

COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Pomona

Spring 2024



The Value of the
Liberal Arts



Westward lies the Pacific, but Joshua Tree National Park—about 100 miles to the east of Claremont—is another place Pomona College students go to experience the grandeur and beauty of California. It is 800,000 acres of rugged and often lonely terrain where one can see a sudden wildflower bloom in spring, climb on massive rocks or stay after sunset to behold the expanse of the Milky Way.

Photos by Carrie Rosema



The desert also is a place of inspiration. In September, poet Jodie Hollander '99 led several workshops in Joshua Tree as part of her Poetry in the Parks project, an ongoing series in national parks and other National Park Service sites. Hollander, second from right above and at far right in opposite photo, led Joshua Tree sessions on landscape poetry, the poetry of grief and healing and narrative poetry. The author of two well-received collections, *My Dark Horses* and *Nocturne*, she has been the recipient of a Fulbright fellowship and a National Endowment for the Humanities grant.

When an unexpected rain fell in the desert during the landscape workshop, it stirred new creative directions and brought to mind lines from Hollander's earlier poem, "After the Storm":

*Later that night I lay there in darkness
wondering about the storm, and what
I had seen unfurl in such violent release,
then wondered, too, what I really knew
of myself, and my own dark moorings.*



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FSC MARK

Questions About the Value— and the Cost—of College

You learn a lot at high school sports events, and not just about which parents will yell at the refs or snipe about their son's or daughter's playing time.

Sitting in the stands at our son's water polo games and swim meets a few years back, I'd listen as people talked about their children and college. The University of California schools dominated the conversation along with occasional Ivy League or military academy aspirations, and sometimes the firm conviction that community college was the smart way to go.

What I wasn't prepared for was the anti-college sentiment. There was a dad who had earned a nice living and built a good family life while working as a manager somewhere in the vast port complex along the Southern California coast. For the life of him, he couldn't understand why his son wanted to go to college to study finance when he could set him up on the waterfront. But it was another father's comments that stopped me cold. What he wanted for his son was "anything but college," an attitude I've shortened in my mind to ABC.

I didn't know him well enough to know if his attitude was tied up in the political divide over higher education, with some on the right viewing colleges and universities as places only for those on the left. Perhaps it reflected his own experience: He must have done well without college, building a business in construction, I think, so why did his son need to spend four years and tens if not hundreds of thousands looking for another way?

Education as the route to a better life is deeply entrenched among many lower-income and immigrant families, often convinced that having a doctor in the family is the way to success. High-income families with a tradition of college-going value education, too—perhaps for itself, perhaps as a way for their children to be able to match the standard of living they have attained, or perhaps as a matter of pride or prestige.

But among middle-income families, it has become more hit and miss. While the national conversation about what colleges can do to enroll low-income students has grown louder over the past decade, it's safe to say that the conversation about what's being done for middle-income families largely has been sidelined. Although Pomona meets the full demonstrated need of all students who are eligible for need-based aid—and without loans—many middle-income families don't look past the published tuition number.

When I ran into a woman I know and learned her daughter had just been awarded a Fulbright after graduating from a small liberal arts-focused university in the Pacific Northwest that offers merit aid, I congratulated her and mentioned that I work at Pomona. "We looked at Pomona but didn't even apply after we saw the price tag," she told me. I felt a sting, but it was too late to urge her to run the MyinTuition calculator (myintuition.org), which also can be found on Pomona's Admissions web pages.

As Pomona College President G. Gabrielle Starr writes on page 40 in introducing our Middle Income Initiative, Pomona is taking a new approach on financial aid. We will continue our longstanding financial support for lower-income students and expand support for students from middle-income families to make Pomona more accessible to students from a full range of incomes.

That's because while we proudly reflect the array of races and ethnicities in this country, we do not reflect the full economic spectrum.

Let's see what we can do about that.

—Robyn Norwood



Cover: A liberal arts education encompasses the arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences, aiming both to shape and reveal the intellect.

Illustration by Luisa Jung

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A look at the origins of Pomona's multifaceted education and how the liberal arts prepare students both for their careers and for lives of continued growth and meaning.

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Six Sagehens from the Class of 2018 and another from the Class of 2020 tell how their Pomona education led them to one of the most renowned medical schools in the world.

Opening Pomona's Doors Wider for Middle Income Students 40

Pomona College President G. Gabrielle Starr, an advocate for students of all backgrounds to have access to higher education, introduces the College's new Middle Income Initiative to make Pomona more affordable.

Journeys: The Paths Pomona Students Choose 42

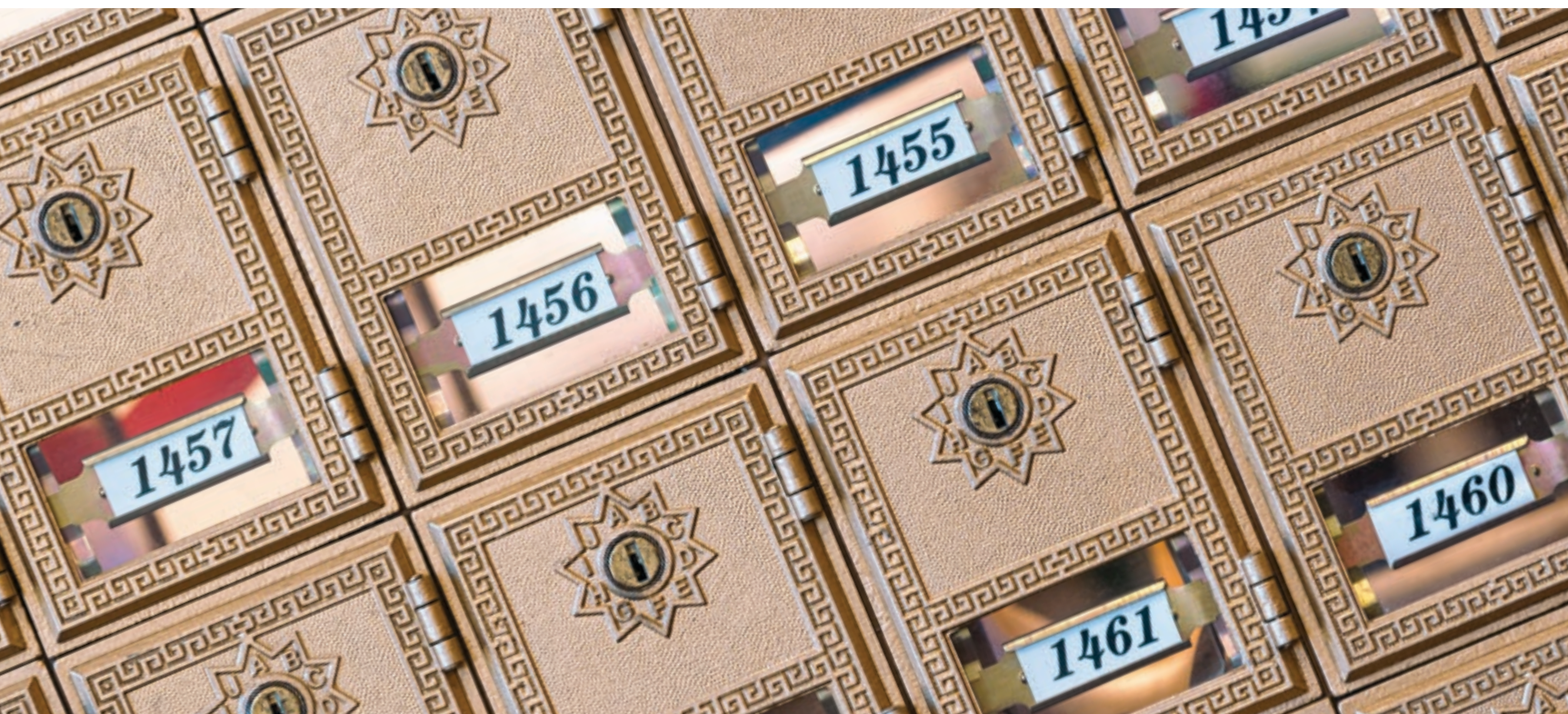
Many liberal arts students enter college with one vision of what they want to study but soon discover new fields or interdisciplinary interests that resonate deeply.

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A Toast to Pomona's Winemakers

Thank you to Adam Rogers '92 for a wonderfully informative interview chockful of winemaking insights with Cathy Corison '75 (Fall 2023).

As a transplant now living in Europe (or the Old World, as the wine milieu would have it), while I possess the luxury of enjoying artisanal, well-made wines from independent-spirited vintners for a relative pittance—down with the three-tier U.S. wine distribution system!—I still hanker now and then for a taste of home in the form of the blessed Californian sunshine that ripens grapes like clockwork.

It's actually quite rare that American wines are imported into Europe, given the general high labor and land costs as well as a bombastically stereotypical style, full of oak and tannin. And yet, almost without fail the likes of Chappellet [founded by the late

Donn Chappellet '54] and Corison are nearly universally admired by discerning palates and cited as New World exemplars that could have easily found roots in the Old World, even mistaken for an example originating from metropole Bordeaux.

Napa has become Disneyfied, where the economics of land acquisition and homogenous vinification also mean costs that are passed on to the taster and consumer, both monetarily and in the loss of terroir. *Chapeau* for our Sagehen trailblazers with their steadfast conviction to make wine that expresses the gifts of the fecund earth. I raise a glass of Kronos Vineyard or Pritchard Hill to those who concur.

—Cliff Wu '08
's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands

1923 Football Captain, AKA 'Dad'

That was such a nice surprise, to open my Pomona magazine and see my dad, Herb Mooney 1924, looking back at me (“100 Years Ago: The Sagehens vs. the Trojans in the L.A. Coliseum,” Fall 2023). What a great guy.

Delightful story. Just to keep the record straight, it isn't that “five of his children” went to Pomona, but that “his five children” went to Pomona.

My father loved Pomona, and he loved football, and we used to see Mr. [Ranney C.] Draper 1925 when we went to games. Thank you for calling attention to a team of very good sports on a very special occasion in a very different era.

Way to go. Take a bow.

—Jane E. Mooney Carter '65
Marshalltown, Iowa



What To Do with Old Mailboxes?

As USC's first full-time university archivist, I had no hesitation in positing a solution as to how to preserve and repurpose all of the “lovely old mailboxes” removed from Smith Campus Center by turning to a form of a time capsule.

Assign six of the mailboxes across to each class year since, let's say, 1950 and invite members of each graduation class to reach some consensus as to what small-sized document or memorabilia might best testify to the history or notable contribution of that class and add such archival gems going forward to each present and future class's six “document” boxes.

I don't know where the college archives are housed on campus, but if space is available, that hopefully subterranean space for such an organic special collection would be an excellent home to preserve Pomona history from the student body's perspective. Examples of this might include music, photos, publications, diaries and original scholarship in the handy form of flash drives, DVDs, etc., together with small mementos. I'm sure you can add to this list.

What say you all?

—Paul Christopher '58
Pebble Beach, CA

Spring 2024

Remembering Professor Richard MacMillen '54

Dick MacMillen's profound influence on my life began my freshman year at Pomona College in the spring semester of 1964, when I enrolled in General Zoology, a course he instructed for some 100 students, many of whom had aspirations of medical school. By the end of the semester, I was sure that I would not be among those headed for the glories of medical practice.

Instead, I became charmed by ecology, evolutionary biology and the special interests in “physiological ecology” that Dick portrayed: How do animals survive and reproduce in deserts, where heat and aridity prevail along with scarcity and unpredictability of vital resources? Dick demonstrated his love of desert physiological ecology by offering us first-year students a field trip out to the creosote bush scrub near Palm Springs, where he showed us how to catch desert iguanas and take their body temperatures with a miniature mercury thermometer. The lizards started off the morning relatively cool but climbed to body temperatures remarkably greater than standard human body temperature, showing us they

were anything but “cold-blooded.” Then as the desert became too hot for even the lizards to tolerate, they retired to their underground burrows, while we *Homo sapiens* hung around sweating it out to complete our documentation that the lizards were in fact disappearing below ground for the duration of the excessive midday heat.

My sophomore year, I enrolled in Dick's Comparative Anatomy course in the fall and his Animal Ecology field course in spring. An added highlight was the Zoology Department spring break trip Dick led to San Carlos Bay in Sonora, Mexico. Desert rodents (kangaroo rats!) and lizards abounded in the desert scrub and cactus, but snorkel-diving for spiny lobsters in the reefs just off the beach served as an introduction to marine biology—not to mention feasting on fresh lobster boiled in a big pot on a wood campfire.

My senior year was Dick's first sabbatical to Australia, but during his absence from Claremont he put me in touch with Professor George Bartholomew at UCLA, with whom he

had recently completed his Ph.D. I followed Dick's path to Westwood. Later, my own first sabbatical was to Australia, and by happy coincidence that year (1983-84) was Dick's third major stay in Australia, which allowed us to meet up again Down Under.

Dick's guidance continued over a lifetime, as he moved from Pomona to UC Irvine, where he influenced my experiences as I figured out my dissertation and made postdoc plans. I'm happy to say I reached Dick by phone on his 91st birthday last April, a few months before his passing. His kind and gentle manner, sincerity, sense of humor and love of the academic life and natural history will remain a memory deeply imprinted in my mind.

—Jim Kenagy '67
*Emeritus Professor of Biology
University of Washington*

Editor's note: An obituary for Richard “Dick” MacMillen '54 P'05, who taught at Pomona from 1960 to 1968, appears on page 56. [PCM](#)

Pomona College Magazine

A New Community Space in the City of Pomona

Pomona College once again is a welcoming presence in the city of Pomona after the 2023 opening of a new community center in the city where the College held its first classes in September 1888.

The Pomona College Community Engagement Center in Pomona's vibrant downtown Arts Colony builds on longstanding ties between the city and the College, which was founded in a cottage near downtown Pomona before moving to Claremont the next year after a hotel building was offered to house the new school.

The Pomona College name stayed, however, and over the decades the college built relationships with its former city through tutoring and arts programs in schools, service programs for teens, and faculty members' research and engagement in the community.

With the opening of the Pomona College Community Engagement Center at 163 W. Second St. near Garey Avenue in Pomona, the College is building programs that will offer after-school activities for teens such as games, art projects, tutoring and workshops on college access, wellness topics and more. Last fall, a six-session series helped high school students learn about college options and guided them in applying to University of California and California State University campuses as well as to private colleges and universities.

Pomona College will continue gathering input and ideas from community members about what they would like to see at the center. Future plans call for Pomona faculty to hold some classes at the center, which also will host workshops on topics such as identifying and writing grants, college access and financial aid. In time, offerings will expand to provide help

Architectural drawing of Ayer Cottage, a small house in the city of Pomona where Pomona College held its first classes in 1888 in exercise of its charter granted October 14, 1887.



for nonprofit organizations to conduct community-based research in the city.

"We are here to serve and strengthen our ties with the people of Pomona, particularly the youth," says Sefa Aina, the College's associate dean responsible for community engagement. "We want this to be a place that builds community, supports learning and serves nonprofits and other Pomona organizations."

Municipal boundaries aside, Pomona College President G. Gabrielle Starr says the center is a tangible example of the College's commitment to its namesake city. "Pomona College aims to expand opportunity in education and for society as a whole, and we see this center in the Arts Colony as a natural place to partner with the community to promote learning, creativity and a sense of connection."

The location is particularly fitting since the Pomona Arts Colony was co-founded by Ed Tessier '91, who also helped launch the nearby School of Arts and Enterprise. The College is renting the space from Tessier's firm, Arteco Partners.

"The College moved to Claremont in 1888, but the Pomona College family always remained engaged here, making a difference," says Tessier. "Those efforts will only grow in ambition and impact now that scholars, residents, visionaries and volunteers can work together in one space."

City-College connections abound. About five blocks to the north of the center stands Pilgrim Congregational, the church that founded Pomona as a nonsectarian college. The American Museum of Ceramic Art, started by the late David Armstrong '62, is even closer. A nearby downtown mural depicts scientific pioneer Jennifer Doudna '85, the first Pomona College graduate to win a Nobel Prize. The late civil rights champion Ignacio Lopez '31, who fought discrimination against Latinos in the region from the 1930s to 1960s, published his influential *El Espectador* newspaper from his Pomona home less than a mile from the center. And nine or so blocks southwest of the center stands a plaque marking where the College held its first classes in Ayer Cottage.

"Pomona is in our very name," says Aina. "We are proud to be back in Pomona in this new way." [PCM](#)



▲ The Pomona College Community Engagement Center at 163 W. Second St. in Pomona held its opening last fall.

◆ Assistant Director of the Draper Center Rita Shaw, left, Ed Tessier '91 and Director of the Draper Center Sefa Aina at the opening.

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Test-Optional Admissions Here to Stay

Students applying to Pomona College will no longer be required to provide standardized test scores for admission, with the pandemic-era policy to remain in place for all future applicants. Though students still may choose to submit SAT or ACT scores, test scores are not required for first-year or transfer admission after Pomona faculty voted last fall in support of making this policy permanent.

