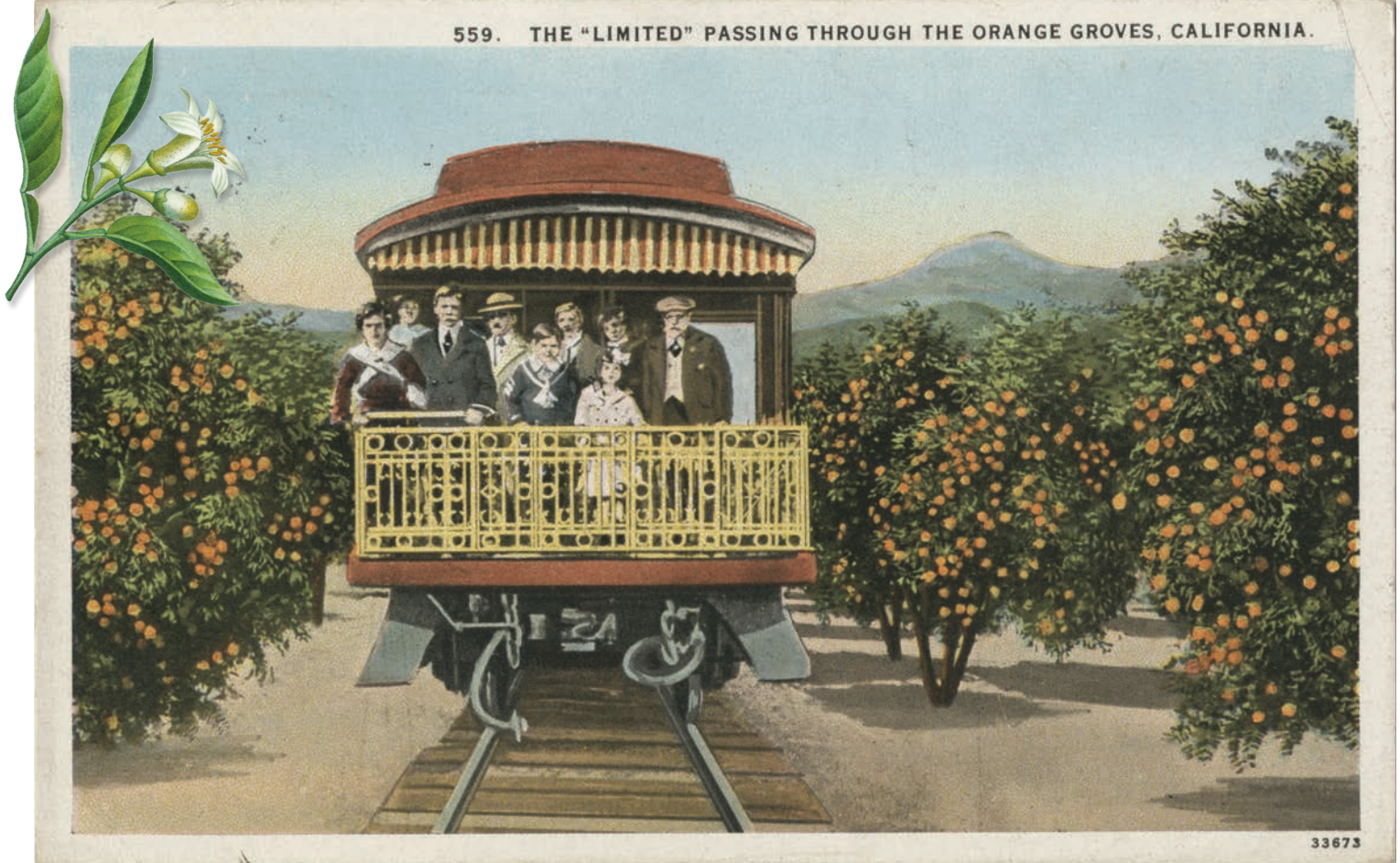
while Diane Goodman, JD '84, was recently appointed to serve as a judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Whether graduates like Charlie Neff '10 are leading as Emmy award-nominated producers in the entertainment industry, or serving as educators, artists, administrators, or first responders, University of La Verne alumni are truly a cut above the rest.

Alumna and owner of Angel's Jewelers, **Liliana Andriani '20** is a longtime business and community leader in the region, contributing to efforts and serving on nonprofit boards that transform communities.

