

# Pomona

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Winter 2023



## **CHOOSING THE DIFFICULT**

Daring Mighty Things  
Moonshots for Unicorns  
Building a Way Home  
The Choice I Make





# 4+7 COOL THINGS

## ABOUT THE NEW CENTER FOR ATHLETICS, RECREATION AND WELLNESS

When the glass doors of the Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness swung open in October, we heard words like “beautiful,” “gorgeous” and “When can alumni use it?” Another question is what to call the nearly 100,000-square-foot building in day-to-day use. Generous gifts by **Ranney Draper '60** and **Priscilla Draper** as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (facilitated by **Libby Gates MacPhee '86**) allowed Pomona

to begin construction on the \$57 million project in 2021. Yet when the principal donors selected two special interior spaces—the fitness center and the upstairs gym—to name in commemoration, it left the building without a nickname. The acronym—CARW—wasn't doing it for **Jasper Davidoff '23**, who suggested in an opinion piece for *The Student Life* it might be better to rearrange the letters for the new home of Sagehen Athletics to a more ornithologically

correct CRAW. Other efforts to invoke the sage grouse have landed on the Nest and the Roost. Still another attempt by students to make the acronym roll off the tongue was WARC, as in a place to WARC out. For now, we'll go with that big, gorgeous, light-filled building at the end of Marston Quad between Big Bridges and Sixth Street. Hope to see you there on Alumni Weekend.

### 1 OAK TREES

Several large older oaks offer their shade near the building's entrance, and new wooden tables and chairs entice people to linger in Rains Courtyard. Along Draper Walk on the south side of the building, a row of existing mature oaks has been enhanced with two newly planted young oaks and new benches. A larger oak has been planted between the new building and

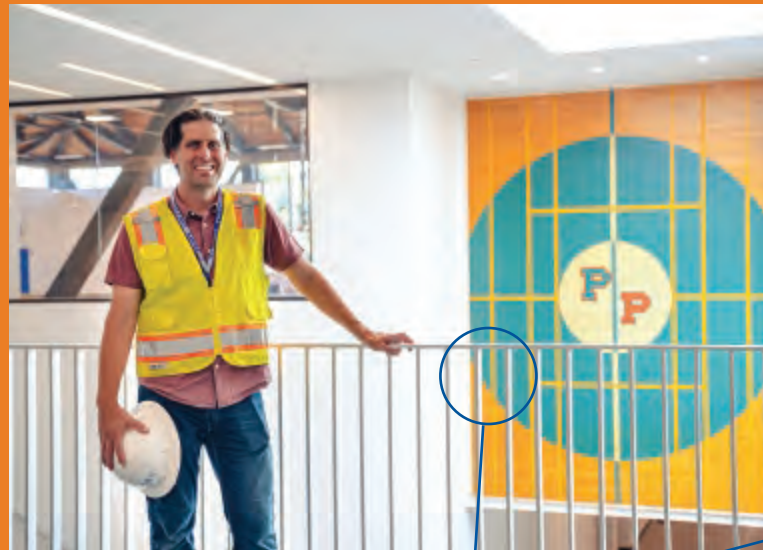
Smiley Hall, creating a small seating area outside the residence hall and a pleasant, leafy view from the fitness center. A subtle architectural reminder of Pomona's lovely old oaks are the dappled shadows that fall on the concrete beneath the perforated shade panels that line the top part of the entry portico, and at night the light from the building lends a lantern-like effect.



## 2 SKYSPACE TRIBUTE

Pomona's familiar campus Skyspace by artist **James Turrell** '65 welcomes sunrise and sunset with varied hues of light on the other side of Sixth Street. Architect Tim M. Stevens of the firm SCB added a nod to Turrell's work in designing the Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness: Look up as you pass through Rains Courtyard just before the main entrance and you'll see a rectangle of open sky, often a brilliant shade of blue.

Pomona College Project Manager **Brian Faber**, below, guided construction to completion despite the challenges of the pandemic and major supply-chain delays.



## 3 REPURPOSED WOOD

The basketball court from the earlier Memorial Gym that existed before the Rains Center opened in 1989 had been in storage for decades. The old maple court has been repurposed to gorgeous effect in the Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness, adding a midcentury vibe to an otherwise contemporary space. A feisty painted Sagehen on one piece of the court welcomes visitors to the front desk. Wood from center court, marked with the PP logo in the jump circle, can be found above the hallway leading to refurbished Voelkel Gym. And not to be overlooked, an expanse of blond refinished wood from the court provides a seating area along the large central stairway.



The mural in Studio 147 is digitally represented above. Painting was in progress.

## 4 AHMANSON STUDIO AND STUDIO 147

With double the studio space of the previous building, there can be two classes in session at once, whether they are P.E. classes, general fitness sessions or faculty/staff fitness and wellness activities. Spin cycling is a new offering, along with standbys like yoga, Pilates and high-intensity interval training.

Each studio features a student-designed mural: **Nico Cid Delgado** '25 is the artist of the one in Studio 147 downstairs, and **Kaylin Ong** '25 created the one in the Ahmanson Studio on the second floor. And yes, the first-floor studio is literally room number 147.



## 5 LOCKER ROOMS

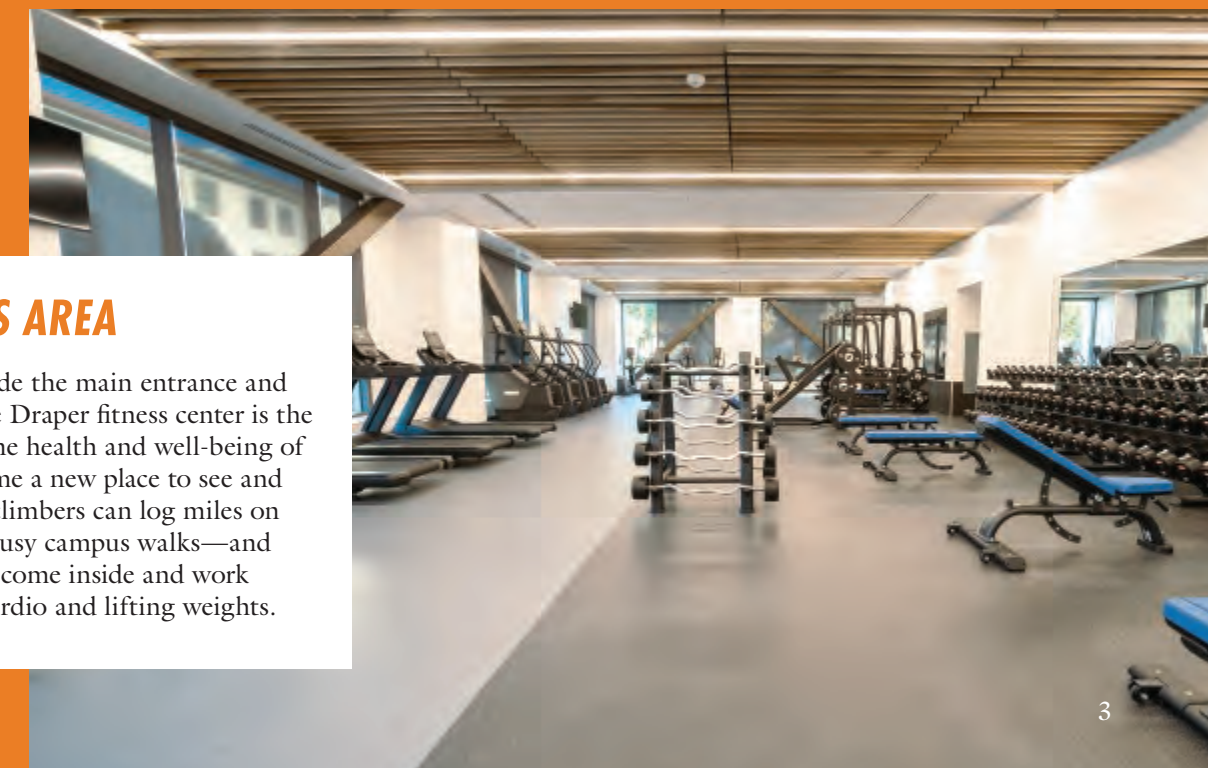
With 12 locker rooms—including day-use lockers for students, faculty and staff—the building provides enough spaces for each of Pomona-Pitzer's 21 Division III NCAA teams to have its own locker room during the season. Large, colorful banners with the sport's name and one of the team's Sagehen athletes of the past make the rooms feel special in-season—and the banners can be exchanged for a different sport's when another team

takes over later in the year. Instead of rooms that were too small or too large for a team's personnel, they are right-sized—and players love that their names are posted on their stalls.



## 6 DRAPER PUBLIC FITNESS AREA

Spanning nearly 6,000 square feet just inside the main entrance and surrounded by windows on three sides, the Draper fitness center is the heart of the building. A space to nurture the health and well-being of students, faculty and staff, it also has become a new place to see and be seen. Indoor joggers, cyclists and stair-climbers can log miles on machines with a view of the passersby on busy campus walks—and perhaps those passersby will be inspired to come inside and work out too when they glimpse others doing cardio and lifting weights.







### 7 N&N PRACTICE GYMNASIUM

*That view.* The San Gabriel Mountains are striking from many points on campus, but the sight of their snow-capped peaks in winter from the second-floor recreational and practice gym is stunning. The nearly floor-to-ceiling windows frame the scene spectacularly. Insider's tip on the N&N Gym name: It's a tribute to former head women's basketball coach **Nancy Breitenstein** (1969-92) and her longtime assistant **Nettie Morrison** by former player **Libby Gates MacPhee** '86. The teams coached by "N&N" included the 1981-82 team that reached the Final Four of the first NCAA Division III women's basketball tournament ever held, along with the string of teams that dominated the SCIAC for much of the 1980s.



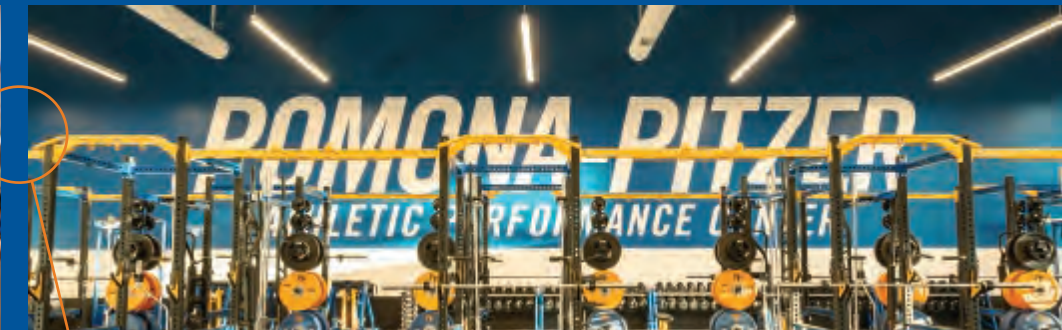
### 10 SIXTH STREET COURTYARD

What was largely neglected space along Sixth Street is now a gathering place, perfect for Sixth Street Rivalry games against Claremont-Mudd-Scripps or just a spot to pause during the day. An orderly arrangement of sycamore trees, benches made of wood and concrete, and a central planter create a sense of place. Plus, the metal wall sculpture *Four Players* by **Bret Price** '72 has a new home on an exterior wall after being moved from inside the now-demolished Memorial Gym. Another new gathering place, Rains Courtyard outside the front entrance, provides more welcoming surroundings for another large-scale metal sculpture by an alumnus, *In the Spirit of Excellence* by **Norman Hines** '61, which remains in its earlier location but is more prominent in the new landscape.



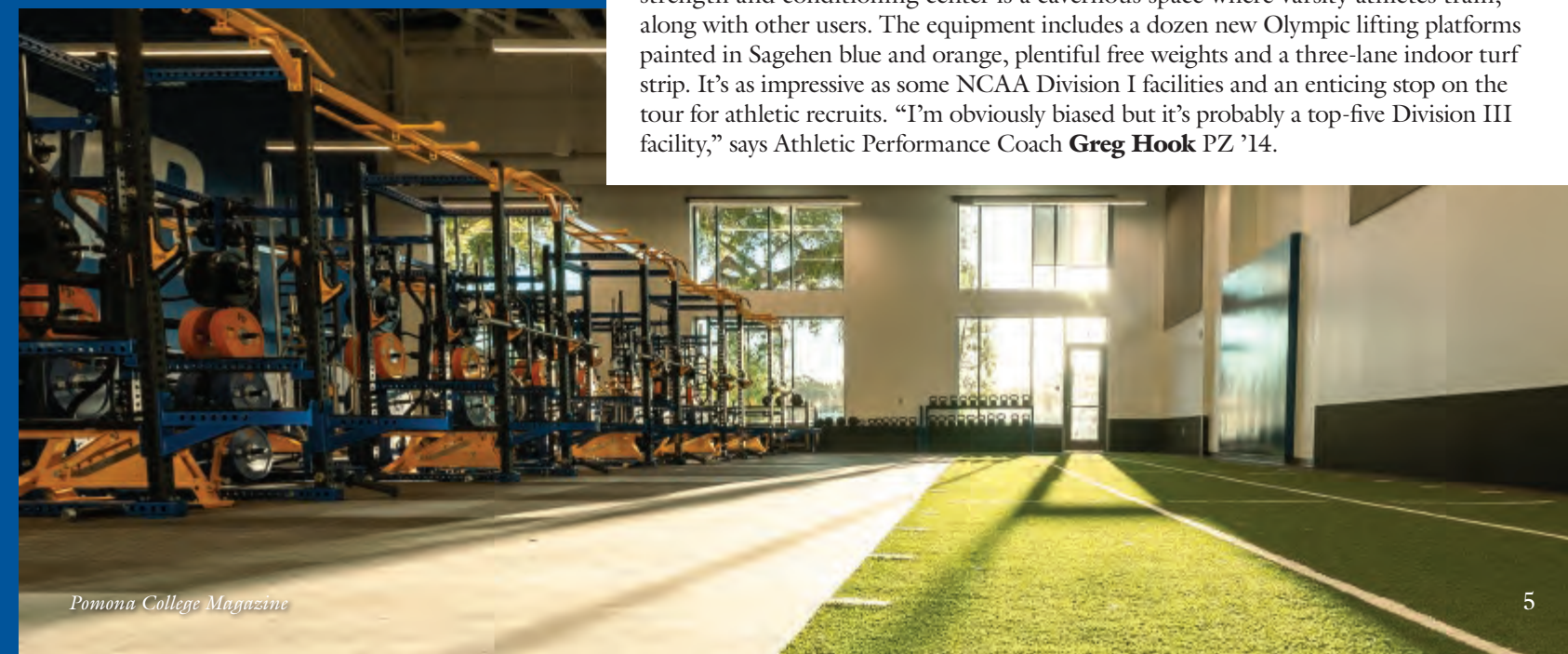
### 8 OLSON FAMILY TERRACE

Pass through the Athletics Department conference room at the back of the building on the second floor and you're suddenly in an unexpected space: The Elizabeth Graham Olson and Steve Olson Family Terrace is a spacious shaded balcony with views of Merritt Field and Alumni Field. It's a lovely spot for a small special event, a prime stop for visiting recruits and a very sweet perch to take in a football game, which comes in handy: **Liz** and **Steve Olson** are the parents of Sagehen football players **Graham Olson** '23 and **Matthias Olson** '26.



### 11 ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE CENTER

On the first floor with a wide view of Merritt Field, the nearly 5,000-square-foot strength and conditioning center is a cavernous space where varsity athletes train, along with other users. The equipment includes a dozen new Olympic lifting platforms painted in Sagehen blue and orange, plentiful free weights and a three-lane indoor turf strip. It's as impressive as some NCAA Division I facilities and an enticing stop on the tour for athletic recruits. "I'm obviously biased but it's probably a top-five Division III facility," says Athletic Performance Coach **Greg Hook** PZ '14.



### 9 HALL OF FAME

A silver platter won by **Darlene Hard** '61, a Wimbledon singles finalist who won the U.S. Open and French Open championships, is among the memorabilia in the new Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Hall of Fame display, centrally located on the first floor. Other items include the historic drum from the old Pomona-Occidental football rivalry, an 1893 silver teapot trophy and the 2019 and 2021 NCAA Division III national championship trophies won by the men's cross country team. A large mural features recent Sagehen athletes, among them Pomona's **Conor Rooney** '19, **Sophia Hui** '19, **James Baker** '17, **Caroline Casper** '19, **Sam Gearou** '19, **Danny Rosen** '20, **Vicky Marie Addo-Ashong** '20, **Jessica Finn** '18, **Andy Reischling** '19, **Genevieve DiBari** '23, **Ally McLaughlin** '16, **Tanner Nishioka** '17, **Nadia Alaiyan** '17, **Aseal Birir** '18 and **Liam O'Shea** '20.







Echoes from A Different Era

Almost everyone who comes to Pomona College learns that Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech in front of Pearsons Hall in 1903, the only visit by a sitting president in Pomona history.

In one of the stories in this issue of *Pomona College Magazine*, there's an allusion to a theme in some of Roosevelt's more famous addresses. Though the exact phrase "dare mighty things" comes from his 1899 speech "The Strenuous Life," the better-known speech is "The Man in the Arena," itself part of a longer address called "Citizenship in a Republic" that Roosevelt delivered in Paris in 1910.

A popular figure at the time, Roosevelt is more controversial today for certain imperialist and racist views. And the famous speech is mostly spoiled for me anyway by Richard Nixon's use of it as he resigned the presidency in disgrace in 1974, still believing he was being persecuted.

What draws me in isn't the "It is not the critic who counts," part, though granted, that might have something to do with my background in journalism. Instead, it's the words at the end about being willing to fail in striving for a worthy cause. Like poet Robert Browning's idea that one's reach should exceed one's grasp, it encourages aiming for more than we might be able to achieve, along with accepting that we may be judged for it.

That willingness to try, not blindly but with a clear understanding that they might not be able to do the thing they set out to do, is at the heart of several of the stories in this issue. Jessie Berman Boatright '98 and Laila Bernstein '04 work intently in Boston with their teams in the Mayor's Office of Housing to try to end homelessness, even though it often seems like every time 100 people find homes, another 100 appear in the streets. Laura Kerber '06 works at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, where virtually every shot is a long shot. And Zach Landman '08 and his wife Geri, both physicians, are bringing to bear all their training, talents and connections to try to find a cure for their daughter Lucy's rare genetic disorder. Even if they can't, they've launched a foundation to try to discover therapies that might help cure other children with single-gene disorders.

There's another story in this issue that reflects a different type of persistence and conviction. It's an essay by physician Atsuko Koyama '96 about why she has chosen to be an abortion provider. I ask you to hear her out to better understand why her professional and personal experiences have led to her decision, and to respect her readiness to explain it.

These Pomona alumni exhibit a boldness some educators believe is diminishing among high-achieving students: the willingness to fail. When getting a B feels like failure for students trying to gain admission to highly selective colleges or graduate schools, it can lead to not attempting courses or projects beyond ones they're confident they'll master. When a student at another college once told me she had failed an engineering course in statics, I remember being surprised she didn't change her major. She took the course again, passed it, won a six-figure federal grant for her technology startup and completed her degree.