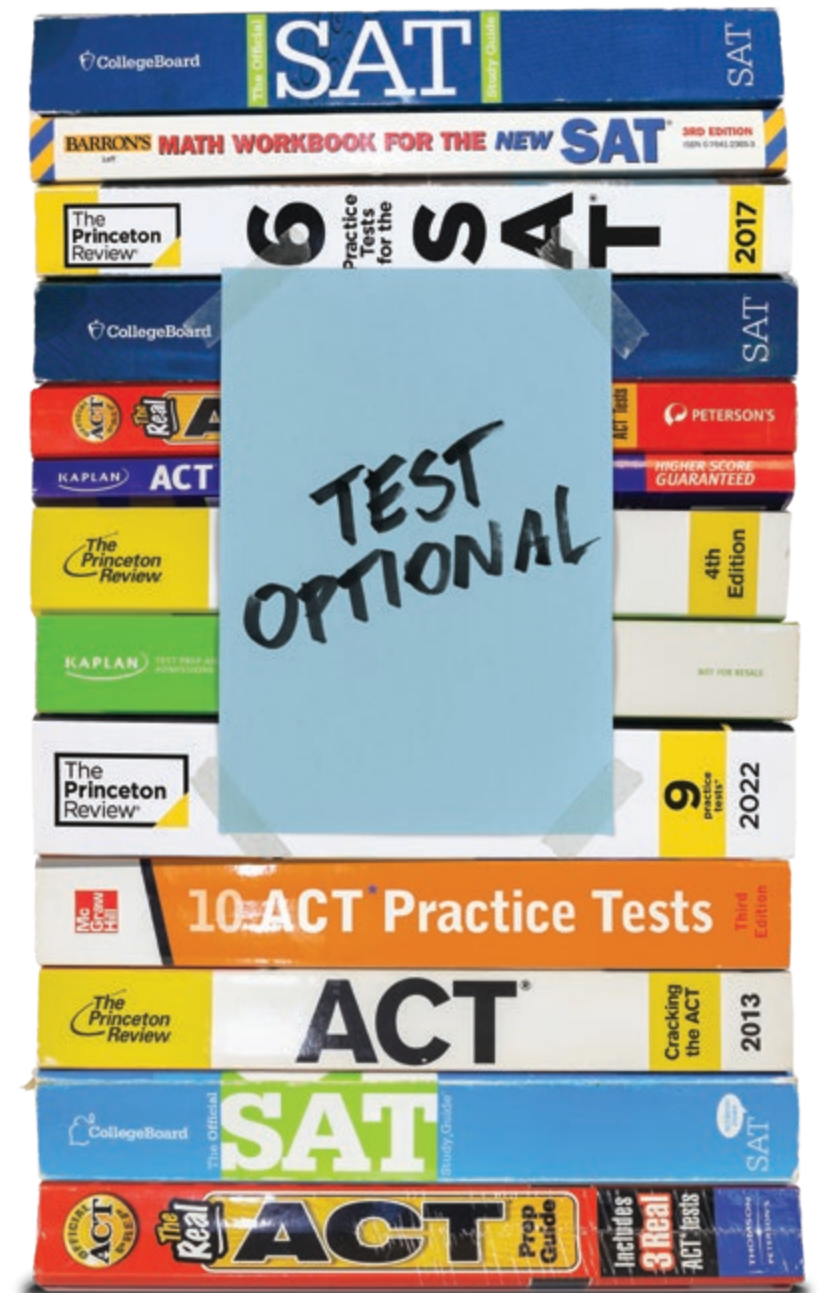
The College initially adopted test-optional admissions for first-year and transfer students applying for entry in fall 2021, as did many other U.S. colleges and universities during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pomona's policy previously had been extended through fall 2024.

With test-optional admissions now cemented in place, Pomona's selection process will continue to be thorough and comprehensive, says Assistant Vice President and Director of Admissions Adam Sapp: "It has always been our goal to admit students who we know will flourish at Pomona—making this test-optional policy permanent does not change that," Sapp says.

"At Pomona, test scores are just one factor out of many to help admissions understand the academic preparation of the applicant. Other components include grades, rigor of curriculum, recommendation letters and exam scores such as AP scores, in addition to

factors like extracurricular activities and essays to help understand who applicants are outside of the classroom."

The College's admissions and financial aid committee, which was instrumental in leading the conversation around Pomona's testing policy, will review the impact of the College's move to test-optional in five years, in the academic year 2028-29. [PCM](#)



Cultivating Care

The long winter break provides a respite for students each year, but it can pose a few complications.

For one, how will the plants that make a residence hall room a home survive untended for weeks on end?

Diana Castellanos '24, a student from Los Angeles, was approached in late 2022 by friends looking for someone to plant-sit before they left campus for break. A known “plant parent” who planned to take her collection home for the holidays, she considered taking her friends’ monstera, orchids and succulents too, but thought wiser of stashing so many plants in her parents’ living room.

Instead, she asked Pomona faculty and staff for a hand. To her surprise, about a dozen people volunteered to care for students’ plants over break—the founding members of the Plant Babysitters Club.

Castellanos, a biology major on a pre-med track, asked faculty and staff for help again this winter, and a tradition took hold. Whereas the previous year the 21-year-old coordinated the drop-off, distribution and pickup of around 75 plants, about 125 were left the second time around. Fortunately, the number of plant-sitters nearly quadrupled, ensuring every pothos, herb and calathea had a caretaker.

After caring for about 20 plants last year, Title IX and Cares Office Associate Director **Abby Lawlor** volunteered to do it again.

“Plants really add a lot of life and character into anywhere, and there are some studies that show they have stress-reducing and healing properties,” Lawlor says.

Over two days, Castellanos and some of the EcoReps—students who promote sustainable practices on campus—collected and organized the multitude of plants being dropped off for supervision. They included an ornamental pepper, a tiny succulent in a giraffe planter, and Eric the moss ball.

Before they bid their plants adieu, students taped care instructions—watering frequency, light exposure—to each pot and added their contact information and plant inventory to a Google doc for recordkeeping.

Aimee Bahng, associate professor of gender and women’s studies, took care of five plants the first year and upped her responsibility to eight this time around.

“I like to think about the worlds these plants otherwise inhabit,” Bahng says. “Maybe they bring students some joy during stressful times, some grounding when the world around them feels so unmoored. And maybe I get to play some small role in keeping that ember of joy alive, even when the odds often feel stacked against us.”



Postmarked Art

Here’s one mailing list you might want to be on: Professor of Art **Mark Allen** turns personal cards and letters into things of beauty, embellishing the outer envelopes with all manner of designs and decorative flourishes. His exhibit *From the Desk Of* last fall in the Chan Gallery at Pomona’s Studio Art Hall featured prints, posters, zines, pop-ups and a wall of envelopes that once held missives to various friends, faculty, staff, students and alumni. Take a look.



New to the Catalog

The Pomona College catalog is ever-evolving, with new and revised courses continually introduced. Among the dozens of fresh offerings this academic year were Medical Ethics, taught by Associate Professor of Philosophy **Julie Tannenbaum**, and Negotiating the U.S. Polityscape, taught by Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics **Sean Diament**.

Tannenbaum’s course touched on topics people will likely face at some point, such as whether euthanasia is permissible and how to respond to health-care practitioners who conscientiously object to providing this and other kinds of medical services.

Many individuals have already weighed in on such debates: “Voters, for example,” Tannenbaum says, “sometimes directly determine whether certain medical procedures, such as assisted suicide or abortion, will be legally permitted.”

Some medical advances seem to raise new questions—as is the case with Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats, or CRISPR, which can be used to eliminate impairments in living organisms and as an enhancement in both embryos and adults.



Associate Professor of Philosophy Julie Tannenbaum’s Medical Ethics class explores topics such as gene editing and euthanasia.

While the question of how to use such emerging medical technology is pressing, this type of issue isn’t new by any stretch.

“Long before CRISPR,” Tannenbaum says, “people were exercising control over what their children would be like, via abortion, embryo selection post-IVF and many other methods. Many of the moral issues with those choices are applicable to CRISPR.”

Diament’s policy class examines how public dissatisfaction with politics combined

with politicians running against government culminate “in a particularly self-destructive expression of politics and consistently underwhelming policy provision system.”

In a political realm where perception is often black and white, Diament’s course encourages students to find and explore the gray.

“There is very little coherent logic to the American state, both in politics and especially in governance,” he says. “Our system is the product of centuries of snap decisions based on contemporary issues, that are then left on the books and continue to inform and restructure American politics.”

Diament’s expertise in the field includes the politics of poverty, political inequity, power and conflict, and American political development, among other emphases.

Beyond the political realm, to understand the polityscape, Diament says, is to understand the professional world.

“Coordination is difficult. Problem solving even more so,” he adds. “But another key lesson is to recognize that incremental progress is still progress, and that small modifications to a business, nonprofit, or governmental body can have profoundly positive effects on individual lives.”

Above all, the politics professor adds, Negotiating the U.S. Polityscape sets out to explain how “governing even in the best of times is extremely hard, even without considering a form of toxic politics that makes it that much harder in the contemporary era.”

Visiting Assistant Professor Sean Diament, right, introduced a new politics course called Negotiating the U.S. Polityscape.



Pomona’s Piano Man

While visiting Canada the summer before his first year of high school, **Hudson Colletti ’27** sat down at a piano one day and began tickling the ivories.

In town with family for the Montreal International Jazz Festival, the Pennsylvania teen wasn’t on stage playing for a capacity crowd inside a palatial concert hall or cozy auditorium.

He was on a street corner.

Within minutes, the sounds echoing through the neighborhood drew passersby, many quick to record the young pianist’s impromptu performance.

“I loved that,” Colletti says. “I thought [playing in public] was a really cool way for me to share something I love. I thought, ‘Why not bring that opportunity back home?’”

Colletti—a first-year student who plans to study economics and computer science, founded Free the Music at 14, not long after returning from Canada. In the years since, he has collected unwanted pianos and provided them to local visual artists as canvases. These customized pianos have found second homes in restaurants and apartment buildings, as well as on various street corners, around Colletti’s hometown of Sewickley, Pennsylvania—population 3,900.

“A lot of people want to learn how to play piano,” he says, “or know how to play but don’t have access to a piano because of how much space they take up or how hard they are to move into a house.”

By placing pianos in public, Free the Music is giving others a chance to fall in love too.

“One of the pianos we placed in town,” he says, “was originally given with nothing inside of the bench, and after four or five months over summer, the bench was filled with books and sheet music from people learning how to play and having lessons there.”

As successful as Free the Music’s initiative has been in his home state, Colletti sees no reason he can’t continue his work elsewhere.

“Music brings people together and brightens our mood,” he says. “It’s a great reminder after finishing a song when people gather around because they have a love of music.”

To see—and hear—Colletti playing one of the painted pianos, check out the video at pomona.edu/hudson-colletti-piano.



Hudson Colletti ’27 invites artists to paint donated pianos before he places the instruments in public.

Books and More Books

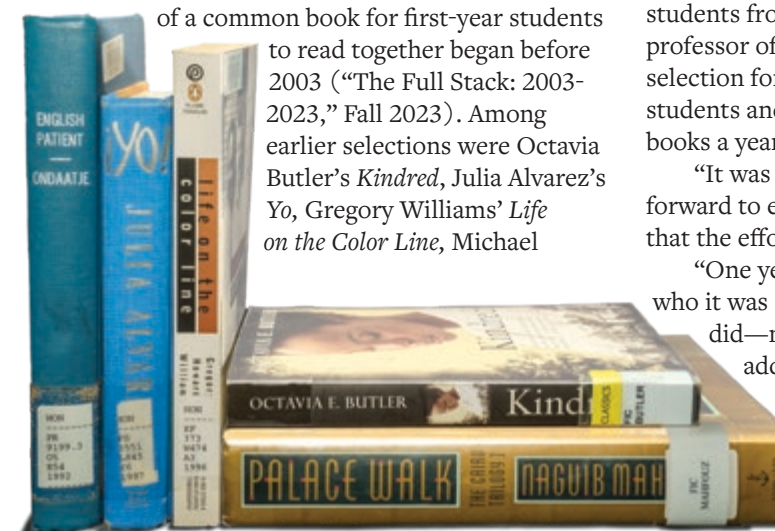
Several readers wrote to note that the tradition of a common book for first-year students to read together began before 2003 (“The Full Stack: 2003-2023,” Fall 2023). Among earlier selections were Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*, Julia Alvarez’s *Yo*, Gregory Williams’ *Life on the Color Line*, Michael

Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* and Naguib Mahfouz’s *The Palace Walk*.

Ann Quinley, Pomona’s dean of students from 1992 to 2007 and an emerita professor of politics, led the first-year book selection for some time with a committee of students and faculty, often reading 20-plus books a year and planning accompanying talks.

“It was my favorite project that I looked forward to every year,” Quinley says, noting that the effort was once the victim of a prank.

“One year, a student—I don’t remember who it was and I don’t think I’d tell you if I did—managed to get hold of the list and add another book. It was one of those bodice-rippers, and then I began to get calls. Students, they are just so creative.”



As for future nominations, **Elizabeth Pyle ’84** writes to suggest *H is for Hawk* by Helen MacDonald, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal and a classic, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion.

Incoming first-year **Sophie Park ’28** is excited to find out what her class might read. “I’d like to suggest *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again* by David Foster Wallace as my class’s orientation book,” she writes, calling the title essay “one of the most profound yet accessible pieces I know.” She adds: “Even if the essay collection isn’t chosen as the orientation book, ‘A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again’ is short and an incredible standalone and I would cry if I came to school with all my classmates having read it.”



Tani Cantil-Sakauye

Commencement Speakers

Pomona's Class of 2024 Commencement ceremony on May 12 will feature four distinguished speakers: former Chief Justice of California **Tani Cantil-Sakauye**, economist and nonprofit leader **Cecilia Conrad**, Occidental College President **Harry Elam** and medical geneticist **Emil Kakkis '82**. In addition to addressing graduating students, the speakers will be conferred honorary degrees by the College.

Cantil-Sakauye is president and CEO of the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that works to improve public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research. Before joining PPIC, she served 32 years as a jurist, with the last 12 as the chief justice of California.

Conrad is founder and CEO of Lever for Change, which assists donors in finding high-impact philanthropic opportunities and has helped distribute more than \$1.7 billion for social good. She previously led the MacArthur Fellows program. An emerita professor of economics at Pomona College, Conrad also served as vice president for academic



Cecilia Conrad



Harry Elam



Emil Kakkis '82

affairs and dean of the College, and later as acting president.

Elam, the president of Occidental College, has positioned Occidental as a cutting-edge liberal arts institution and demonstrated visionary leadership in complex national higher education issues. He completed the most successful comprehensive campaign in the college's history and has led transformative initiatives to advance Occidental's renown for education that values social impact. A pre-eminent scholar of playwright August Wilson's works, he is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Kakkis is CEO and president of Ultragenyx. Known for his work to develop treatments for rare and ultra-rare disorders, Kakkis has identified or developed 11 approved treatments for rare genetic diseases. After earning a B.A. in biology at Pomona College, he received his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from UCLA. He began his research career at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, where he worked on developing an enzyme replacement therapy for the rare lysosomal storage disorder MPS I. Kakkis also founded the nonprofit EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases.

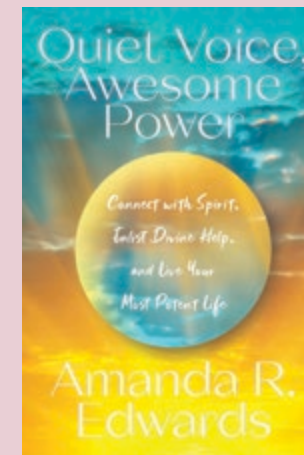
Information for commencement weekend can be found on the Commencement webpage at pomona.edu/commencement. A live broadcast of the ceremony will be available. [PCM](#)



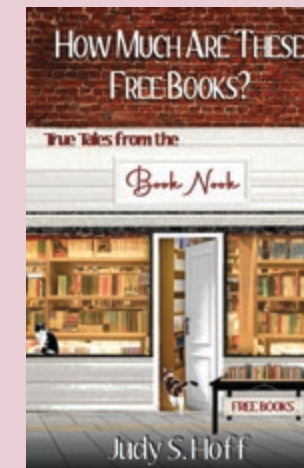
In *Studio of the Voice: Essays by Marcia Aldrich*, **Marcia Aldrich '75** serves up intense personal essays, often reflecting on her relationships with her mother and daughter.



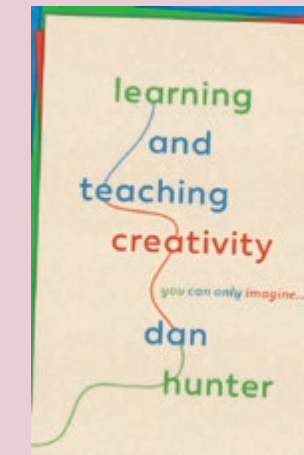
One Day This Tree Will Fall, a nonfiction picture book by **Leslie Barnard Booth '04**, invites readers to celebrate the life cycle and afterlife of trees.



Amanda Edwards '96, in *Quiet Voice, Awesome Power*, guides readers in communicating with spirit, defining their spiritual path and living with power and purpose.



How Much Are These Free Books? True Tales from the Book Nook by **Judy Schelling Hoff '62** reflects on Hoff's bookstore in Schenectady, New York, through 19 years of its existence.



In *Learning and Teaching Creativity*, **Dan Hunter '75** details steps to improve student and teacher creativity through imagination.



The poems in *The Saplings Think of Us as Young* by **Kim Kralowec '89** explore the intimacy of living in close relationship with extremes of beauty and distress.



Exquisite Dreams: The Art and Life of Dorothea Tanning by **Amy Lyford '86** is a study of the artist's life and creative output as well as the history of Surrealism.



In *Social Anarchism and the Rejection of Moral Tyranny*, **Jesse Spafford '12** articulates and defends social anarchism, staking out a number of bold and original positions.



Ali Standish '10 reimagines Arthur Conan Doyle's early life in her boarding school mystery novel, *The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall*.

The Failures Of Facebook

To understand exactly what has happened at Meta with its lineup of products such as Facebook and Instagram, ask **Jeff Horwitz '03**. The investigative journalist for *The Wall Street Journal* has been on the Meta beat for more than four years with the goal of revealing the inner workings—and management failures—within Facebook's Silicon Valley walls.