The Santa Fe Railway in La Verne

559. THE "LIMITED" PASSING THROUGH THE ORANGE GROVES, CALIFORNIA.



The California Limited, a train of the Santa Fe, running through an orange grove. The railroad used this postcard and many others like it to advertise the orange empire of Southern California.

THE CITY OF LA VERNE CAME INTO BEING THANKS TO THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROADS THAT CONNECTED SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TO THE WORLD BEYOND.

By the 1880s, two such lines served the Southland: the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway.

The Santa Fe, as many Californians referred to it, put La Verne on the map. In the 1880s, a real estate developer named Isaac Lord from San Bernardino noted that the Santa Fe Railway was building a new line connecting his town to Los Angeles. Working with the railroad, Lord bought land in Southern California in what is today known as La Verne. This site, eventually known as Lordsburg, enjoyed direct access to the new Santa Fe route when it was completed in 1887. That year, a real estate boom attracted thousands of migrants to Southern California, causing

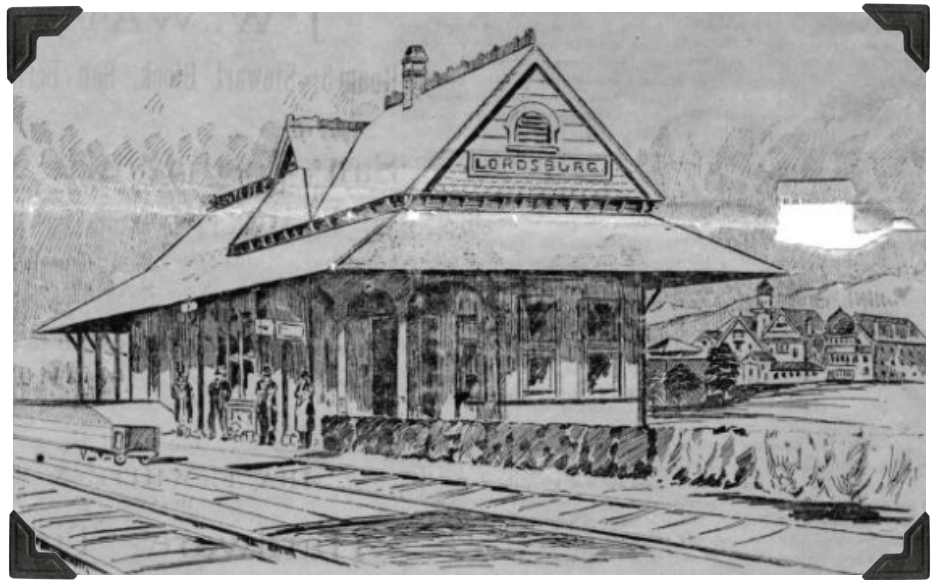
a population surge. The Santa Fe organized excursion trains that shuttled potential land buyers from large stations in Los Angeles and San Bernardino to Lordsburg, where many purchased lots and started a new community. Lordsburg had its own railroad station on the Santa Fe, which stood from 1887 until 1954.

In addition to bringing people to Lordsburg, the railroad moved important goods. Citrus growers built packinghouses along the tracks, sending oranges and lemons on the Santa Fe to eager customers. The development of refrigerator railroad cars to keep fruits from spoiling allowed produce from Lordsburg to reach distant markets across the United States. The money returned from the citrus industry funded the city's expansion, and the Santa Fe played a critical role in this economic development.

Isaac Lord also funded construction of a lavish hotel building along the railroad tracks. This structure, the Lordsburg Hotel, was meant to house potential guests in the city whom Lord hoped would fall in love with the town and move there. Unfortunately, by the time the hotel opened its doors in 1888, the real estate boom of the previous years had fallen apart. Legend has it that the hotel never hosted a paying guest.

The placement of the Lordsburg Hotel along the railroad tracks enticed buyers to repurpose the building, a process in which the Santa Fe played a key role. The railroad employed an agent named George McDonough, who had previously brought members of the German Baptist Brethren Church to the Midwest. In 1889, McDonough came to California, and invited leaders from the Brethren community to visit the Southland.

Among those who answered McDonough's call was Matthew M. Eshelman, another agent of the Santa Fe railroad and a newspaper editor who had helped found McPherson College, a Brethren school in Kansas. In 1890, Eshelman set up the *Southern Californian*, a newspaper designed to promote the Lordsburg Hotel, and printed it from the building.



An illustration from the *Southern Californian* showing the Santa Fe Railroad station in Lordsburg, ca. 1890.