So here's to trying, and to trying again.

—Robyn Norwood

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EDITOR  
Robyn Norwood ([robyn.norwood@pomona.edu](mailto:robyn.norwood@pomona.edu))

ART DIRECTOR  
Eric Melgosa ([eric.melgosa@pomona.edu](mailto:eric.melgosa@pomona.edu))

BOOKS EDITOR  
Lorraine Wu Harry '97 ([pcmbbooks@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmbbooks@pomona.edu))

CLASS NOTES EDITOR  
Catherine Gaugh ([pcmnotes@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmnotes@pomona.edu))

CONTRIBUTORS  
**Atsuko Koyama** '96 ("The Choice I Make") is a pediatric emergency medicine physician and abortion provider. She also is a fellow with Physicians for Reproductive Health and a Doctors for America health justice and equity committee leader.

**Mark Kreidler** ("Moonshots for Unicorns") is a California-based writer and broadcaster and the author of three books, including *Four Days to Glory*.

**George Spencer** ("Building a Way Home") is a writer based in Hillsborough, North Carolina. A former executive editor of the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, he writes for numerous alumni magazines including those at Princeton, Brown, Notre Dame, the University of Virginia, Georgia Tech and the University of North Carolina.

CONTRIBUTING STAFF  
Lorraine Wu Harry '97  
Jeff Hing, *photographer*  
Marilyn Thomsen  
Kristopher Vargas, *photographer*

SUBMISSIONS AND CHANGES  
For class notes, address changes, photos and birth or death notices, email [pcmnotes@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmnotes@pomona.edu) or phone (909) 607-8129. For consideration for book publication notices, email [pcmbbooks@pomona.edu](mailto:pcmbbooks@pomona.edu). For other editorial matters or submissions, email [pcm@pomona.edu](mailto:pcm@pomona.edu) or mail a letter to *Pomona College Magazine*, 550 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711. Magazine policies are available at [pomona.edu/pcm-guidelines](http://pomona.edu/pcm-guidelines).

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PRESIDENT  
G. Gabrielle Starr

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER  
Mark Kendall

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Cover: Photo illustration of what the view might look like from inside a lunar cave if it were explored by the Axel rover. Rover image is courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech. Illustration is not to scale.

**CHOOSING  
THE DIFFICULT**

**FEATURES**

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**Daring Mighty Things 23**

No one has ever explored caves in another world. Laura Kerber '06 has set out to change that.

**Moonshots for Unicorns 28**

Racing against time for a cure for their daughter's rare genetic disorder, Zach Landman '08 and his wife Geri, both physicians, try to help other families too.

**Building a Way Home 34**

While other cities struggle to make headway against homelessness, Jessica Boatright '98 and Laila Bernstein '04 have helped reduce the number of people without housing in Boston by 28%.

**The Choice I Make 38**

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, abortion laws became a shifting patchwork across the country. But where you live and who you are have always determined the health care you receive in the United States. A physician tells her story.

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## Kudos to the Pandemic Graduates

I came home from summer vacation to find the Summer 2022 edition of *PCM* had arrived. What a joyful read! I love the beautiful graduation photos for all three classes. They fought hard these past few years and I'm overjoyed to see them celebrating together.

I admire the members of the classes of 2020, 2021 and 2022 so much. While they couldn't spend their years together the way anyone would have imagined, they're linked in a new and different way. I think they'll find power in remembering what they've overcome as individuals, and together.

I also loved the "Heart to Heart" article with my classmate **Roxanne Ruzicka Maas '94** and **Elisa Louizos '96**. They didn't just survive something frightening. They chose to renew their friendship, and renew their commitments to living with love and meaning.

I always feel a little restless in the fall, like I should be starting a new academic pursuit. So I'll take this renewal and inspiration with me as I head back to work, and take my daughter Bailey to first grade.

—Christina Caldwell Lobo '94  
Ballwin, Missouri

## Remembering William Irwin Thompson '62

I noted with sadness the passing of **William Irwin Thompson '62** (Spring 2022). Thompson was one of the formative writers of my early 20s. I read two of his books—*At the Edge of History* and *Passages About Earth*—before I even knew I would be transferring to Pomona, which I eventually did in fall 1975. Those books offered a heady brew of history, philosophy, religion, literature, art and anthropology, all in the service of nudging what Thompson saw as a nascent planetary culture into being.

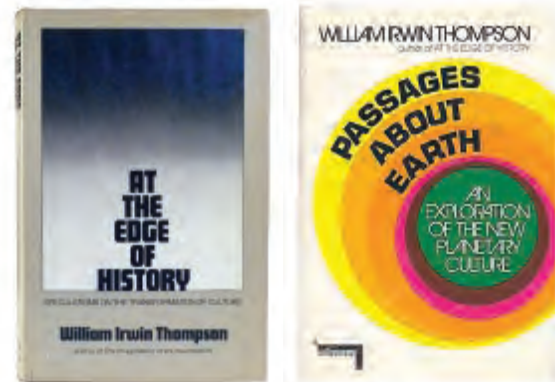
For someone coming of age in the early '70s, they offered a vision of culture more grounded and hopeful than the unhinged and rapacious one we were instead coming to inhabit. I have continued to collect and read his writings over the years, and while my older, more pessimistic self may not have found them quite so intoxicating, they still provoked and stimulated as well as introduced me to writers (Francisco Varela, James Lovelock, Lynn Margulis, Evan Thompson) and ideas (embodied minds, Gaia hypothesis) that at the time were outside the mainstream.

After I learned of Thompson's death, I ran across an online interview he gave in 2008. This passage caught my eye: "And I didn't get into UCLA or a conventional school, but I was able to talk my way into Pomona as a

maverick. The professor said, 'We're allowed one oddball a year. I will make you my oddball for this year if you go back and finish your high school diploma.'" I thought, Hey, that's me! I too had a checkered high school record and a vexed relation with educational institutions generally. My first semester, Chemistry Professor **Wayne Steinmetz** told me I was the very last applicant the admissions committee decided on, hinting that his doubts persisted. But I stayed on despite having my own doubts about Pomona that first year. And though my life has followed a very different path than Thompson's, I'm grateful Pomona saw fit to take a chance on us both and that it was the kind of place that offered us the means to find our footing and flourish in our own distinct ways.

—Rick Penticoff '78  
Moscow, Idaho

P.S. Your notice makes it appear as if *At the Edge of History* and *Passages About Earth* are one book. They are two—*Edge* was published in 1971; *Passages* in 1974.



## Pomona's Contributions to Diplomacy

I was thrilled to read in the summer issue "Partners in Prague" by **Doug Morrow '01** and **Erik Black '95**, relating their efforts in Prague and elsewhere to "share and strengthen" our democratic values there. It is heartening to read that these two Pomona grads recognize the importance of constant vigilance in this respect. Even in our own country, we need reminders of the significance of these values. Thank you for publishing their story.

—Jane Barnes '58  
Julian, California



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

## President G. Gabrielle Starr Joins Academy of Arts and Sciences



There was a distinct Pomona College presence at the induction ceremonies of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in September, as College President **G. Gabrielle Starr** formally joined the distinguished academy led by **David Oxtoby**, who preceded her as Pomona College president.

Starr, a national voice on access to college for students of all backgrounds as well as the future of higher education, was selected for her role in educational and academic leadership. Also a literary scholar and neuroscientist, she took office as the 10th president of Pomona College in 2017.

Elected to the academy in 2020, Starr was inducted in a ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts, along with influential artists, scientists, scholars, authors and institutional leaders from the classes of 2020 and 2021 after delays due to the pandemic. Others inducted included singer Joan C. Baez, former U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. and author Ann Patchett.

Other Sagehens entered the academy alongside Starr. Alumna **Adela Yarbrow Collins '67**, an internationally renowned and respected scholar of the New Testament, also was elected in 2020. She is the Buckingham Professor Emerita of New Testament

Criticism and Interpretation at Yale Divinity School. Alumnus **Thomas McDade '91**, elected to the academy in 2021, is a biological anthropologist specializing in human population biology and is the Carlos Montezuma Professor of Anthropology and Faculty Fellow at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University.

New inductees signed the academy's Book of Members, which already includes numerous Sagehens. Among them are scientists **Jennifer Doudna '85**, **Sarah Elgin '67**, **J. Andrew McCammon '69** and **Tom Pollard '64**; author **Louis Menand '73**, art historian **Ingrid Rowland '74**, artist **James Turrell '65**, journalist **Joe Palca '74** and developmental psychologist **Henry Wellman '70**.

The academy is led by Oxtoby, inducted in 2012 and named president in 2018. He served as president of Pomona College from 2003 until 2017. Starr became the third Pomona College president to join the academy. The late **David Alexander**, Pomona's president from 1969 to 1991, was inducted in 2006.

Chartered in 1780, the academy has counted Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson among its members, as well as 20th-century luminaries such as Margaret Mead and Martin Luther King Jr. The current membership includes more than 300 Nobel laureates, some 100 Pulitzer Prize winners and many of the world's most celebrated artists and performers.

## A Grant for Inclusive Excellence

Pomona's newly created Institute for Inclusive Excellence will benefit from an \$800,000 grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). The six-year grant is part of the HHMI Inclusive Excellence initiative, which incentivizes four-year colleges and universities to build capacity for inclusion on their own campuses, especially in the sciences. Pomona is one of 108 schools across the country that were invited to take part in HHMI's current Inclusive Excellence 3 initiative. Most of the grant will go directly toward supporting programming through the College's new institute, which is co-directed by **Travis Brown** and Professor of Biology **Sharon Stranford**. Pomona's initial focus is on faculty and staff professional development in inclusive teaching and mentorship.



Travis Brown



Sharon Stranford

Recent graduates make the traditional exit through the College Gates during the May 2022 delayed Commencement celebrations for the pandemic Classes of 2020 and 2021.





## New Eckstein Scholarship for Refugees

Whether displaced by war, political upheaval or natural disaster, students fleeing crisis could soon find refuge at Pomona College through the new Dr. Albert Eckstein and Liese Bendheim Eckstein Scholarship.

Established by Pomona College Trustee **Paul Eckstein '62** P'92 GP'26 and his wife **Florence** P'92 GP'26 in memory of Paul's parents with a gift of \$1.2 million, the permanently endowed scholarship will provide students with refugee status and financial need a chance to continue their education.

Paul's father, Albert, born in 1908 in what is now Romania, immigrated to America with his family as a teenager to escape the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. Encountering quotas on Jewish students in U.S. medical schools, Albert returned to Europe to attend medical school in Germany, where he met Liese Lotte Bendheim. With Hitler in power by the time Albert earned his degree in 1936, the couple left Germany for the U.S. ahead of the horrors of the Holocaust.

Paul said his father often spoke about the extraordinary waste of human talent caused by the Holocaust, other wars and political upheaval. Both Flo and Paul know his parents would be proud the endowed scholarship carries their names. Thinking of future recipients, Paul says, "Who knows if they will be Nobel Prize winners, great senators, or wonderful writers or musicians? I like to dream and think this gift will in some way help facilitate that."



Liese and Albert Eckstein, top left, in a family photo at son Paul's 1962 graduation from Pomona, along with images of their U.S. citizenship papers. The QR code at right links to a Pomona video of the family's story.

## New COO and Treasurer Jeff Roth

**Jeff Roth**, an innovative finance leader with experience at top higher education institutions and the nation's largest public library system, joined the College as vice president, chief operating officer and treasurer in September.

He previously was an associate vice president for academic planning and budgeting at UCLA, where he worked to increase transparency in allocation decisions for the \$10 billion annual operating budget and developed a multi-year budget approach to strengthen the university's finances for the future. Before joining UCLA in 2016, Roth served in a series of key leadership roles over 15 years at the New York Public Library, directing finance and strategic planning for the 92-location system, largest in the U.S. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and an MBA from Rutgers Graduate School of Management.



## Geology Department Turns 100



Founded in 1922 by **A.O. Woodford**, a 1913 graduate of the College better known as Woody, the Geology Department has marked its centennial year. So did Woodford, a one-man department for 30 years who died in 1990 at the age of 100. A great-nephew of Pomona co-founder Rev. James Harwood, Woodford majored in chemistry before earning a Ph.D. studying soil science at UC Berkeley. In addition to his research, Woodford was known for developing scientists. Among them was **Roger Revelle '29**, an early predictor of global warming. UC San Diego's Revelle College bears his name.

## On Board: 3 Distinguished Alumni Join the College's Board of Trustees

**John Gingrich '91** is the office managing director for Accenture in Northern California, leading more than 5,000 people who work out of the company's San Francisco Innovation Hub and San Jose offices. He is responsible for Accenture's talent development and recruiting as well as growing the business and maintaining strong client relationships. He also works to deepen relationships with local community organizations, nonprofits, higher education institutions and government entities. Gingrich returned to Accenture in 2020 from Bay Area startup Humu, where he held the position of chief revenue officer. Earlier in his career he spent nearly three decades at Accenture. Gingrich is a board member and past board chair of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. He also is a director for the Elizabeth V. Sanderson Foundation, which provides animal rescue resources and land preservation grants to help protect the environment. Born in Pomona and raised in Claremont, Gingrich majored in international relations at Pomona. His wife, **Christine Currie '91**, is a Pomona alumna. Their son **Gus Gingrich '24** is a current student.



**Wei Hopeman '92** is a co-founder and managing partner of Arbor Ventures, a leading Asia-based fintech-focused venture capital firm founded in 2013. Arbor uses its global vantage point, extensive network and deep sector knowledge to identify key trends and partner closely with leading entrepreneurs to build transformational companies. Hopeman previously was managing director and head of Asia for Citi Ventures, chief China representative for Jefferies & Co. and a technology investment banker at Goldman Sachs in Silicon Valley. She currently serves on the board of directors of Booking Holdings and numerous private technology firms. After graduating from Pomona College with a major in international relations, Hopeman earned an MBA at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

**Jim Valone '85** is a retired emerging markets investment professional who is actively involved in nonprofit work. From 1999 to 2021, he worked at Wellington Management, where he founded and led the firm's emerging markets debt (EMD) effort. During his tenure, he built out a suite of EMD products, led a team of 35 professionals and grew assets under management to over \$35 billion. Prior to joining Wellington, Valone was a portfolio manager at Baring Asset Management and an analyst and portfolio manager at Fidelity Management. In retirement he continues to invest in emerging markets through his private investment fund, 4747 LLC. Valone's nonprofit work is concentrated in youth education and sustainability causes. He serves on the boards of the Wellington Foundation and Empower. Valone also is a board member of the Emerging Markets Investors Alliance, which promotes good governance and sustainable development in emerging markets. After majoring in economics at Pomona, he went on to earn an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business. He and his wife, **Lisa Valone '96**, live in Wayland, Massachusetts, and have two grown children.





## A Mufti Revival

There's talk lately of strengthening connections between generations of Sagehens through the College's traditions. One that has been missing in action was known as Mufti, a secret society whose members used to post anonymous paper messages laden with puns and other word play on buildings around campus. Often, the messages had to do with campus controversies of the moment that are indecipherable years later. In recent years, Mufti had gone silent. But in September, a message stuck to campus spots that included a bench, a lamppost and a few buildings provided commentary on the heat, drought and college rankings and concluded, "Fear not, comrades, for MUFTI is near/To bring you all some meager cheer..." It also included a QR code. Very 21st century. If you're ready to spill some tea about Mufti past or present or tell us about *your* favorite Pomona tradition, write to us at [pcm@pomona.edu](mailto:pcm@pomona.edu).



*Vintage Mufti messages courtesy of Kristen McCabe Romero PZ '92, Advancement Communications and Events*

## Band's Name Is No Typoo

Last winter, a brewery near campus was looking for a band to play as an opening act. A group of Claremont Colleges musicians quickly pulled one together and gave the event's organizers the band name "Tea Room" as a placeholder.

"They spelled 'room' with three o's," says saxophonist **Dylan Yin '23**, one of several

musicians from Pomona's jazz ensemble invited by keyboardist Alex Arguelles PZ '24 to join the impromptu group. "We looked at it, we looked at each other and we nodded."

Tea Room became the official name, though the bandmates joke that they should add another extra o after every show.

Each performance since has reflected the quirkiness and versatility of the band.

"We're not afraid to try songs we've never played before live, take audience recommendations or remix songs that already exist," says drummer **Jeremy Martin '25**, adding that the bandmates try to have a sense of humor in everything they do.

"We're serious musicians who don't take ourselves too seriously," he says.

Trumpet player **Nico Santamaria '25** attributes their improvisational tendencies to the group's jazz background. Vocalist Cece Malone PZ '24 and guitarist Amya Bolden PZ '24 appreciate that the spontaneous approach doesn't focus on technicalities. It's a constant learning experience, personalizing performances and interacting with each new audience.

"Music is all about expressing yourself and seeing if other people will relate to that emotion," Arguelles says. "We can be whatever people need us to be. That's quite lovely."

A year later, the band is still playing gigs and has added guitarist **Aden Cicourel '26** as Bolden takes a more part-time role. Says Martin: "I wish I could give you a better idea of how many o's we're on, but I think we may have lost track!"

—*Oluymisi Bolonduro '23*



*A 2022 Tea Room performance with saxophonist Dylan Yin '23 at the mic. Photo by Lillian Visaya PZ '24*

*Taylor Swift performs in Bridges Auditorium on October 15, 2012. Photos courtesy of Frank Micelotta for VH1 Storytellers*



Were You There?

Taylor Swift's upcoming 2023 tour sparked a frenzy that turned into a fiasco for unprepared Ticketmaster.

Remember when she played Bridges Auditorium?

It's been 10 years since Swift's live acoustic concert on the Pomona campus on October 15, 2012. The 22-year-old played for about 3,000 of her millennial peers at The Claremont Colleges, thanks to Harvey Mudd students who leveraged strategy and social media to tally the top score in the "Taylor Swift on Campus" contest sponsored by Chegg, the textbook rental and edtech company.

The Bridges concert even led to a wedding. **Tyler Womack '15** and **Vicente Robles '16** met at Pomona and became good friends after Robles gave Womack free tickets he won in a lottery. After a 10-year courtship, the couple married on campus in Richardson Garden next to Seaver House. "You Belong With Me," was part of the early romance that led to the couple's wedding on campus on June 18, 2022.

Swift is scheduled to launch her tour in March and wrap up in the Los Angeles area in August with multiple dates at SoFi Stadium. Never ever getting back together? Ms. Swift, it's a mere 45 miles to Marston Quad.

## Sagecast, the podcast of Pomona College, is back.

Recorded in the studios of KSPC 88.7 FM, Pomona's campus radio station, the fifth season offers a chance to listen in on vibrant intellectual conversations with Pomona College professors and hosts **Patty Vest** and **Marilyn Thomsen**. Featured faculty include **Rosalia Romero** (art history), **Gary Kates** (history), **Ellie Anderson** (philosophy), **Pierangelo De Pace** (economics) and **Rose Portillo** (theatre). Listen at [pomona.edu/sagecast](http://pomona.edu/sagecast) or look us up on the podcast sites of Apple, Google or Spotify.