Horwitz tracked how often Facebook chose growth over quality by ignoring misinformation on the site and by lack of moderation, resulting in the investigative series *The Facebook Files* for the *WSJ* in 2021. He added additional reporting for his newly released book, *Broken Code: Inside Facebook and the Fight to Expose Its Harmful Secrets*. In it, Horwitz also looks at how Instagram managers ignored warning signs that the platform seriously damaged body image perceptions for teen girls around the world.

Journalist David Silverberg spoke to Horwitz for *Pomona College Magazine* to learn more about his yearslong process in investigating Meta, his view on Mark Zuckerberg's role in the company's missteps, and why he warns parents to be extremely careful about how their children use social media.

PCM: Technology reporters have been writing that those who run Facebook haven't learned from the mistakes they made in 2016 and beyond. What's your take on that?

Horwitz: One of the really fascinating things that came out of the book is that there was a period of time where Facebook invested really heavily in safety and in understanding its product. Then those people made recommendations on how to change the product in ways that would certainly mitigate a lot of the harms from its product, such as misinformation, the formation of massive groups like QAnon, conspiracy movements. There were approaches to fixing this that these folks developed but the problem was they came at the cost of engagement and usage of a platform. Meta and in particular Mark

Zuckerberg were not willing to accept that. So the company has actually laid off a lot of the people who are doing this, partly because they aren't interested in pursuing the work, and partly because they view these people as a fifth column inside the company that is more loyal to their sense of public good than to their sense of what is good for Meta.

The problems of 2016 and 2020 have by and large not been addressed. The ease with which any motivated entity can trick the algorithm into spewing out spam or political content hasn't fundamentally changed.

PCM: Your book found that Zuckerberg's role in how his company chose growth over content moderation was a stark contrast to how some other CEOs and founders run their companies. How so?

Horwitz: Everything flows from Mark, and that's why he's kind of an anomaly in the tech space at this point. The other big founders tend to step back or work on side hobbies such as Twitter—look at Elon Musk—and with Google and Microsoft, those founders have moved along in their lives and Mark hasn't. And I think one of the things that's really striking is he is often describing the open internet where anyone can write what they want but he neglects to discuss what Facebook became, which is an extremely powerful content recommendation engine that will recommend literally anything that will keep people on the platform more often.

No one understood that introducing a reshare button was going to actually produce higher levels of misinformation on the platform because the more times a thing gets shared,

it turns out based on the company's internal research, the less likely it's going to be true and more likely it's going to be sensationalist.

PCM: What I also found compelling about the book, and *The Facebook Files*, was how you established a relationship with Frances Haugen, the famous whistleblower and ex-manager from Facebook who ended up testifying to the U.S. Senate about how the company knew about the potential harm they were causing to both adults and children. What did you think about what she did for you and the investigation?

Horwitz: Frances is an extremely unusual human being in the sense that most whistleblowers burn out first and then they quit in a huff or they get laid off and then they decide they want to talk. I think it's very unusual for someone to begin at square one and that she couldn't live with herself if she didn't do her best to bring [Facebook's issues] to the world's attention.

This is somebody who was breaching the confidence of their employer for a very valid purpose and I think she had a lot on the line.

PCM: Before you delved into writing about Meta, you also wrote about other businesses for *The Associated Press* when you worked there between 2014 and 2019. How did your stint at AP help you with your career?

Horwitz: I was hired for their Washington investigative team and Donald Trump's candidacy sort of ate my career there. I think because I had a business focus, I was originally put onto it in 2015 as, oh, hey, here's another flash-in-the-pan candidate. We've seen many of them like that. Every cycle has some sort of Herman Cain-type figure who appears briefly on the horizon and then disappears. And I think that was originally the assumption about Donald Trump's candidacy as well. Obviously that never happened.

So it was a really interesting time in terms of the work. But at the same time—I get into this a little bit in the book—it was kind of a depressing time because it really became apparent in 2016 that the only way news could get traction was if it appealed to partisans on either side and, in particular, if it appealed to partisans on Twitter.

I think one of the ways I ended up covering Facebook for *The Wall Street Journal* is I wanted to figure out that if the news and information ecosystem is permanently broken, then what's going to replace it? And maybe I should be writing about that. So that's how I ended up covering Meta.

PCM: How would you characterize the time you spent at Pomona?

Horwitz: One of the best things that happened at Pomona College for me was I got David Foster Wallace when he was teaching creative writing.

I also got into journalism via the student newspaper, and my first ever story for them was covering Professional Bull Riders Association events in Anaheim. It's not like bull riding is a thing that I am deeply passionate about, but to have my press seat next to ESPN's was pretty fun.

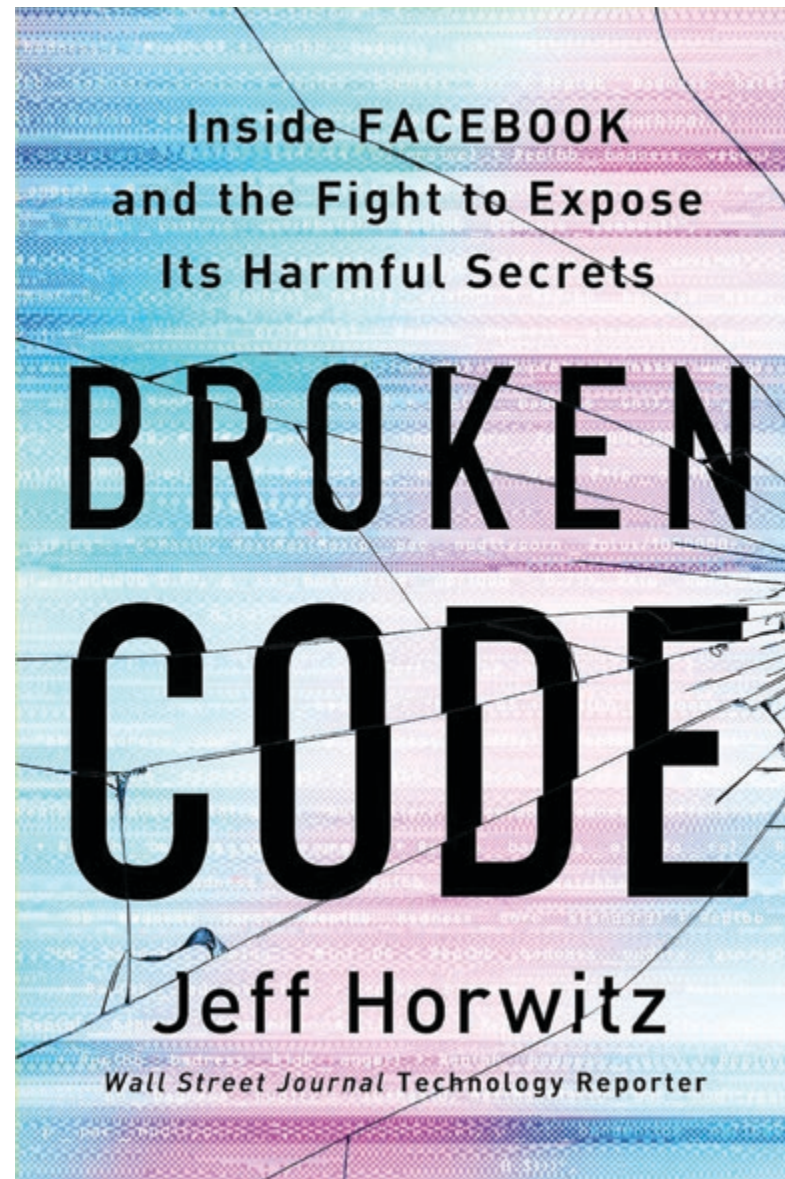
I began to feel more like an investigative reporter when I wrote on issues at the school, such as when I broke a story about grade inflation at Pomona while I was there. In 2000, *The Student Life* also reported on a very nasty fight over dining hall unionization and what we saw as some of the labor-busting tactics that the school undertook. I'm grateful to Pomona for a lot of things, but one of them is it kind of turned me on to questioning institutions.

Editor's note: Pomona's dining hall workers have been unionized since 2013, and the most recent collective-bargaining agreement provides a minimum wage of \$25 an hour for all dining and catering workers by July 1, 2024.

PCM: Lastly, what's your social media usage like these days? I assume you're more careful than most considering everything you know about Facebook and Instagram.

Horwitz: I like cat videos as much as the next guy, but I've never been a super-heavy user.

So while I don't have kids, I will say that I have been pretty damn strenuous in telling friends that it's a good idea to be, shall we say, conservative with how much social media children use for a whole bunch of reasons. [*Editor's note: Since the interview, Horwitz has reported on Meta's struggle to prevent pedophiles from using Facebook and Instagram in violation of its policies against child exploitation.*] An interesting part of the book was revealing how the company really did define what was good for users and whatever made them use the product more. In other words, they must like it if they're using it more, right? Not so fast. **PCM**



By Brian Whitehead

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY



Pomona-Pitzer won the NCAA Division III men's cross country championship in 2019, 2021 and now 2023.

3 NATIONAL TITLES IN 4 SEASONS

For the seniors on Pomona-Pitzer's men's cross country team, the path to the 2023 NCAA Division III national championship began four years ago—in Oregon, Denver, Northern California and Pennsylvania.

As first-year Sagehens in fall 2020, when most colleges and universities across the country transitioned to distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these student-athletes spent their would-be first season scattered, looking for places to race independently.

Most of the runners in the Class of 2024 lived together in Oregon that fall—away from home for the first time—where they learned how to balance schoolwork and training with no coaching staff around to keep them honest.

Weekly Zoom sessions that first semester of college kept the dispersed classmates connected virtually, but it wasn't until many of them moved into a house in North Carolina the following spring that they truly began to bond.

"That's when I realized we had a really strong team culture," says Derek Fearon '24. "I realized then we had something special."

After competing sporadically in independent races during their nomadic first year of college, the teammates arrived on campus in fall 2021 as sophomores.

With the one-year NCAA competition hiatus behind them, Fearon, Colin Kirkpatrick '24 and Lucas Florsheim '24 had outstanding debut seasons in 2021, and the Sagehens—who'd won the 2019 NCAA Division III championship with a different core—repeated as national titlists.

"A perfect year," Fearon calls his sophomore season. "Our *annus mirabilis*."

"We started thinking, 'This is easy. That wasn't so hard,'" Kirkpatrick says. "It wasn't until the next year we learned humility. We realized, 'This isn't as easy as we thought.'"

With several key returning juniors, Pomona-Pitzer was heavily favored to win a

third straight Division III championship in 2022. So much so, Fearon recalls, that many on the team started believing the title was theirs to lose instead of theirs to win.

The Sagehens breezed to conference and regional championships with Fearon, Kirkpatrick and Florsheim leading the charge and entered the title race as the consensus top team in the country. But they finished fifth at nationals, off the podium.

"It was really hard to handle the pressure of being the best team," Fearon says.

A year later—this time as underdogs with a No. 8 ranking—the Sagehens won the 2023 national title by a single point, the narrowest margin of victory in Division III history. And in a season of surprises, Fearon says, Jack Stein '26—the team's fifth and final scoring runner at nationals—captured the points needed to secure the win as Pomona-Pitzer became one of five Division III men's cross country programs with at least three national championships. [PCM](#)

A Woman Is Men's Coach of the Year

Pomona-Pitzer Coach Amber Williams' path to the 2023 Division III men's cross country championship and national Coach of the Year honors began a decade ago in Indiana, at her alma mater, Ball State.

There, the former Division I student-athlete cut her teeth as a track and field coach after a gilded collegiate career. Williams spent four years at Ball State before successive stops at Division I programs Colgate, Cleveland State and Columbia.

Last June, Pomona-Pitzer hired her to coach men's cross country and track and field.

"I'd been lucky enough to know about the program here through other coaching friends,"

Williams says. "I'd heard nothing but good things and glowing reviews.

"You feel at times you never get a utopia," she adds, "but here felt pretty doggone close."

While not her first time taking over a men's athletics program, Williams still wondered how a female head coach would be received at Pomona-Pitzer—even with Emma DeLira, an assistant coach and invaluable piece of the program, already on staff.

"You never know how a men's team will react" to having a female coach, Williams says, "but they were so warm and so open to the opportunity. It speaks volumes to who they are as people. ... When it comes to those guys, they knew at the end of the day, the mission was to try to get another championship."

Introductions behind, Williams and the Sagehens set out on a bounce-back season.

"There's a tradition of competitiveness and a winning culture here," Williams says. "You

feel that prestige when you come through the doors. After what happened last year, we hoped we could bring it back."

Despite coming up short in 2022, Pomona-Pitzer returned five of seven athletes who competed in the national meet and began the campaign ranked highly in Division III. But injuries, illnesses and lackluster performances in the latter part of the year tanked the Sagehens' ranking heading into the postseason.

With adversity, however, came perspective. "Being the underdogs, you wonder how a team will take that, how it'll react when something doesn't go their way," Williams says. "Some athletes feel the path has to be perfect, and if it isn't, nationals is out of reach. These guys figured it out every week, every meet. You saw them believe the good races were coming and uplift each other, care about each other."

As they had the year before, the Sagehens captured conference and regional championships on their way to nationals.

But typically, Derek Fearon '24 says, teams ranked outside the top three heading into the title race have little chance to win. Pomona-Pitzer had fallen to No. 8.

"I didn't wake up in the morning thinking we were going to win," he says. "All I knew is we had to run the best race."

They did, winning by the narrowest of margins.

Williams also made history, becoming the first female head coach to win a Division III men's cross country championship.

"For a lot of the guys, there's more ownership of this championship compared to 2021," says Colin Kirkpatrick '24.

"Two years ago, we didn't really know what it would take to win. But this year, we knew exactly what it would take, how hard it would be and how unlikely it was."

In the days following the team's historic win, Fearon, Lucas Florsheim '24, Kirkpatrick and Cameron Hatler '25 earned All-America honors. For Fearon and Florsheim, the distinctions were the third of their careers.

Additionally, Williams was named national men's cross country Coach of the Year for Division III—the first female and third Pomona-Pitzer coach to receive the honor.

While it is an individual coaching award, Williams is effusive in her praise of DeLira, a tireless leader.

"I'm working with great people, in a great space, in a great environment," Williams says. "I hope we can continue to do great things for a long time." [PCM](#)



First-year Coach Amber Williams, right, with Assistant Coach Emma DeLira, says, "I'm working with great people."

An Undefeated Regular Season for Women's Soccer

The Pomona-Pitzer women's soccer team lost only one game all year: a 1-0 season-ending setback in the second round of the NCAA tournament to Cal Lutheran, the eventual Division III national champion.

Until then, the Sagehens were 16-0-3, going unbeaten in the regular season for the first time in program history. They tied Cal Lutheran for the SCIAC regular-season title and then claimed the SCIAC tournament title with a 1-0 victory over their conference co-champions—only to fall to the same team in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Led by strong defense and goaltending, the Sagehens gave up only seven goals all season. Among numerous postseason honors, midfielder Ella Endo '25 was named first-team All-American by United Soccer Coaches and defender Spencer Deutz PZ '25 was chosen to the second team. Endo was the SCIAC Offensive Athlete of the Year and Jen Scanlon led the SCIAC Coaching Staff of the Year. [PCM](#)



Ella Endo '25 earned first-team All-American honors.



Spencer Deutz PZ '25 was chosen second-team All-American in the United Soccer Coaches selections.



Shelley Keeler Whelan '92 To Join Women's Collegiate Tennis Hall of Fame

She was a three-time NCAA Division III doubles champion, the 1992 Division III singles titlist and led the Sagehens to the 1992 Division III national championship.

In recognition of her extraordinary career, Shelley Keeler Whelan '92 will be inducted into the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Women's Collegiate Tennis Hall of Fame on October 5, 2024, in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Known as Shelley Keeler during her collegiate career, Whelan was a four-time first-team All-SCIAC player and two-time SCIAC Player of the Year. She qualified for the NCAA championships each year in singles and doubles and swept the championships her senior season, sharing the doubles title with teammate Erin Hendricks '92, claiming the singles title and anchoring the Sagehens' national championship, Pomona-Pitzer's first team title in any sport.

A two-time All-American, Whelan was inducted into the Pomona-Pitzer Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002, along with the entire 1992 team. [PCM](#)

Masago Armstrong Beloved Registrar Leaves \$1 Million for Pomona Student Scholarships

By Joe Woodward

Revered in campus lore, Masago Armstrong helped thousands of students stay on track during her 30 years as registrar of Pomona College. After leaving a \$1 million gift for scholarships at her passing, Armstrong will continue to shape students' lives for years to come.

The daughter of Japanese immigrants, Armstrong found her world upended in 1942 during World War II when her entire family was sent to a U.S. government incarceration camp, where her mother died. In time, Armstrong rebuilt her life and went on to influence the academic lives of generations of students during her tenure as Pomona College registrar from 1955 to 1985.

Coming from an administrator whose work unfolded behind the scenes, the bequest is a testament to Pomona's close-knit community—and to the extraordinary nature of Armstrong, who passed away at the age of 102 in 2022.

"Masago Armstrong was known for her skill and diligence as registrar and for her kindness and care for Pomona students," said Pomona College President G. Gabrielle Starr. "This endowed scholarship will honor her mother's memory and support generations of students with financial help to attend Pomona."

The gift through Armstrong's estate builds on the smaller Towa Yamaguchi Shibuya Scholarship Fund that Armstrong launched in honor of her mother decades earlier.

Masago Shibuya Armstrong was born in Menlo Park, California, one of six siblings who worked on the family's flower farm. Her parents, determined that all their children would attend college, saw most of them off to Stanford, where Masago graduated with a master's degree in 1941.