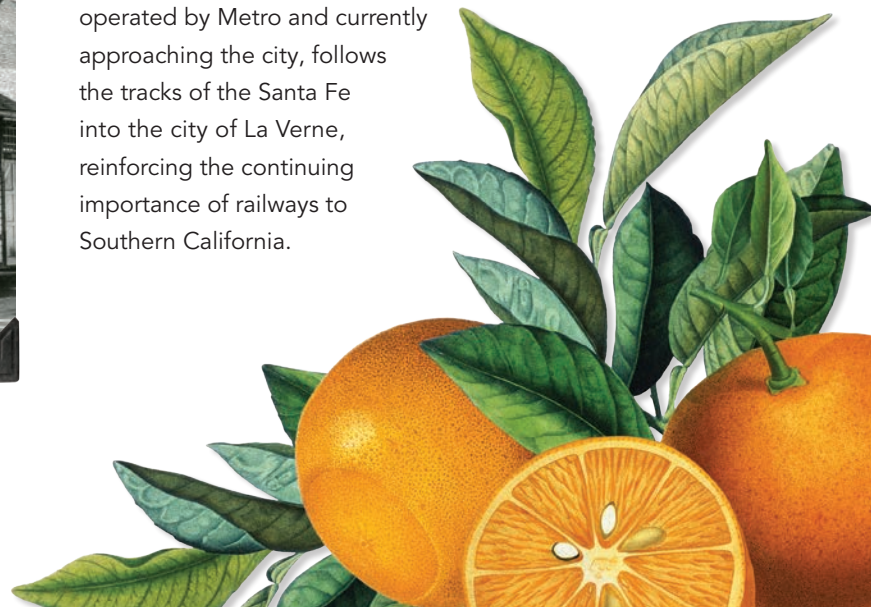
Eshelman convinced four men to purchase the hotel to transform it into an institution of higher education. These individuals—Daniel Houser, Henry Kuns, David Kuns, and Samuel Overholtzer, all members of the German Baptist Brethren Church—bought the Lordsburg Hotel and transformed it into Lordsburg College, which matriculated its first class in 1891. The school evolved over time into the University of La Verne, which would not have existed if not for the Santa Fe Railroad's determination to make the hotel building useful.

The University of La Verne's relationship with the Santa Fe continued well into the twentieth century. In 1987, the university purchased land from the railroad and used it to build the Oaks residence halls. A plaque commemorating the original Santa Fe Railroad station stood on the east side of this student housing complex.

Trains from the Santa Fe Railroad still use the tracks that pass the Oaks residence hall, Arts and Communications building, and parking structure of the University of La Verne. The Gold Line, operated by Metro and currently approaching the city, follows the tracks of the Santa Fe into the city of La Verne, reinforcing the continuing importance of railways to Southern California.

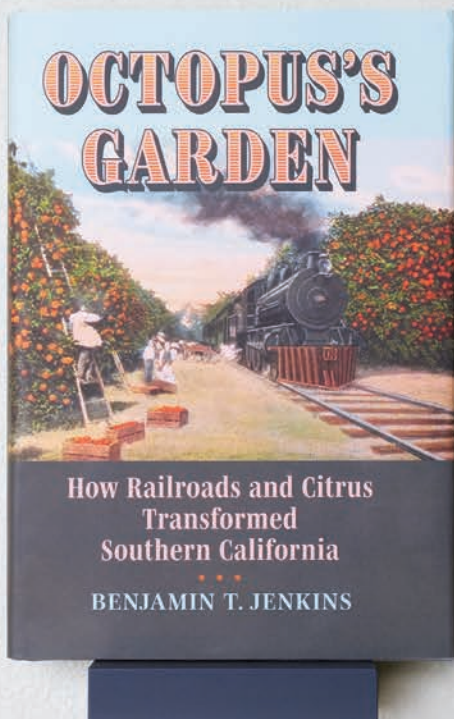


The Santa Fe Railroad station, which stood in Lordsburg and La Verne for decades.



Looking for your next good book?