## The Sontag Legacy

The name Sontag is a fixture on campus, and Pomona said farewell to a benefactor whose generosity and spirit inspired many when **Susan Thomas Sontag '64 P'95** died in September, more than 28 years after being told she had terminal brain cancer and only a few years to live.

The Sontag legacy at Pomona is immense, but a guide to the family tree may be helpful. Philosophy Professor **Frederick E. Sontag**, known as Fred, influenced generations of students in his 57 years at the College. It is for him that the Sontag Greek Theatre in the wooded area known as the Wash is named.

Fred's nephew **Frederick B. Sontag HMC '64**, known as Rick, met Susan Thomas while growing up in Long Beach and reconnected when she transferred from UC Berkeley to Pomona when he was a student at Harvey Mudd. They became inseparable, married and eventually

purchased a small aviation components business, Unison Industries, that they built into a company with 1,500 employees and nearly \$200 million in annual revenue before selling it to General Electric in 2002.

The couple became extraordinary supporters of education, particularly with gifts to Pomona and Harvey Mudd College. Each college has a residence hall named in their honor. (Pomona's LEED Platinum Sontag Hall was completed in 2011.) The couple also established the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity, popularly known as the Hive, to serve The Claremont Colleges, providing both initial operating expenses and an endowment to ensure its longevity.

Beyond campus, they established the Sontag Foundation for brain cancer research and the Brain Tumor Network to help patients affected by brain tumors.

*Pomona's Sontag Hall*



"Their commitment to a greater cause serves as a reminder of our community's enduring mission," says Pomona College President **G. Gabrielle Starr**.



# Uncommon Purpose

In *Saving Ryan*, physician-scientist **Emil Kakkis** '82 chronicles the 30-year journey to develop a first-ever treatment for the ultra-rare genetic disease mucopolysaccharidosis, known as MPS. At the center of the story are Ryan Dant, who was diagnosed with potentially fatal MPS type I at age 3, and his parents, who started a foundation to support the development of the treatment. Dant is now in his 30s, a college graduate and recently married.

PCM's Lorraine Wu Harry '97 talked to Kakkis—also founder, president and CEO of the biopharmaceutical company Ultragenyx—about the book, his time at Pomona and advice for young people today. The interview has been edited and condensed for length and clarity.

**PCM: What was your impetus for writing the book? Who do you hope will read it?**

**Kakkis:** One impetus was to capture the challenge of getting a treatment for rare disease developed from a policy perspective, to highlight the requirements the Food and Drug Administration has put that are quite difficult, near impossible. While we succeeded, it was so close to being missing. It shouldn't have been because it's straightforward science. I intended the book to help with the FDA and Capitol Hill on the policy issues regarding the regulation of these rare disease drugs. At the same time, I wanted to capture for families out there that the impossible can be achieved, that you don't have to be a scientist—Mark Dant was a police officer, and his wife was a programmer—that you can come together and figure out how to treat your kid. It was a story for inspiration for those families.

**PCM: Did you keep journals along the way? There are so many details you remember from the last 30 years.**

**Kakkis:** Some of them were seared into my brain. I remember them very specifically. I

had memos and letters that helped me place things in time. What the book does is jump from moment to moment in time. I was really writing about the things that were memorable. Things like an FDA meeting. That meeting I remember very, very vividly.

**PCM: Tell me about your time at Pomona: what you studied, how it shaped you, how it prepared you for your work.**

**Kakkis:** I spent my time at Pomona as a biology major. I took a lot of chemistry, biochemistry and a fair amount of philosophy too. I took a course with [Professor Fred] Sontag when I was a freshman. I thought I was a good writer, and then I discovered that I was not a good writer. Sontag had a great policy. You wrote your first paper; he graded it and he graded it thoroughly. If you rewrote the paper based on the comments, then he would grade the new one too and average it with your first draft. I ended up rewriting every single paper. What he was doing was encouraging you. It started me thinking about how to express yourself and how to edit yourself. How to think ahead, how things sound, how they read.

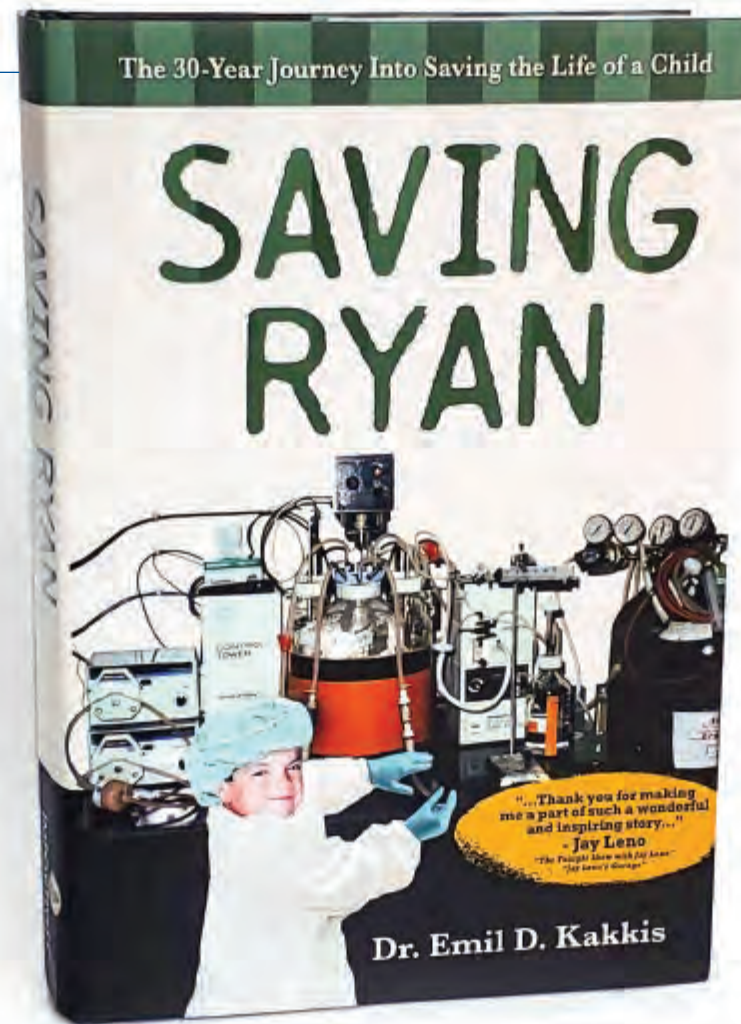
It was a really important piece of learning.

The science training was, of course, excellent. As an undergrad I was running the research; there wasn't a grad student. Therefore, you had to learn and organize the research yourself and conduct experiments and plan what you were going to do. It's a good test for your ability to organize and execute, which serves you well later. You've done it before, as opposed to being a helper on someone else's project where you're just following along. Having to do it yourself as an undergraduate researcher challenges you to think harder, deeper and to be able to plan and execute an actual research program.

**PCM: Would you have any advice for Pomona students who are either aspiring physicians or scientists, or both?**

**Kakkis:** The important thing that I put in the book is the discovery of your true purpose for your career. It shouldn't be about money, or fame or prizes. It should be, what do you want to do that's going to be meaningful, that will last and be important?

In college, you have a lot of reasons why you might become an M.D.-Ph.D. Finding



your true purpose will help you make better decisions as you go forward that are not about your fame or about money but about doing the right thing that helps achieve something lasting. You could talk about prizes or tenure, but there's nothing quite like talking with Ryan or meeting him, finding out how he's doing and realizing that you've changed the course of his life and the lives of many other kids with MPS I. There's a real purpose to what you can get done in research if you find that purpose. And if you adhere to it, then you can have a career that's without regret and achieve great things.

**PCM: What has been the reception to your book?**

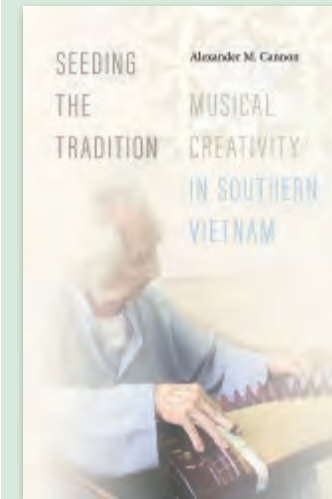
**Kakkis:** The reception has been really good. I'm happy I got it done because at least the story is down on paper. The truth is, like any movie or writer, there are always imperfections you wish could be better, but I do feel it captures the story enough that others can relive it and maybe draw from it what it takes to do the impossible and how gratifying and exhilarating it can be.

**PCM: I could see it becoming a movie.**

**Kakkis:** That's right. I'm going to be lobbying for George Clooney to play me. He was a great pediatrician on *ER*; he needs to be a pediatrician in the movie. He's done everything else. He's been a lawyer and other things. It's time for him to be a doctor again.

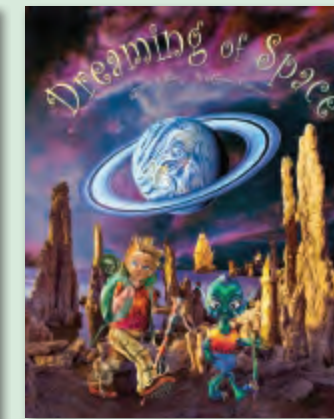
**PCM: Any last things you'd like to share?**

**Kakkis:** You always wonder what you can do with your life. I've run into students lately, especially post-pandemic, that feel like there's nothing that they want to do or nothing great, no place to go. The truth is, there are incredible projects that are waiting for them that they've never heard of, that they can find, that will give their life great meaning and purpose. They should keep searching for that thing and find that passion and that purpose and do great things. You may not have any idea what it is—I certainly had no idea when I was in college, but it came out, it was found. I hope people get the inspiration to seek that mission and find their purpose. Even though you have no idea what it is now, it will come, and then you have to see it in front of you and know when it's time that this is the thing I need to do. **PCM**



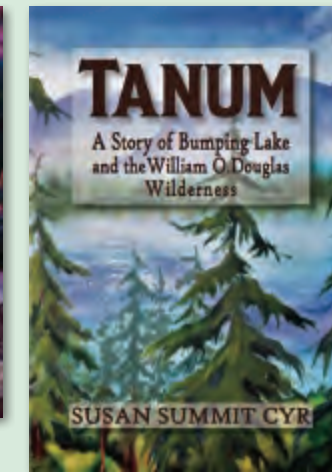
**Seeding the Tradition: Musical Creativity in Southern Vietnam**

**Alexander Cannon** '05 explores southern Vietnamese traditional music while suggesting revised approaches to studying creativity in contemporary ethnomusicology.



**Dreaming of Space**

In this children's book, **Grant Collier** '96 combines photos with illustrations to tell the story of a boy who dreams that aliens take him on a journey across the universe.



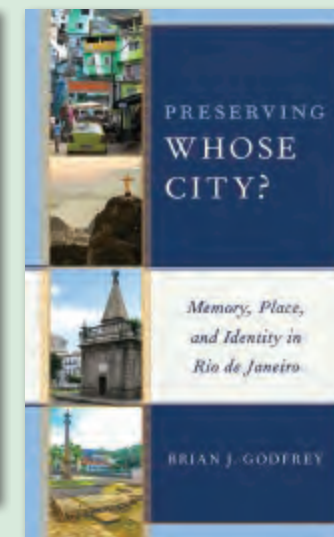
**Tanum: A Story of Bumping Lake and the William O. Douglas Wilderness**

**Susan Summit Cyr** '85 P '13 recounts the history of the little-known pocket of Bumping Lake in Washington state and the conservationists who fought to preserve it.



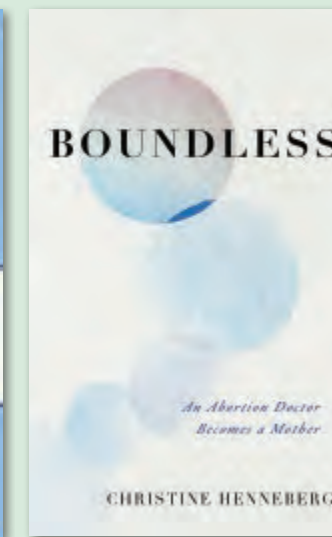
**Bibliophiles, Murderous Bookmen, and Mad Librarians: The Story of Books in Modern Spain**

**Robert Ellis** '77 examines how books are represented in modern Spanish writing and how Spanish bibliophiles reflect on the role of books in their lives.



**Preserving Whose City? Memory, Place, and Identity in Rio de Janeiro**

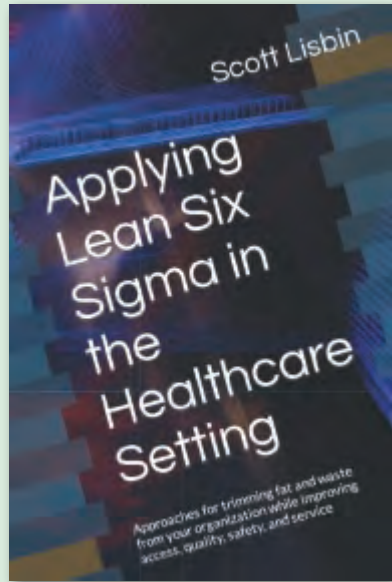
Geographer **Brian J. Godfrey** '74 describes preservation projects undertaken in Rio de Janeiro since the 1930s and the role of memory in placemaking.



**Boundless: An Abortion Doctor Becomes a Mother**

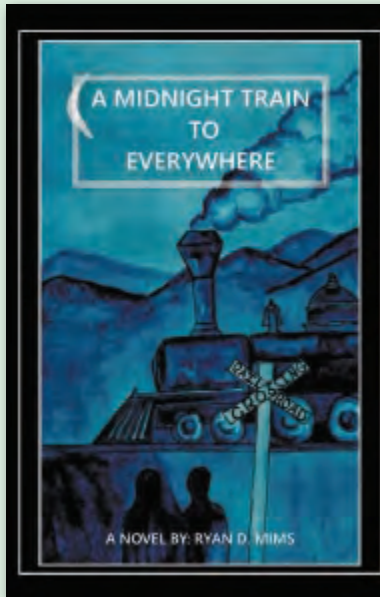
Through weaving her personal narrative with stories of her patients, **Christine Henneberg** '05 deals with the complexities of motherhood and choice.





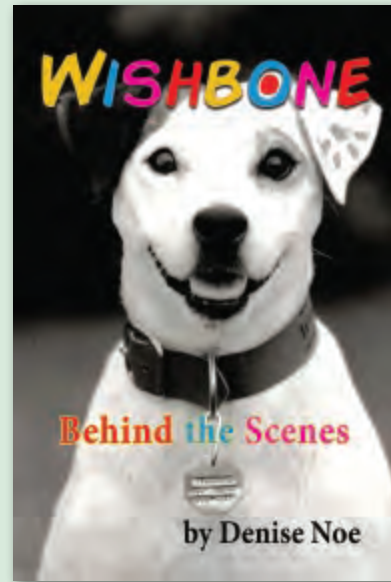
**Applying Lean Six Sigma in the Healthcare Setting**

**Scott Lisbin '77** advises healthcare professionals on improving access, quality, safety, service and affordability in the healthcare environment.



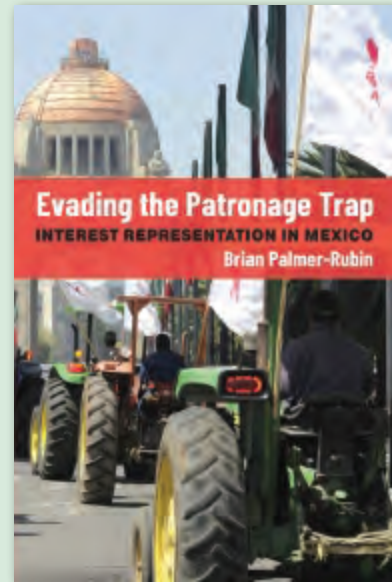
**A Midnight Train to Everywhere**

This paranormal fantasy novel by **Ryan Mims '99** takes readers on an adventure through the afterlife and across the multiverse.



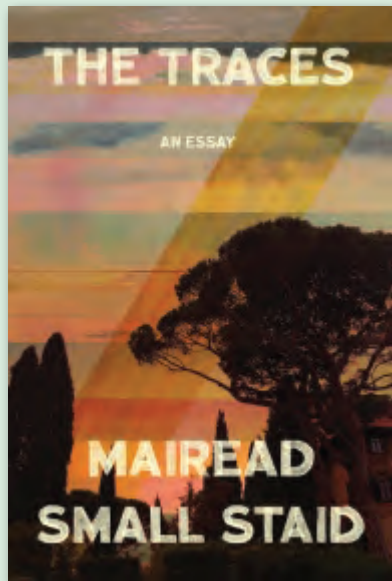
**Wishbone Behind the Scenes**

**Denise Noe '81** goes behind the scenes to show how this educational children's TV program starring a Jack Russell Terrier was created.



**Evading the Patronage Trap: Interest Representation in Mexico**

**Brian Palmer-Rubin '04** unpacks how reliance on economic interest organizations undermines interest representation in developing democracies.



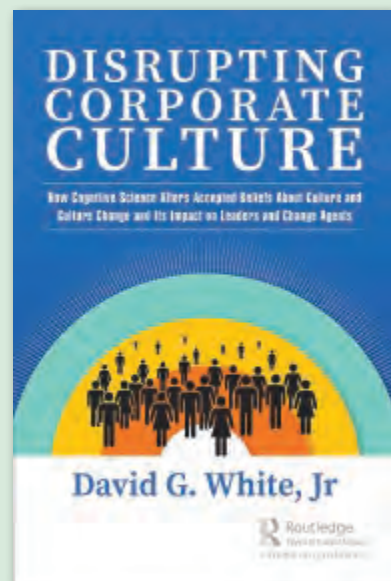
**The Traces**

In this memoir, **Mairead Small Staid '10** draws on the fields of physics, history, architecture and cartography to explore the nature of happiness and memory.



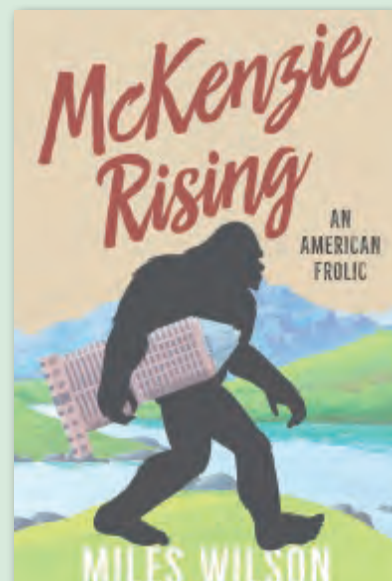
**To Be Enlightened**

This fantasy novel by **Alan J. Steinberg '79** passes on lessons on meditation and enlightenment by following the life of a fictional philosophy professor at Pomona College.



**Disrupting Corporate Culture**

**David G. White Jr. '83** uses cognitive science research to provide a guide on how to sustainably change culture in the business world.



**McKenzie Rising: An American Frolic**

**Miles Wilson '66** satirizes contemporary America and its institutions in this novel about MegaMax Corporation's venture to turn the McKenzie Valley into an upscale development.