Masago Armstrong shaped the academic lives of generations of students as Pomona College registrar from 1955 to 1985.

Her father, Ryohitsu, and mother, Towa, were born in Japan and came to the United States in 1904. Masago's father is said to have arrived with just \$60 in cash and a basket of clothes. Together with his wife and children, the family built a thriving flower business renowned for its prized chrysanthemums.

The Shibuyas' hard-won prosperity was interrupted by catastrophe in April 1942. Due



to the executive order issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the entire family was sent to temporary quarters at Santa Anita Park racetrack in Arcadia, California, and then moved to a detention camp for Japanese Americans at Heart Mountain in Wyoming. Tragically, her mother died there at the age of 51, and the family would not return to their Menlo Park home until April 1945.

After the war, Armstrong worked at Stanford University, where she met and married her husband, Hubert Armstrong. Together they moved to Claremont, where she was hired by the College in 1955. During her long career, Armstrong helped guide 8,752 students through to graduation.

Before Armstrong's death and in celebration of her 100th birthday, Julie Siebel '84 joined a group of alumni to share memories of Armstrong's influence on their lives at Pomona and afterward. Siebel recalled how Armstrong knew her mother—Cynthia "Sue" Cudney Siebel '59—who had attended Pomona—and also remembered Julie as a child growing up in Claremont.

"Masago's warm welcome to me as a first-year in Sumner Hall really surprised my sponsor group because they had been told to fear her at registration," recalled Siebel. "And later, when I applied to graduate school, the hand-calculated GPA on my transcript was a point of interest to the historians on my admission committee. I gave them the first hand-calculated GPA they had seen since

computerized transcripts had become the norm, and they asked me about it. I assured them that Masago was more accurate than a computer."

Beloved and respected by the Pomona community, Armstrong was known as a woman of gracefully opposing forces. She was kind and stern, patient and efficient, self-effacing and accomplished, mild and meticulous. Her memory for names and faces, majors and GPAs remains the stuff of legend. She was both a masterful student mentor and an exacting, indomitable college administrator.

When she retired, Armstrong reflected on her career in an interview for *Pomona College Magazine*. "I like the detail. I think that is one of my strengths, and it's absolutely necessary for the job. ... And I haven't denied myself the pleasure of meeting the students," she said.

In the same magazine piece, then Associate Dean of the College R. Stanton Hales '64 agreed. "She is the ideal registrar. She is efficient, patient and has a deep and sincere interest in every individual student," Hales said.

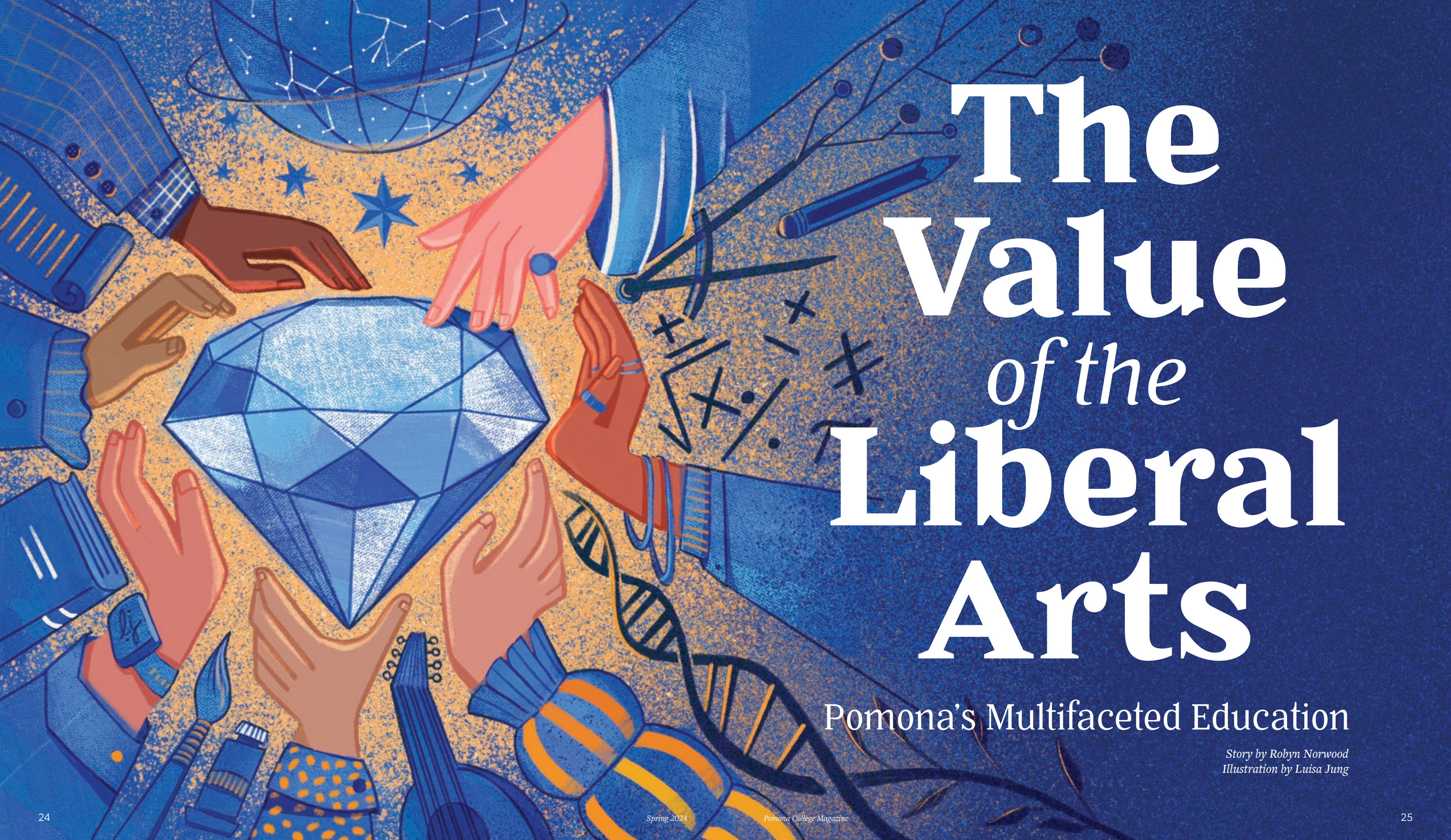
Even decades after retiring, Armstrong stayed close to Pomona's campus as a resident of the Mt. San Antonio Gardens retirement community a little more than a mile from Marston Quad.

Lily Shibuya, Armstrong's sister-in-law, commented on the gift and the College's plan to celebrate Masago and her enduring impact on Pomona: "To me the best epitaph that describes her is that 'to know her was to love and respect her' as she enriched everyone's life that she touched. Thank you to Pomona College for honoring her in this special way." [PCM](#)



At opposite page top, the Shibuya family before being incarcerated during World War II. Photo by Dorothea Lange.

At bottom, Armstrong in action as registrar pictured in the 1957 Metate yearbook.



The Value *of the* Liberal Arts

Pomona's Multifaceted Education

*Story by Robyn Norwood
Illustration by Luisa Jung*

If you graduated from Pomona College, you understand the meaning of the liberal arts. But to most people across the country and around the world, the concept is murky.

Many imagine that a liberal arts college is focused on the arts and humanities. Yet 39% of Pomona’s Class of 2023 graduates earned degrees in the natural sciences, a division that includes mathematics. Nor should we forget that Pomona’s Nobel Prize winner, gene-editing pioneer Jennifer Doudna ’85, got her start in a chemistry lab on this small liberal arts campus.

Another 24% of Pomona’s 2023 graduates earned degrees in the social sciences, including economics, politics and psychological science, the undergraduate major of Erika H. James ’91, dean of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Some 21% earned degrees in the arts and humanities, as did U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz ’94, a philosophy major. And 16% of

2023 graduates studied an interdisciplinary major—an emblem of the liberal arts that encourages making connections across different fields, such as the Philosophy, Politics and Economics Major (PPE), the major of Hollywood producer Aditya Sood ’97.

The sheer breadth and multifaceted nature of a liberal arts education makes it tough to define. And absorbing the meaning and impact of it does take time—maybe a lifetime.

“The happiest moment for me is when my students connect the dots and see how their whole education is related,” says Dean of the College Y. Melanie Wu, a computer science professor. “Many students have told me five years after graduation, suddenly it’s all come together in their minds. The Spanish class, the gender and women’s studies class, the art class, the math class. The education they get at Pomona might seem like just sampling or absorbing, but it becomes connected for them and they utilize the entirety of it in their professional and personal lives.”



Y. Melanie Wu, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the College; professor of computer science



Associate Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies Aimee Bahng, right of the podium, leads a discussion in her Race, Gender, and the Environment class.

The Liberal Arts Defined

The concept of the liberal arts draws from the Roman educational system 2,000 years ago, says Chair of the Faculty Ken Wolf, John Sutton Miner Professor of History and coordinator of the Late Antique-Medieval Studies Program.

“In that context, the liberal arts were the subjects that were considered appropriate for a ‘free man’ (*liber*, in Latin) to know so that he could be an active citizen,” Wolf says. “These

were distinguished from the ‘manual arts’ that a person would learn to build things. Nowadays the distinction has more to do with what some have called ‘pure’ subjects (like history, biology or sociology) as opposed to ‘applied’ ones (like engineering, business or nursing).”

The original seven liberal arts were divided into the quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy—and the trivium, identified as grammar, dialectic (similar to logic or critical thinking) and rhetoric. Those subjects have evolved and expanded, and though Pomona offers 48 majors, some that are common at other colleges and universities are not to be found here. Specifically, “professional” majors are not part of the Pomona curriculum. Even our Computer Science Major is focused more on theory.

Ken Wolf, chair of the faculty; John Sutton Miner Professor of History and coordinator of the Late Antique-Medieval Studies Program



Spring 2024

Pomona’s Multifaceted Education

So what is a liberal arts education as offered at Pomona?

An education that is both broad and deep, with exposure to the arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. Small classes focused on discussion, writing and collaborative learning that foster close relationships with professors who often continue to guide students even after graduation. Plentiful opportunities to conduct research with faculty without any graduate students on campus to crowd out undergraduates. A college where almost all students spend all four years in the residence halls, living and studying together and engaging with each other beyond academics. And not least, the freedom to explore many fields so students can discover what it is they want to do with what the poet Mary Oliver called their “one wild and precious life.”

While students often wrangle with choosing a major—and “What’s your major?” remains a time-honored icebreaker at college parties and family gatherings—many academic leaders at Pomona believe that decision is overemphasized. That goes as much for Wu, the academic dean and computer science

professor, and Associate Dean Pierangelo De Pace, an economics professor, as for Chair of the Faculty Ken Wolf, John Sutton Miner Professor of History and the coordinator of the Late Antique-Medieval Studies Program.

“When they arrive at Pomona College, we try to tell them and try to show them, especially in the first two years of their

“We try to show them that a holistic approach to education based on rigorous principles is what we think is the key aspect of an education like this one.”

—Associate Dean Pierangelo De Pace



journey, that this college is not so much about the major,” De Pace says. “Their life will not depend so much on the kinds of specialization they will acquire in college. We try to show them that a holistic approach to education based on rigorous principles is what we think is the key aspect of an education like this one.”

Even for students eyeing such fields as medicine, Wu says, nodding at the cadre of Pomona alumni at Harvard Medical School profiled in a story on page 32 and other student journeys featured on page 42, the varied coursework in the liberal arts adds a richness to their education.

“So even though they may major in biology, chemistry or neuroscience and so on, look at the other classes they have taken,” Wu says. “Not necessarily a minor, but just other classes in the spirit of the liberal arts that contribute to their Pomona education and that will contribute to their career paths. They’re going to be better doctors—and better human beings, not just better doctors.”

What Wolf’s students learn in the Late Antique-Medieval Studies Major might not at first glance seem relevant to contemporary life. But the subject is really only a vehicle for mastering the fundamental skills associated with the humanities in general.

“The particular majors that Pomona students pick are far less important than one might think,” says Wolf, whose own undergraduate journey at Stanford University began in pre-engineering and ended in religious studies. (See his 2015 Convocation speech at pomona.edu/2015-convocation.) “What’s more important is that they learn to create, to write, to express themselves orally, to manage data and to use numbers,” Wolf says. “Courses from



Students share their research posters at the annual Intensive Summer Experience Symposium.



Professor of Geology Jade Star Lackey works with a student in his lab.

all across the curricular spectrum contribute to the development of these skills.”

No small part of the job of a liberal arts college is to take a student’s assumptions about what they think they are interested in and expand them.

“This is why as soon as they arrive, we do not try to assign students to advisors based on intellectual affinity,” De Pace says. “Even if a student comes to me and tells me, ‘I want to major in math,’ probably the student will not get a mathematics professor as their advisor. Because the idea is for them to be exposed as much as they can, especially the first two years, to a broader array of fields, disciplines and subjects. And then, of course, they can make up their mind. We try to provide them with this opportunity of exploring and going a little beyond what they think is a real interest at the beginning.”

Return on Investment

There remains the question of value or return on investment (ROI), especially when the cost of attending college in the U.S. roughly doubled in the first two decades of the 21st century.

The cost of attending Pomona in 2023-24 was \$82,700, including tuition and fees and on-campus room and board but excluding other necessary expenses like books, health insurance and personal spending. (However, more than half of Pomona students receive need-based aid, with an average scholarship or grant amount of \$63,044. In addition, Pomona’s new Middle Income Initiative detailed on page 40 seeks to reduce the burden on even more students and their families.)

Yet despite the cost of attending a premier liberal arts college, it often pays off over the long run, according to research published by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce in 2020.

In the first decade after enrollment, the full spectrum of colleges and universities—including those with engineering and business degrees as well as two-year colleges that launch graduates into careers earlier—has a higher ROI than liberal arts colleges. But over the course of a career, the median ROI at liberal

upper management surpass them. Technology, which often boasts strong starting salaries, can be cyclical and more recent graduates might be in demand because of the rapid evolution of new skills and tools. (As a critically thinking product of a liberal arts college, you already might have surmised that the top ROI among liberal arts colleges belongs to Harvey Mudd, a liberal arts college with an engineering and computer science focus.)

In summary, choosing to study the liberal arts is not turning away from the marketplace.

“Our students are career-driven,” Wu says. “There’s nothing wrong with that—and if our students are not thinking about their profession and their career and what they’re going to become, that’s also a concern.”

Yet too narrow a focus on in-demand jobs of the moment also could put students on the wrong side of a supply-and-demand curve when industry needs shift. There might be no better example right now than the waves of layoffs at big tech companies including Google, Amazon and Meta. Software engineer, one of the coveted first jobs of recent years, is no longer a golden ticket. The exponential growth of Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is one reason.

“Tech is one of the more visible areas within college recruiting but at the same time, a lot of industries are automating,” says Hazel

Raja, associate dean and senior director of Pomona’s Career Development Office. “So, when we speak to students who say, ‘I was planning to go into software engineering,’ or ‘I was really leaning toward something in the tech industry,’ we talk to them about ways that they can merge their tech skills into other industries that are also very interesting to them, and perhaps even allow them to elevate their liberal arts education.”

That education, in fact, might be the best to have in the era of AI, with critical thinking and the ability to recognize misinformation and disinformation all the more essential.

“We tell them, ‘You didn’t choose to go to a tech-heavy school. You chose to go to Pomona College, so tell us a little bit about why you chose to pursue a liberal arts degree. What is it about that liberal arts degree that you really value?’” Raja says. “And that’s when they start to pull out the skill sets like, ‘I really wanted to be able to utilize my communication skills,’ ‘I really liked the idea of being in a small environment where I’m learning a lot of different things.’ Well, that’s exactly what employers want.”

The 2024 Job Outlook report by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) bears that out, with employers listing the top three resumé

attributes they seek as problem-solving skills, ability to work on a team and written communication skills. Technical skills—which can shift rapidly and vary from company to company—were seventh, behind work ethic, adaptability and verbal communication skills.

The Class of 2024 faces a different hiring outlook than new graduates in 2022 and 2023, who benefited from a post-pandemic hiring boom. In contrast, hiring of new graduates this year was predicted to dip by 1.9% in the NACE report. The leading industry poised to increase hiring was social services.

Now, many of the same students who started their college careers online because of the pandemic shutdown may have to pivot and be nimble again.

“So let’s try to find ways for us to merge your interests,” Raja says. “We spend time asking what they actually are interested in doing. We say, you know, I noticed on your resumé that you got involved in x types of causes or y types of activities. Are there industries out there that perhaps also intrigue you, where you can utilize some of your skill sets, including coding skills and other tech skills, but also some of the other skills that you are developing through your liberal arts education that can culminate into a career path that is more fulfilling for you?”

“What is it about that liberal arts degree that you really value? ... that’s exactly what employers want.”

—Hazel Raja, associate dean and senior director of the Career Development Office



arts colleges rises to \$918,000, more than 25% above the \$723,000 ROI of all colleges 40 years after enrollment. And those with degrees from 47 of the most selective liberal arts colleges—a group that includes Pomona—do even better, with a 40-year ROI of \$1.13 million.

What explains it? Early high earners might fade as others who earn graduate degrees in business, law and medicine or who move into

Alumni Career Story: Sophia Sun '18



Currently working as a senior product manager at Kajabi, Sophia Sun '18 believes that her experiences as a Linguistics & Cognitive Science Major at Pomona helped her prepare for her current role. She credits her professors and peers for celebrating “being a beginner” and trying new classes. Additionally, she found that Pomona’s rigorous courses and dedicated professors helped her refine her written, verbal and visual communication skills.