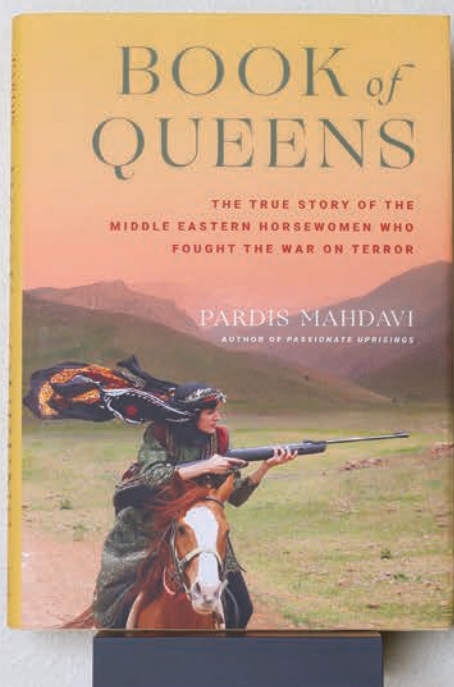
See what our faculty have written on the Bookshelf below, or by visiting voice.laverne.edu/bookshelf.



Octopus's Garden: How Railroads and Citrus Transformed Southern California

BY BENJAMIN T. JENKINS

University of La Verne Archivist and Professor Benjamin T. Jenkins presents a complex and refreshing perspective on the impact railroad companies and citrus agriculturalists had on the social and economic transformation of Southern California in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Southern California recovered from the collapse of the cattle industry in the 1860s, the arrival of railroads—attacked by newspapers as the greedy “octopus”—and the expansion of citrus agriculture transformed the struggling region into a vast, idealized, and prosperous garden.



Book of Queens: The True story of the Middle Eastern Horsewomen Who Fought the War on Terror

BY PARDIS MAHDAVI

University of La Verne President Pardis Mahdavi recounts the true and poignant tale of the Middle Eastern women who fought for freedom, liberation, and preservation of the Caspian horse. Drawing on decades of research, newly found diaries and exclusive military sources, Mahdavi pulls together the intersecting and untold stories of generations of freedom-fighters who wielded their communal knowledge as the genesis of their own liberation.



Jeffrey Torres



LAW & EDUCATION

After six years working in education, Jeffrey Torres felt he could make a greater impact in his community by becoming a legal advocate, but he also felt a continued calling in the education field. The University of La Verne helped create and guide him on a custom path toward education law.

“When I started, I didn’t know what could come about in my journey,” said Jeffrey Torres, who was the only University of La Verne student to graduate this year with joint Juris Doctor and Master of Education degrees. “I’m really blessed and thankful to the University of La Verne and my peers. They’ve given me so much that I would never have had anywhere else, and I am eternally grateful.”

Torres has a post-graduation offer to become a lawyer with Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo, a major law firm headquartered in Cerritos with several offices throughout California. The firm represents many public and private sector clients, including those in education. He is currently a law clerk for the firm and once admitted to the bar, plans to practice in both general education and special education law on behalf of school districts and educational entities throughout California.

In Memoriam

Laing Stevens '66 passed away on January 13, 2023. After graduation, he served in the Army as a first lieutenant in the Vietnam War. After his service ended, he began a lifelong career as a football coach. He is survived by his wife, Holly '67, four children, and thirteen grandchildren.

Jennifer Shepherd, EdD '17, passed away in July following a four-year battle with brain cancer. She was 39. Jenn enjoyed reading, travel, yoga, giraffes, wine, tacos, photography, and beaches. She is survived by her mother, Lisa; brother, Jason; stepdad, Bill; step-siblings, Will, Jennifer and Michelle; grandparents, Karen and Conley; and her beloved dog, Theo.

Donna Gale Bently passed away this year. She served the Wilson Library for 28 years and was bestowed an honorable faculty emeritus. Donna is survived by her brothers Baffrey Bentley of Harrington, Maine, and Charles Bentley '81 of Dayton, Nevada.

Retirements

Teresita Esquer-Castro '82 retired from teaching after forty-one years at Charles H. Lee Elementary in Azusa Unified School District.

Richard Miller '00 and his wife **Gail Miller, MEd '97**, retired in 2019. Richard worked for Starbucks as a senior facilities manager. Gail was a sixth grade math/science teacher for Etiwanda School District. They moved to Summerlin, Nevada, and enjoy traveling around the Southwest, concerts, and relaxing.

- 1 **Judy Fancher '86** celebrated her retirement from Hacienda La Puente Unified School District as assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, where she worked for more than ten years.

Awards and Achievements

Efrain Escobedo, MBA '22, was named president and CEO of the Southern California Center for Nonprofit Management.

Joey Sabers '20 is a client relationship associate at Kforce, a business-to-business staffing and recruiting company headquartered in Tampa, Florida.

Matt Ballantyne, MPA '04, was selected as Fontana's new city manager.