*Kenneth Gonzalez '24, Simon Heck '22 and Liz Johnson '24 work with Anthony Clark, assistant professor of computer science.*



# HOW TO TEACH A ROBOT

*by Marilyn Thomsen*

Someday, when a storm downs trees and power lines on campus or elsewhere, emergency workers may turn to autonomous robots for help with immediate surveillance.

“Maybe you want a robot to roam around campus, because it’s safer for them than for a human,” says Anthony Clark, assistant professor of computer science. “Maybe you have 10 robots that can take pictures and report back, ‘Hey, there’s a tree down here, a limb fallen there, this looks like a power line that’s down,’” he says, and technicians can be dispatched immediately to the correct location.

That day may not be too far off, thanks to research being conducted by Clark and three Pomona computer science majors. Right now they are working on computer simulations, exploring how to train autonomous robots to navigate the campus using machine learning. By spring, they hope to test their methods in actual robots, prototypes of which are already under construction elsewhere in Clark’s lab.

The group scoured the campus last summer to find a building with an interior that would present challenges to the autonomous robots. They settled

on the Oldenborg Center because it “was potentially confusing enough for a robot trying to drive around,” with one hallway, for instance, leading to stairs in one direction and a ramp in the other.

Machine learning, Clark explains, is a subset of artificial intelligence. “It is basically an automated system that makes some decisions, and those automated decisions are based on a bunch of training data.”

To generate the data, the team created an exquisitely detailed schematic of the Oldenborg interior, down to a water fountain in a hallway. Kenneth Gonzalez '24 took 2,000 photos and used photogrammetry software to determine how many images the robot would need for correct decision-making. Liz Johnson '24 created another model with the flexibility to change various elements—from carpet to wood or even grass on the floors, for example, or rocks on the ceiling. Simon Heck '22 worked on the back-end coding.

“The reason why we want to modify the environment, like having different lighting and changing textures, is so the robot is able to generalize,” says Clark. “The dataset will

have larger amounts of diverse environments. We don’t want it to get confused if it’s going down a hallway and all of a sudden there’s a new painting on the wall.”

Clark says that once the group has models that work in virtual environments and transfer well to the physical world, the team will make the tasks more challenging. One idea is to create autonomous robots that fly rather than roll. “It’s pretty much the same process,” Clark says, “but it’s a lot more complicated.”

The goal, Clark says, “is a better way to make machine learning models transfer to a real-world device. To me, that means it’s less likely to bump into walls, and it’s a lot safer and more energy efficient.”

What keeps him up at night is training a machine and then, for example, a person taller than those in the dataset enters the field. The robot mischaracterizes what they are and runs into them. “I’m hoping the big takeaway from this work is how do you automatically find things that you weren’t necessarily looking for?” [PCM](#)



# AFTER 67 YEARS



## Pomona Claims Another SCIAC Football Championship

Story by Robyn Norwood

Photos by Carlos Puma



When students rushed the field after Pomona-Pitzer's Sixth Street Rivalry win over CMS for the first SCIAC title and first NCAA playoff berth in the program's history, a few of them already had bottles of bubbly ready to spray in celebration.

Figuratively speaking, the champagne had been on ice for 67 years. Pomona had not won a SCIAC football title since 1955—so long ago that Pitzer College had not yet been founded and Pomona and Claremont played together on a combined team.

"It means the world. You imagine this, and now it's a reality. Nothing beats it," says defensive back Vaish Siddapureddy '22, one of the Sagehens' fifth-year seniors already taking classes at Claremont Graduate University while playing their final seasons after the COVID-19 pandemic canceled the 2020 season.

Emotion was flowing along with champagne spray after a hard-fought 28-14 victory over CMS (7-2) on November 12. Officially, the two teams shared the SCIAC title with one conference loss each, but the Sagehens earned the automatic NCAA berth and bragging rights by virtue of their head-to-head win over the Stags.

A week later, Pomona-Pitzer bowed out in the first round of the 32-team NCAA Division III football playoffs in a loss to undefeated Linfield University on November 19 in McMinnville, Oregon. But this Pomona-Pitzer team left its mark with an 8-3 record—the most wins in program history—with two of the losses in overtime.

"It's a lot of hard work that coaches, players and staff have put into this, and we finally did it. We finally did it," says John Walsh, head football coach and assistant professor of physical education.

It has been a long climb. When Walsh arrived at Pomona-Pitzer in 2013 as defensive coordinator and associate head coach, the Sagehens had won only two games over the past three years, making them one of the least successful programs in the country.

"It needed to be rebuilt," Walsh says. "We took some time and solidified the infrastructure and then brought in the right coaches and the right players. That's how you do it."

Since Walsh took over as head coach before the 2017 season, the Sagehens have gone 27-20 and had only one losing record.

"When I first came into this program, Coach Walsh had only been here for a few years," says offensive lineman Michael Collins '22, who graduated with a degree in economics in May and will earn an MBA from Claremont Graduate University's Drucker School of Management this spring. "He made a real point to change the

culture here. This was a team that hadn't won games in a long time. It had been 60 years at that point since Pomona had won a league championship. I really was inspired by the people he recruited to come in."

The game was played in front of an overflow crowd at Merritt Field, with spectators leaning on the fences outside the stadium after the stands filled.

"When I came in, I had no clue how big a rivalry this really was," says Collins. "It means a lot because this rivalry between the two teams has been a huge part of my time here. As much as you want to beat the other guys, the reality is, it makes both teams better. Both these teams, CMS and ourselves, have pushed each other in these tight rivalry games.

"I think it's a real testament to not only what Pomona and Pitzer have going on, but all the 5Cs." [PCM](#)



Quinten Wimmer PZ'24



Will Radice '22



# THE LAST CHAMPS

The object below is a game program from the crucial contest of Pomona's 1955 season, the most recent time the Sagehens were part of a SCIAC football championship season.

Pitzer College, Pomona's current partner in athletics, had not yet been founded. Pomona and what was then Claremont Men's College—now rivals as Pomona-Pitzer and Claremont-Mudd-Scripps—played together on a combined team known as Pomona-Claremont that claimed the third of three titles in a row.

The title-clinching win was a dramatic 14-13 victory over Whittier College in the Poets' homecoming game, where this program sold for 20 cents. The two met late in the season as the only SCIAC teams that remained undefeated in conference play.

The recently completed 2022 season marked a poignant milestone for Whittier. The college dropped its football program after 115 years, along with men's lacrosse and men's and women's golf. The decision was primarily for financial reasons. Whittier had not won a game since the

pandemic canceled the 2020 season, going 0-18 over the last two seasons.

Whittier's coach in 1955 was George Allen, who went on to coach the Los Angeles Rams and Washington Redskins. Pomona-Claremont was coached by Earl "Fuzz" Merritt '25, for whom Pomona-Pitzer's home field is named.

The Pomona-Claremont roster included end Bill Schultz '56, tackle Ken Wedel '56, halfback Herb Meyer '57, guard/tackle Hugh Martin '57, and halfback/quarterback Jim Lindblad '58, all later

inducted into the Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Hall of Fame. The name of a certain 165-pound sophomore end might also ring a bell.

Pomona-Claremont's final game of the 1955 season was a 29-13 victory over rival Occidental in front of 6,000 fans in Claremont. Oxy's standouts included quarterback Jack Kemp, who went on to play professional football and serve nine terms as a U.S. congressman. In 2020, Occidental announced it would discontinue its football program, ending the rivalry. Six remaining teams will compete for the 2023 SCIAC football title: Cal Lutheran, Chapman, CMS, La Verne, Pomona-Pitzer and Redlands. [PCM](#)

# NCAA Championships: Cross Country Teams Take 5th, 11th

The three-peat was not to be, as the two-time defending national champion Pomona-Pitzer men's cross country team finished fifth at the NCAA Division III championships November 19 in East Lansing, Michigan.

With patches of snow on the ground, gusting winds and temperatures in the 20s, conditions were challenging. The No. 1-ranked Sagehens were knocked off by MIT, which won its first national championship. Pomona-Pitzer was led by Lucas Florsheim '24 in 16th place and Derek Fearon '24 in 24th as the pair earned All-American honors.

The Pomona-Pitzer women finished 11th, led by Abigail Loisselle '23, who earned All-American honors with her 21st-place finish.





No one has ever explored  
caves in another world.  
**Laura Kerber '06** has set  
out to change that.

By Marilyn Thomsen

# DARING MIGHTY THINGS



**L**aura Kerber '06 is a woman with a mission. The bumper sticker on the car in her driveway reads “Moon Diver.” She answers the door wearing a NASA Moon Diver polo shirt. A stack of NASA coasters rests on a table.

Even her marriage has a Moon Diver connection. Her husband of two years is a robotics engineer working on the Moon Diver mission rover. On one of their first dates, they assembled a large Saturn V rocket model using Legos. It's on prominent display in their living room.

Kerber happily blurs the line between work and play. “It’s kind of like a hobby/job,” she says of her work as a research scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in La Cañada Flintridge, near Los Angeles. Her passion is planetary geology, especially explosive volcanism and extraterrestrial caves. She focuses her attention on Mercury, Mars and, for the past seven years, Earth’s Moon. “I’ve been known to go on vacation and then work on my job,” she admits, cheerfully. “But don’t tell anyone.”

The proposed Moon Diver mission that she leads as principal investigator began at a picnic table at JPL with a group of five researchers excited about the discovery of caves on the Moon. The Japanese lunar probe SELENE first spotted them in 2009, and the American Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter



At home, Laura Kerber '06 keeps a Saturn V model rocket made of Legos.

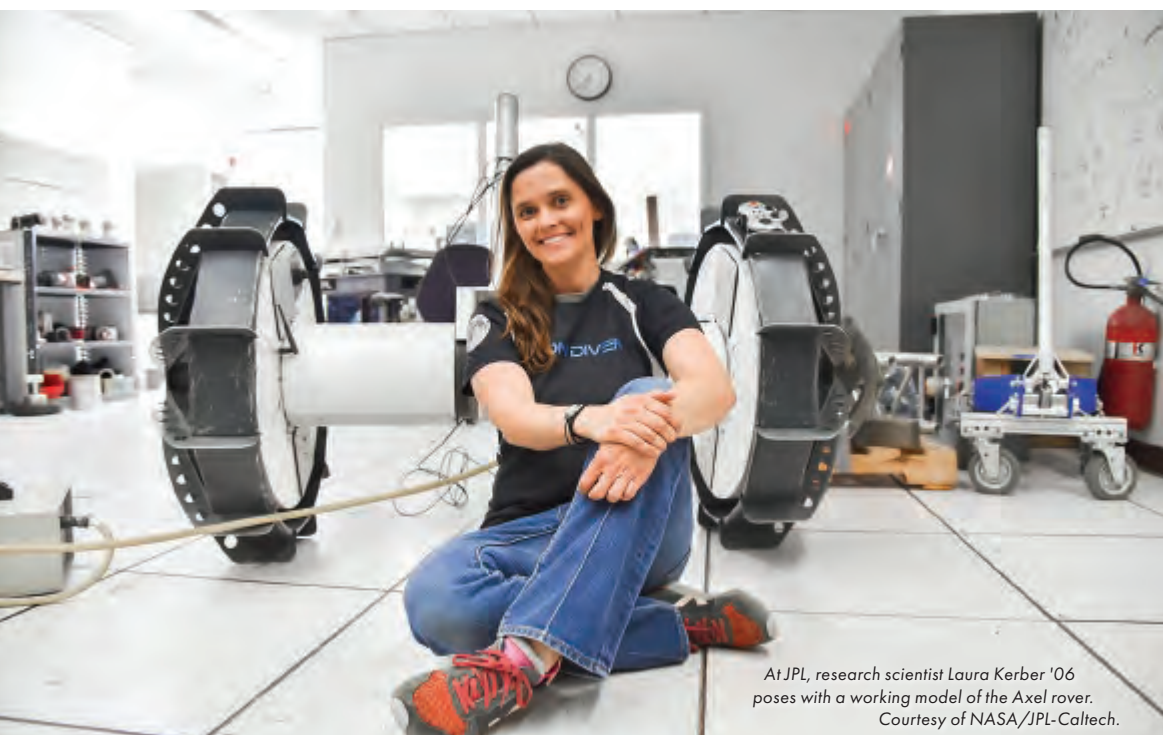
followed up with high-resolution images. No one has ever explored caves in another world. The scientists began to dream.

One of them, JPL engineer Issa Nesnas, had worked with geologists to develop a rover that could explore hard-to-navigate landscapes. It is basically two wheels with a thick axle in between and looks straight out of *Star Wars*. When Kerber heard about

the vehicle, dubbed the Axel Extreme Terrain Rover, she had an idea. “If I had your robot, I wouldn’t necessarily explore the cave,” she told him. Geologists, unlike engineers, prefer sheer cliffs to flat ground. “I would explore the beautiful cross section of bedrock that’s exposed in the wall of the pit going into the cave.” To Nesnas, it sounded like an intriguing idea, and the two teamed up to write proposals.

Thus the Moon Diver mission concept was born, through research and imagination. The cave it would explore is in the Sea of Tranquility, the same region of the Moon where Apollo 11 landed in 1969. It is in the Moon’s mare, an area we see as dark swirls on the lunar surface, named with the Italian word for “sea.” The mare (pronounced “mah-ray”), primarily made up of volcanic rock called basalt, was formed by lava flows billions of years ago when the Moon was young.

The near-vertical walls of the cave expose intact strata of the Moon’s secondary crust, which can tell geologists “what was going on ‘inside’ the Moon while the primary crust was forming on the surface,” Kerber says. “Looking at volcanic deposits from deep inside planets using petrology is one of the main ways that we understand the inside structure of planets,” she explains. “The Moon is special because its primary and secondary crusts are both still preserved



At JPL, research scientist Laura Kerber '06 poses with a working model of the Axel rover. Courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech.

**“I WOULD EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL CROSS SECTION THAT’S EXPOSED IN THE WALL OF THE PIT GOING INTO THE CAVE.”**

**—LAURA KERBER '06**



The Axel Extreme Terrain Rover originally was designed for surface exploration. Courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech.

at the surface, unlike anywhere else in the solar system.” The Moon is bombarded by meteorites, but since it lacks an atmosphere, its surface has not been weathered by wind or water, nor altered, as Earth has been, by the constant motion of tectonic plates. (She likes to tell what she calls a “NASA joke”: “Someone tried to open a restaurant on the moon, but it failed because it just didn’t have any atmosphere.”)

Tethered to its lander by a cable that supplies power and communications and could extend 300 meters, the Axel vehicle would rappel down the cave wall gathering data as it descended to the floor. Instruments deployed from the rover’s wheel wells would analyze key aspects of the geological record: an X-ray spectrometer for elemental chemistry, a reflectance spectrometer for mineralogy and a camera system to measure the layers of rock.

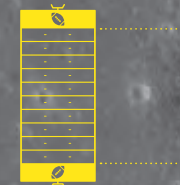
By 2018, Kerber and Nesnas had persuaded JPL to fund development of the Moon Diver proposal for NASA’s Discovery competition. The space agency funds projects at various cost levels, from flagship class—such as the recent Mars rover Perseverance and the upcoming Europa Clipper voyage—to lower-cost, competitively chosen missions such as Discovery with specific scientific goals for solar system exploration. Kerber and Nesnas directed a team that at one time included as many as 40 people, but the Moon Diver proposal didn’t make the final four in the 2019 funding round.

They ultimately lost out to two missions to explore Venus, “which we thought was fair,” Kerber says, without any apparent hint of jealousy. “Venus is an underappreciated planet. We’ve got to show it some love.”

Not being selected in the most recent funding cycle motivated Kerber and her team to re-evaluate the mission proposal from start to finish. One major area of concern was data analysis. Were they aiming to collect the right data? And would the analytical methods provide sufficiently accurate results to resolve the scientific questions they set out to answer?

One way to find out was to test the methodology on similar basalt flows on Earth. To do that, Kerber reached out to Eric Grosfils, a professor in the geology department at Pomona who was her advisor during her college years. Grosfils, however, is primarily a physics-based volcanologist; Moon Diver needed a geology partner who was chemistry-focused. Grosfils referred Kerber to Nicole Moore, visiting assistant professor of geology. “It was just incredibly serendipitous, because I have studied basalts my entire research career,” says Moore. “First, basalt on a stratovolcano in the Cascades—Mount Baker—for my master’s. And then I studied the Columbia River Flood Basalt for my Ph.D.

“These [Earth] flood basalts are a really good analog for what the Moon basalts might look like,” Moore says. And then she punctures a myth that NASA, in an April



The opening to the lunar pit the Moon Diver mission would explore is roughly 100 meters wide, a little more than the length of a football field, and scientists believe the pit is also around 100 meters deep.

Courtesy of NASA/GSFC/ASU.





In July 2022, JPL's Laura Kerber '06, bottom right, took a team of researchers to Washington to test the Axel rover model on basalts that might be similar to those found on the Moon. Nate Wire '23 at top row, middle, with Pomona Geology Professor Nicole Moore on the top row, third from right.

Fools' post, said dates back nearly half a millennium. The Moon, she says, is not made of cheese. "The man on the Moon is basalt."

In mid-July 2022, Kerber, Moore and a team that included Nate Wire '23, a Moon Diver summer intern, spent a week testing a model of the Axel rover along with various instruments on massive basalt flows in the state of Washington. A major goal was to determine how accurately the instruments proposed for use on the rover in the lunar environment could determine the precise composition of the rocks it encountered.

If the team knew the actual chemistry of the rocks found through highly accurate analytical methods on Earth, says Moore, it could then compare that with results from a handheld device similar to what would be used on the Moon. "We need that precision," Moore explains. "That was basically the concern of the group that didn't fund the proposal [right] off the bat. 'Is this really going to work?' We're still actively evaluating the data we got from the field this summer."

Kerber understands there are no guarantees in the space business. She and her team are working hard to refine the Moon Diver mission proposal for future opportunities. It's "kind of on this weird journey," she says. "It might not end up looking like the endeavor that we proposed in 2019. It could morph into something different. It could be something that astronauts could help with in the Artemis program," she says, referring to NASA's plans to return astronauts to the Moon. "Or," she says, "we could repack it into something a lot smaller. We could fly or hop into the cave."

Space exploration "is a business of hopes and dreams," Kerber says. "You have to really love the process, because nothing is guaranteed to happen. You can work a lot on a project and it might never fly."

So Kerber relishes the journey. "I've been having the time of my life working on this project," she remarks. "Somebody pays me to think about the Moon in a

crazy amount of detail. It is such a delight to me. I love working with the team. It's so fun to work with some of the world's smartest engineers and roboticists and other scientists that are equally obsessed as I am."

Given the chance, Kerber would fly to the Moon in a heartbeat. She has applied to become an astronaut twice. One of her colleagues is currently in the astronaut

Geology Professor Nicole Moore



corps. "She's in space right now," Kerber says. "She's poised at the right moment where she could be the first person to return to the Moon. It's so exciting."

Kerber is not so sure she'd jump at the chance to go on a Mars mission. "It takes a lot longer to get to Mars, and it's very, very hard on your body," she explains. And, with a new baby, she says, "I love the life that I have on Earth." But the Moon? That would be an easier decision. "Four days away. Go there, have a good time, come back," she says. If only she had the chance.