Learn more about Sun’s career path at pomona.edu/outcomes/alumni-career-stories/posts/sophia-sun-18.



Sebastian Fish Mathurin '26 and Katie Stuart '25 catch up in the Career Development Office.

Many students flock to the same fields in their first jobs, perhaps a result of which companies recruit on campus or offer strong starting salaries. For Pomona graduates in the Class of 2023, the top industry was management consulting followed by higher education and investment banking and management. As always, a significant number of Pomona alumni go directly to graduate school, including 23% of the Class of 2023. (See Pomona's 2023 First Destinations Report at pomona.edu/outcomes for more.)

"Sometimes it's the buzzworthy that feels right. We often hear, 'I want to go into management consulting,'" Raja says, citing a well-paying first job that offers students a chance to do project-based work and even peripherally explore different industries. "I do ask them what management consulting is and if they can't answer or if they talk about it in a really vague way, we impress upon them doing that research because quite frankly, it's a great career path for a lot of students but it's not the only career path. And, it's a very

competitive recruitment process so you have to be committed."

In some ways, liberal arts colleges remain a hard sell beyond the highly sought-after schools atop the rankings, a group that would include Amherst, Pomona and Williams, to cite a few. Some lesser-known and less selective liberal arts colleges have closed in the face of the continuing decline in students due to demographics, and others are cutting seemingly fundamental majors. Across the country, a number of colleges and universities are turning away from the liberal arts—and in particular the humanities—as a matter of cost-cutting based in part on supply and demand or perceived career value. (See *The New York Times*' November 2023 article "Can the Humanities Survive the Budget Cuts?") Nor are flagship state universities immune. West Virginia University recently cut 28 programs, among them language majors and others in the arts.

The debate about higher education is broad-based, politically charged and ongoing.

What remains is a tension between certification and education, and between what De Pace calls "specialization and diversification," a push-pull between career preparation and learning to learn in order to understand an ever-changing world and the richness of intellectual life.

To demonstrate the career paths the liberal arts can lead to, the College has undertaken the new Pomona Outcomes Project, which eventually will trace alumni from their majors to their careers and be an interactive tool for future students.

Wu, even with her technology expertise, deeply embraces the liberal arts model but also understands the wrangling about education is far from over in an era when the accumulated knowledge of the world is essentially at everyone's fingertips.

"It's a long discussion that we will continue to have for many decades about the value of education, especially the value of a broad education," she says. [PCM](#)



Class of 2023 by Majors

NATURAL SCIENCES

211

SOCIAL SCIENCES

127

ARTS & HUMANITIES

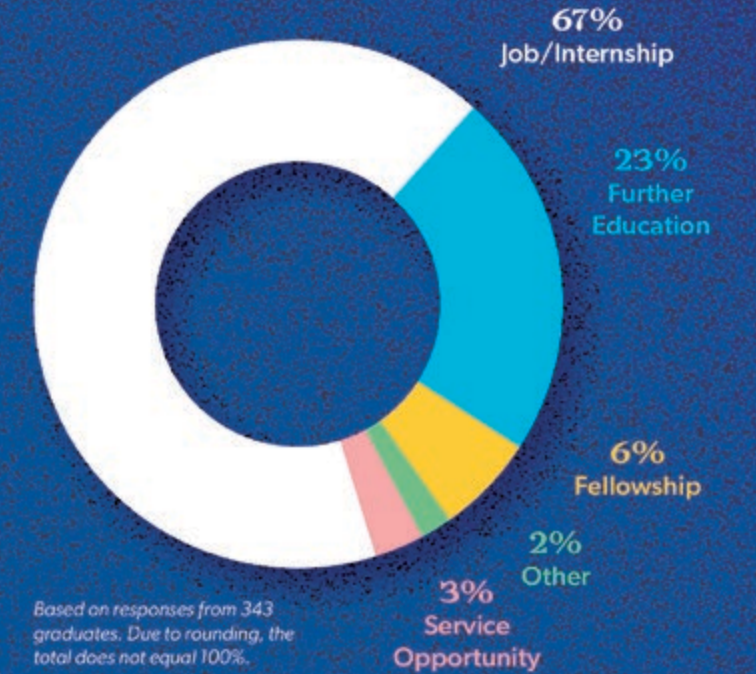
115

INTERDISCIPLINARY

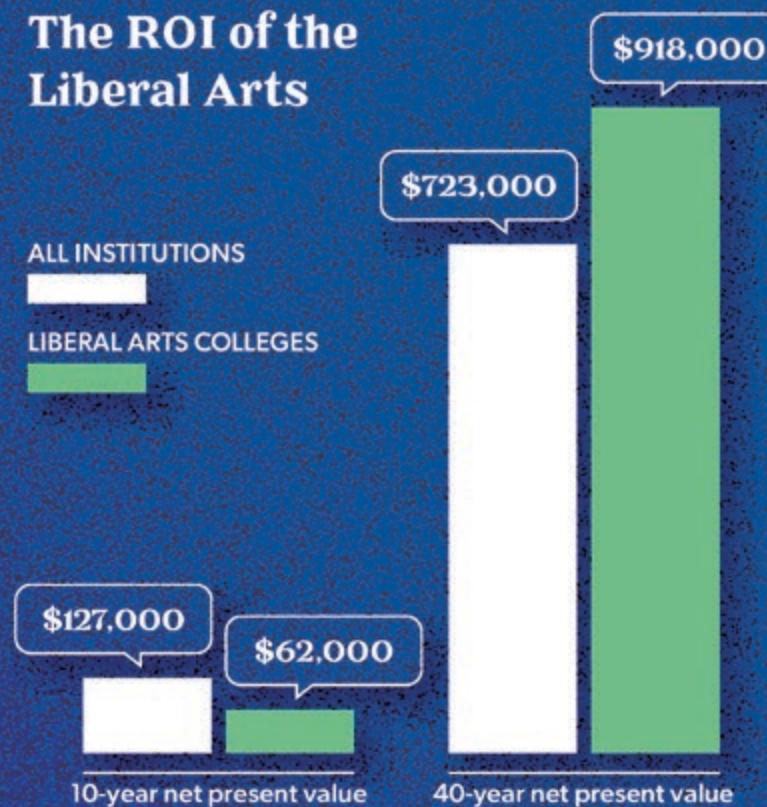
87

Source: Pomona College completed majors report by Institutional Research.

Class of 2023 Career Outcomes

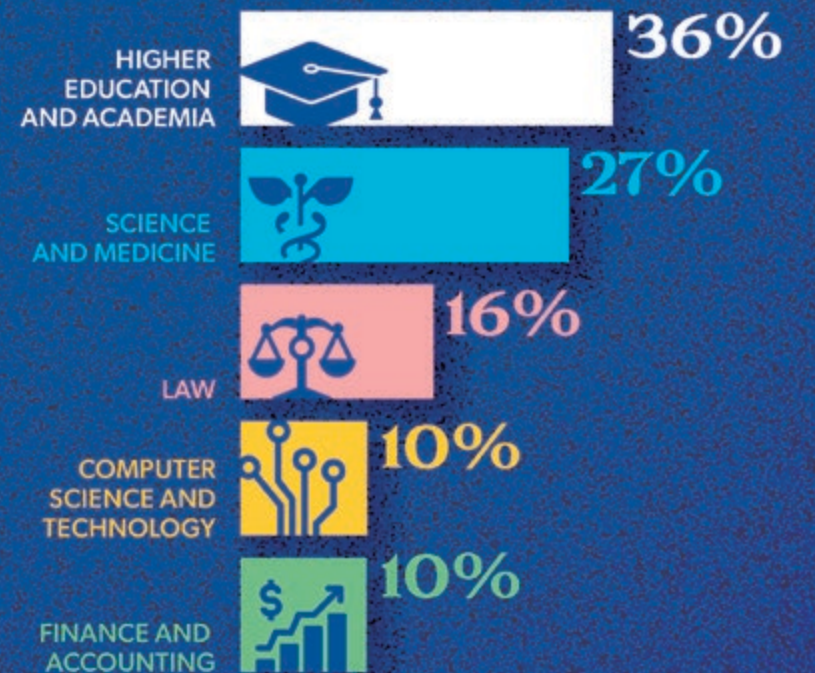


The ROI of the Liberal Arts



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard, 2019.

Leading Industries among Alumni



Source: Pomona College alumni and family attitude survey data, 2023. Due to rounding, the total does not equal 100%.

Six Sagehens from the Class of 2018 and another from the Class of 2020 tell how their Pomona education led them to one of the most prestigious medical schools in the world.

From left, Maryann Zhao '18, Grant Steele '18, Sal Daddario '18, Aseal Birir '18, Julia Foote '18, Samantha Little '20 and Michael Poeschla '18. Photography by Joel Benjamin

Birds of a Feather AT HARVARD MED

By Marilyn Thomsen



They took different routes to the study of medicine, but the paths of a cluster of Sagehens—including at least a half-dozen from the Pomona College Class of 2018—have converged at Harvard Medical School. With a history dating to 1782 and 10 Nobel Prizes awarded for research conducted there, Harvard is one of the most prestigious and selective medical schools in the world, with only 3.2% of applicants accepted into its M.D. program in 2023. Maybe that's why Maryann Zhao '18 was literally speechless when she got the call that she was one of only 30 students in 2020 accepted into the school's Health Sciences and Technology program, a research-focused medical track.

As New England's leaves began their annual display of color last fall, a gathering of Sagehens who are soon to be doctors munched on pizza and drank soda in an empty classroom on the Harvard medical campus in Boston and talked about their experiences so far. They seemed relaxed and jovial despite the academic rigor of their programs.

Though they did not all start med school at the same time—gap years were common—most are near the end of the beginning, about to graduate medical school and advance into residency. Grant Steele '18 already is a first-year urologic surgery resident at Massachusetts General Hospital and Michael Poeschla '18 is far along in an M.D./Ph.D. program, with his research focused on understanding how human genetic variation impacts blood cell production and blood cancers, as well as aging. And he's not the only Sagehen at Harvard studying to become a physician-scientist: Jessica Phan '19 is also in the program.

Aseal Birir '18 plans a different future. During medical school he discovered a compelling interest in drug development and became fascinated with the business side of medicine. This spring, he will complete Harvard's five-year joint M.D./MBA program and is applying for positions in biotech investing.

Getting into medical school required taking courses like Intro to Cell Biology

and Organic Chemistry. But for Birir, a chemistry major, an Africana studies class he took his freshman year changed his entire perspective on himself and the patients who might one day benefit from his work. During his second year at Harvard, Birir wrote an essay published in *The Student Life*, The Claremont Colleges' student newspaper, encouraging fellow STEM majors to follow his lead. "No matter how you plan to use an undergrad degree in STEM, the lessons of Africana studies will impact you positively," he wrote. "I encourage students in STEM fields to leave the safety of textbooks and problem

sets for uncomfortable but meaningful lessons and discussions in Africana studies classes."

That is but one example of how a liberal arts education has shaped these Sagehens who are aiming for the highest ranks of their profession. For some, it was memorable classes such as Genetic Analysis or a Spanish literature course on the Latin American Boom literary movement of the 1960s and 1970s. For others, it was varsity tennis, soccer or lacrosse, where they found a tight-knit family of fellow athletes without having to compromise academic pursuits. And again

and again, these med students say, close and meaningful connections with faculty helped pave their way.

At Harvard, the Pomona alumni still cross paths. Steele, the first to graduate from medical school, is now finding fellow Sagehens—including some from other medical schools—among the residents he encounters in the operating room at Massachusetts General Hospital. "It really is special to look across the drapes in the OR and see a fellow Sagehen smiling back at you," he says.

Here are the stories of some of the Harvard Med students from Pomona.

Sal Daddario '18

My very first exposure to the field of medicine was as a patient. When I was 11, I had an infectious disease that required multiple surgeries. I was in and out of the hospital for two months. I remember interacting with my doctors and being in awe of the way they worked: They collected information, made decisions, tried new things—and then I got better. In my 11-year-old brain, that was the coolest thing ever.

As I moved into high school and then college, I had a vague idea that I could become a doctor. Being a first-generation college student from a small, rural town in Ohio, I didn't know many other career paths. When I arrived at Pomona, I was embraced in a way that shaped the path of the rest of my life. I still remember the support I received from professors in the sciences early on—especially from Professors Dan O'Leary and Nicole Weekes. They became my academic parents: I was always in their offices talking about the course, the fields, or our lives. They gave me books, they taught me how to read primary literature in the sciences, and they helped me see the different paths into my future. I had never had such impactful academic relationships in my life.

I was also embraced by the Pomona Scholars of Science program (big shout-out to Travis Brown). It was my very first introduction to mentorship. After benefiting from the support of the first-generation college student community at Pomona for my first year, I was able to jump into an educating and mentoring role myself in my second year. It was the first of many, many times in my life

since where I had the opportunity to work to make my communities stronger. I found that I had a deep passion for education, supporting students and building positive learning communities.

While I was at Pomona, I gained clinical experience working as a scribe in the emergency department at nearby Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center. I found that as a physician, I would get to do tons of impactful, targeted patient education while also being part of a larger academic structure where I could work closely with residents and medical students. In medicine, I could be an educator and mentor for the rest of my life!

It was a bit hard to transition from Pomona to Harvard—it's a huge institution with lots of hierarchy and slow change. Still, it's been amazing to be in the heart of medicine, surrounded by incredibly bright clinicians, fantastic educators and powerful researchers. I've found that people here are very excited about changing the face of medical education, and I have gotten to work on

projects for publication in medical education journals. I've used the skills I learned at Pomona in every research endeavor I've been involved in here at Harvard. I came into college without any of those skills, and I left



Sal Daddario

CLASS YEAR
2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR
Neuroscience
Minor: Biology

FAST FACTS

> Programs like the Pomona Scholars of Science fostered his love for teaching and mentoring.

> Discovered his passion for medicine while working as a scribe at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center.

> Applying for a residency in anesthesia and wants to be a pediatric anesthesiologist.

> Finds balance in life through improv comedy and cherishes connections with fellow Pomona graduates at Harvard.

Pomona ready to immediately engage in clinical research as a valuable member of the team. Now I'm applying to anesthesia residency programs with the goal of being a pediatric anesthesiologist.

Life as a medical student, in general, is very ebb-and-flow. Some weeks and months are among the hardest of my life—taking care of patients all day, going home and studying for exams at night, and working on research projects on the weekends. But other months, I'm able to strike a better balance. For me, that balance is improv comedy.

While I was taking two gap years in Chicago before med school, I started to do improv at the iO Theater. Initially something I did to make more friends in the city and have a bit of fun, improv morphed into a very large, meaningful part of my life. In my third year of medical school, I joined a cast at Union Comedy in Somerville, a Boston suburb, and started to do improv again around three times a week. It has become my sanctuary here, a place where for a few hours I don't have to think about school, medicine, exams or residency applications. I can laugh with my friends and put on shows. I want to keep one foot in improv for the rest of my life. It has brought me so much joy.

Having other Sagehens at Harvard Medical School has been fantastic. The fact that I could come into this totally new world and be with the people I knew and loved to spend time with was very reassuring. I feel truly at home. We have shared almost 10 years of our educational journeys together. Our shared histories are such an important part of my sense of belonging here.

If I were giving advice to current Pomona students, it would be this: Figure out the thing that you love to do. Then do it. A lot. For me, that is teaching and mentoring. It was the most amazing part of my time at Pomona. My application to medical school was filled with the teaching I got to do at Pomona. Now my residency applications are again filled with the teaching opportunities I've had here at Harvard.

Medical schools like applicants who have something they really love to do, something that they light up when they talk about. I tell everyone still in college to figure out what is the thing that they like to do for hours and hours. And then figure out ways to do it more.

Aseal Birir '18

I was always passionate about science and was attracted to a career in medicine as a way to apply my passion for science to heal others. However, my definition of healing has taken on additional meaning during my 4 ½ years at Harvard Medical School.

During my time at Pomona, I was involved in a research project developing a breath test for pneumonia infections and working with a startup biotech company at the Keck Graduate Institute. Attempting to build and commercialize innovations in medicine showed me that this was an exciting way to impact health care and motivated me to pursue an MBA at Harvard Business School during my medical training. I'll graduate with both an M.D. and an MBA this May.

Once I started medical school, my interests began to shift. I enjoyed treating patients with cutting-edge medicines, but I was exposed to numerous diseases with no treatments and high unmet need. This made me really interested in how drugs are discovered and developed. At Harvard Business School, I got exposure to the broader health-care landscape. I realized that working in drug development would allow me to have a scaled-up impact on patient care and that it was at the intersection of my interests in medicine, science and business. Thus I have decided not to apply to residency programs and to pursue a career in biotech after graduation.

My liberal arts education at Pomona gave me the foundation to think broadly in medical school about my interests, and that led me to expand my medical education to include business school. Additionally, a liberal arts education taught me how to learn, and that has enabled me to succeed in two very different academic environments: medicine and business.

I played on the varsity football team at Pomona all four years. Pomona-Pitzer football

Aseal Birir

CLASS YEAR
2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR
Chemistry

FAST FACTS

> Extracurricular activities like varsity football helped develop teamwork and leadership skills.

> Credits a liberal arts education for fostering broad thinking and research skills.

> Shifted focus from patient care to drug development due to unmet needs in certain diseases and personal interest in innovation.

> Combined medical and business education with an M.D./MBA program.



was critical to my development. My teammates, and now lifelong friends, taught me hard work, commitment and teamwork. I also learned how to work with a variety of personalities, how to lead and motivate others, how to fail (we lost quite a few games in my first two years but turned it around the last two seasons) and how to sacrifice for others around you.