Stephanie Ceminsky, EdD '17, was hired as the new interim associate dean of strategic initiatives and community engagement at the LaFetra College of Education.

Norma Castañeda '12, MBA '16, was recognized as a Women Who Lead 2023 Coachella Valley High-Achiever under the business leader category.

Noelle Cobb '17 was hired as director of recruiting and assistant women's basketball coach for the University of Maryland.

Clarissa Perez '20, MBA '23, was hired as assistant women's basketball coach for Elmhurst University.

Lauren Van Lul-Vanderpool '17 received her first Emmy Award nomination by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences category from the Pacific Southwest chapter.

Professor of Leadership **Candy Singh, EdD '15**, served as the keynote speaker for the My Leading While Female Journey conference to discuss overcoming barriers and creating support factors for emerging leaders in education. She is also the inaugural LaFetra College of Education superintendent-in-residence.

ABC Unified School District hired longtime administrator **Gina Zietlow, EdD '11**, as their next superintendent.

Arsen Danielian, MA '82, JD '84, Glendale attorney and civic leader, was recognized by Pope Francis with The Papal Order of Knight Commander of Saint Sylvester, one of the most prestigious honors bestowed by the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church.

Azalea "Ozzy" Mora '13 joined KLAS 8 Las Vegas as an anchor/reporter.

Christian Orozco '16 and **Alejandra Molina '05** joined the De Los reporting staff for Los Angeles Times.

Arianna Martinez '18 joined KRCR as an evening anchor.

- 2 **Nisha (Kapoor) Morris '00** joined the National Security Agency as chief of strategic communications.

- 3 **Damion Wright, MS '04**, has been appointed the new director of the Department of Family and Children Services for the County of Santa Clara.





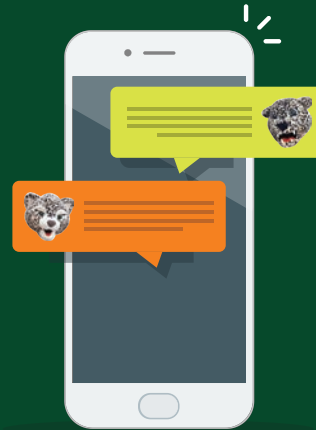
STAY CONNECTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE

The Office of Alumni Engagement has three ways to help you build your network and develop your skills.



Private Online Networking

Join thousands of graduates on the Leo Alumni Network today by visiting leoalumninetwork.com or on the Google Play app. Activate your Leo Connect profile and access jobs, promote your business, share opportunities, chat within private alumni and faculty groups, and more.



Scan here!



Text Messaging

Receive news and event information faster by signing up to receive our text message alerts. Visit alumni.laverne.edu/texting or scan the QR code to opt in today.

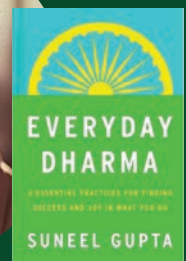
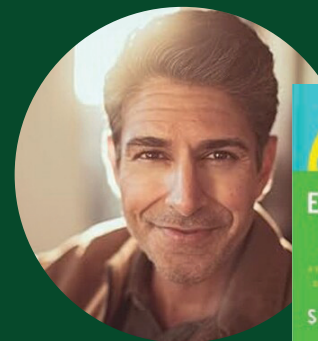
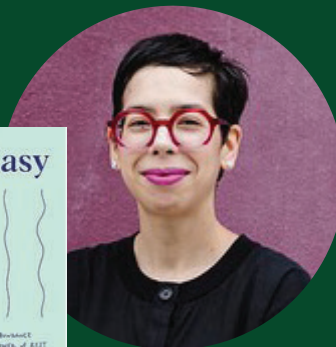
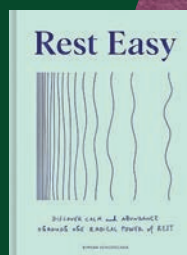
Monthly Webinars

Learn from nationally recognized talent as they discuss timely topics of interest, no travel required! Check out the alumni-exclusive lineup of speakers and register today at alumlc.org/laverne.

Wednesday, December 6th, 2023
9:00 a.m. PST

How to Discover Calm and Abundance through the Radical Power of Rest

Ximena Vengoechea, author and user researcher



Tuesday, December 12th, 2023
9:00 a.m. PST

How to Bring Who You Are and What You Do Into Alignment

Suneel Gupta, bestselling author

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President Mahdavi talks with students outside the Sara and Michael Abraham Campus Center.