Kerber knows her mission may be a long time in the making. "My goal is a long, 50-year goal," she says. "If I put this out into

the universe long enough that somebody will explore a lunar pit, even if it's not me, then I'll be delighted to see what the results are. I think that's an achievable goal."

The JPL motto is "Dare mighty things." It fits well, Kerber says, with a quote she loves. "I don't know where it's from, but it says, 'A ship in harbor is safe. But that's not what ships are built for.'"

"Are you doing something bold and brave?" she is asked. "I try," she replies. "I fail a lot. I don't stop trying. Don't worry so much about all the things that you have to have in place before you start succeeding. Just try and do something hard, and then all those things will take care of themselves." **PCM**

Researchers examine flood basalts on site in the state of Washington. Photo by Nate Wire '23

Laura Kerber '06, who earned a doctorate in geological sciences at Brown, inspects a specimen in her collection at home.



**"I'VE BEEN HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE WORKING ON THIS PROJECT."**

**—LAURA KERBER '06**



# Moonshots *for* Unicorns

*Racing against time for a cure for their daughter's rare genetic disorder, Zach Landman '08 and his wife Geri, both physicians, try to help other families too.*

By Mark Kreidler

Photo by Kree Photography

Winter 2023

In those unreal first moments, Zach Landman '08 wasn't thinking about college days or his old friends, or the ways in which their worlds were about to intersect. He had no idea of the conspiracy of generosity that would soon envelop his family and help take it to a place of hope that at that instant was unimaginable.

All that Landman was thinking about, just then, were the words he and his wife, Geri, were hearing from their infant daughter Lucy's neurologist last April.

*Rare genetic disorder.*

*Untreatable seizures.*

*Never walk. Never talk.*

"At the time, Lucy was literally sitting on our laps, this cute, babbling, smiley baby who looks perfectly normal," Landman says. "The neurologist said, 'There are maybe 50 kids in the world with this disorder, and it will advance, and the truth is that there is no cure, and from what I can see there is no one anywhere who is working on a treatment.'"

It was, in those moments, incomprehensible. What followed was a week of soul-searching and tears, as Zach, 36, and Geri, 38, tried to understand by what bizarre turn they had "lost the genetic lottery," as Landman put it, as dual carriers of a gene mutation so unknown it was only

discovered in the last decade. "We're talking one in billions," Landman says. "We could have won Powerball several times over before we'd both be carriers for this disorder."

The diagnosis seemed catastrophic. But Lucy Landman, a blue-eyed doll who was then just shy of her first birthday, got remarkably lucky in at least one specific sense: She is the daughter of Zach and Geri.

Both are doctors, Zach specializing in pain medicine, Geri a pediatrician. It was Geri's keen sense of baby well-being that tripped the alarms that something was not right with their daughter, with Lucy sometimes unable to remain sitting up, sometimes not making eye contact, sometimes refusing solid food.

It was Zach's and Geri's determination to press experts for answers that led to Lucy's stay at Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital last March and to full workups, an expedited MRI, a spinal tap, an electroencephalogram, a nerve conduction study. When none of those revealed anything unusual, the pediatric neurologist on service, who also happened to be a geneticist—and Geri's resident when Geri was at UC San Francisco—moved to the next level and ordered genetic testing.

It led to the chilling diagnosis. But it also led to what came next. A community of help was on its way.

The PGAP3 gene disorder in humans is not particularly well understood, in part because it is so rarely diagnosed. Since no cure exists, it isn't commonly tested for. What is known is that when the gene fails to function properly, the body does not have enough functional glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchored proteins, which are pivotal for both speech and motor development in young children.

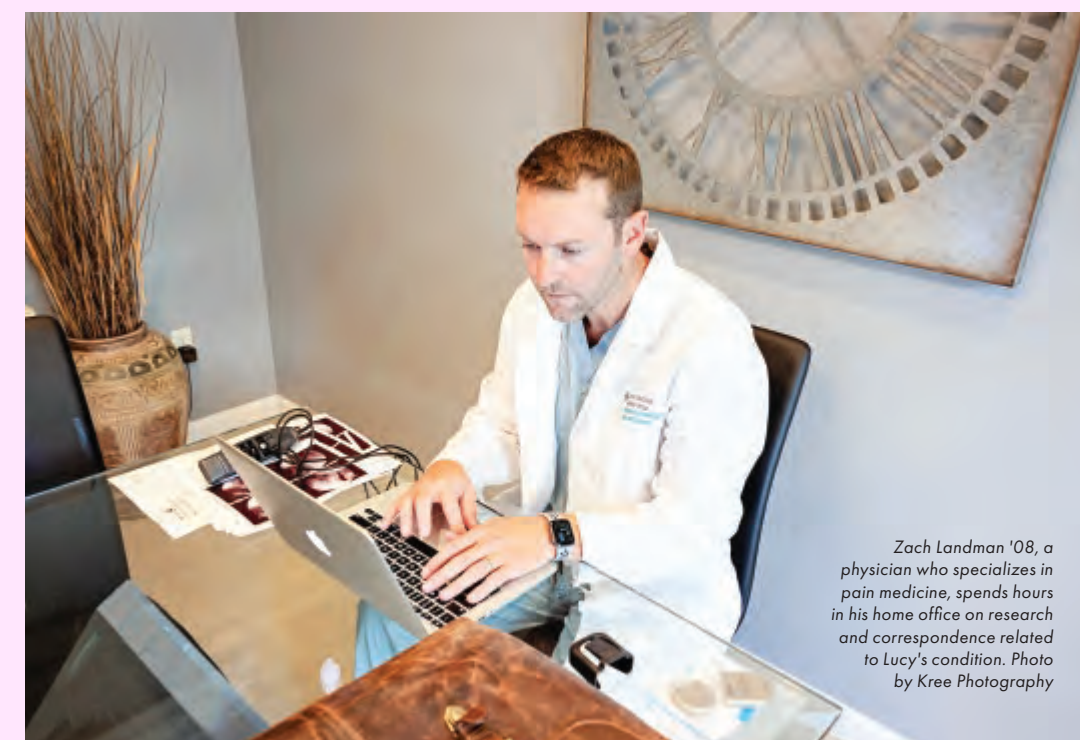
"I hadn't heard of this disorder before," says Kathrin Meyer, Ph.D., a research scientist and principal investigator at the Center for Gene Therapy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, who is working with the Landmans on what



Using lab methods like those seen above, scientists in San Francisco have grown yeasts modified with the PGAP3 disorder in order to test repurposed medicines.



Infant Lucy Landman undergoes a brain scan, one of numerous tests performed at Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital in March 2022.



Zach Landman '08, a physician who specializes in pain medicine, spends hours in his home office on research and correspondence related to Lucy's condition. Photo by Kree Photography



could be a cure for Lucy and others like her. “There are very, very few case reports.”

With Zach and Geri both carriers, neither of Lucy’s PGAP3 genes functions properly. Lucy’s parents noticed some of the effects of that as early as four months into Lucy’s life, when the child, their third daughter, showed a tendency to be “floppier” than other children—to sit up straight less often and for shorter periods. But Lucy initially was considered simply to be a later-developing infant with regard to her motor skills. It wasn’t until a family trip to Panama, when she caught a cold that appeared to affect her deeply, that things began to quickly escalate.

“When Lucy started to get really sick in the early spring, refusing food and really lethargic, I started sounding the alarm,” Geri says. “At one point, we were told that they’d scheduled an MRI for her in July. I was like, ‘No, no, no. I don’t think you understand the urgency here.’”

Both Geri and her husband understood, though. With genetic disorders that affect speech and movement, time is always the enemy, because the effects progress so steadily and can become difficult or

impossible to reverse. The Landmans’ goals were suddenly both dramatic and incredibly streamlined: They needed near-immediate intervention to slow Lucy’s deterioration of skills, and they needed, essentially, a longer-term miracle—a moonshot, as they put it—in the form of an actual cure.

They attacked on all fronts, rounding up expert help from their long lists of personal and professional medical connections: at Harvard, Stanford, Vanderbilt, the Mayo Clinic. Zach, who coincidentally wrote his thesis at Pomona on the application of tailored pharmaceuticals to genetic disorders, began cold-calling experts around the world. Geri, a graduate of Williams College and the UCSF School of Medicine (where she and Zach met), read textbooks on the science behind gene disorders and their treatments.

Kathrin Meyer, in Ohio, was the first to suggest that gene therapy, a process through which healthy PGAP3 genes would be introduced to Lucy’s body to do the work of the faulty ones, might actually work. The Landmans had contacted Meyer because of the deep expertise she and Nationwide Children’s Hospital have in the field, and



*Geri Landman, a pediatrician, carefully manages her youngest daughter’s diet and supplements. Photo by Kree Photography*

Meyer explained some of the basics. Lucy’s case was a possibility, in part because a similar therapy Meyer helped develop had worked on a single-gene neurodegenerative disease called spinal muscular atrophy, so a part of a template already existed.

Meyer needed to get Lucy’s cells under a microscope, and although Stanford officials offered to perform a punch biopsy “basically for free,” Zach says, there was significant legalese standing between that act and actually getting the results to Meyer’s team. It would take time to resolve—months, perhaps. The clock was ticking.

“So I took a red-eye flight that night from San Francisco to Atlanta to Columbus, with Lucy on my lap, while Geri stayed at home with the two kids (Audrey, now 8, and Edna, 6),” Zach says. “We Ubered to Nationwide Children’s, met Kat, they found a neurologist to do the biopsy at lunchtime, back to the airport, and then flew home. It was 23 hours of straight travel, but they got the tissue.”

What Meyer needed to know, among other things, was whether Lucy’s PGAP3 gene was relatively long or short. This mattered because the method of transmission to the brain is a virus, and it can accommodate only so large a gene.

“Think of it like a vehicle. This (therapy) is like putting a second car in the garage,” Meyer said from Scotland, where she was attending a medical conference. “If the other car is broken, you can use this one instead.”

The result was affirmative—the transmission method could work. “You won’t believe this,” Geri told Zach after speaking with Meyer, “but this is possible. And she’s happy to get started on it right away.”

In short order, the Landmans realized a couple of truths. First, though gene therapy is inherently uncertain, it was at least a potential cure for Lucy, although it would take 18 months or more to get to a fast-track FDA clinical trial. Second, a couple of other treatments, including the repurposing of existing drugs and a ketogenic diet, might put the development of Lucy’s disorder on a slower track, buying time for that therapy to be created.

And third, this all would cost money. More than they had. Millions.

Zach and Geri immediately started calling pharmaceutical giants, asking if one of them might consider funding the research and trials. The answer came back almost as directly: PGAP3 was so rare that there was no way to make an investment in the gene therapy pay for itself over time.

After a frustrating week of negative feedback, it was a fellow Pomona grad who helped the Landmans see the road ahead. One of Zach’s cold calls had gone to Emil Kakkis ’82, a physician-scientist who is the founder and CEO of the pharmaceutical company Ultragenyx, which helps produce gene therapies for disorders more common than PGAP3. Kakkis, who knows Meyer professionally, spent an hour with Zach and Geri, laying out the likely scenarios and encouraging them to stay rooted in the present.

“Rather than worry about solving every last variable, which is daunting, the best advice is to keep your head down and get to the next step,” Kakkis says. “If you get a gene therapy created, you will find out what it does and then work from there. It’s an iterative process.”

Says Geri, “Emil just took our hands and slowed us down. He said, ‘You just need to look at tomorrow, and then the next day. Gene therapy is a good therapy. You are working with good people.’ It was a healthy dose of reality.”

Still, the financials of the process were overwhelming; the cost just to get to the point of an FDA trial might top \$2 million. It became obvious to the Landmans, who already had sold their Bay Area home and scraped up all their savings, that absent a Big Pharma

investment, they’d need to set up a nonprofit in order to solicit funds to help Lucy.

In the midst of their emotional and logistical chaos, Zach and Geri wanted to achieve something greater, too.

“We didn’t want to do it for just PGAP3,” Zach says. “Our mission statement was that we want no parent to get a diagnosis for their child and go to bed thinking there’s nothing they can do, which is what happened to us. It shouldn’t be just two doctors with Silicon Valley connections with the ability to get this done.”

The result: Moonshots for Unicorns, a foundation with a website that not only explains Lucy’s story but notes that single-gene disorders number roughly 10,000 and affect 1% of the population. The cost of developing treatments and strategies for any one of them can run to \$5 million. Donations to the site not only

help defray costs in Lucy’s case but also fund the Landmans’ creation of a pop-up laboratory in San Francisco that is capable of rapidly testing up to 6,000 existing, FDA-approved drugs to see if any of them can be repurposed—that is, used “off label”—to delay or ward off the effects of PGAP3 or other rare genetic disorders.

Simply put, the rarest diseases don’t often get treated or cured because such small numbers of children or adults suffer from them. “But at the same time, you only have one child,” Kakkis says. An organization like Moonshots may one day give that child a chance.

“They’re doing this in such a structured way that it will become a model for others to follow,” says Robert Pepple ’08, who has known Zach since their first day of Pomona-Pitzer football practice together in 2004, the beginning of a longstanding



*Photo by Kree Photography*



*Zach and Geri Landman with Lucy, the youngest of their three daughters. Photo by Kree Photography*



close friendship. “They don’t realize that yet, and I haven’t mentioned it because I don’t want to distract from what they’re doing. But I’m sure of it.”

“It’s terrible that this happened to anyone, but there are no two more competent people on Earth to handle the situation,” Pepple says. “They are the most brilliant, motivated human beings in this world. If anybody can figure it out, it’s them.”

It was Pepple to whom Zach turned when it came to organization: How does one even begin setting up a nonprofit? An attorney in the Los Angeles office of the global firm Nixon Peabody who’d been a partner “for all of about five minutes,” Pepple says he told Zach to give him a day, then immediately asked his partners to get on board with setting up Moonshots as a 501(c)(3). “They prioritized it,” Pepple says, and within a day the framework was together.

Pepple didn’t stop there. He quickly reached out to a web designer, who agreed to put together the Moonshots landing site and build out its detailed, expressive pages, all pro bono. The Landmans consistently add updates, scientific information and breathtaking, sometimes heartbreaking, photos and videos.

When another college football teammate of Zach’s, Bobby Montalvo PZ ’10, saw a Facebook post about Lucy’s story on Zach’s page, his first thought was, “They need video.” Montalvo, who owns a production company in the L.A. area, was about to travel to the Bay Area for an assignment. He messaged the Landmans, arranged a sit-down with Lucy, Geri and three cameras, and produced a video that began resonating with visitors to both the website, and now, several social media accounts that update friends and family and seek donations to the cause.

“I had never asked anyone for money or been in a startup mode. Geri and I never even had an Instagram account, you know?” Zach says. “Rob was



Lucy with her parents, Zach and Geri Landman.  
Photo by Kree Photography

key. Bobby was key. It’s hard to even explain how much they’ve done.”

Almost a year into their journey, it’s clear that both Zach and Geri still sometimes awaken in a state of shock over the turn their family’s life has taken. When someone mentions to Geri how impressive it is that she doesn’t appear overwhelmed by all they’ve had to do, she quickly cuts him off. “I am completely overwhelmed by this,” Lucy’s mother replies. “I like talking about the science of it sometimes, because it uses the academic side of my brain, not the side that wonders, ‘Who would Lucy have been if she were not missing this one gene?’”

They celebrate the progress when it comes. The Jackson Laboratory, an industry leader in building mouse models for testing specific types of rare disease treatments, offered to do all the model testing and FDA submission on Lucy’s case for free. The keto diet, one often used to treat epilepsy, showed enough promise for the family to consider it for Lucy.

Their fundraising efforts had amassed \$495,522 by late fall, in the midst of a “\$1.3M by 2023” drive bolstered by nearly 30,000 Instagram followers. Meyer’s gene therapy work continues. And one week after the pop-up lab identified four drugs that might be repurposed to help slow the effects of PGAP3 disorder, Lucy last October took her first steps, something her parents were told would likely never happen.

At each of those points, the Landmans were surrounded by, as Montalvo put it, good people. Geri’s best friend from Williams, Megan McCann, a Wharton MBA, put other business aside to consult and become president of Moonshots. Montalvo sits on the board. Pepple has essentially become a constant—a lifeline of knowledge and action whenever it’s needed.

Kakkis, the most veteran of the alumni in the group, sounds unsurprised. “(Pomona) is a small school with lots of good people who care about others,” he says. “It’s more the selection of who is there and the culture of who we are than any networking scheme or clubby-type thing.”

Lucy’s prospects, of course, are uncertain—the nature of a moonshot, Zach says. But her life has already transformed the rest of the Landmans, as well as those who are serving them in the fight. Says Zach, “It spans generations.” It continues still. **PCM**



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# BUILDING AWAY HOME

While other cities struggle to make headway against homelessness, **Jessica Boatright '98** and **Laila Bernstein '04** have helped reduce the number of people without housing in Boston by 28%.

By **George Spencer**



Photo by Joel Benjamin

Jessica Boatright '98 will always remember when she first met Laila Bernstein '04. The year was 2009. Both women had a passion to end homelessness in Massachusetts. That led them to jobs combating the problem, working at opposite ends of the fourth floor of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

"This super-smart intern showed up out of nowhere," recalls Boatright, known as Jessie Berman in her Pomona days. Boatright was the liaison between the state's public housing office and the newly created Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. Bernstein was a new presence on the council. Something about her rocked the more senior Boatright back on her heels. "She seemed young, but I was slightly intimidated by her intelligence," she recalls.

When the two women look back at it, their first encounter sparks laughter. "I was just, like, a pipsqueak intern," says Bernstein. "And you were a *special assistant!*" At the time, Boatright worked in the division responsible for the Commonwealth's portfolio of some 50,000 state-owned public housing units and 26,000 rental vouchers.

Today, their lives are entwined. "We share two complementary parallel paths, going through huge life events and challenging work situations together," says Boatright. Now close friends, the two former public policy analysis majors have supported each other through childbirth, child-rearing and parents' health crises.

There's one more thing. They now work in the same place—in the Boston Mayor's Office of Housing (one row and six cubicles apart, to be precise). They lead sister divisions that function in tandem to forward Mayor Michelle Wu's commitment to ensure all Bostonians have access to safe, affordable housing.

Bernstein is deputy director of the Supportive Housing Division, which is responsible for the city's housing strategies to end homelessness. The team manages more than \$50 million in annual funding, collects and analyzes data on people experiencing homelessness in Boston, creates and leads strategic plans, and drives system design and policy change.

Boatright is deputy director in the Neighborhood Housing Development department. Her team of underwriters, project managers, architects and construction experts hammers out plans with developers and community stakeholders to create more than 1,000 units of new or preserved housing units each year.

Together with their teams, they have helped Boston make substantial progress in combating homelessness, a seemingly intractable problem in many cities across the country and particularly on the West Coast. In the past two years, Boston's unhoused population has decreased by 28%, according to the city's 2022 point-in-time count, a federally required measure. By contrast, homelessness has surged in such cities as Sacramento, California, and Portland, Oregon. And in Los Angeles, a city with a budget that now designates \$1 billion a year to address the problem, there has been a stubborn 2% increase in homelessness since 2020.