If I were giving advice to incoming Pomona students, I'd tell them to take advantage of faculty office hours. You can build great relationships with professors and really grow as a student. I'd say, "Be a chemistry major!" (because it's the best department at Pomona, in my unbiased opinion). I'd like to give a special shout-out to Professor Chuck Taylor.

Take more humanities classes than you think you should. Despite being a pre-med chemistry major, I found the Africana studies courses I took at Pomona to be the most influential.

Finally, use your first few years at Pomona to explore and remain curious about all career paths before you choose the one that's right for you. And have fun—it's college!



Maryann Zhao

CLASS YEAR

2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Molecular Biology

FAST FACTS

> Pomona mentors fostered her love for research and independent learning.

> Values the support and community found in extracurricular activities like the tennis team.

> Plans to focus on the ear, nose and throat field and is doing research on head and neck cancer at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

creating models in the lab of head and neck tumors that closely resemble what is found in patients. I am currently tackling this problem by creating 3D models to study immune interactions in these cancers. I'm lucky to have such an excellent mentor who has forged a path as a surgeon-scientist.

Since the beginning of college, I've always really loved science and doing scientific research. My mentors at Pomona, specifically Professors Jane Liu and Daniel O'Leary, played a huge role in fostering my passion for research and providing a nurturing yet challenging environment for me to learn how to master the scientific process. What gets me most excited is how research can potentially impact someone's life and improve care they receive. That's what motivated me to go into medicine.

Research can be incredibly challenging. What's really rewarding, though, especially for people who do end up

being physician-scientists, is that while you are spending time with patients in the clinic, you may see how research you're involved in is improving their outcomes—patients living longer and having a better quality of life. Simultaneously, you can take inspiration that comes from the clinic and apply it in your research. The expertise and perspectives of physicians and scientists can be quite different, so it's nice to provide a bridge between the two to benefit patients.

While I was at Pomona, I was on the tennis team. I was incredibly close to my teammates and to my coaches, Ann Lebedeff and Mike Morgan, and they were family to me. Many of my formative experiences in college were with my team. Tennis uses a different type of mental energy, and that allowed me to take a break from studying.

I think a lot of students at Pomona find themselves involved in clubs or community organizations, such as Health Bridges. I'd encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities and find their own little family

away from home while they're at Pomona. After graduation, life becomes more fragmented, and these opportunities are harder to come by. College is a time for students to grow and find the directions they want to go in life.

“What gets me most excited is how research can potentially impact someone's life and improve care they receive. That's what motivated me to go into medicine.”

—Maryann Zhao '18

Julia Foote and I met during our first days at Pomona and continued to live together during our two gap years in Boston. When applying to medical school, I was particularly excited about Harvard Medical School's Health Sciences and Technology program, which is designed for students who are interested in research and innovation in medicine. The day I got the call from the program director that I had been accepted into HST, I was at work. I was in shock and at a loss for words; I was just so happy and relieved. After hanging up, I immediately called Julia, admittedly even before I even told my family. Fortunately, Julia got her HMS acceptance later that same day. We have been friends for going on 10 years. Now we're about to graduate from medical school and are excited to continue our careers as doctors together.

Honestly, when I came to Pomona, I didn't fully know what to expect from a liberal arts college experience. Now that we're a few years out from graduation, I have a better perspective on the skills and experiences that Pomona gave me—from the tennis team to research to small classes—and how it has prepared me for my career. Pomona helped me learn to be incredibly independent, confident in my own abilities and prepared to tackle challenges in the real world. Nothing feels too big to overcome because of what I've already experienced.

Grant Steele '18

Growing up, I was always enthralled by my mother's stories of her work as a primary care physician. Whether she was diagnosing and treating complex conditions or helping patients and their families move on to the next stage of life, she seemed to have endless skills she could deploy. I greatly admired her expertise and as I moved through my education, I also began to appreciate the science driving her decisions. Medicine truly seemed to offer the best combination of science and humanism.

At Pomona, I learned to engage with these high-level questions on a deep level. In Jon Moore's Genetic Analysis class, for example, we focused on one topic each week, such as the underpinnings of Huntington's disease. We analyzed foundational papers that helped lead to the current understanding of the topic and compared their strengths and weaknesses. I gained an appreciation for the nuances of science that has translated well to the practice of medicine.

In addition to engaging with scientific inquiries, Pomona encouraged this same level of engagement with the humanities. One of my most memorable courses was a Spanish literature course on the Latin American Boom,

with Nivia Montenegro. This course gave me a profound appreciation not only for the beauty of well-written literature, but also for the lessons it can teach us on the nature of individuals, society and more.

“I can't really say why I got into Harvard Medical School. However, I suspect it had something to do with the well-rounded education that Pomona provides and the critical thinkers it produces. “Eager. Thoughtful. Reverent.” In addition to being inscribed on the gates of Pomona, I think those traits describe people who will succeed at HMS.

Looking back—I graduated from HMS in 2023—I greatly enjoyed my time in medical school. I loved being surrounded by curious and hardworking people, just like at Pomona, whether they were classmates, professors or doctors. There were endless opportunities to explore interests and passions without pressure to stretch myself thin.

At HMS, I interacted with fellow Sagehens all the time. We had a built-in community. Now that I'm a busy resident, I particularly find comfort in seeing my fellow Sagehens, both at the medical school and among the other residents at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Near the end of my fourth year at HMS,

I did an intensive care unit rotation. It's known for being intense, both intellectually and emotionally. In a way, it's the pinnacle of the med school clinical experience. During that month I cared for a gentleman in his 80s that I'll call Mr. A. He came in with heart failure that progressed to kidney and respiratory failure. From an academic perspective, it was a thrill to finally feel like I could understand the medical complexities and contribute to his care. The more memorable aspect, though, was helping care for his wife, daughters and extended family.

Sadly, it became evident that Mr. A was not going to recover. Our team helped the family through the difficult decision to focus on maximizing his comfort. I emphasized with the family that sometimes the bravest decision is not to continue with aggressive treatments

but to know when to stop. He passed away comfortably the next day. I'm proud of our team's work to help the family embrace Mr. A's final moments. I'm also thankful for the mentorship, starting with my mother and continuing at Pomona and HMS, that helped me develop these skills that I continue to hone as a urology resident.

Julia Foote '18

I was born in the United States but grew up in Kingston, Jamaica. At a young age, I saw the difference that a plane ride could make in one's health outcomes when my mom developed degenerative disk disease. As dual citizens, we were privileged enough to seek a diagnosis and treatment for my mom in the U.S. But seeing the need for broader health-care access in Jamaica inspired me to pursue a career in medicine.

I started medical school on Zoom in 2020, early in the pandemic. But at least I knew Sal [Daddario] and Mary [Zhao] and Michael [Poeschla] and other Sagehens in my class at Harvard Medical School.

After graduating from Pomona, I took two gap years before starting med school. I worked at Massachusetts General Hospital in a group that uses simulation models to evaluate the clinical benefits and cost-effectiveness of various HIV treatments. It was different from the basic science and bench work that I had done at Pomona, but I was able to translate the skills I learned as an undergraduate into a different framework and research modality. Shout-out to Professor Karen Parfitt in the neuroscience department. I was in her lab for three years, and she taught me how to actually conduct research and gave me the confidence to do it.

That has now informed what I want to do in my future career. I'm applying for a medicine residency with a possible subspecialty in cardiology. Thinking more broadly, I'm very interested in health-care utilization and the cost-effectiveness of various treatments and screenings for disease. Right now at HMS, I'm continuing to do health policy research. I'm working to develop a simulation model of heart failure to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of implementation strategies for guideline-directed medical therapies. My overarching career goal is to have a hand in both clinical care and health policy research.

I have found so much meaning working on the medicine floor with patients to form a shared understanding of their care. This past

Maryann Zhao '18

When I started medical school, I was considering some type of surgery as my specialty. But it wasn't until surgery rotation in my clinical year that I discovered the field of ear, nose and throat (ENT) and fell in love with it. It's an ideal mix of intricate anatomy, a diverse range of procedures and surgeries you can do and a patient population that is very meaningful to work with. Above all, I loved the people I worked with. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the ENT service, working with the residents and attendings on the team, and I didn't mind the long days. That was a big deciding factor for me.

I'm currently doing a research year at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, working in the lab of Dr. Ravindra Uppaluri, who is director of head and neck surgical oncology at the Brigham and Women's Hospital and Dana-Farber. Our lab is focused on head and neck cancer models and is studying the immunology of the disease. One of the challenges of this field is the difficulty of



Grant Steele

CLASS YEAR

2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Biology
Minor: Spanish

FAST FACTS

> Currently a resident in urologic surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital.

> At Pomona, learned to engage at a high level with both science and the humanities.

> Memorable classes at Pomona included Genetic Analysis and a Spanish literature course on the Latin American Boom.

spring I cared for an elderly man who had recently been diagnosed with heart failure and prescribed a number of new medications. He was unsure of what the diagnosis meant for his future but interested in researching his new medications.

I offered him this: “I’m a third-year medical student, so we can learn this together, if you’d like.” He smiled, accepted the offer, and we sat down together and reviewed the results of various heart failure trials. I left the hospital that day feeling both excited and grateful: excited to meaningfully engage with my future patients, and grateful for the opportunity to translate scientific evidence into everyday language.

My very first day at Pomona, in 2014, I met Mary Zhao. Our rooms were side by side in the dorm. We roomed together when we both took gap years in Boston, and we applied to med school at the same time. Harvard has two medical school tracks. Mary applied for the Health Sciences and Technology (HST) track, which emphasizes interdisciplinary research. I chose the larger Pathways track focusing on clinical experience. Only about 30 students a year are accepted into the HST program, so unlike with the Pathways acceptances,

the admissions officer can call each accepted student personally. As soon as Mary got the call, she was on the phone to me with the good news.

That’s how I knew that Harvard’s acceptances were coming out. After hearing Mary’s news, I just sat at my desk for an hour, frozen in anticipation. Then suddenly an email appeared on my screen: “Welcome to Harvard Medical School.” I didn’t even open the email. I bolted into a conference room and called Mary. Then I texted my family. My dad FaceTimed me back, sobbing. Harvard wasn’t the first medical school I had gotten into. To my family, though, it was the biggest deal because I’m from Jamaica. Everyone in the world knows Harvard, whereas no one cared about any other medical school that I got into.

I’m extremely grateful to have gone to Pomona. I was a bit apprehensive at first because, being from Jamaica, I didn’t do any college tours. I based my decision entirely on seeing the college’s website. But I sing Pomona’s praises to every high school student that I know who’s applying to college. It was a great experience.

Michael Poeschla '18

I got interested in the field of biomedical research early on—I liked the idea of a career where you get to continuously learn new things and be part of creating new knowledge that might help people.

Currently, I am an M.D./Ph.D. student at Harvard Medical School. After two years of preclinical medical school classes, I started my Ph.D. in bioinformatics and genetics in 2022. My Ph.D. work is focused on understanding how human genetic variation impacts blood cell production and blood cancers, as well as aging.

I am really grateful for the education I received at Pomona, which was great preparation for doing a Ph.D. At Pomona I was fortunate to learn from exceptional biology professors like Jon Moore, Sara Olson and André Cavalcanti. Their classes, such as Genetic Analysis and Advanced Cell Biology, instilled a deep appreciation for the wonders of biology and inspired me to get involved in doing research to advance human health.

At every step, I’ve had serendipitous connections that ended up having a great impact on me. After I became really interested

in research after studying abroad and working in a lab at University College London, a classmate at Pomona told me about research opportunities in Germany. That led me to apply to the Max Planck Institute after I graduated. I had the good fortune to find an unbelievably generous mentor, Dario Valenzano, who agreed to take me on in his lab after just one Skype call. Spending two years in Cologne studying rapidly aging African turquoise killifish was an exhilarating experience that really shaped who I am today.

I’ve really enjoyed living in Boston, and life as an M.D./Ph.D. student is pretty good. I have lots of time to do research, take interesting classes at Harvard and MIT and constantly

“At every step, I’ve had serendipitous connections that ended up having a great impact on me.”

—Michael Poeschla '18

Samantha Little '20

I’ve always been drawn to science in the classroom, but I am passionate about connecting with and treating people, and practicing medicine is one of the most human types of work a person can do.

One of the most formative parts of my time at Pomona was being a member of the Pomona-Pitzer lacrosse team. Medicine is truly a team-based career, so the experience of playing a sport in college has made it much easier to integrate myself into the different surgical teams in the operating room and medical teams on the wards.

I really enjoyed—and I think I needed—two gap years between college and medical school. It gave me time to define my priorities in life before starting school again. I had a list in my head of my “non-negotiables,” things in my life that I was not willing to give up during medical school.

The idea of med school taking over my life was scary to me before I started. But once I got to Boston and got settled in, I learned how to balance work and life and am happy with the quality of life I have today. I have time to do hobbies like regular exercise that bring me joy, socialize with classmates outside of school and maintain a happy and healthy relationship with my significant other—though I did have to replace Instagram with flashcards!

I ended up coming to Harvard Medical School because I really connected with the people I met while visiting campus, including another fellow Sagehen. I think any school will give you a stellar education. My best advice is to find one where you can picture yourself being the happiest.

I truly love the people I have met at HMS. Everyone is kind, supportive and incredibly passionate about a particular aspect of medicine, and that makes for inspiring energy. And I love seeing other Sagehens! Grant Steele helped teach anatomy to my first-year med school class. Sal Daddario was my near-peer



Samantha Little

CLASS YEAR
2020

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR
Neuroscience

FAST FACTS

> Being part of the Pomona-Pitzer lacrosse team helped prepare her for teamwork in her medical career.

> Finds time even in med school for work-life balance.

> But had to replace Instagram with flashcards!

mentor in my pediatric rotation. Both of them were in the Pomona Class of 2018.

Learning to practice medicine can have unexpected twists and surprises. I did a patient interview and physical exam on a woman who, the day before, had received an above-the-knee amputation. I was a bit nervous to talk to her, since I assumed that she would be mourning the loss of her lower leg and foot. When I walked into the room, though, she was one of the happiest patients I have ever talked to. I asked her how she was feeling about her amputation and she said, “Ugh. Good riddance!” She was so excited about this new chapter of her life since her foot had caused her terrible chronic pain.

That experience taught me to challenge my assumptions when I meet a patient. I may have no idea where they are in their medical journey. They may be having every surgery possible to try to save a limb, or, like that patient, they may be happy to get rid of it. I try to bring a blank slate into each patient room I walk into, so I can really listen to their experience. [PCM](#)

Julia Foote

CLASS YEAR
2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR
Neuroscience

FAST FACTS

> Came to Pomona from Jamaica never having visited the campus. Plans to take a medicine residency. Would like to be involved in both patient care and health policy research.

> Enjoys translating scientific evidence into everyday language for patients.



Michael Poeschla

CLASS YEAR
2018

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR
Molecular Biology

FAST FACTS

> Is currently an M.D./Ph.D. student at Harvard, researching bioinformatics and genetics.

> Credits exceptional biology professors at Pomona.

> Studied abroad and worked in a lab at University College London as a Pomona student.

learn new things. I get paid to take classes and do research—can’t really complain!

I’ve made some good friends here, and I was lucky to start medical school in Harvard’s Health Sciences and Technology program alongside Mary Zhao. She was a classmate at Pomona, and we both played varsity tennis. We were roommates for the first three years of medical school before ending up on opposite sides of the Charles River this year. We still meet up for Chinese or Korean food every few weeks.

My advice to current Pomona students is to enjoy every moment of the experience. I miss Pomona a lot! It is such a great place to explore widely. Take the opportunity to try new things, learn about whatever you might be interested in, and see as much as you can of what’s out there in the world as you figure out what you want to do with your life. I also wish I’d learned to surf and had eaten more tacos while I was living in Southern California. Boston is a great town, but in those areas, it can’t compete with L.A.!

By G. Gabrielle Starr

OPENING POMONA'S DOORS WIDER for Middle Income Students

Over the course of the 20th century, American higher education became in many ways the repository of not just America's dreams, but of much of the world's. Young people and families from every corner of the globe have come to believe that one of the best paths to a future of prosperity and peace runs through colleges like Pomona: a liberal arts education can fulfill dreams that haven't even yet been dreamt. I believe that to be true.

Indeed, in a model invented in the U.S., an education like that Pomona offers gives access to the full richness of the human inheritance—the accumulated knowledge of centuries—and also nurtures the yet-to-be-born discoveries that will shape our future. Liberal arts education carries this standard proudly, and does so by centering individual students in an intimate, nurturing and challenging environment where both our breadth and depth provide a foundation that helps students reach for the stars.

“This is an urgent call, because we are not alone in having something of a ‘barbell’ distribution of our students.”

I believe in this claim deeply. But I also know that the institutions that make this kind of education possible—and the dreams that we inspire—are fragile. Trust in higher education is at a low ebb, with a national survey conducted by Pew Research Center in early 2024 suggesting that 45% of Americans believe colleges and universities have a negative impact on the country today, while 53% cite a positive impact.

Political turmoil is part of it. But it is more than that: The cost of college education has become prohibitive for many students and families, particularly those who are neither eligible for large amounts of financial aid nor wealthy enough to pay a sum for four years at a private college that in some parts of the country is enough to buy a house.

Pomona has done good work as an engine of opportunity. We are what *The New York Times* has called one of the top colleges doing the most for the American Dream because of our need-blind admission, our no-loan aid and our exceptional graduation rates. Due to improvements in financial aid, we are one of a handful of colleges nationwide where the net cost of attendance for families receiving aid has stayed near constant over the last 15 years. All kinds of dreamers who come to Pomona have the chance to flourish, and to bear their added gifts in trust for all.

But for some, their dream still seems out of reach. In our strategic planning process, we came to realize exactly that. For example, in 2022, while about 28% of Pomona's first-year students from the U.S. came from households with incomes of less than \$75,000 a year, the majority—55%—came from households with incomes of \$150,000 or more. That means that 83% of our first-year students represented opposite ends of the income spectrum. Only 17% were from families with incomes in the \$75,000 to \$150,000 range—what many call “middle class,”

though we prefer to dispense with the idea of class and address levels of income. While we proudly reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of this country, we do not fully reflect the economic spectrum. Thus, our Middle Income Initiative was born.

“It's now our moment to help show that the path of opportunity is wide open, and I ask you to join with me on this quest.”

We seek in the coming years to increase the number of students from middle-income families who attend Pomona. This starts with who applies. In recent years the portion of applicants from middle-income households has been nowhere near representative, partly because the cost can seem out of reach and also because few outside programs and scholarships focus on middle-income students. Our admissions staff will be working to expand our reach, helping students know more about Pomona.

The financial considerations are significant. Even with the generous financial aid that Pomona offers—among the best in the country—many middle-

income families still believe they cannot afford to come and students don't even apply. We aim to change that, by raising enough funds to increase what we can offer to middle-income families upfront and by providing a price guarantee that simplifies the college search process and helps students see that Pomona can work for them.

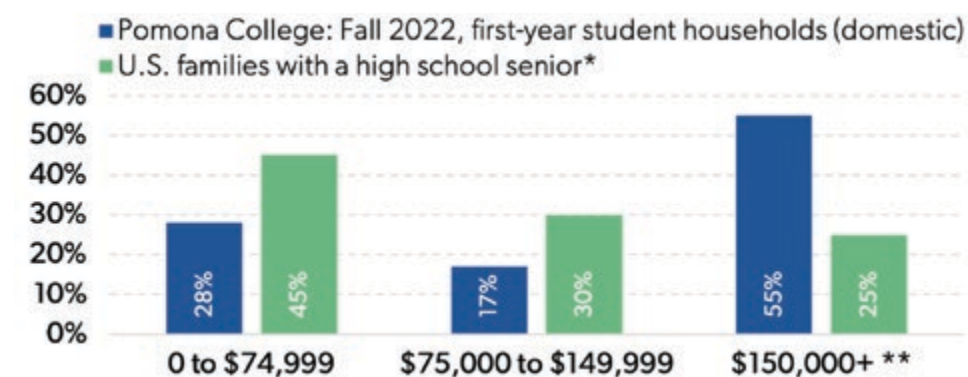
The fundraising for this has begun and will require a significant philanthropic investment from Sagehens to realize. The recruitment for this also has begun, as we have opened our doors to more transfers from community colleges, to maximize our reach and offer a Pomona education to as many brilliant students as we can.

This is an urgent call, because we are not alone in having something of a “barbell” distribution of our students. In 2017, the research and policy group now known as Opportunity Insights found that at 38 U.S. colleges and universities the number of students from households with incomes in the top 1% exceeded the number from the bottom 60%. That group did not include Pomona, but it did include five Ivy League universities and numerous liberal arts colleges. Flagship public institutions have become more expensive too, as a proportion of family income, for lower-income and middle-income students than for students from the richest families.

Collectively, it looks as if we all represent a dream deferred. But Pomona will continue to show the way forward. We have proven that diversity and excellence go hand in hand. It's now our moment to help show that the path of opportunity is wide open, and I ask you to join with me on this quest. For Pomona to be great, we must, truly, bear our riches in trust for all. [PCM](#)

G. Gabrielle Starr took office as president of Pomona College in 2017. A national voice on access to college for students of all backgrounds and on the future of higher education, she is working to ensure students from the full range of family incomes enroll in college and thrive.

2021 FAMILY INCOME



* Source (U.S. Family Income): U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2021.

** Includes families with unknown incomes who did not apply for financial aid.

JOURNEYS

THE PATHS POMONA STUDENTS CHOOSE

By Lorraine Wu Harry '97

At the tender age of 17, many students are faced with decisions not only about where to apply to college, but also about what to study. At University of California and Cal State University system campuses in particular, the major that students apply for—and the competition within that applicant pool—can be the difference between acceptance and rejection.

At liberal arts colleges in general and Pomona College in particular, the educational approach provides opportunities for exploration, refinement of interests and the melding of different academic fields. Small classes and close relationships with faculty allow for collaborative learning with other students and attentive intellectual and career guidance from professors.

Here are the stories of six students and alumni and their searches for the intersection of their interests and talents.

ZOË BATTERMAN '24

When Batterman came to Pomona College from New Orleans, her interests lay in environmental analysis and philosophy. But taking linear algebra her first year with Shahriar Shahriari, William Polk Russell Professor of Mathematics and Statistics, shifted her trajectory.

“That class revolutionized what I thought about math,” Batterman says. “I really loved how creative it could be. It felt like a very powerful edifice where one can see how other people think.”

The camaraderie of the mathematics community also drew her in. Even online during the COVID-19 pandemic, Batterman met a group of people who were “very close friends,” and that community helped propel her into the mathematics major.

“Whereas I previously thought of mathematics as a foreign and inaccessible discipline, the collaboration and support shown in Pomona’s Mathematics Department demonstrated otherwise,” Batterman says.

Soon after deciding on the major, she began seeking research opportunities. Her sophomore year, Batterman worked on C^* -algebras with Konrad Aguilar, assistant professor of mathematics and statistics.

Batterman then learned about the work of Professor of Mathematics and Statistics Edray Goins, which is motivated by the longstanding Inverse Galois problem. She was selected to

participate in Goins’ Pomona Research in Mathematics Experience (PRiME) program, an eight-week residential research opportunity, the summer after her sophomore year.

Her work and accomplishments have led to three prestigious national awards in the past year: the Goldwater Scholarship, the Alice T. Schafer Prize for Excellence in Mathematics by an Undergraduate Woman and the Churchill Scholarship, which funds a year of graduate study at the University of Cambridge.

“I have watched her grow into a powerhouse of a mathematician,” says Goins.

Batterman appreciates the recognition because she notes that students at large research universities tend to draw more attention through math competitions and “have access to a lot more resources like graduate courses.”

Without those courses available to Batterman, Goins worked personally with her on graduate-level material that he had taught while a professor at Purdue University.

After graduating this spring, Batterman will head to Churchill College at Cambridge, where she will conduct full-time pure mathematics research with Professor Dhruv Ranganathan.

In the longer term, Batterman plans to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics, which ideally will allow her to become a university professor.

“I want to do math and join the community and the conversation,” she says.



Zoe Batterman '24, center, with Talitha Washington, president of the Association for Women in Mathematics, and Professor Edray Goins.

BETSY DING '24



Ding's Instagram account, *@paintpencilpastries*, showcases lush floral arrangements, glossy ceramic pieces and food sumptuously arranged into veritable works of art, all formed by her hands on campus.

Ding considered attending culinary school at several points. In her teens, she already had amassed 30,000 followers on her TikTok cooking channel, published a recipe in *Taste of Home* magazine and formed paid partnerships with brands.

After arriving at Pomona, Ding decided to major in cognitive science and minor in studio art, while also taking classes in engineering, computer science and philosophy, among other disciplines, at the various Claremont Colleges. She laid to rest the idea of pursuing food professionally (thinking her temperament was better suited to other careers).

But food continued to play a considerable role in her life: as an outlet for stress, as a way to bring friends together and as a vehicle for satisfying her cravings.

Courses such as Food and the Environment in Asia, Anthropology of Food and Foundations of 2D Design contributed to her development as a chef and consumer.

"Food is something that everyone cares about and loves, but it's often not seen through the lens of history, environmentalism, culture

and cultural exchange and economics," says Ding. "In my classes I've learned about industrialization, chefs' roles in creating cultural cuisines, as well as agriculture and the role of food in the environment."

In the fall of 2023, Ding applied for a Student Creativity Grant through the Hive—more formally known as the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity—to design and prepare a nine-course tasting menu dinner.

When it was time to eat, eight fellow students and two staff members from the Hive took their seats in the Dialynas Hall living room, adjacent to the kitchen. The table was set with plateware carefully curated to enhance the dining experience and paired with paper menus that Ding designed.

She also included an information sheet with the stories behind each course: why she chose certain ingredients, how the food spoke to her own upbringing, and her relationship to the dish.

For the next two hours, guests were treated to a feast for the eyes and taste buds.

Ding credits the visual presentation of her food to her art classes at Pomona, which taught her "how to consider composition, color and design."

As she prepares to graduate from Pomona, Ding reflects on how the College has shaped her and others to be "independent thinkers." Taking classes in so many disciplines has broadened her mind, and food has been just one area in which she has been able to express her creativity and resourcefulness.



Ding presents a nine-course dinner in Dialynas Hall. At right, images on Ding's website.

KIRSTEN HOUSEN '23



Housen came to Pomona College from the San Francisco Bay Area for the opportunity to play varsity soccer while studying any subject of her choice. Although injuries and the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed her soccer career, her time at Pomona succeeded in launching her vocation in civil and environmental engineering.

Housen was aware of Pomona's 3-2 combined plan in engineering—which allows students to receive a bachelor of arts degree from Pomona College and a bachelor of science from Caltech or Washington University in St. Louis after a combined five-year program—when she arrived. While unsure if she would pursue that path, she was quickly drawn to the physics department. Faculty members were inviting and made the subject accessible and enjoyable, she says.

Settling on a physics major opened her to pursuing the 3-2 program. Fitting in the pre-engineering requirements in addition to classes toward the physics major and Pomona's general education requirements—all in three years—required careful planning.

Despite the structure, Housen says she still had ample room to gain a broad liberal arts education.

"I always had a really nice balance of the technical and the philosophical and creative," she says.

When it came time to transfer, she chose Washington University.

Janice Hudgings, Seeley W. Mudd Professor of Physics, taught three of Housen's physics courses at Pomona and says that she was confident that Housen would excel at Washington University: "Building on her liberal arts background, Kirsten leaned into the advanced engineering courses," Hudgings says.

Among many other accolades at Washington University, Housen made the dean's list, was selected as the Lee Hunter Scholar in the School of Engineering and



Housen in a chemical engineering/environmental engineering lab at Washington University in St. Louis.

received the Award of Excellence in Technical Writing for Social Impact for her paper on the water quality impacts of fast fashion in developing countries.

"The process of researching and writing this paper underscored how valuable the liberal arts education is and the wonderful writing and critical thinking foundation that Pomona provides to its students," says Housen, who is now enrolled in Stanford University's master's program in civil and environmental engineering.

She looks back at her time at Pomona with appreciation.

"It was a really great opportunity to have the option to go into an engineering route while still having the liberal arts foundation and getting to take all the different kinds of courses that Pomona offers," she says.

Housen's message to Pomona students: "Explore and use the opportunities available to you. Figure out what you really want to do and what makes you motivated. Pomona is a great place to learn. You're around people with such interesting ideas and opinions."



Professor Janice Hudgings taught three of Housen's physics courses at Pomona.



DYLAN McCUSKEY '23

McCuskey chose Pomona so he could study both physics and English without getting pigeonholed into either. Little did he imagine, however, that those two fields would come together for him as he prepares to publish an English paper in a literary journal by employing a theoretical physics analogy.

His passion for physics and English came together his junior year when he was taking Legal Guardianship and the Novel with Sarah Raff, an associate professor of English, and General Relativity with Professor of Physics Thomas Moore.

As McCuskey read Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, "a really complex, 900-page, twisty turning novel with two narrators," for his English class, he realized there was a concept in his physics class—which studied space, time, gravity and theoretical astrophysics—that he could superimpose on the narrative structure of the novel "to better understand what was going on between the two narrators."

One of the narrators is an impersonal, omniscient voice, which he designated as a "space" narrator, "moving across the city of London and observing everything that happens in the current moment," he says. The other narrator is a first-person character in the story, which McCuskey assigned as the "time" narrator, "driving the

passage of time and guaranteeing a future from a single point in space."

For his final assignment, he wrote a 25-page paper titled "Bound by Time and Place: The Spacetime Guardianship of *Bleak House*." Raff was so impressed by it that she encouraged him to submit it to an academic journal to be published.

McCuskey and Raff worked together for several months to revise the paper, and in fall 2022 the essay was accepted by *The Dickensian* journal for publication in early 2024.

"In the field of English, it is extremely rare for an undergraduate to publish in a professional peer-reviewed journal," says Raff. "In nearly all cases, it takes many years of graduate study to write for a scholarly journal in a literary field."

For McCuskey, the experience of writing and publishing the article has been validating. "I've been interested in physics and English for a long time, but I haven't had projects that do both," he says.

Looking ahead, McCuskey would like to continue to combine his physics major and English minor in his career. He is planning on attending graduate school for physics and eventually doing research and teaching at the college level.

To teach, McCuskey says, "You have to have the science knowledge but also the humanities communications skills."

RUBEN MURRAY '19

When Murray wrote his senior thesis on the small East African country of Djibouti, the international relations major didn't expect to end up there two years later as a foreign service officer for the U.S. State Department.

Having dreamed as a child of becoming a diplomat, Murray was able to cut his teeth on his first post, performing such tasks as interpreting for a meeting between the Djibouti president and the U.S. secretary of defense, joining a search and rescue mission for stranded migrants in the desert, and serving as the interim chief of his section.

Taking classes on African history with Makhroufi Ousmane Traoré, an associate professor of history and Africana studies, as well as conducting research on African politics and development with Pierre Englebert, H. Russell Smith Professor of International Relations and Professor of Politics, helped Murray find his niche in African security studies and focus his senior thesis on Djibouti.

When it came time for Murray to rank his choices for his first assignment as a foreign service officer, he included Djibouti in a list of about 20 countries. As it turned out, Djibouti had an immediate need for a political officer.

Murray's qualifications also included his fluency in French, having grown up in France with a French and Spanish mother and an African American father.

The job included a lot of writing, says Murray, and his education at Pomona prepared him well.

He took advantage of the Center for Speaking, Writing, and the Image regularly, visiting weekly for help with class assignments. When writing reports now, he says, "I still go through the same mechanism that I did when I was submitting my papers to the Writing Center."

One of the most surreal moments of his two years in Djibouti came when U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin arrived for meetings with the country's president. When it became



clear that Murray was the most qualified person to provide translation, he says he was "kind of thrown into the situation."

"That's not something that's written in your contract," he says.

But it did land him in a historic moment—Secretary Austin's first official trip to Africa.

Before Murray wrapped up his post in Djibouti, he received the U.S. State Department's Superior Honor Award for his sustained extraordinary performance in Djibouti.

Having found what he was passionate about "as opposed to doing something because I thought it would look good for employers in the future," Murray's advice for current students is, "Find what moves you."

Murray's views are his own and do not reflect those of the Department of State.



Ruben Murray '19, right, during a U.S. Navy Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron patrol in Djibouti.



Murray, left of flag, provides translation between U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and the president of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh, during Austin's first official trip to Africa.

DANIEL VELAZQUEZ '25

The day before the MexiCali Biennial Exhibition was set to open at The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, Velazquez and Samuel White '23 labored side-by-side with Rosalia Romero, assistant professor of art history, to put the finishing touches on the show.

For all of them, the opening would be a culmination of months of curatorial work and research.

Romero was an organizer for a pair of exhibitions at The Cheech in Riverside, California. The first was *Land of Milk and Honey* (the most recent iteration of the MexiCali Biennial) which focused on concepts of agriculture in California and Mexico. An adjacent gallery showed a corollary presentation, *MexiCali Biennial: Art, Action, Exchanges*, which chronicles the history of the MexiCali Biennial from 2006 to the present.

Velazquez's primary task was to conduct research with the Hispanic Reading Room of the Library of Congress to create a story map—an interactive digital storytelling tool—on *Land of Milk and Honey*. The story map uses photographs, illustrations and interviews to tell the deeper history of four pieces in the exhibition.

This research equipped Velazquez well to serve as a docent at the museum for the exhibitions. They also wrote

wall texts and helped curate and install the shows.

Velazquez came to Pomona from Chicago as a Posse Scholar and plans to double major in Chicana/o-Latina/o studies and sociology.

In their first-year writing seminar about Southern California murals taught by Romero, Velazquez says that "seeing how Professor Romero was able to bring the political side of art and connect it to social problems and movements made me really interested in art." After enrolling in Romero's Introduction to Latin American and Latinx Art course next, Velazquez asked to do research with her.

Velazquez says of the research experience: "It was very rewarding and also very refreshing to be not just in the museum but a museum for people like me and working on an exhibit that's about experiences that make me think about my family's experiences."

Velazquez hopes to work in museums as a career and is especially interested in archival and curatorial work. The idea of presenting research via an exhibition (versus through, say, a paper) appeals to Velazquez.

"While I love that I would be researching and studying and probably teaching, you can do both; Professor Romero is a professor and is also doing museum work," Velazquez says. [PCM](#)

Daniel Velazquez '25, right, and Samuel White '23 worked with Assistant Professor Rosalia Romero on the MexiCali Biennial exhibition at The Cheech.



From the Alumni Association Board President

Hello Sagehens!

With just a handful of months left in my term as Alumni Association Board president, I've been reflecting on my time as a board member these past several years. One of the best things about my involvement has been the opportunity to connect with so many of you. I continue to be awestruck that Pomona grads really do blanket our globe. And whether it's been chatting with alumni at College events, catching up with classmates at informal gatherings, or a random meeting with a fellow Sagehen after spotting a Pomona T-shirt, it reminds me every time of the broad and unique community we have. We often talk about the Pomona experience referring to our time as students, but it only begins there. Meeting up with each other through events, work or chance encounters reminds us that the Pomona experience extends beyond the Gates and throughout our lives.