Boatright says Wu, the Boston mayor, is "laser focused" on the struggle of people without housing, and the city recently dedicated an additional \$20 million in American Rescue Plan funds to create supportive housing.



Boatright and Bernstein help spearhead projects like the one at 3368 Washington Street, which is replacing a one-story office building with the largest ground-up construction of a permanent supportive housing project in the city's history. (Unlike subsidized housing, supportive housing in Massachusetts is more specifically targeted to people exiting homelessness, with preference going to those with disabilities who have been experiencing homelessness the longest. It comes with intensive services to help support and stabilize them. No one is screened out due to criminal history, bad credit or other barriers people experiencing homelessness often face.)

Located near five-story buildings in the affluent Jamaica Plain neighborhood, the \$100 million redevelopment project will create 202 low-income housing units with 140 of those earmarked for people who are exiting homelessness. The Pine Street Inn, the location's previous occupant—a nonprofit that has provided food, shelter and other services to people in need since 1969—is a development partner and will be the service provider and have offices there alongside housing for both formerly homeless households and families with low and moderate incomes.

"Deals don't always come together like this one, but this one combined a unique site with a strong development team," says Boatright. "It's a great location for people

to live, period, including people exiting homelessness. It's located on a transit thoroughfare with easy access to both public amenities and a commercial corridor serving a broad diversity of consumers."

In addition to new construction, other projects to add affordable and supportive housing have included the preservation and rehabilitation of architecturally significant landmarks, among them 48 Boylston Street, an 1875 building near Boston Common that once housed the Boston Young Men's Christian Union, and 140 Clarendon Street in well-to-do Back Bay. The current tenants at the Clarendon location—the Lyric Stage Company of Boston, the city's oldest professional theatre company, and the YW Boston, formerly the YWCA—welcomed the project and will stay in their historic homes.

Many more are in the pipeline.



Construction at 3368 Washington Street, above, will provide 140 units for people exiting homelessness in a mixed-use building shown below in an architectural rendering by RODE Architects.



"We're building a plane as we're flying it on a number of supportive housing opportunities," says Boatright. "The problem is huge, but I think there's a ton of promise to deliver a huge number of these units in the next few years."

Bernstein sighs when she considers what she, Boatright and Boston are up against. "Even when we've helped 100 people stabilize in housing, 100 more fall into homelessness in Boston," she says. "That part's really hard, to not be able to address all of the root causes at once."



Above, officials celebrate a partnership to renovate a historic building on Clarendon Street to provide affordable and supportive housing alongside cultural institutions, below.



Winter 2023

JESSICA BOATRIGHT '98

*"The complexity of the problem is another hook that keeps me in it. It's not easy, not boring, and never routine."*



Photo by Joel Benjamin

*"It's a privilege to be in a role working on something that's so clearly needed and responding to a complex set of systemic failures with a solution."*

LAILA BERNSTEIN '04



When asked why ending homelessness is her life's work, Bernstein seems surprised. "Who doesn't want to be working on ending homelessness?" she replies. "It's a privilege to be in a role working on something that's so clearly needed and responding to a complex set of systemic failures with a solution."

Boatright's zeal to make a difference comes from a slightly different place. The daughter of activist parents, she says she is motivated by values of justice and fairness. "It feels very visceral. Social justice work has to be at the center of what I do every day," she insists.

Bernstein calls her friend "a boundary spanner" and a "mission-driven person." Boatright admits she relishes the intricacy of the work. "The draw for me is the opportunity to realize a neighborhood's needs, wants and dreams through the built environment. The challenge is to make this happen with the alphabet soup of public and private programs that fund and regulate the projects. It's an insane brain workout. The complexity of the problem is another hook that keeps me in it. It's not easy, not boring, and never routine."

Bernstein loves seeing buildings being repurposed or built to house people experiencing homelessness. "You can feel

tangibly the results of this complicated and at times frustrating, arduous process," she says. "Permanent supportive housing transforms lives for people in our community. It's hard to imagine a more compelling job."

The pace of work is furious for both women. They spend workdays switching gears between nonstop meetings, sometimes on the hour, sometimes on the half-hour. "There is a deluge of demands on our schedules," says Boatright.

They live for the personal time they carve out of their schedules every Friday at 10 a.m. That's when Boatright says they do their "weekly debrief sessions," a euphemism for stress-relieving fresh-air strolls. Free from office hubbub, the two division heads follow a loop trail that connects Pappas Way to Waterfront Path #1, "an awesome walk," they say, which passes through a mix of carefully landscaped lawns and industrial buildings along a Boston seaport canal.

"It's what keeps us able to come back on Monday," says Bernstein.

These ritual walks, they say, create an almost sacred interlude. They were especially important during COVID. "We were able to keep up those walks as a really safe and important space for protecting and nurturing

each other during an incredibly hard time to work in government," says Boatright.

Their conversations embrace everything in their lives. They have been there through their parents' health crises. "Laila's mom was diagnosed with the same cancer my mom had before she passed away. We're lucky three of our parents are alive and very engaged in our lives," says Boatright.

When Bernstein had her first child, Boatright, whose two children were older, helped with meals and "1,000 tips and words of encouragement," says Bernstein. "Jessica modeled how you can believe in yourself as a professional and be a dedicated, caring parent. I don't know if I would have made it through becoming a new parent and working at a job like this without her wisdom and her support."

Bernstein reflects on the similarities between being a parent and a manager. "You have to work hard to understand someone else's perspective. People see right through you—whether they're 2 or 50."

Bernstein pauses to consider what it takes to be a good manager. Her description also fits their friendship: "You have to be your genuine self while also providing the guidance and support for someone who needs to keep moving forward." [PCM](#)



# The Choice I Make

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, abortion laws became a shifting patchwork across the country. But where you live and who you are have always determined the health care you receive in the United States. A physician tells her story.

By **Atsuko Koyama '96**



When someone asks me, “So, what do you do for a living?” I have to make a decision. I am triple board-certified in pediatrics, pediatric emergency medicine and adolescent medicine. Do I add “abortion provider” to my list of jobs, or leave it out?

I base my answer on how it might affect me, my family and my patients. Will my family be harassed? Will they be safe? Am I abandoning my patients if I don’t talk about an essential health care procedure that many physicians refuse to perform themselves or to refer for?

I’ve come to believe that talking about my abortion work normalizes it as part of health care and puts a face on a group of medical professionals who are often demonized. Creating that human connection makes this work safer for all of us as providers and patients. But it saddens me that I still ask myself: What are the risks and benefits of talking about abortion? Unfortunately, this won’t change until we stop politicizing health care and start advocating for abortion alongside other social justice causes such as racial equity, fair wages, transgender rights, Indigenous people’s rights and even climate change advocacy, with the understanding that they are all interconnected.

It has been a lifelong journey for me to get to the point where, despite the fear, discomfort and unknown, I (usually) advocate for and talk about abortion.

My interest in reproductive health care started at Pomona with a job I found through the Career Development Office. Despite being a Japanese American teenager who had never discussed sex growing up, I was hired to teach comprehensive sexual education at area high schools. This made me somewhat of an Asian Dr. Ruth, and I became a distributor of condoms and advice regarding birth control, safe sex and consent, not only for high school students but for my fellow Sagehens too. It turns out comprehensive sex ed is something most adolescents desire regardless of ZIP code, family income or education.

The next year, I taught career development classes to pregnant and parenting high school students in Redlands, California, and accompanied pregnant teens to Lamaze classes. I shared in their shock as we watched a video on how babies are born. I also learned to provide pregnancy options counseling through a summer job. And when a friend called me to tell me about her unplanned pregnancy, I was able to support her, without judgment, in her decision-making process. She went on to raise two amazing daughters with the support of her family, friends, church and university.

My interest in social justice grew while I was at Pomona, but it was rooted in experiences I had growing up as one of the few Asian kids at my public school in Arizona. I watched as my non-English speaking parents worked hard to create a life for me and my brother. My father taught karate and built a community in a place where people of Japanese descent had been forcibly relocated during World War II only two decades earlier. Like my father, I experienced racist comments from teachers and students alike. But I also made lifelong friends who showed me inclusivity and friendship. Those experiences led me to help start a refugee youth council in high school to support Hmong classmates who had been evacuated and relocated at the end of the Vietnam War.

In 1992, my parents dropped me off at Pomona. I majored in Asian studies figuring that because I was pre-med, college would be the last opportunity to study liberal arts. Professors Sam Yamashita, Lynne Miyake and Kyoko Kurita, in addition to countless others, taught me how to think critically and build arguments with solid foundations based on reason, compassion and truth. Pomona nurtured students’



intellectual curiosity, developed problem-solving skills and gave us confidence that we could tackle difficult issues.

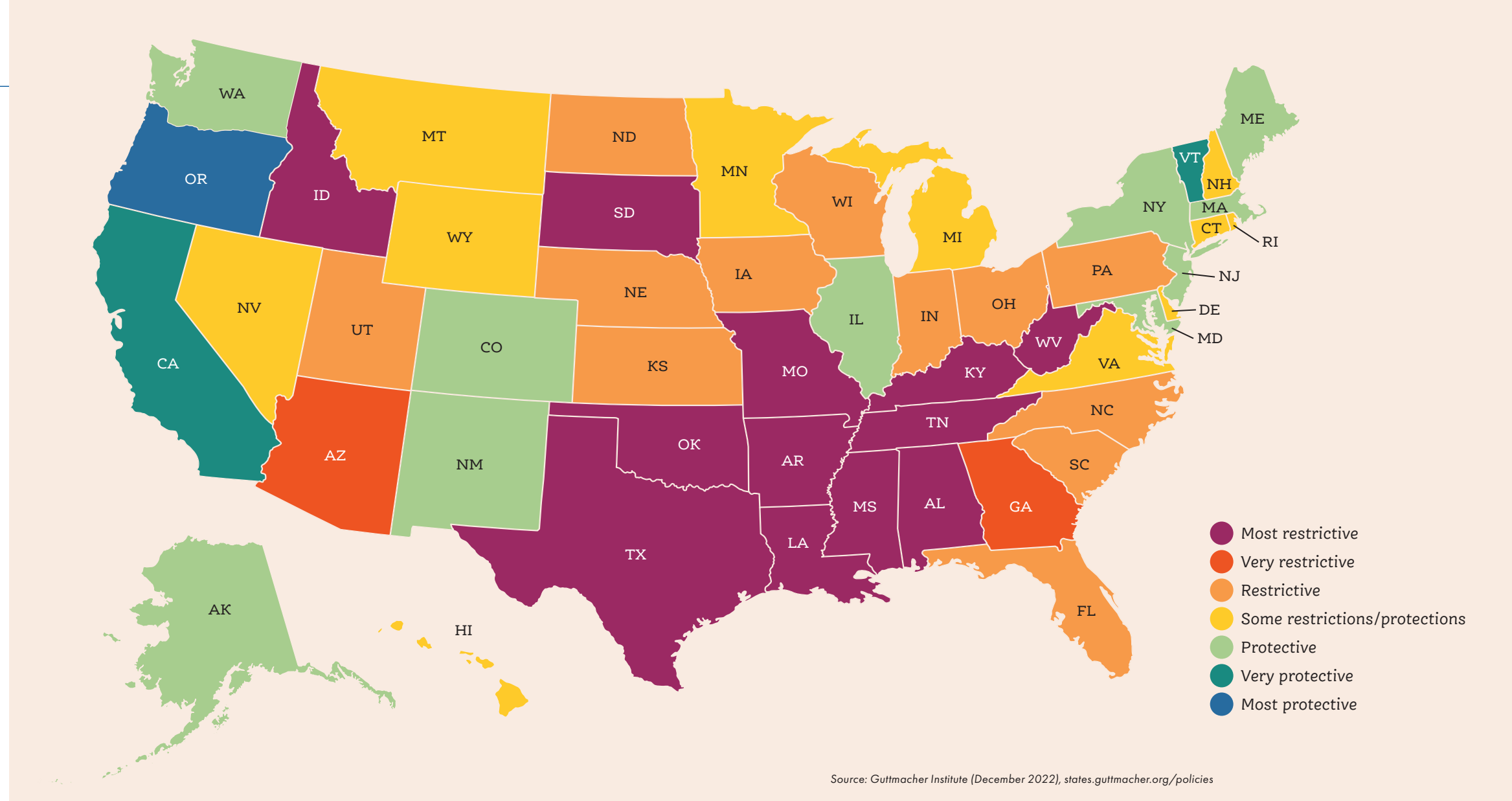
After college, my work and medical training took me across the country, from California and Arizona to New York, Boston and Atlanta. I've been exposed to the harsh reality of health care in the United States: The quality and extent of health care that people can access is almost entirely dependent on their ZIP code, income and identities.

I moved to San Francisco after graduating for an internship at the UC San Francisco AIDS Health Project, where I provided HIV testing services at needle exchanges, street fairs and health clinics. I also worked at San Francisco Women Against Rape, where I advocated for rape survivors in local emergency departments and answered hotline calls late into the night. The trainings I received for these jobs were led by activists within those marginalized communities who understood and fought against bias, stigma and discrimination. Those experiences solidified my conviction that abortion access is about justice and equity, and is an essential aspect of women's health.

During medical school at the University of Arizona, I discovered that the reason abortion services were not available to pregnant people at the University Medical Center was because a state legislator put an abortion ban into the same 1974 law that funded an expansion of the football stadium. *Football* was the reason patients were forced to go elsewhere for essential health care. It was also the reason I was forced to go to independent abortion clinics in Seattle and Tucson for abortion training during my fourth-year elective rotations.

I also traveled to Ecuador, where abortion is largely illegal, to participate in an elective in women's health. I had to tell a rape survivor that I couldn't help her with abortion care for this pregnancy—but if she wanted, she could take a rhythm method bead necklace to ensure she wouldn't get pregnant in the future. She was *raped*. (In 2021, Ecuador decriminalized abortion in cases of rape. It also is allowed when a patient's life is in danger.)

As a resident in pediatrics at a New York City hospital, I came to realize even more how systemic racism disproportionately affects children. In the Bronx, the creation



Source: Guttmacher Institute (December 2022), [states.guttmacher.org/policies](https://states.guttmacher.org/policies)

of the Cross Bronx Expressway led to increased exposure to pollution, displacement of communities and degradation of neighborhoods—all interconnected and leading to increased rates of asthma and asthma-related complications. In addition to my pediatrics training, I received further abortion training. There were patients whose birth control failed them, who could not afford another child and still provide for their family, or who wanted to complete their education.

I went on to do two fellowships in Boston, where racial disparities I saw in the city were amplified for the adolescents I cared for. There was a 14-year-old whose pregnancy was diagnosed while she was being prepped for unrelated surgery. I helped her tell her mother. She gave birth several weeks later. There was also a young woman who had obtained medication abortion pills from a family member in another

country. Research shows that medication abortion pills are generally safe and do not require physician involvement. But occasionally patients require a procedure to stop dangerous vaginal bleeding, as she did. In some states, ambiguous laws make uterine evacuation illegal unless the patient's life is "at risk"—a term that puts physicians and hospitals in the difficult position of delaying care as lawyers are consulted and committees are convened to determine whether a patient is close enough to dying to receive a procedure that physicians are trained to perform.

Later, when I moved to Atlanta as a new mother, I developed close friendships with Black moms. As my daughter became friends with their children, it hit home how hard it must be to raise a Black child in America knowing the injustices they face. I also worked at a local abortion clinic. One patient, a religious woman who worried

about the stigma of abortion, drove eight hours from Ohio. Another who previously had postpartum complications cried in relief as her abortion gave her confidence she would survive to raise the children she already had.

My work as an abortion provider—especially in the South, where health disparities along racial and income lines are more pronounced—has made it clear that for people with resources, abortion is usually accessible. But for those with limited means, abortion is difficult if not impossible to access. The people I know who fight for reproductive freedom at organizations supporting women of color—groups including SisterSong and Indigenous Women Rising—say it's clear to them that abortion restrictions and bans worsen maternal mortality and health disparities. Academic research supports that.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, those disparities have become starker.

In Arizona, where I had returned to be closer to family and work as a pediatric emergency medicine physician and abortion provider, abortion services ceased temporarily as lawyers argued for greater clarification of state laws. Abortion access in Arizona, as in other abortion-restrictive states, has been in turmoil since. Patients' lives have been at the mercy of legislators, lawyers and judges, the majority of whom are not physicians. Some clinics in Arizona kept their doors closed due to the uncertainty of abortion legality, reopening in October when the Arizona Court of Appeals put a hold on the reinstatement of an 1864 law that criminalized abortion when Arizona was still a territory, not a state. This back and forth and lack of legal clarity has been confusing and stressful for patients, sometimes with

life-threatening consequences. Pregnant patients have been affected, of course. But so have patients who need access to medications like methotrexate, which is used for the treatment of both ectopic pregnancies and autoimmune illnesses: Some have been denied potentially life-saving medication due to concern that it would be used to induce an abortion.

The turmoil has made many providers reluctant to perform abortion services out of fear of criminal penalties. The recruitment of medical students and physician trainees across the country also has been affected, with some seeking to train and practice in states where medicine is science-driven, not politically driven.

As I continue to work with and listen to people who have been advocating for decades with Black, brown and Indigenous organizations, I've come to realize that fighting for abortion rights is not the same as fighting for reproductive justice.

Reproductive justice is the right to have children, to not have children, and to raise the children you have in safe, sustainable communities. This means abortion access *and* access to clean water. This means bodily autonomy *and* not facing drought-induced heat strokes and natural disasters. We cannot have one without the other.

It is devastating to know that at any moment, every single day, patients in this country are being turned away from the medical care they want and need, and turned away from the futures they imagine for themselves and their families. These restrictions are impacting the way that health care providers like me approach conversations about more than abortion care. They also affect the ways we approach miscarriage management, birth control, ectopic pregnancy treatment, infertility care, cancer care and so much more due to concerns about losing one's license, livelihood—and with potential criminal penalties in some states—even one's freedom.

While all of the air has been knocked out of me as I raise a young girl in a state where legislators and the courts have control over our bodies, I move forward with a bit of hope, a small glimmer knowing that we—the collective we—will not stop until we build a better future for each other, that no matter who we are, where we live, who we love or how much money we make, we can live a life of dignity, respect and self-determination. **PCM**





## Message from Alumni Board President Alfredo Romero '91

Greetings, my fellow Sagehens,

Happy New Year! How are we here in 2023 already? I'd like to begin by thanking Don Swan '15 for his leadership of the Alumni Association Board these past two years. The board and I deeply appreciate his time and commitment, especially as it stretched across the pandemic and the return to in-person life.

I am excited to be leading this dynamic group of dedicated and energetic Sagehen volunteers and can't believe it's already been six months since the Alumni Board members kicked off their work this academic year. We have had fantastic planning and discussions taking place in our meetings and are working toward many opportunities for alumni engagement and philanthropy—so stay tuned for more details! And I am also pleased to share some highlights of board work already in motion:

- Partnering with the Career Development Office to offer Alumni Futures, virtual career exploration and planning presentations from Alumni Board members for young alumni and students. Chirps to **Jeff Levere '12** for kicking off this effort with his workshop this past fall!
- Connecting with members of the campus community to share information and support Pomona traditions.
- Working to grow alumni registrations as well as alumni-to-alumni and alumni-to-student mentoring on Sagehen Connect. (Did you know you can access the official Pomona College Alumni Directory and the *Pomona College Magazine* class notes pages on Sagehen Connect?)
- Supporting activities of our Sagehen Regional Alumni Chapters, including working with chapter volunteers and planning the launch of two new chapters by Summer 2023!

As we get closer to spring, I want to remind you that all alumni are welcome to attend Alumni Weekend—April 27-30—and hope to see you there. The Alumni Board also looks forward to welcoming our newest Alumni Association members (the Class of 2023) in May!

Until next time—CHIRP!

**Alfredo**

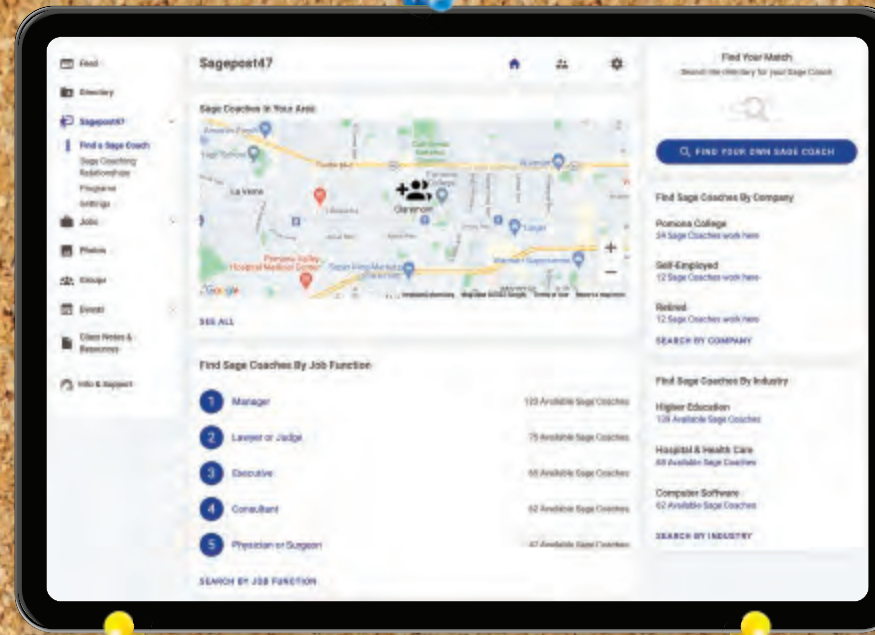
Alfredo Romero '91  
Alumni Association Board President

To learn more about the Alumni Association Board, see the board roster or read meeting minutes online—or to nominate a fellow Sagehen (or yourself) for the board—please visit [pomona.edu/alumni-board](http://pomona.edu/alumni-board).

For questions, please contact  
Director of Alumni and Family Engagement Alisa Fishbach at [alumni@pomona.edu](mailto:alumni@pomona.edu).

## Family Weekend Fun

We happily welcomed hundreds of families to campus for Family Weekend in October to enjoy a special weekend of programs and activities with their students. Families toured the new Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness and Benton Museum of Art, attended faculty and staff presentations like Hen Talks and History of Pomona, and were welcomed to many open house receptions hosted by academic departments and Student Affairs offices. We also appreciated the opportunity to thank our generous family donors in person at a special luncheon held in their honor on Saturday.



## Sage Coaches Needed on Sagehen Connect!

Who knows the ins and outs of graduating from Pomona and experiencing life beyond the Gates better than a Sagehen? Alumni and students would love to connect with you and hear your advice about career experiences, graduate school and other post-Pomona life wisdom as a Sage Coach on Sagehen Connect. Provide resume feedback, offer advice on career roles and paths, make recommendations on graduate school programs or assist with other types of support—you choose how you would like to help and how much. Additionally, Sage Coaches may be invited to participate in panel discussions or individual presentations hosted by the Career Development Office or Alumni and Family Engagement.

### Signing up is easy:

- Log in to Sagehen Connect at [sagehenconnect.pomona.edu](http://sagehenconnect.pomona.edu).
- Select "Edit profile" next to your profile image.
- Scroll to "Offer Sage Coaching" and select what you would like to do as a Sage Coach.
- Don't forget to save your changes!

Not on Sagehen Connect yet? Learn more about our Pomona College online alumni community and register today at [pomona.edu/sagehen-connect](http://pomona.edu/sagehen-connect).

## Alumni Weekend

Who's Coming to Alumni Weekend 2023?

Alumni Weekend registration opens in February, and we can't wait to welcome our Sagehens back to campus for a fantastic weekend of reconnecting and making new memories. We'll visit familiar and new Pomona spaces and celebrate reunions with class years ending in 3 or 8 as well as the 47th reunion of the Class of 1976 and our Diamond Classes of 1962 and earlier. As always, there will be an abundance of curated programs and events for our alumni community to enjoy. All alumni are invited, so don't wait for your next reunion to come and say hello to classmates, faculty, staff and Cecil!



Watch your email and the Alumni Weekend and Reunion Celebrations website at [pomona.edu/alumniweekend](http://pomona.edu/alumniweekend) for details, updates and information on how to register. Questions? Please call (888) SAGEHEN or email Director of Alumni and Family Engagement Alisa Fishbach at [alumni@pomona.edu](mailto:alumni@pomona.edu).

## A Message from Nathan Dean '15, National Chair of Annual Giving

Hello and Happy New Year, Sagehens!

I hope your holiday season was full of joy and relaxation and gave you time to reconnect with family, friends and your favorite Sagehens. During these past months of giving, I have been in awe, once again, at the generosity of our Sagehen community. It is inspiring to begin 2023 as a proud member of our philanthropic community, noting the impact that's been made in support of our students so far this academic year.

With January here, it occurs to me that I am heading into the last six months of my term as the national chair of annual giving. In July, I'll be honored to pass the torch to our newly named national chair, **Christina Tong '17**. It's been a rewarding role indeed, and I look forward to working on several special giving opportunities coming our way this spring that will strive to raise funds for key areas in need at Pomona.

Thank you to everyone who has made a gift in 2022. Rest assured that your support goes directly to the immediate needs of current students and faculty, including financial aid, academic programs and resources, experiential learning and student activities. If you haven't given yet, I hope you'll consider donating to the area of Pomona that's most meaningful to you before June 30 reaches us. Gifts of all sizes make a great impact.



Gratefully,

**Nathan**

Nathan Dean '10  
National Chair of Annual Giving

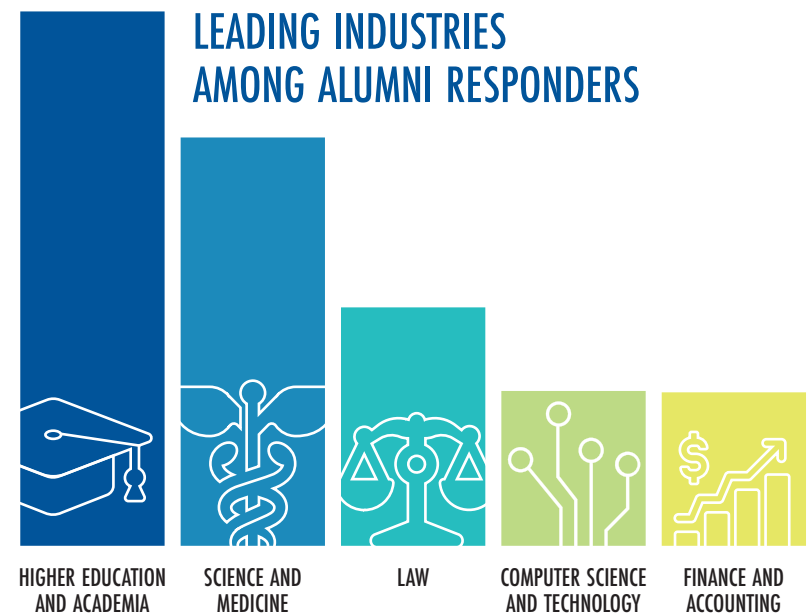
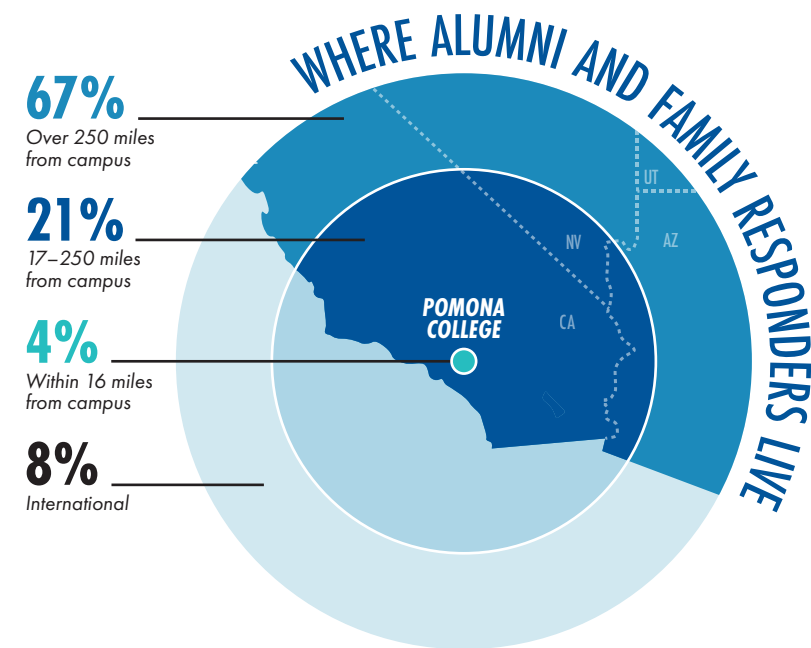


# THE ALUMNI AND FAMILY ATTITUDE SURVEY (AFAS)

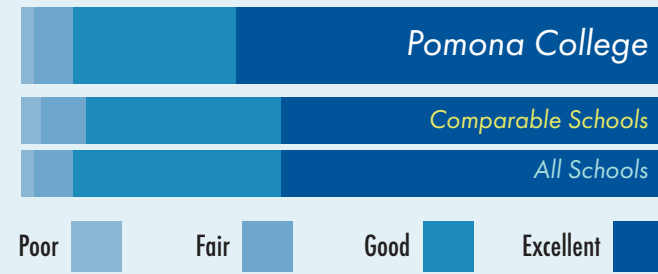
## We asked what you thought, and you told us.

Last summer, the College launched a multiyear project with alumni and families to strengthen connectivity, understanding and engagement. We partnered with PEG, Ltd., a leading national alumni research firm that has worked with Caltech, Grinnell, Georgetown and Duke, among others.

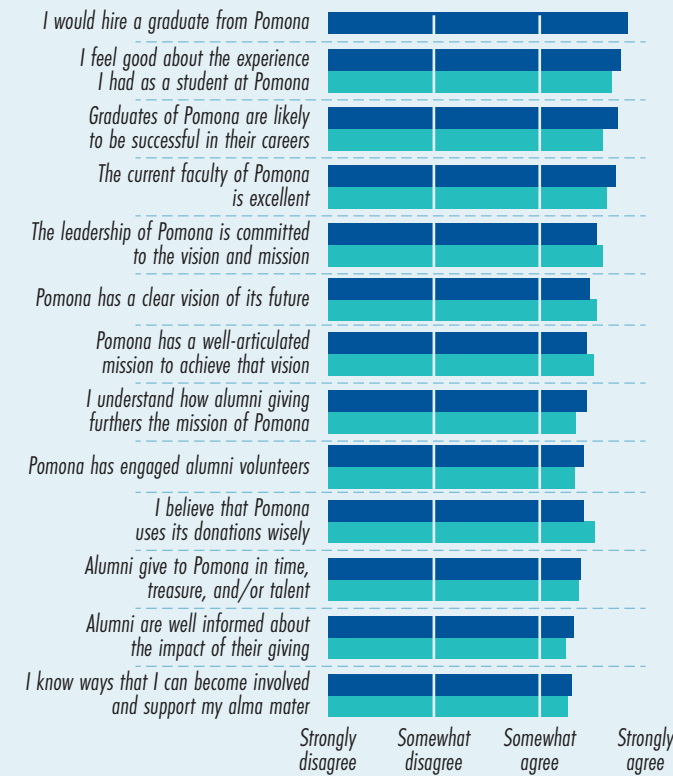
We received over 2,100 initial responses. Here's some of what we learned.



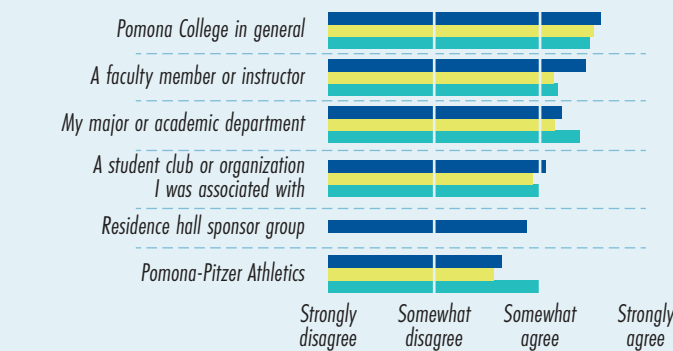
## OVERALL OPINION OF POMONA COLLEGE



## WE BELIEVE IN POMONA



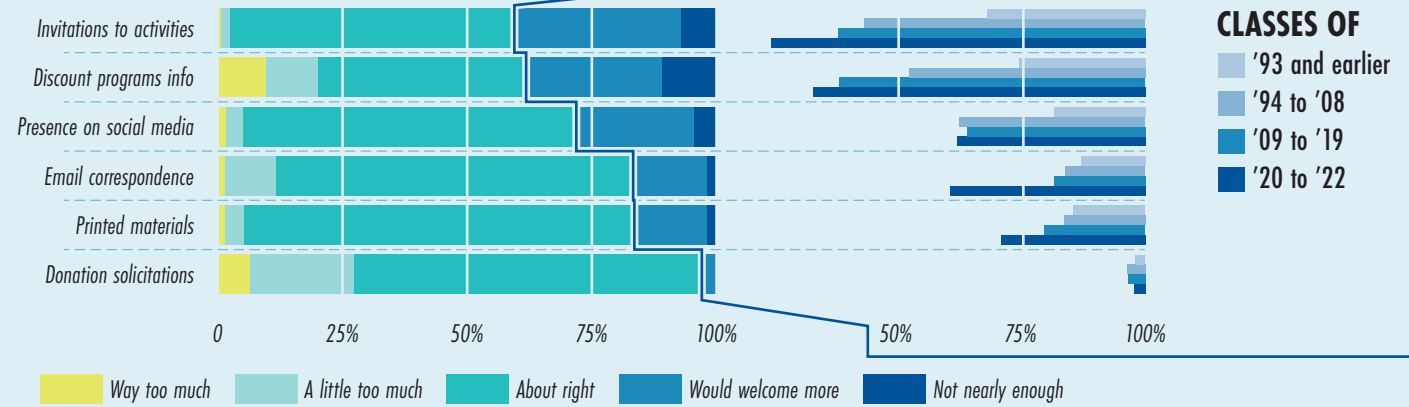
## WE ARE LOYAL



## 6 QUALITIES OF A SAGEHEN

- > Critical Thinker
- > Smart
- > Self-Motivated
- > Curious
- > Open-Minded
- > Adaptable

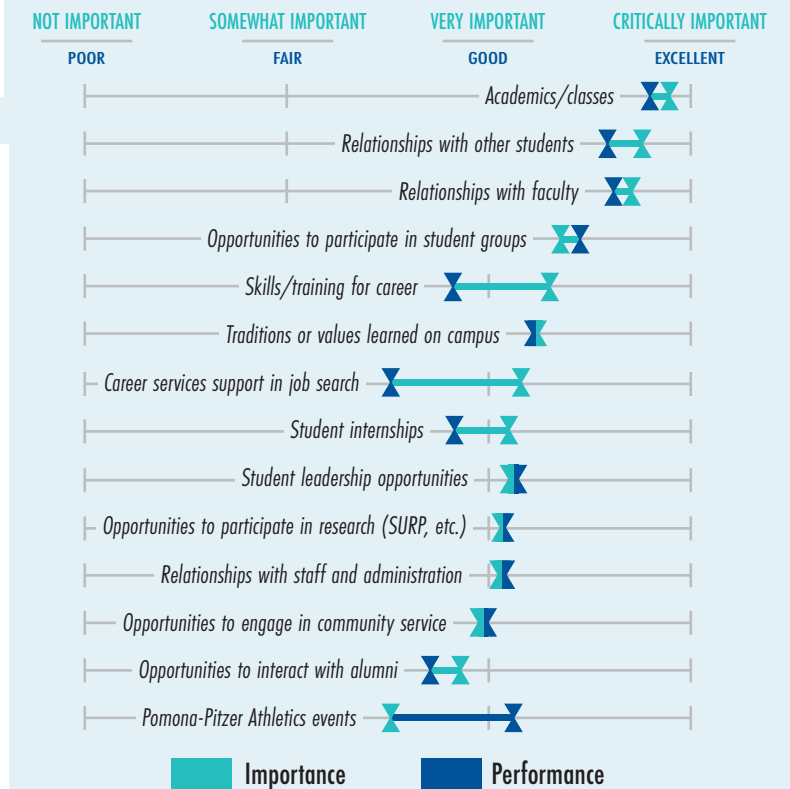
## COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES



## HOW FAMILIES WANT TO STAY CONNECTED

- Networking with alumni and other student families
- Identifying job opportunities for graduates
- Attending regional alumni events
- Participating in Pomona College online activities

## HOW WELL DID WE DO?



## AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INITIAL FINDINGS

1. Alumni and families love Pomona College.
2. Alumni, across all eras of graduation, agree the College has been effective in furthering academic excellence and building a diverse and inclusive student population.
3. Alumni and families believe the College should increase communication and engagement, offer more and varied regional events, and strengthen college to career services and networking opportunities.

## OUR NEXT STEPS

You'll hear more as we study your feedback and make plans to engage and serve Pomona College alumni and families.

**Keep in Touch. Stay Connected. Get Involved. Chirp!**

Learn more about the survey at [pomona.edu/afas-survey](https://pomona.edu/afas-survey)

**Alumni and Family Engagement**  
[pomona.edu/alumni](https://pomona.edu/alumni)  
[pomona.edu/families](https://pomona.edu/families)

**Career Development Office**  
[pomona.edu/cdo](https://pomona.edu/cdo)

**Sagehen Connect**  
[SagehenConnect.pomona.edu](https://SagehenConnect.pomona.edu)

**Admissions**  
[pomona.edu/admissions](https://pomona.edu/admissions)



## Alfredo Romero '91

Romero, the new president of the Alumni Association Board, arrived at Pomona in 1987 as an undocumented student. After working in international business, he now owns a marketing consulting firm for small businesses and is a part-time lecturer at Loyola Marymount. His conversation with *PCM*'s Robyn Norwood has been edited for length and clarity.