With this in mind, I am truly thrilled to see the revival and growth of our regional alumni chapters over the last few years. These chapters have been an important part of our post-pandemic reconnection and ongoing Pomona experience. I'm grateful to our chapter leaders for the many hours spent meeting, planning and coordinating meaningful and fun events for alumni to gather in Northern California's Bay Area, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, Southern California's Orange County, the Puget Sound region of Washington state and in Washington, D.C. They have organized beach cleanups, trips to museums and a Major League Baseball game, alumni speaker presentations, casual meetups, meals—and the list goes on. My thanks to my fellow board members past and present, and especially to Julie Siebel '84 and Andrew Brown '77, for their dedication and leadership in relaunching and helping to rebuild our alumni chapters.

If we haven't crossed paths already, I hope to meet you at a chapter event or at one of the many other alumni events planned for this spring. The Alumni Board and I will be at Alumni Weekend in April as well. Please stop and say hello when you see us!

Until next time ... chirp!

Alfredo Romero '91
Alumni Association Board President

Find information on alumni chapters and get involved at pomona.edu/alumni-chapters.



Alumni and Families Pulse Survey

Share your Pomona story with us in the Alumni and Families Pulse Survey. Check your inbox for the survey link. Curious to see the results of our previous survey? Visit pomona.edu/afas-survey.



Alumni Weekend 2024 Registration Now Open

Register online now through April 15. Walk-up registration will be available at AW Registration Check-In during Alumni Weekend. Find additional information and register at pomona.edu/aw-registration-info.



REGISTRATION OPEN!

APRIL 1 Early Bird Deadline

APRIL 2 Registration Fees Increase

APRIL 15 Online Registration Closes

Alumni Weekend & Reunion Celebrations
APRIL 25-28

SPRING 2024

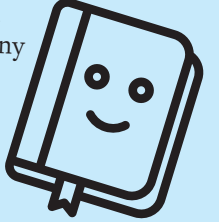
APRIL 7
 4/7 Day of Sagehen Impact

APRIL 25-28
 Alumni Weekend and Reunion Celebrations

MAY 12
 Commencement

Sagehen Stories of Impact Online

Read alumni, student and faculty Sagehen stories on the newly launched Stories of Sagehen Impact website. Learn about Professor April Mayes '94 P'26 and her longtime involvement with the Draper Center, Alumni Association Board member Robi Ganguly '00 and the remarkable startup company that resulted from a chance meeting with fellow alumni, and many more stories of Sagehens making their marks in the world.



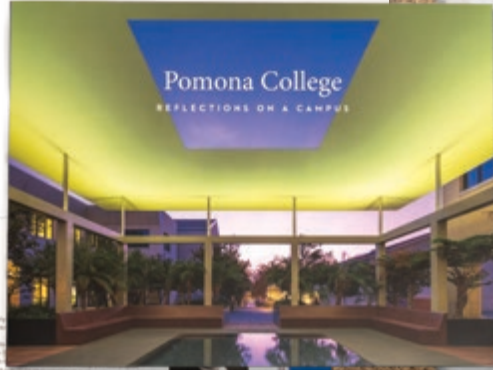
Visit pomona.edu/stories-of-impact for news about Sagehens bearing their added riches in their own neighborhoods and across the globe.

New Edition Now Available

Pomona College: 'Reflections on a Campus'

Written predominantly during the pandemic, this second edition of *Reflections* by Marjorie Harth, emerita professor and director of the former Pomona College Museum of Art, updates and expands the scope of the first, published in 2007. Like the first edition, this 292-page book documents and reflects upon the campus of Pomona College as an architectural entity and visual expression of the history and identity of a great academic institution. Many of the original entries and essays have been edited and updated, as have the photographs. Among new entries is Scott Smith's essay on landscape architect Ralph Cornell.

These stunning photographic strolls through campus and poignant essays recount the exceptional transformation of Pomona from desert patch to a "college in a garden." Would you like to add this special keepsake to your book collection? Copies may be purchased at pomona.edu/reflections-book.

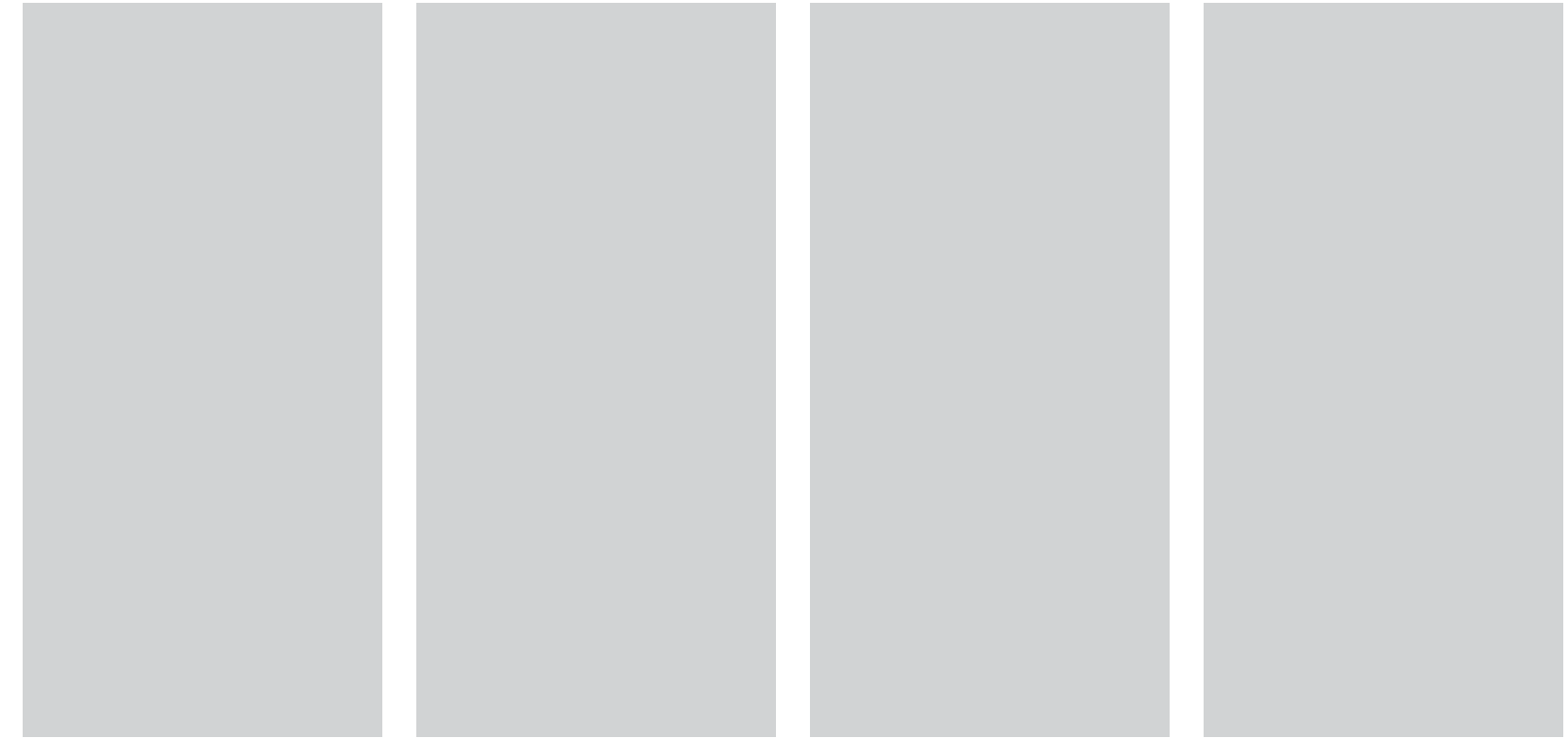


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online at sagehenconnect.pomona.edu

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A SPECIAL THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF ATHLETICS **MARCH 7, 2024**

“When we work together, our collective impact shapes the future of Pomona-Pitzer Athletics. Support us on giving day and be a part of our progress towards a community who outperforms in the classroom, on the field and beyond.”

Miriam Merrill
Director of Athletics



Missed March 7th? Scan our QR code to become a Champion of Sagehen Athletics
pomona.edu/champions



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Solution to crossword puzzle on page 64

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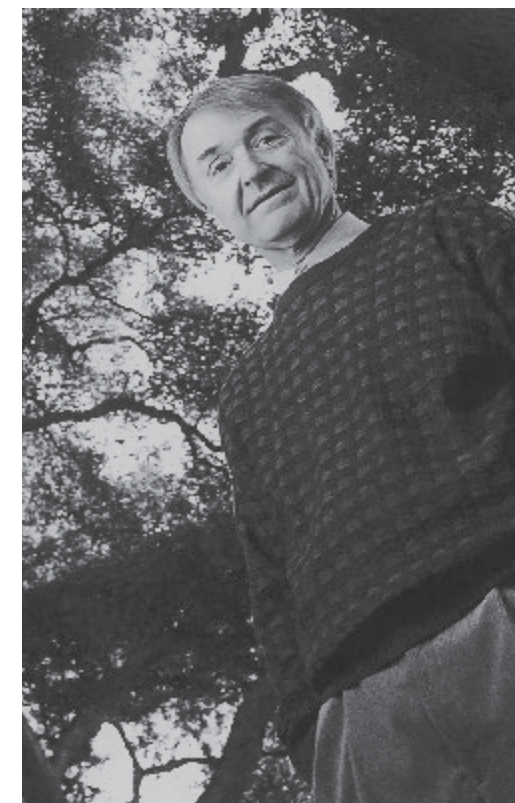
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Stephen A. Erickson

Emeritus Professor of Philosophy
 1940-2023



U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz '94, also a philosophy major, told *Pomona College Magazine* in 2013 that "Erickson wasn't afraid to be a little tough on me," adding that "I once wrote something sort of substandard for him, and he wrote a note to me that said: 'Brian, we both know you're better than this, and that is what matters.'"

Born in Minnesota, Erickson was the only child of Chris Erickson, a 12-year Minnesota state senator, and Venus Erickson. He graduated summa cum laude from St. Olaf College in 1961 and never lost touch with his Midwestern roots.

Erickson went on to receive his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1964 at the age of 24.

Emeritus Professor of Philosophy Stephen A. Erickson, who taught at Pomona College for 56 years before his retirement in 2020, died on September 20, 2023. He was 83.

Philosophy was more than an academic discipline for Erickson; it was his love. "I chose philosophy because I can't remember a time when the question of what life meant didn't obsess me," he told *Pomona College Magazine* in 1996.

An expert on existential philosophy, Erickson was a widely respected and published philosopher and a noted scholar. His volumes include *Language and Being* (1970), *Human Presence at the Boundaries of Meaning* (1984) and *The (Coming) Age of Thresholding* (1999). He also is known for his 24-lecture series in The Great Courses titled "Philosophy as a Guide to Living."

In the description of the lecture series, Erickson said that "philosophy can be construed in our time not just as a technical discipline; it can also be construed as guidance in the art of living, the pursuit of the very meaning of life, and the means for attaining this meaning."

With a deep affection for students and Pomona, Erickson was a consummate teacher.

He earned the Wig Distinguished Professor award for excellence in teaching four times, in 1968, '85, '89 and '94.

Students consistently cited his brilliant mind, humility and kindness. Through his engaging lectures and abundant office hours, he taught them how to live and think and was able to make philosophy accessible and relevant to their lives.

Johanna Glaser '10, now a medical doctor, took Philosophy in Literature with Erickson during her first semester at Pomona and says, "Within two weeks of his class, I knew I was going to major in philosophy."

Upon graduating, he was immediately hired by Pomona President E. Wilson Lyon. Years later, Erickson was honored to hold the E. Wilson Lyon Professor of the Humanities endowed chair.

Ever witty and self-effacing, Erickson told the college magazine in 1996 that "Pomona has put up with me for 32 years now and deserves grateful acknowledgment, if not deep sympathy."

During his more than a half-century in the classroom, students and the campus climate changed considerably, but Erickson continued to hold students rapt. One remembered him bouncing a tennis ball off a wall the entire lecture.

Another, Debra Best '88, now a professor of English at Cal State Dominguez Hills and recipient of the university's 2020 Presidential Outstanding Professor Award, said Erickson "certainly provided me with a method for engaging students in lectures in a way that a straight lecture does not.

"I only had one class from him, but he impacted how I teach today," Best said. "He was a gifted lecturer. I still remember him coming into class and asking a student to ask a question. His answer then spawned that day's lecture. It was gripping and polished, and answered the question. Such an amazing teacher."

Hugh Marbury '91 remembered Erickson's impact as well.

"Professor Erickson was fabulous. I don't know a soul who felt otherwise—and if someone did, they were wrong," Marbury said.

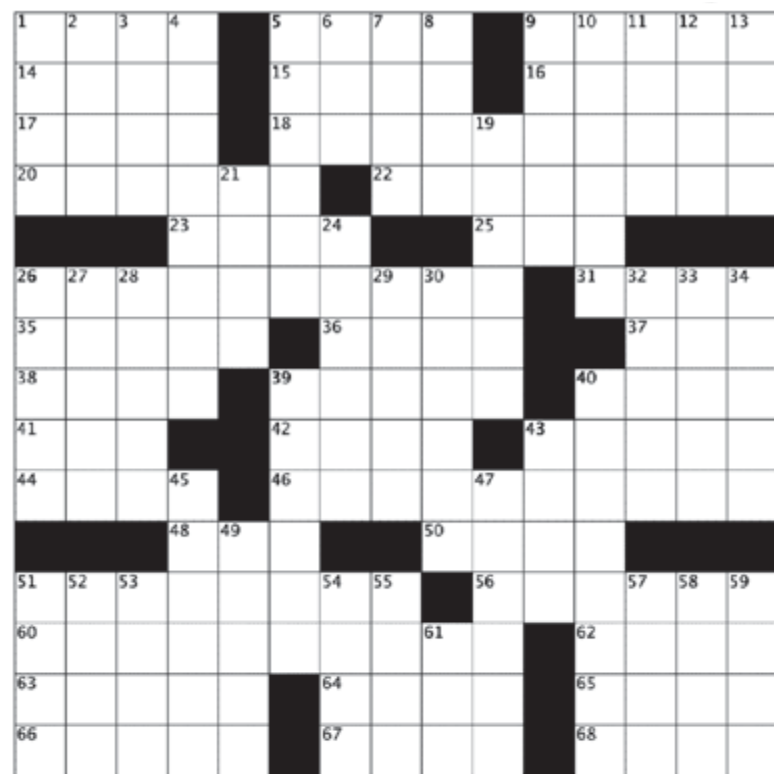
Erickson is survived by his wife Pauline Erickson; children Chris Erickson and Erika Erickson; three grandchildren; stepchildren Aaron Bastien, Renée Bastien and Jorden Bastien; and six step-grandchildren.

School's Out

by Joel Fagliano '14

ACROSS

- 1. Something that's often pulled when it should be pushed
- 5. Team supporters
- 9. Salami and pastrami
- 14. Tropical destination
- 15. Scratch that!
- 16. Annoyingly over-the-top, in modern lingo
- 17. Strategize
- 18. Common thread?
- 20. "George" has two of them
- 22. Guacamole needs
- 23. Mess (with)
- 25. Kilmer who played Batman
- 26. Where to pick up milk, yogurt, sour cream, etc.
- 31. Sunrise direction
- 35. Casting director's assignments
- 36. Boardwalk extension
- 37. See 8-Down
- 38. One of the Great Lakes
- 39. Unlocks
- 40. Plants used in Mendel's genetic studies



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- 41. Move ___ snail's pace
- 42. "The Simpsons" newsman ___ Brockman
- 43. What many millennials use to split a check
- 44. Like a neat bed
- 46. Exodus of expertise
- 48. Mischievous
- 50. Symbol on the Canadian flag
- 51. Noted name in New York news
- 56. "Yes, captain!"
- 60. Something a professor uses to catch ChatGPT-written papers ... which would have gone off twice for 18-, 26- and 46-Across?
- 62. Heart of the matter
- 63. Winona of "Stranger Things"
- 64. Chuck
- 65. Where the rubber meets the road?
- 66. Demand for compensation
- 67. Follow

- 68. Honey Bunches of ___ (cereal)
- DOWN**
- 1. Exercises that target the chest and tricep muscles
 - 2. Capital of Norway
 - 3. Snowman in "Frozen"
 - 4. How something might live in your head
 - 5. Party that becomes a nap when its first letter is changed to an "s"
 - 6. 24-hour source of \$20s
 - 7. March Madness org.
 - 8. With 37-Across, role for Sarah Snook on "Succession"
 - 9. Birthplace of Muhammad
 - 10. Breathe out
 - 11. Somewhat
 - 12. Duo + one
 - 13. Comic ___ (typeface)
 - 19. Paramours
 - 21. Fellas
 - 24. It has many small teeth
 - 26. Night vision?

- 27. Main artery from the heart
- 28. Homeric epic about the Trojan War
- 29. Major city in Tuscany
- 30. Soup legume
- 32. Big sports venue
- 33. "Me, too!"
- 34. Boxer with a cameo in "The Hangover"
- 39. "Fine, as far as I'm concerned"
- 40. "Nailed it 100%"
- 43. Feb. 14th, informally
- 45. Hold in high regard
- 47. Almost
- 49. Liquid measure, in the U.K.
- 51. Rain cover while camping
- 52. Chipper greeting
- 53. Small whirlpool
- 54. Annoying glitch on a speakerphone call
- 55. Leftover part of a ticket
- 57. Opera solo
- 58. Round Mongolian tent
- 59. Former 19-Down
- 61. Resource needed to build a city in the game Catan



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 53.

Early Bloom

Winter rains and flowering trees foretell the coming of spring on campus as passersby stroll past Thatcher Music Building.
Photo by Jeff Hing





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