### **PCM: How was it that you first came to Pomona?**

**Romero:** In high school, I visited the Harvey Mudd campus through the Upward Bound program, where we got to stay overnight. I was very interested in—and still am—engineering and mathematics. During the tour, somebody pointed out, oh yeah, down the street there are other colleges. Pitzer, Claremont McKenna, Pomona. Only one of my teachers at Pioneer High School in Whittier had actually heard of Pomona, and the only reason he remembered was because Pomona had won the College Bowl back in the '60s. So that added a little bit more mystique. Sure enough, I fell in love once I got to visit the campus, meet people and read about the student-faculty ratio. I thought, absolutely, I'm going to apply.

### **PCM: Tell me about your family and higher education.**

**Romero:** We're all immigrants. I was 8 years old when we came here. I didn't speak a lot of English. One of the reasons that we came to this country, my dad has said many times, is for the opportunities, including educational opportunities. We were a border family. I was born in Hermosillo, the capital of the state of Sonora, just south of Arizona. This was before the borders were so impenetrable. There was a lot of back and forth.

We finally came here, and I was pretty good at school and ended up skipping eighth grade. In high school, they put me in the track of the honors program. It was really interesting, the encouragement I got from my parents. It wasn't even explicitly said, but I understood that whatever I chose to do, they were going to support it. It never really dawned on me to think about the price. We'd figure out how to pay for it. I'd take loans if I had to, which I did. There are a lot of things I wish I

would have known. But I also had probably the best support I could have gotten.

### **PCM: How did you get involved on campus once you were here?**

**Romero:** I spent my first two years in Oldenborg, and that was a lot of fun. I was very involved in high school and I just continued that here. I decided to run for ASPC, so I was a senator and then I was the external affairs commissioner my junior year. I played intramurals. I've always been very sociable, so I'd just go meet people. A lot of the people on the Alumni Board are people who were very involved. In fact, we have former ASPC presidents on the board, including Andrea Venezia ['91], who was ASPC president when I was here. My personal journey after graduating was that I volunteered with the CDO [Career Development Office] quite a bit. And I served on panels about business, international business, graduate school, anything they needed speakers for that I have experience in.

What it's always been about is Pomona did a lot for me. Coming in, I was actually undocumented. I didn't get my green card until I was a sophomore at Pomona. Thinking back, that was probably one of the reasons I chose Pomona over UCLA—a state school versus a private school. I never got to the conversation with UCLA as to what they would have expected of me as an undocumented student, but with Pomona there was no issue. Some of the loans I got were different from federal loans, but they found them for me.

That's probably one of the biggest debts of gratitude I have to Pomona: They didn't let my immigrant status get in the way. But the other one is really just the exposure to the world that I got at Pomona. Students from all over the world, all over the country. The access to different socioeconomic groups. I think one of the

best advantages Pomona has, especially with the diversity of the student body, is that as a young immigrant kid from Whittier, you get to speak with people whose parents are professors or they're lawyers or they're successful business people. There are also instances where you realize that you're in a better situation than they are, which for a 17- or 18-year-old is eye-opening when you've been told your whole life that people in the upper part of the socioeconomic strata have it better: They have a better life; they have a better chance of success.

The story I love to tell is the friend of mine who needed to buy a dress for a formal party. We went down to Montclair Plaza. I had a car, and that was one of the biggest things right? I'm local, so I have a car and I drive people around. There are different kinds of privilege. We get to the mall, she picks the dress she wants and we go up to the counter. Her father had given her a checkbook and said, "Go ahead. Write checks for anything you need." Which immediately I'm thinking, oh, that's cool. She opens up the checkbook and goes, "I don't know how to write a check." It was a big reveal to me, because I had a checking account since I got a job at 16. So I helped her. Privilege isn't necessarily a binary thing. It's not one extreme or the other.

### **PCM: Given the timing, were you part of the Reagan amnesty era?**

**Romero:** Yes, absolutely. We came here in 1978, and my dad actually had attended high school in Arizona, in Tucson. He joined the U.S. Air Force but ended up moving back to Mexico, met my mom and had a family there. When we came, my dad said, "I'm a veteran. We should have no problem immigrating." So we started applying for residency. And nothing. It was issues with my dad's paperwork; there were just all kinds of hurdles. It was seven, eight



years of trying. My mom was completely concerned when I was in high school. "Be careful where you go, you don't want to get caught by Immigration." At that point, I think I'd already lost any accent I had, so I wasn't that worried. But my mom was.

At one point, the lawyer we had hired to help us looked at my parents and said, "You know, the best thing you could do right now is to apply for this new amnesty program that is coming through." So when I hear people talking about, like, why don't people just come here legally, I remember it took us almost a decade to do it the right way. That is how finally, in 1987, I was in Oldenborg and I got my date to go down to

the city of Pomona and have my interview to get my temporary residence card.

### **PCM: With the Alumni Board, do you come in with anything specific you're trying to do?**

**Romero:** The Alumni Board to me is a reflection of the alumni community as a whole. So what I immediately recognized is that no matter what my personal feelings may be towards something, the only way to get things done is to make sure the energy is there to get them done. Yes, I have a particular passion for DACA students or anybody undocumented. I have a very, very strong desire to help first-generation and low-

income students as they come in. We do have a very diverse group on the board, including other former first-generation students.

But we also have—I guess I'm part of this now—older alumni who are very interested in continuing the traditions of the College. In conversations with some of the younger alums, there seems to be a disconnect between their experience at Pomona and what they see as the traditions of the College. Some of that was done on purpose because there are some traditions that Pomona had—the freshman weigh-in was definitely one we don't want to continue. It stopped. But there are a lot of traditions that we do want to continue. (For more on traditions, see *Pomoniana*, page 12.) [PCM](#)



To view notes online, visit  
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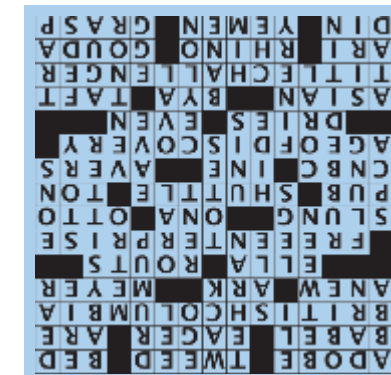
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Solution to crossword puzzle on page 64



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*"Now in my senior year at Pomona, I can't help but marvel at everything I've experienced, all I've learned and the many friends and mentors I've met — like Professor Sharon Goto, my psychological science advisor who helped me to fall in love with psych and was instrumental in my development.*

*Your generosity ensures tomorrow's trailblazers and problem solvers continue to have access to the same world-class faculty, inclusive residence and internship programs, and enriching extracurricular opportunities I do."*

*— Kalau Morikawa '23*



**PASS THE TORCH**  
**TOMORROW'S SAGEHENS NEED YOUR SUPPORT**

Give to Pomona's Annual Fund at  
[pomona.edu/give-today](https://pomona.edu/give-today)





## James P. Taylor

Emeritus Professor of Theatre  
1954–2022

**Emeritus Professor of Theatre Jim Taylor**, who taught at Pomona for three decades before his retirement in July, passed away from complications of cancer on November 10, 2022. He was 68.

As a specialist in stage and lighting design, Taylor not only trained students in those arts but also designed the College’s departmental theatre productions. In recent years, he found great satisfaction in developing and teaching a course titled Theatre in an Age of Climate Change that introduced elementary concepts and principles of both climate change and theatre. He also was involved in Climate Change Theatre Action, an international series of readings and performances of short climate change plays, hosting events on the Pomona campus that sought to inspire climate action through artistic expression.

Together with Isabelle Rogers ’20, Taylor worked to write a play, *This Is a River*, set in Malaysian Borneo, where deforestation, palm oil plantations and dam construction have affected Indigenous people living along the Baram River. In 2020, Theatre Without Borders and the Pomona College Department of Theatre presented an online reading of the in-progress work that featured Southeast Asian actors living in Los Angeles, Chicago, London, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.

“Jim was an extremely kind professor and advisor, and supported me at every point,” Rogers says. “His work went far beyond lighting and set design, and I was most inspired by how he encouraged students to incorporate challenging messages, like the intersection between environmental issues and gender, into our theatrical work. I appreciated how he always pushed himself out of his comfort zone to work on new projects. It was such a pleasure to collaborate with him on *This Is a River*,



which was in many ways a passion project from his personal experience on the EnviroLab Asia trip and his knowledge about the urgency of environmental activism. I’m committed to continuing his legacy with future work and collaboration with Indigenous Kayan groups on the play.”

Taylor also had expertise in South African theatre and theatre in the Philippines, where he was a Fulbright lecturer in 1997-98.

Before arriving at Pomona in 1991, Taylor was a professor at Grinnell College, Drake University and the University of Arkansas Little Rock. He earned an MFA in theatre design and technology from Southern Methodist University in 1979 after graduating from Colorado College in 1976.

At Pomona, students who had the opportunity to study with Taylor valued his skillful teaching, his vast knowledge and his close attention to craft, but the

word they most frequently used to describe him was “kind.”

In nominations for the Wig Award for excellence in teaching, students described Taylor as someone who saw “the light of each student and invite[d] them to the community with his kind heart,” and referred to him as the “kindest, most passionate, very talented, and brilliant professor.” One student noted that he was a source of comfort during the pandemic, teaching his classes with “a calm, gentle kindness that is so appreciated, especially when the world is so hard.” Students said they felt genuinely cared for by a professor noteworthy for his flexibility, compassionate listening and concern for their well-being as much as for their learning.

In addition to his contributions to dozens of campus productions—most recently as set designer for last April’s *Scissoring* in Pomona’s Allen Theatre—Taylor frequently worked in lighting design for Pasadena’s A Noise Within theatre and at various other venues and festivals over the years.

In describing the value of theatre to students, he said, “Studying theatre is a powerful synthesis of specialized knowledge and broader knowledge, which is important. You become proficient in expression in the short term, and prepared for learning and practice in the art for a lifetime.”

Born James Patrick Brennan Taylor in Denver in 1954, Taylor spent most of his childhood in Wichita, Kansas. He discovered his love for theatre and his talent for the backstage elements of the craft while at Colorado College.

Taylor is survived by his first wife, Mary (Twedt) Cantrell and their daughter Brennan Straka, whose family includes son-in-law Andrew, step-grandson Glen and grandson Malcolm. He is also survived by former wife Rosalie “Sallie” Canda Taylor and her daughter, Francesca “Cesca” Canda.

## Julian Nava ’51

Educator and Ambassador to Mexico  
1927–2022

**Julian Nava ’51**, a professor and trailblazing advocate for public education who later became the first Mexican American to serve as U.S. ambassador to Mexico, died July 29, 2022. He was 95.

Two Los Angeles Unified School District campuses bear Nava’s name—the Dr. Julian Nava Learning Academy and the Nava College Preparatory Academy—in recognition of his contributions as the first Latino elected to the Los Angeles Board of Education in 1967.

Nava, a professor of history at Cal State Northridge for more than 40 years, served on the LAUSD board for 12 years, including two stints as board president. A proponent of bilingual education, a multicultural curriculum and school integration, he emerged as a pivotal figure in the first year after he was elected during the volatile protests remembered as the East L.A. high school walkouts or Chicano “blowouts,” when thousands of students walked out of classrooms demanding more equitable education. Nava, a graduate of Roosevelt High in Boyle Heights, immediately found himself in the middle.

“Having grown up in East Los Angeles and having experienced the same unfair treatment that these students were experiencing, he understood it like no other member on the board,” remembers his daughter Carmen Nava, a professor of history at Cal State San Marcos.

“It was a trial by fire and on a certain level, everybody criticized him. People on the right felt like, ‘Who is this person who’s sympathetic and soft on crime?’ People on the left were like, ‘Why are you wearing a suit? You’ve just become one of them and you’re a sellout.’”

Nava—at times under such criticism he was advised to wear a bullet-proof vest—persuaded the board to move a pivotal meeting to East L.A.’s Lincoln High, and the board eventually implemented reforms that met most of the students’ demands.



He enrolled at East Los Angeles College, where he was the first Mexican American elected student body president. One of his teachers, a Pomona alumna, pointed him toward her alma mater, suggesting that he could be accepted despite a B+ average. “She explained that grades were not everything that Pomona would take into account. My well-rounded background, military service and election as student body president could help gain acceptance,” he wrote in his autobiography, *Julian Nava: My Mexican-American Journey*.

At Pomona, Nava recalled, he was one of only a handful of students with Spanish surnames. He reveled in eating in Frary Dining Hall under the *Prometheus* mural by José Clemente Orozco, one of Mexico’s greatest artists. Professor Hubert Herring, a specialist in Latin American history, urged Nava to apply to graduate school at Harvard. He was accepted and became one of the first Mexican Americans to earn a doctorate from Harvard.

As a young man Nava worked as a community organizer with the Community Service Organization. There he met labor leader Cesar Chavez. He served as a pallbearer at Chavez’s funeral in 1993.

Pomona presented Nava with an honorary doctor of laws in 1980, when he was a Commencement speaker. His time as a Pomona student was a watershed, his daughter says. “Up to that point, nothing in his life had been like that. But the beautiful Pomona campus, the richness of the experience that he had in his classes with his teachers and fellow students, I remember stories he would tell me about how small the classes were, almost like a seminar. I’m so grateful for that and I know that he was able to pass it forward to other students.”

Nava is survived by his wife of 60 years, Patricia, children Carmen Nava, Katie Stokes and Julian Paul Nava, sister Rose Marie Herzig and six grandchildren.

“He had to find a way to speak with his brand-new colleagues on the board—to talk with them, to learn from them, to educate them, to convince them that this was an opportunity to listen to these students—and to do what he could, for example, to try to prevent an overreaction, a police reaction, to what the students were doing,” his daughter says.

Though Nava hadn’t planned to go into politics or diplomacy, he was appointed U.S. ambassador to Mexico in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter, serving until 1981 after Ronald Reagan had taken office. In 1992, not long after he taught at Pomona as a visiting professor, Nava announced a run for mayor of Los Angeles, but his candidacy never took hold.

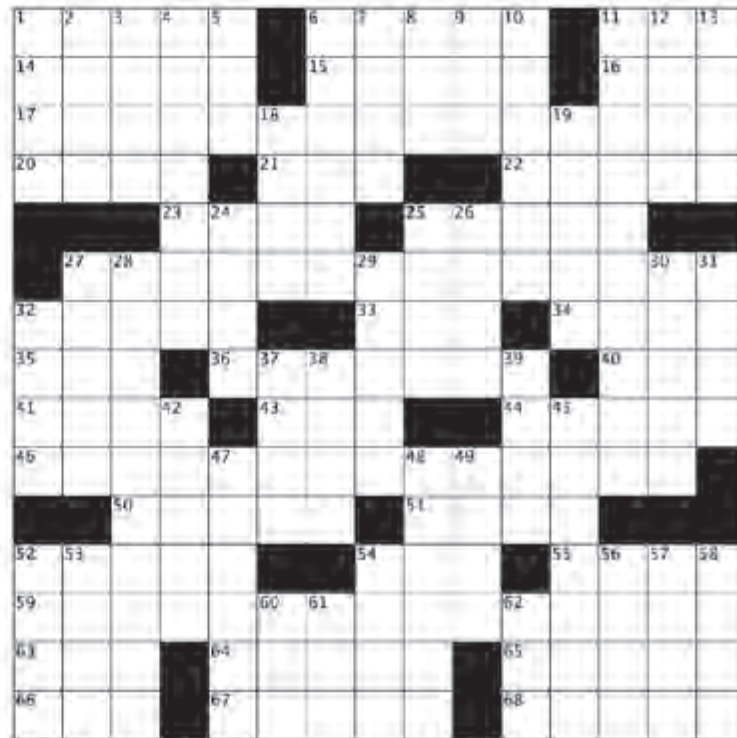
Nava arrived at Pomona after serving in the U.S. Navy Air Corps near the end of World War II. The GI Bill provided a pathway to higher education, and he became the first of eight siblings to attend college.



**"I Need Some Space"** by Joel Fagliano '14

**ACROSS**

- 1. Photoshop maker
- 6. Jacket fabric
- 11. Place to go undercover?
- 14. Tower of \_\_\_ (site in Genesis)
- 15. Rarin' to go
- 16. What "r" is sometimes short for
- 17. Westernmost province of Canada
- 20. All over again
- 21. Torah holder
- 22. Selina \_\_\_, politician on "Veep"
- 23. Singer Fitzgerald
- 25. Severe defeats
- 27. Principle of a market economy
- 32. Thrown
- 33. "Livin' \_\_\_ Prayer"
- 34. Palindromic man's name
- 35. Locale of ale sales
- 36. NASA craft ... names of which can found at the ends of 17-, 27-, 46- and 59-Across



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**DOWN**

- 40. Whole bunch
- 41. Channel with business news
- 43. Suffix with nectar or serpent
- 44. States as fact
- 46. Exploratory period beginning in the 15th century
- 50. Uses a towel, with "off"
- 51. Like 2022, but not 2023
- 52. The first "A" of A.A.P.I.
- 54. Not \_\_\_ long shot
- 55. U.S. president who sported a handlebar mustache
- 59. Belt seeker, in boxing
- 63. \_\_\_ Fleischer, former White House Press Secretary
- 64. Animal that can be found on the Horn of Africa, fittingly
- 65. Popular Dutch cheese
- 66. Cacophony
- 67. Only country whose name starts with "Y"
- 68. Understanding
- 1. "Dancing Queen" band
- 2. "Rats!"
- 3. Theater award
- 4. "\_\_\_ the World and Me" (Ta-Nehisi Coates book)
- 5. QB Manning
- 6. Capital of Iran
- 7. Not cool
- 8. Sense of self
- 9. Wiggly fish
- 10. Generate, as support
- 11. Facilitator of a night out for parents
- 12. One of the Great Lakes
- 13. Letter starter
- 18. Cyber Monday event
- 19. Paris subway system
- 24. Millipedes don't actually have 1,000 of them, despite their name
- 25. Big expense in New York City or San Francisco
- 26. Mouth-related
- 27. Chucked
- 28. Acted like a sore winner
- 29. "Definitely," in slang
- 30. Series of Snapchats
- 31. Long, long, long, time
- 32. Pet adoption org.
- 37. Avoid a seeker
- 38. Les États-\_\_\_
- 39. Roof overhang
- 42. Pinkish-red hue
- 45. Yellow Monopoly avenue
- 47. Fancy possessions
- 48. Former name for Sri Lanka
- 49. Running track shape
- 52. The slightest bit
- 53. "Hey \_\_\_" (start of a phone voice command)
- 54. Serious annoyance
- 56. Water, in Spanish
- 57. Government agents
- 58. Hip-hop subgenre from Atlanta
- 60. Michael of "Weekend Update"
- 61. That guy
- 62. Answer to this riddle from "The Hobbit": "A box without hinges, key or lid / Yet golden treasure inside is hid"



**Crossword Challenge**

This crossword puzzle was designed by Joel Fagliano '14, a senior puzzles editor at *The New York Times*. The solution is available on page 51.

Students make their way to and from classes during November rains that helped bolster the region's water supplies during the ongoing drought. Photo by Kristopher Vargas







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